



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0083SC-1 for Marion County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided a reform vision that proposes to improve and infuse technology in the newly consolidated district. More specifically, the applicant has proposed to infuse elements of technology with "fluid social learning groups" that are reflective of the subject area in which they reside.</p> <p>Additionally, the applicant proposes that the social learning groups and a four step framework will allow students to understand the learning target and success measures and take more control of their learning,</p> <p>On a positive note, the applicant is in a state that has adopted college and career ready learning standards (CCSS).</p> <p>Beyond noting the use of small group instruction, literacy circles and book clubs, there was no description of what a "fluid social learning group" is or does. The applicant did not sufficiently explain the "Learning in a Social Organization" graphic and how it relates to the proposal. As is currently written, the proposal is merely citing research on social learning and has not directly related and described <i>how</i> social learning groups impact personalized learning environments and <i>specifically</i> how they will be implemented into the grant activities.</p> <p>(a) While the applicant did address its work in the four core educational assurance areas (as defined in this notice); it did so in a generic and global manner. As one example, there was reference to "relevant and necessary professional development in using technology, assessment tools, standards based instruction, collaboration, differentiation", though, there was no specific plan that addressed how the applicant provide this professional development and or recruit and retain staff.</p> <p>(b) The applicant has not described or articulated a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support. Merely stating that students "will work together to create the finished product of their learning" and providing training for teachers, does not adequately justify their approach to accelerating student achievement.</p> <p>(c) While the applicant describes a vision of students studying plant cells at one end of the district- and collaborating with a pharmacist or, students at the other end of the district via technology, or using Prezi, a wiki, and cooperative learning strategies, there was no strong description of how any of this relates to personalized learning environments and improved achievement.</p> <p>Overall the applicant is clear about infusing technology into the district, though not clear and descriptive about doing so through these selection criteria and scores in a low-medium range.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant has selected to have ALL students and schools in the district participate in the grant activities. Though the applicant did not indicate why it chose to have all schools participate. While it is understandable that due to the consolidation the applicant would potentially want to include all schools in the proposed grant activities, it did not provide a rationale for doing so.</p> <p>Per the definition of participating students and the data in Table in A2 the participating schools collectively meet the following competition eligibility requirements.</p> <p>(b) The applicant has provided a complete list of all 11 participating schools.</p> <p>(c) The applicant provided the total number and percent of participating students from low-income families for each school. All schools have over 86% of the students from low-income families (most have well over 90%).</p> <p>The applicant provided the number of participating high-need students as special education student only. It is unclear why the applicant did not include all high needs students as defined in the notice (students living in poverty, high minority, students below grade level or have left school, homeless or in foster care and at risk of not graduating) given the county description provided in section (A)(1).</p> <p>The applicant provided the number of participating educators in each school.</p> <p>Other than not addressing all high needs students, the applicant has provided the required information for this criteria and has scored in the high range.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has proposed that all 11 schools in the district participate in the grant activities with the intent of immediate district wide reform scale-up.</p>		

Additionally, the applicant spoke to project based learning, developing greater facility with technology products, the infusion of technology into instruction and creating individualized learning plans as strategies to achieve that goal.

The district ambitiously proposes that district level staff will document the process, write papers for education journals and present at conferences. It is unclear as to which district staff will be responsible for said documentation and the criteria for documentation.

The proposal had global statements about providing 4 day summer professional development, pilot teachers, fluid learning groups, PLCs, etc., though, the application did not include a high-quality plan with specific key goals, activities, rational for the activities, a specific timeline, deliverables or persons responsible for the activities. As one example, the professional development includes "summer camp" in-service and "as the year progresses staff will receive training during professional development days... with additional training the following summer". As currently written it is unclear how many staff will be trained the first year, how they will be selected, the content of the professional development day trainings and its duration. Nor, is there a plan for training newly hired teachers. Additionally, the applicant did not address the qualifications or the selection criteria for the first wave of pilot teachers who will receive training in the use of the Tablets and technology infusion.

As another example of the need to be more specific in its plans for implementation, while the applicant did propose a district wide project roll-out in 2015-2016, there was no specific timeline with specific activities that would lead up to the roll out and for continued activities throughout the course of the grant. While the applicant may be able to immediately purchase the proposed technology, without a high quality plan, it is unlikely that the applicant will achieve its goal goal to "increase the college and career ready skills " of its students within the grant timelines.

As one more example, it is unclear what the applicant means when it proposes that pilot teachers will be "working in conjunction with administrators and guidance counselors, they will begin the process of preparing for the fluid social learning groups..." There is no description or plan for what it means to "work in conjunction with administrators", as well as no delineation of tasks, responsibilities or outcomes of these efforts.

Nor, is there a clear description of the "process of preparing for the fluid social learning groups". As this is a relatively new and abstract strategy for educating students, it is unclear and was not explicitly defined and described as to what it will look like and *how it will be implemented*.

The applicant did not provide a logic model or theory of change. Nor, did the applicant fully demonstrate how its proposal would specifically improve student learning outcomes for all students who would be served by the grant. Thus, it remains unclear that the applicant will be able to reach its goal to "increase the college and career ready skills " of its students.

Overall, the applicant has minimally responded to the criterion for this section and has scored in the low-medium range.

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

10

4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided overall and by student subgroup goals for the district in the following areas:

(a) Performance on summative assessments (proficiency status and growth).

The annual goals for performance on summative assessments provided by the applicant are the State Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for the ESEA waiver. Currently only females and whites as subgroups meet these targets. The methodology for determining the target is met (600) plus the increase in percentage which is different for elementary (35), middle (28) and high school (226 for ELA and 223 for math). Additionally, growth levels are based on the growth projected in the state ESEA waiver.

With 5 point yearly increases for elementary, 4 point increases for middle and high school, the goals do appear to be achievable, though not ambitious in terms of growth goals. Figure 2 was cut off in the hard copy and on the disc making it difficult to fully analyze all the 2012 PASS results. Although, from what could be read, it appears that in most cases, in most grade levels between 50 and 60% of the students "met" or had "exemplary" status (there were 3 instances out of 18 where between 40-49 % of the students met or were exemplary).

In Table (A)(4)(a) it is unclear if this is district wide data or what grade levels the data represents. From the data provided it may be district wide data combined for elementary and middle schools and then high school. As such the applicant proposes yearly increases of 3% across *all* subgroups for elementary and middle schools in ELA and math, and 2% yearly increases for high school students in ELA and math. Again, these goals appear to be achievable though, are not ambitious. Nor, are the goals differentiated by subgroup - except in the case of achievement for the "white " high school subgroup goal for ELA, where the goal is 100% for the 4 years of the grant. It is unclear why the applicant did not differentiate growth goals for each of the subgroups. As is currently written , these goals do not mitigate the achievement gap.

(b) Decreasing achievement gaps:

The applicant has proposed several generic strategies (Individualized learning plans, fluid learning groups, collecting and using data, a Parent Center) to decrease the achievement gap, there were no specific plans or a description of how these strategies would impact the specific subgroups.

The data in Table (A)(4)(b) has as a goal, to "increase the *overall* percentage of students scoring at the met or above level on PASS ELA by at least 3%". Yet the subgroups noted are "black and white" and the numbers provided decrease by a value of 10 over the course of the grant. In addition, it is unclear, if the numbers represent point values or percentages, what the numbers refer to and the grade levels. The same holds true for the second box in this table - which refers to increasing pass rates for HSAP ELA which decrease in increments of 5 (it is unclear, if the numbers represent point values or percentages, and what the numbers refer to). This lack of clarity and clear reference to all grade levels makes it difficult to determine the extent to which the applicant has provided goals that will mitigate the achievement gap and are likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity.

(c) Graduation rates

The applicant proposes a 5% yearly increase in district graduation rates across all subgroups.

The applicant did not provide any differentiation across sub-groups based on the current graduation rates. As an example students with disabilities will increase graduation rates at 5% every year, just as students with subsidized meals and white students. In other words, the gap in graduation rates across subgroups will remain the same over the course of the grant period. While the goals as presented, may result in improved student learning and performance they do not increase equity.

(d) College enrollment rates

The applicant spoke to the various colleges in and around the region. Other than Gear-Up at one grade level and the annual FAFSA preparation day there was no clear plan or specific activities to increase college enrollment rates.

It is unclear what is different about students' current ability to take "virtual field trips" and/or go online for "college preparation tools and applications", as the applicant proposes they will be able to do as the result of the grant. New tablets will not increase this opportunity.

Additionally, the applicant did not provide college enrollment rate goals as required by this criteria. As such, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the applicant's vision will result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity. This lack of data may have been an oversight as Table (A)(4)(c) is provided twice.

Overall, the extent to which the applicant responded to these criteria with ambitious and achievable goals was inadequate. With unclear and missing data, the applicant has scored in the low- medium range.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	4
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>It should be noted that over the course of a decade, the applicant has consolidated four school districts into one. The state officially approved this consolidation in July 2012. This means that "officially" the district is only one year old which may impact the extent to which the <i>new</i> district may demonstrate evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years.</p> <p>While taking this into account, it must also be noted that the applicant might have provided at a minimum, 4 year trend data that would demonstrate the advancement in student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching for <i>each</i> of the former 4 districts.</p> <p>The applicant noted that the trends from the former Marion school district indicate they are "progressing in the correct direction". Though, no trend data was provided - so there is no evidence of a record of success. Nor, was there trend data provided for the other former districts and/or schools.</p> <p>In a review of MAP RIT scores the applicant states that "there has been minimal change for students in the former districts of Marion 1 and Marion 2 in the past three years". Additionally, the same pattern holds true for the HSAP and EOC course data for the high school students. Though, again, data was not provided as evidence to these statements.</p> <p>The applicant also provided statements of increasing graduation rates, and "below average" and "good" state growth ratings, with one district achieving an "excellent " growth rating by 2012. Though, again, there was no trend data or, any data to support this.</p> <p>The applicant has not addressed its ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps (as defined in this notice), including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), and college enrollment (as defined in this notice) rates; (b) Achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) or in its low-performing schools (as defined in this notice); and (c) With regard to making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services, the district subscribes to Power School - a web-based data collection system that allows students, teachers and parents (via a Parent portal) to access report cards, attendance rates, discipline reports, lunch counts and maintains contact logs with parents and teachers. <p>In addition, the district holds parent conferences three times a year, and teachers send home bi-weekly newsletters and maintain a webpage.</p> <p>While the Power School data system and teacher webpages do exist, it is unclear how many parents actually have access, due to limited internet connectivity and access (as described by the applicant elsewhere in this proposal). As well, the applicant has not described <i>how</i> and <i>in what ways</i> this data informs and improves participation.</p> <p>Overall, with no data in any form (i.e. charts, graphs, raw student data, and other evidence that demonstrates trend data on student growth) other than a brief narrative that indicates some growth, though mostly no growth across all the former districts, the applicant has not demonstrated a clear record of success and has scored in the low- medium range.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As described by the applicant, the district currently provides a high level of transparency in its district processes, practices, and investments, by making public actual district level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration.

For the purpose of the district consolidation process there were community public meetings, though it is unclear if the district also provides information on processes, practices, investments, and actual *school-level expenditures by school as the applicant did not speak to these criteria.*

Based on the narrative and screen shots from the district website, the applicant already makes available the following 3 categories of school-level expenditures from State and local funds:

(b) and (c) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff and teachers are available on the district website Human Resources page. Anyone may view the teacher salary scale. Administrative and the dozen or so non-instructional staff salaries are not posted.

(d) Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level are available to any visitor to the district Finance department expenditures. By clicking "spending Transparency" anyone can access a record of financial reports, vendors, monthly spending reports, credit card bills, and checks written and to whom.

(a) The district does not post actual personnel salaries at the school level for administrators and non-certified support staff.

Overall, the applicant has demonstrated evidence of adequate levels of transparency. As such, the applicant has scored in the medium range.

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

10

3

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

While the applicant has recently received approval for a district consolidation, is monitored by the state, and has implemented the CCSS, the applicant has not sufficiently demonstrated for the purposes of this proposal, successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under any State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in this proposal.

This is in part evidenced by a lack of any State letter of support, or copies of the state comments to the proposal. It is also evidenced in part by the district's plan to use its current Goals Based Evaluation system and not pilot the state teacher evaluation system that goes into effect in 2015.

As currently written, the district has not adequately met this criteria and has scored in the low-medium range.

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

15

5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) In support of how students, families, teachers, and principals were engaged in the development of the proposal, and how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback, the applicant has stated that there were pre-writing discussion groups, meetings and consultations and committees formed to solicit parent and community opinions and comments. In addition, middle and high school students met with the grant writer.

While the applicant states that students and community/parent support for the proposal was high, there was no demonstrated evidence of said support or how the proposal was revised based on parent, community, student and teacher input. The extent to which stakeholder engagement occurred throughout the process remains unclear as the applicant did not provide the number or dates/times of the parent, community or student meetings, the number of attendees at each of these meetings, and the process to gather input. Nor, was there any indication of parent, student, teacher, or community representation on the writing committee.

Of positive note, two building principals and one school level curriculum facilitator served on the writing committee for the proposal. All principals had an opportunity to provide input on the proposal during monthly Leadership Meetings and completed a survey.

(ii) While the applicant notes that 97% of the teachers responded positively to the question of supporting the RTTT proposal the percent of teachers who actually responded to the survey was not provided, nor was the actual teacher survey provided. Additionally, it is unclear *when* the teacher survey was provided. Overall, there is inadequate evidence to determine actual teacher support of this proposal. State law prevents collective bargaining so this is a non-bargaining district, which also has no official union affiliation, so no union signature was provided - or necessary.

(b) The applicant provided two letters of support (one from the mayor and another from the district teacher of the year).

While the applicant noted support from the community, there were no letters of support to evidence such support from these or other key stakeholders such as parents, parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, tribes, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, and higher education institutions.

Overall, the applicant has minimally demonstrated evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal. As such, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range.

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

Available

Score

(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7
<p data-bbox="66 132 344 159">(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p data-bbox="66 170 930 197">The applicant proposes to implement the following four district focus areas for 2013-2014:</p> <ul data-bbox="123 220 535 384" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="123 220 302 247">• Developing PLC <li data-bbox="123 268 310 296">• Balanced literacy <li data-bbox="123 317 535 344">• Instructional skills that support the CCSS <li data-bbox="123 365 415 392">• Data driven decision making <p data-bbox="66 413 1542 527">It is unclear why these focus areas are only for 2013-2014 and not the entire grant period and what focusing on these areas will entail with regards to professional development and implementation. This is important to note as these focus areas do not align to the grant proposed professional development in technology infusion, project based learning and fluid social groups. Also unclear is why the district did not provide focus areas for the remainder of the grant period.</p> <p data-bbox="66 548 1542 724">The applicant plans that the proposed technology infusion will support the balanced literacy focus with an increase in leveled electronic reading materials, device applications to help build fluency, and data to improve small group instruction. It remains unclear <i>how</i> this will be <i>different</i> from current practice (as technology currently exists from recent upgrades) and <i>how</i> the applicant will personalize learning for students especially students with disabilities, students in poverty, and those students at risk of not graduating. The applicant has addressed a variety of digital platforms and data warehouses (My Big Campus, Enrich, Skype, PD 360, etc.) for teachers and students (Compass Learning, APEX, Waterford, Success Maker, Khan Academy, etc.) use as a result of Project REAL.</p> <p data-bbox="66 745 1542 829">While these platforms and software open many avenues for teacher and student use - it is unclear what will be <i>different</i> about their use and <i>how</i> they will <i>specifically</i> increase personalized learning once Project REAL is in place. Many of these platforms and software are already in the district and available for use.</p> <p data-bbox="66 850 1542 1029">While the applicant has addressed several strategies for improving learning and teaching these strategies are for the most part listings of software and technology and good intent. They are not part of a comprehensive and coherent plan to improve personalized learning and improved instruction. The applicant has not provided a plan (as defined in this notice) that addresses an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that will enable them to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs. This is evidenced by the lack of key goals, activities, specific rationale for the activities, a timeline, deliverables and persons responsible for the activities.</p> <p data-bbox="66 1050 1542 1165">The applicant has minimally addressed an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students (as defined in this notice), in an age-appropriate manner such that (i) students understand what they are learning is key to their success and accomplishing their goals. In one instance the applicant proposes that teachers will use the data to make instructional decisions for students and create individual learning plans for students, then, in another instance propose that students will make goals based on interests and social groups.</p> <p data-bbox="66 1186 1542 1480">(ii) While the applicant did mention virtual college tours and does provide an annual College and FAFSA Form Day they did not specifically address <i>how</i> Project REAL will help students identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Nor, did the applicant specifically address how it would help students understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals. Merely stating that development of a personalized learning plan would include assessment data, teacher observations and the student learning style, coupled with "the infusion of technology will enable students to achieve 21st century digital literacy skills as well as college and career readiness" is insufficient for the purposes of this proposal. The applicant has not explicitly described <i>how</i> teachers and parents will help students identify their goals and choose deep, learning experiences that expose students to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives. As currently written the proposal does not demonstrate how Project Real will provide deep and rigorous personalized learning that will facilitate student (v) mastery of critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.</p> <p data-bbox="66 1501 1542 1585">(b) Of positive note, the applicant currently provides student opportunities to receive additional support and or catch up to their peers. This is evidenced by the Weekend Warrior program where students may come in on Saturday for additional support, PUSH, where 8th grade students may work to regain lost credits and catch up to their graduating class by 10th grade, and "Marion Men" a mentoring program.</p> <p data-bbox="66 1606 1542 1669">It is unclear what supports exist for middle and elementary level students and which of the above programs are district wide (it appears as if Weekend Warrior is school based).</p> <p data-bbox="66 1690 1542 1921">(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 is a focus of this selection criteria. While providing numerous technologies, potential strategies, and good intent, the applicant never really provided a complete and coherent plan which described <i>how</i> it would specifically personalize, sequenced instructional content and skill development and deep personalized learning for all participating students. There was no discussion of the components of the personalized learning plans, the criteria for success, and most importantly the specific strategies for personalized support. This was very evident in the lack of information on accommodations and <i>specific</i> follow-up supports to improve learning for high needs students. The focus of this proposal was described very globally as the infusion of technology and implementation of fluid social learning groups to increase skills, though the applicant has insufficiently described and demonstrated its understanding and implementation plan for personalized learning.</p> <p data-bbox="66 1942 1542 2001">(ii) While the applicant notes the use of Success Maker, Khan Academy, virtual tutorials, classrooms, and field trips, messaging with other students and teachers, these were all merely listed as Project REAL supports. The applicant has not adequately addressed a variety of high-quality instructional</p>		

approaches and environments and *how* it will use those supports to enhance a personalized learning environment and improve learning. As an example, the applicant proposes that each student will take the VARK (a learning styles inventory), and teachers will "carefully monitor student progress with DIAL, Dominic, PASS, MAP and HSAP testing and through Excent, Enrich etc. District curriculum specialist are to guide teachers in "reviewing results" from standardized testing and benchmark testing and writing prompts. These curriculum coaches will then help teachers design lesson plans to meet student needs.

Though, the applicant did not define the instruments and how they would provide student specific information (like the VARK). As well, some of the test results are from summative assessments. It is unclear what ongoing formative assessments will be used to improve instruction.

It is unclear and of concern, how many curriculum specialists will be available. This is important information to know as the applicant is proposing that the curriculum specialists will also serve as data coaches guiding teachers in the review of standardized and benchmark testing results in addition to the writing prompts. The time commitment for these specialist/coaches does not seem reasonable or sufficient to support all 500 district teachers. It is unclear how and when these coaches will be able to meet with teachers to help design lesson plans that meet specific individualized student learning needs..

(iii) The applicant did not specifically address or describe its high-quality content, including digital learning content and how that content is specifically aligned with college- and career-ready standards and how it would deepen student learning.

(iv) The applicant currently uses "data-driven decision making at the classroom level" via the use of Excel spreadsheets and interim MAPs assessments. The applicant proposes to provide "more resources" to help teachers create individualized plans, though, the applicant did not define those resources and specifically how teachers would personalize student learning.

(A) The applicant has proposed the state DOE website and the use of the district Department of Curriculum and Instruction disaggregated data, and Enrich, E and GIFT View data based systems to frequently update individual student data. Though, these data collection tools were merely listed. The applicant did not describe these tools and systems and how and when they would be used to determine progress toward mastery of college - and career-ready standards, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. There was no mention of formative assessment measures or the frequency of feedback to students other than quarterly parent conference meeting.

(v) The applicant did not address accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students (as defined in this notice) to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. While teachers have received professional development on differentiated instruction, it is unclear what the applicant proposes regarding improving learning opportunities and outcomes for its high needs students.

(c) The applicant has insufficiently described a plan that will provide training and support to students to ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. In the *Parent and Student Training Overview*, the applicant has provided a very basic 4 year training schedule. Said schedule does not change over time. In other words, the same content is provided every year as exemplified by the parent schedule which repeats *Conferences* and *Parenting Sessions* that cover Literacy and Technology Support.

Additionally, the schedule does not provide the following components of a high quality plan (as defined in this notice):goals, specific activities, a timeline of how often the trainings will occur, or how long they will last. Lastly, the Training Overview is just that, a brief overview and does not provide the specific content to be covered or demonstrate increased learning over time.

While it may be true as the applicant states, that students come naturally to technology and social learning, given the consistent noted lack of internet access in the county and inequity in technology use, a specific plan to train students in the use and maintenance of technology and social media is of critical importance.

Overall, the applicant has minimally addressed the criteria in this section. The applicant did not provided a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the supports necessary to graduate college - and career-ready. There was minimal description of personalized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills, aligned to college- and career-ready standards, content, instructional approaches, and supports. For the reasons noted above, the applicant scores in the low medium range.

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

20

7

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Teaching and Leading: An approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice) by enabling the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching for all students, in particular high-need students, such that:

(a) The district currently provides summer professional development, one early release day a month, four day long staff development days per year, and training during planning time. Of positive note, the district analyzes student achievement gap data and under performance to determine professional development. The district provides math coaches to support individual teacher needs and last year implemented formal Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which meet once a week, with an agenda.

(i) The district proposes to provide professional development in the following areas.

- Teachers will receive instruction and coaching on the new technologies, implementation of Common Core standards, and assessments
- Training in quantifying 21st century learning skills, and developing strategies to teach these skills Aid in creating and revising lesson plans to reflect collaboration skills, teamwork, and individualized learning plans
- Technology integration in classroom instruction, especially as concerned with group work and project based learning
- Support, Observation and Feedback:
- Working with the school leadership teams to establish benchmarks from which to plan and implement professional development
- Assistance in formulating plans to launch individualized learning plans

- Teacher assistance in creating and implementing individualized learning plans
- Training and support in implementation AND assessment of Common Core and the new South Carolina Science standards
- Research and data tracking tools to ensure success
- Training and monitoring of coaching in new tools and strategies
- Training of school-based coaches to ensure sustainability
- reflection and assessment tool

As such, it appears that training and support for the implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time and college- and career-ready are in place.

That said, the applicant did not provide a high quality plan (as defined in this notice) for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment. The applicant did not provide key goals and activities to improve learning and teaching, or rationale for such activities, a timeline for the proposed professional development and related activities, deliverables and the persons responsible for the activities. Equally important, the applicant did not speak to its approach to implementing instructional strategies for all students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards.

While it is clear that the applicant plans to provide substantial professional development, it is not clear, how that will happen. As an example, there are no timelines for training all teachers, or which teachers will attend the summer trainings, or building the mentor teacher cadre, or how the applicant will bring newly hired teachers up to speed. Additionally, the above list of "new learning" is not inclusive of other proposed training on fluid social learning groups and minimally addressed project based learning.

(ii) The proposal does not address *how* the applicant will ensure that teachers have the skills and knowledge to adapt content and instruction, provide opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches (i.e. discussion and collaborative work, project-based learning, videos, audio, and manipulatives),

(iii) As noted earlier the applicant proposed quarterly parent conferences and data based tools to provide student data, though the applicant did not describe the formative measures, or define what frequent measures of student progress looked like, or how it would use the data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators.

(iv) The applicant states that it currently uses a Goals Based Evaluation (GBE) system for its teachers and will continue to use it until it adopts the new state teacher evaluation system in 2015. At that time the applicant will "use the system that becomes adopted", as well as continue to use the GBE system. The new teacher evaluation system has five levels of teacher effectiveness and is based on 50% teacher observation, 30% student individual growth, 10% school growth and 10% for community growth. The new state teacher evaluation system will provide feedback on individual and collective effectiveness - in the form of a teacher and district letter grade for proficiency.

While not explicitly stated, it appears that the district does not support the new state teacher evaluation system. This is in part evidenced by the district not piloting the new teacher evaluation system this year (because it a newly consolidated district) and by the comment that the "district seeks to provide an example of higher quality leadership by providing deep professional development opportunities coupled with teacher tools for learning, followed by self - reflection". As such, once the new system is adopted, the district will continue to use its own GBE system similar in form to the Individual Professional Development Plans; and "administrators will decide what makes a highly effective teacher" (students would score 85% or better on the state assessment). This is a concern in that there is a good deal of new learning, transitioning and work for administrators and teachers to implement this grant proposal. Adding a duplicative teacher evaluation system takes time and effort away from the focus activities.

(ii) The applicant specifically proposes to provide high-quality digital learning resources that includes digital resources and assessments that are aligned with college - and career-ready standards, and the tools to create and share these new resources. This is evidenced by the proposal to add tablets for every student and new instructional software, data collection systems and professional development support.

The applicant did not adequately identify the instructional content which is critical to implementing personalized learning environments.

(iii) As noted earlier, the applicant did not adequately address the processes it would employ to match student needs as noted in Selection Criterion (C)(2)(b)(i) with specific resources and approaches. The applicant did not describe ongoing feedback, its frequency and classroom based formative assessment that would continuously inform and improve the effectiveness of the resources in meeting individual student needs.

(i) The applicant proposes to use Individualized Professional Development Plans - similar to its GBE system and teacher reflection to inform school leaders for improving individual teacher effectiveness. Teacher recognition is at the building level, with Honor Roll Teachers, District Teacher of the Year and district publications. In addition, the district will reward high performing schools and improving schools (not teachers) with public recognition.

Beyond the mention of PLCs the applicant did not address how the school leadership teams would assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate.

(ii) As noted earlier, the applicant has proposed professional development, though, the provision of the professional development is not described in any coherent or systematic plan that will ensure consistent and continuous individual school or collective progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps in the district.

(d) The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan or described how it would increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

While the applicant addressed the difficulty in recruiting "high quality teachers" in a "small county without much business base", the applicant noted its continued commitment to recruiting and retaining effective teachers. Though, the applicant did not provide any information as to how it would staff in hard-to-staff schools and hard to staff subjects, and specialty areas (such as special education).

Overall, the applicant has not provided a complete and coherent plan that adequately demonstrates its plan to improve teaching and learning by

personalizing the learning environment. As evidenced by 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	7
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning by—</p> <p>(a) As noted earlier, the applicant is a newly consolidated school district and has organized itself with six Directors and six Coordinators who report to the Directors. These individuals meet once a month with the Superintendent for a cabinet meeting and then a second time in a month they all meet with the school principals for Leadership Team Meetings. This arrangement seems to work for the 14 schools and programs in the district.</p> <p>(b) The district provides school principals the autonomy to set individual school schedules, budget and manage funds for their building, and have a "great say" in personnel decisions.</p> <p>While principals seem to have autonomy and decision-making flexibility, the applicant did not address any autonomy, decision making, and/or flexibility over factors such as school schedules and calendars, staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets for the school based leadership teams.</p> <p>(c) As noted earlier, the applicant provides several opportunities for students to make up credits. This is evidenced by the Saturday School, the PUSH program for 8th graders and the dual credit system which allows for high school and college credit accrual. The state has no regulations pertaining to credit recovery, meaning individual schools may originate their own. This provides increased flexibility in credit recovery opportunities for students.</p> <p>The applicant did not address any opportunities to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, as opposed to the amount of time spent on a topic, thus it is unclear if this is an option in the district.</p> <p>(d) While the applicant noted that students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery on the HSAP, it did not note how many opportunities a student has to demonstrate mastery.</p> <p>The district does provide multiple comparable ways to demonstrate mastery of a standard (individual or group projects, standard unit tests, multi-media presentations, oral reports and classroom observations). Make-up tests are also provided.</p> <p>(e) The applicant noted that it provides an ESOL family Coordinator to work with the families of the ESOL students, an ESOL specialist, three school psychologists, two counselors, a transition and a low-incidence specialist, and a resource officer,</p> <p>The applicant did not describe and or explain <i>how</i> it will provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. It is important to note that the district employs an ESOL Coordinator and Specialist, which would suggest that the distinct has students who speak a language other than English. Though, ESL was not listed as a subgroup in any of the Section A Goals, no, has the applicant mentioned ESL stud nets in any efforts with regard to personalized learning environments. The number, achievement levels and needs of English language students in the district is unknown, This is evidence of not ensuring that the needs of ALL students are met.</p> <p>The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan with key goals, and activities, rationale for said activities, a timeline, outcomes and persons responsible to support the project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. Overall, the applicant has insufficiently responded to these criteria and has scored in the low-medium range.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has noted that the district will better support personalized learning when it is able to obtain more internet access across the community in selected locations. Currently many families who live outside the city limits do not have internet access or even cell phone reception. Of positive note, is the district plans to allow students to check out the equipment so they can do work at home or at some of the community WiFi spots once they are up. Additionally, if funded, the district will place some of the old computers in these newly internet accessible community spots, the library and create a parent computer lab at the Palmetto Education Center in an effort to increase resident and student access. The district will provide classes in financial literacy, keyboarding and Microsoft office - free of charge.</p> <p>It is unclear how students will be able to work at home with no internet access, and how long it will be before there will be more access sites in the community as the district did not provide a plan or timeline. As currently written, there would be no support for some time.</p> <p>Having only addressed internet access, the applicant did not adequately describe how it would (a) ensure that all students in the district and other stakeholders regardless of income, have access to the necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>(b) While the applicant will allow students to check out their technology equipment and take it home and it will maintain the computer labs, the applicant did not sufficiently address this criteria. The applicant did not describe <i>how</i> it would ensure that students, parents, educators and other stakeholders have the necessary and appropriate levels of technical support, and/or the range of potential strategies for doing so.</p>		

(c) The applicant subscribes to Power School as a method of allowing parents and students to export their information in an open data format. Parents can simply click on the district home page link to access the Parent portal to obtain report cards, attendance and lunch data. In addition, parents will have access to teacher emails. Beyond these basic connections, that are already in place in the district, the applicant did not address how it will use the data in other electronic learning systems (e.g., electronic tutors, tools that make recommendations for additional learning supports, or software that securely stores personal records), or *how* the *new* technology, software and tools would be used to impact student learning.

(d) Currently the district Human Resource data system is not compatible with Power School. While it is designed to be compatible - further programming is necessary. The applicant "hopes" that these systems will be more compatible next year. "Hoping" is insufficient evidence of how this will be accomplished.

The applicant did not address the use of other inter operable data systems such as budget and/or instructional improvement data systems. Thus, it is unclear if these systems exist or are compatible.

The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan with key goals and activities, rationale for the activities, timeline, outcomes and persons responsible for the activities to support the implementation of Project Real. A clear and coherent plan is especially important for these criteria as they relate to policies and infrastructure supports that are necessary to meet the proposed goals within the project timeline.

Per the above comments, 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	7
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant plans on hiring a "well qualified Program Director" who will be responsible for grant mamangement, supervision of the coaches, filing documentation and ensuring implementation of the project.</p> <p>The applicant did not describe the criteria it will use to select its "well qualified" director. Additionally, while the applicant has described some aspects of how it will monitor grant progress, it has done so in a vary global and non-specific manner. As one example, the reporting criteria and process for the teacher "discussions" in PLCs and with coaches is not indicated. It is unclear what successful reporting will look like.</p> <p>As another example, there are no specific goals, timelines or deliverables for the external evaluator.</p> <p>Lastly, there is no indication of when and how the data (survey, efficacy of instruction, student blogs, standardized assessment, percent of students applying to college, employment rates, etc.) will be collected.</p> <p>The applicant has noted that the NetLead program sponsored by the Winthrop University will "contribute to mentoring of administrators and the development of future curriculum specialists, assistant principals and principals." It is unclear how this mentoring program relates to the RTT-D proposal as this is not mentioned elsewhere in the proposal and/or specified in the budget. Mentoring administrators programs are a time consuming process, so this is a concern that it was not mentioned elsewhere and how and when this will be implemented.</p> <p>The applicant has not provided a coherent and comprehensive high-quality plan that describes how it will implement a rigorous and continuous improvement process that provides 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 defined in this notice, such a plan would have key goals and activities, a timeline and specific deliverables describing <i>how</i> the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District. The applicant did not describe such a plan and has scored in the medium range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant intends to use the already established six Advisory Councils as the foundation for its communication. These councils are as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business/industry • Faith-based • Principals • Teachers • Parents • Students <p>As well, Project REAL results will be shared wiith the School Improvement Councils and the Parent Teacher organization. Additionally, the district plans to share information through its regular methods of communication (Board meetings, local media, the district newsmagazine, a monthly news column by the superintendent, Facebook, Twitter, Alert Now) and through a newly created webpage for Project REAL.</p> <p>While these are all very reasonable methods of communication, the applicant has not provided a coherent and high quality plan for its approach to communication and engagement for project REAL. As defined in this notice, the communication plan would include key goals and activities, rationale and outcomes for said activities, a timeline, and persons responsible for the activities.</p> <p>Given the absence of a high quality plan, the applicant has scored in the low range.</p>		

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided 12 performance measures with annual targets for each performance measure. The applicant did not describe in the narrative or, in the Tables the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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 regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; or (c) How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress. <p>Additionally, some of the performance measures had incomplete data and did not provide measures for subgroups. As one example, in the performance measure for the ALL population, the applicant did not provide the required effective or highly effective teacher information. It is unclear what the data in the table labeled Performance Measure (All Applicants-c) is referring to as the description has been cut off (possibly elementary achievement).</p> <p>For performance measure Grade 4-8-a, it is unclear why the district has zero students who are on track to college and career readiness in 2012-2013 baseline line data column A and then jump to 373 students in 2012-2013 - column D, as this is the <i>same</i> year.</p> <p>The applicant has provided achievable goals, though not necessarily ambitious goals. As one example, the attendance performance measures (ALL, PK-3, 4-8, and 9-12) start with a baseline of 95% and increases 1% each year.</p> <p>As another example, the applicant has student achievement increases at 5% increments each year for PK-3 and 4-8. Additionally, the high school measure increases by only 2% each year. With no explanation as to how the applicant determined these increases, it is unclear if they could in fact be ambitious. As currently provided the performance measures do not appear to be ambitious.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant had missing data, did not provide subgroup data, and did not provide the methodology for calculating the measure. As such, the applicant has scored in the low- medium range.</p>		

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has proposed a three-tiered approach to evaluating its RTTT-D funded activities. This approach includes the following.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student and Teacher Surveys where students will rate the value of instruction as well as their perception of their own performance. Teachers surveys will collect information on teacher perceptions of worth as well as measure student performance as reported on the report card. 2. Collection and analysis of survey results and performance and assessment results. The Curriculum and Instruction department will collect and analyze data , look for trends and report to the superintendent. 3 External evaluator - The district will contract with BCBS, a national company to monitor the performance of the equipment, strategies used by the professional development trainers and coaching staff and the validity of the conclusions reached by the district data analysis. <p>While this three tiered approach does have some merits, it does not have evaluation goals and activities, an evaluation timeline and deliverables, or note the persons responsible for each of the activities. In other words, 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 the proposed professional development and other activities to infuse the new technology. As such, the applicant has scored in the low range.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As evidenced in Tables 1-1 and 2-1, the applicant has provided an overall budget and project budgets that included both RTTT-D grant costs and external funds.</p> <p>Overall, the budget adds up and seems reasonable to support the applicants proposal to implement a 1:1 tablet initiative and the necessary accessories and professional development to support the new technology.</p> <p>While the applicant provided a complete budget that included all of the funds including, Race to the Top – District grant, and external support that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal, and total revenue from these sources, the applicant did not identify the <u>source</u> of the external funds, making it unclear if they are philanthropic, or grant and/or other Federal funds.</p> <p>Additionally, the applicant did not respond to the prompts for cost descriptions and assumptions, thus, line item costs for much of the budget was not provided making it difficult to determine the specifics of much of the costs. As one example, the \$390,000 budgeted for contractual services is provided by year, though there is no indication of the contractor in the budget table, or the estimated cost per expected procurement or services, the amount of time devoted to the project and/or contractor rates. While the narrative notes a five day summer training, "additional training sessions..., onsite coaching from the S2tem Center SC", the actual rates are unclear.</p>		

As another example, there was no line item description of the \$30,000 training stipends. It is thus unclear how many teachers will be trained, for how many hours or days and the hourly rate for said training stipends. Nor does the training stipend budget change over the course of the grant. This is a concern, as there would be a potential increase in a training budget to account for new teachers and continued training of all teachers.

In Table 3-1 there is no Project name or identified activity or associated criteria for the \$20,500 in supplies and \$761,000 in contractual services and \$644,000 training stipends. This is a concern as it is unclear how these expenditures relate to the proposal and which selection criteria it is addressing. More importantly, with no line item description of services or rates, it will be difficult at best to account for the expenditures.

While acknowledging the one time costs of the technology and initial infrastructure cost, the applicant has proposed a budget that is predominately (70%) for equipment. This is of concern as the applicant's descriptions and plan for personalized learning environments and improved student achievement were not detailed and coherent enough to merit such a large investment in technology.

The applicant has budgeted for 300 "replacement Dell desktops" at a cost of \$316,185.00 and 750 Laser printers at a cost of \$225,000.00, though, there is no mention of said desktops or Laser printers in the proposal. It is unclear where they will be placed and who be be using them and for what purpose.

Overall, due to the lack of detail in the proposed overall and project budgets, the applicant has scored in the low-medium range for this criteria.

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

The applicant proposes to sustain the professional development efforts of the grant by training internal staff to serve as their technology coaches and mentors. The applicant proposes that the need for coaches will decrease over time and teachers will be recruited as mentors and paid with a stipend - which would be more cost effective. For sustaining equipment, the applicant proposes to replace the tablets on a rolling cycle (replacing 1/3 every five years)

While the applicant states its intent for sustainability and some potential strategies, it did not provide a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) with key goals, activities, a timeline or the deliverables for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. As an example, there were no goals for the number of teacher mentors that the district would retain, how they would be chosen and trained, how much their stipends would be and where their stipends would come from. Further the applicant states it would decrease coaches by attrition, though there was no data on why the applicant felt that would happen and/or a timeline for the attrition.

As another example, the district proposed to continue to seek additional sources of funding though, did not indicate a plan for how that would happen, a timeline, or key goals of such an effort. Stating that "wise fiscal management" and that "some" of the funds would come from Title I is not detailed enough information to support sustainability efforts. There was no indication of how the applicant would evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget. Lastly, the applicant did not provide any information on an estimated budget for after the term of the grant. This is of particular concern as the applicant consistently stated budget concerns throughout the proposal not being able to implement the proposal without the grant funds.

Additionally, there was no description of any support from philanthropic entities, State and local government financial support, or any description of how the applicant would evaluate the effectiveness of its past investments and use that data to inform future investments.

Given the very global response with no specifics regarding any plan, the applicant has scored in the low range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not address this competitive priority.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not coherently and comprehensively addressed how it will build on the four 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.

This was in part evidenced by incomplete responses to the selection criteria and by the absence of goals and activities, specific timelines, deliverables and a coherent rationale for the proposed activities when a plan was required. Nor, did the applicant *specifically* address how it would improve teaching and learning through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators. Lastly, the applicant did not address how it would

decrease achievement gaps and provide accommodations and personalized learning environments for its most high need students (students with disabilities, ELL and students at risk of not graduating, etc.).

As such, the applicant has not met this priority.

Total	210	76
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0083SC-2 for Marion County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides a thorough description of the background, history and demographics of the district within the narrative. Graphs and charts were provided to support demographic information within the narrative. The applicant provides four focus areas as basis for the vision. These areas are Professional Learning Communities, Data Driven Decision Making, Balanced Literacy and Instructional Shifts to Support the Common Core Standards. The focus areas are addressed in various parts of the application. The applicant does not address all four core educational areas. There is no evidence of recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals. There is insufficient evidence to determine if the applicant has a plan in place or intends to implement a plan to recruit, develop, reward or retain effective teachers and principals. The personalized remediation of students is mentioned but details are not provided within the narrative. The applicant mentions using project-based learning, Successmaker, My Big Campus, Edmodo Study Island, Blackboard, and Skype however this list is not a sufficient description of what the classroom experience will be like. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant addresses 9 schools however there are 14 schools listed in other sections of the application; the chart provided lists 11 schools. It is not clear if the discrepancy in the number of schools is a mere oversight in the application or if the schools were to be excluded from this application. The applicant does not describe the process used to select participating schools; all schools were selected with no criteria or data basis. It is unclear if the selection of the schools meets the criteria of this competition. It is unclear if all participating schools met competition eligibility requirement as the narrative provides school grades for 9 schools 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides thoughtful plans by first piloting the reform proposal in each school and then expanding the roll out over the subsequent school year. It is the applicant's intention to not overwhelm the students with a radical change. This approach may have a positive impact and "buy-in" on the district-wide change as all schools within the district are listed as participating. Much of this section of the application as organized by the applicant is dedicated to professional development of teachers and administrators and fluid social learning groups. It is unclear what the direct impact of the professional development will have on student learning outcomes. All aspects of a high quality plan were not addressed in the narrative. The applicant lists activities in regards to the professional development of teachers. The applicant addresses the beginning of a timeline to pilot in 2014 and roll-out during the 2015-2016 school year but no further dates are given to support a thoughtful plan in regards to timeline. It is unclear how the applicant plans for the reform beyond the pilot year and the subsequent year and into the remaining years of the grant. 		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The narrative does not explain what the achievement gaps are; no specific explanation is provided therefore it is difficult to determine if gaps exist and if the plan will decrease the gap. The applicant says the African American male population performs poorer than other subgroups however the charts provided has conflicting data showing the Disabled subgroups performing lower than African American subgroup. The applicant has initiated a program called Marion County Men with provides mentoring to the African American male population however there is no description of how this mentoring will have a direct effect on student learning. While this subgroup is addressed in this section, the other 		

subgroups are not. A brief mention of ELL students is included in this section however this mention appears to have been included to form a scenario as ELL students are not described in any other narrative or included in the chart.

- The data is general and it is unclear how performance was determined within the core subjects, across the subjects, across the district.
- Graduation rates are not listed; the applicant lists several programs already in place within the district for students at risk or who have dropped out of high school.
- College enrollment data is not evident in the narrative therefore it is not clear if the plan is intended to impact the enrollment rate. It is difficult to determine if the applicant's goal is for students to enter and succeed in college.
- The applicant does not address all subgroups listed on the chart within the narrative.

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	10
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant does not provide a clear record of success in the past 4 years because as stated in the narrative this specific district has only one year of reliable measure of success data. The applicant explains that the district was comprised of other districts that were consolidated into one. The applicant provides random information or data about Marion School District 7 and Marion County 2 however this is the first mention of these districts within the application. It is unclear within the narrative to determine if the current district was providing the information as evidence of a clear track record as it is ambiguous data. • The applicant mentions providing interventions and additional support however no supporting evidence was given detailing what these programs will address or how it will improve student outcomes. Programs mentioned in other parts of the application include Successmaker, APEX and Khan Academy however the applicant does not explain if these are specifically for interventions or regular classroom instruction. • The 3% goal for students to score met or above level on specific exams is not sufficiently ambitious. This minor increase may not reflect students have made learning gains yet did not achieve met or above level. • High school graduation statistics are not provided in this section of the application however graduation information for one high school in the district is provided in section C1 of the application; CBHS is projected to have an on-time graduation rate of 95%; no other schools addressed therefor it is unclear if the other high schools are either not graduating students or not demonstrating an increases in graduation rates. • Student performance data is available to students, parents and teachers on Excel spreadsheets and meetings. The applicant mentions use of an online data warehouse called Enrich but provides no description of this. Furthermore, the applicant describes a barrier of access to internet by families at this time which is incompatible with using an online data warehouse. 		
(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 the district website provides a record of checks written, credit card bills, financial reports, vendors and monthly spending reports. The applicant further explains that these reports spell out non-personnel expenditures within the Spending Transparency tab. Screenshots of the website are provided in the appendix. • The applicant states that the district website provides a tab for The Human Resource department. This department provides teacher salary schedule. Screenshots of the district website are provided as evidence of teacher salaries in the appendix. • The applicant further explains within the narrative that administrative salaries and non-certified salaries are not posted. The applicant does not indicate future plans of making this information accessible. The applicant describes 12 different grades which affect the non-posted salaries and recommends contacting the Human Resources department. While contact the Human Resources department would seem a viable method in obtaining the information, the information required for this section of the application is lacking. 		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	2
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant was granted an ESEA flexibility waiver. The applicant describes the granting of this waiver as a means of being able to tailor instruction to its students through implementation of their plan. However, no evidence from the State was provided within the narrative or in the appendix. The relationship and/or conditions between the applicant and the state can therefore not be determined. • The applicant includes a letter of support from the the mayor however there was no indication within the application or the letter that the mayor was offered 10 business days to comment on the application. • The applicant has opted to not participate in the state teacher evaluation system. The applicant explains the district "will adhere to whatever teacher and principal evaluation system is devised, as they are currently doing". Although it would appear the district is operating with autonomy the word choice would indicate that there is no clear, determined evaluation system of specific, timely and measurable outcomes. The vagueness of this method does not demonstrate a clear impact on the student learning outcomes or the intended outcomes of this proposal . 		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	8
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant mentions that student support is very high however there is no indication of how this was measured. There is no evidence within the application or appendix such as student survey reports or student meetings/open house to demonstrate student support. • The applicant mentions forming committees to solicit parent and community leaders insights and opinions however there is no evidence of the activities of these committees were engaged in. There are no sign-in sheets or copies of meeting agendas within the application or the appendix. • The appendix has two letters of support; one letter from the mayor and one letter from a teacher. There are no letters of support from other key stakeholders. The support documents of only two individuals is not sufficient to demonstrate full support by the entire district (14 schools). Although 		

there is a letter of support from the mayor, there is no evidence provided to determine if the mayor was offered 10 days to comment on the application. It is unclear the extent of involvement the mayor had in the applicants plan.

- The applicant states that presently no local teacher union exists; there is no evidence to support the statement in the narrative that 97% of teachers support the proposal as required by the criteria in this section of the application. Supporting evidence such as copies of sign-in sheets or teacher feedback surveys are not provided within the application or the appendix.
- The applicant mentions developing the application with the School Improvement Council in section C1 of the application however the full extent of the involvement was not described. It is unclear if the plan was presented simply for approval or if input and feedback was elicited and used to drive the focus of the plan.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high quality plan is not evident as specific activities, timelines and deliverables are not described. • The applicant focus much of the narrative on resources and professional development for the teachers such as My Big Campus, SKYPE, Enrich, PD 360 and OnCourse. This description is better suited for section C2 which is Teaching and Learning. • The applicant describes 13 locations in this section of the application which contradicts the number of schools listed in previous sections of the application. Previously 14 schools were identified as participating therefore this discrepancy causes some confusion in regards to the total number of participating schools. • The applicant mentions their intention to use many programs such as SLICE however provides no additional information describing the program and how it will support this proposal. This is ambiguous information it does not explain how this will empower students in their learning. • The applicant mentions students in the subgroups however there is no mention of instruction, personalized programs or interventions for these subgroups. It is therefore not clear what approach to learning will apply to students within the subgroups. • The applicant mentions inadequate classroom libraries for students who read below grade level but lists that The Fountas and Pinnell leveled books are used for for students reading beyond grade level. This is contradicting. • While the applicant mentions the name Common Core State Standards, the applicant does not specifically address instruction, programs, remediation that support their proposal. It is unclear if the instruction will be tailored to the CCSS and if students learning will be linked to career and college. • The applicant mentions utilizing curriculum support specialists will serve as data coaches; it appears this will be in lieu of providing support with specific curriculum/content. It is unclear who will be providing support in regards to curriculum. • The applicant mentions students who are Gifted and Talent; no mention of this group has been evident in other areas of this application furthermore there was no description within the narrative of instruction or programs for these students. It is unclear if Gifted and Talented students are being introduced as a smaller subgroup within one of the subgroups and what instruction if any is being personalized for this group of students. 		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high quality plan is not evident. The narrative for this section focuses on teacher evaluation systems and effectiveness of teachers. The applicant briefly mentions a new evaluation system proposed by the state however no other information is given. The applicant goes on to explain that they do not want to stress teachers by adopting an evaluation system however describes a Goals Based Evaluation system. This system does not appear to have structure to support this proposal. It appears that teachers select any goals regardless of student achievement. It was not clear how this evaluation system is measured fairly from teacher to teacher by the school administrators. Towards the end of this section the applicant describes a measurement of effectiveness for teachers however it is not clear what evaluation tool was utilized. • The applicant describes a plan in a pilot stage for teacher effectiveness and refers to the evidence in the appendix; the evidence is not provided in the appendix. • The principal's evaluation system is not addressed. • The narrative language is very descriptive in terms of the barriers the applicant is facing with teacher evaluation systems however the applicant fails to address the criteria of this section of the application in regards to student achievement. • While there is mention of Professional Development, PLC, APEX Curriculum and access to graduate level course for teachers, the teaching and learning environment is not clear. The narrative does not provide instructional strategies, rigorous coursework, acceleration of students, remediation for non-proficient students as a result of the professional development of the teachers. • The applicant mentions this was reviewed by the state and refers to the appendix. The evidence is not provided in the appendix. 		

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:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant mentions ESOL students, family coordinators, and specialists in this section however this population has not been addressed in any other section of the application; it was not listed as a subgroup. It is unclear of this population of students existed within the district and if their learning was taken into consideration within this application. • The applicant lists contradicting information about passing HSAP not guaranteeing graduation but then providing HSAP preparation classes for graduation therefore the need for the courses can not be determined. • The applicant refers to a document as evidence of the evaluation system however it is not attached in the appendix or application therefore determination of the effectiveness or non effectiveness of the evaluation system can not be made. • Although the applicant states the schools have autonomy, the applicant states that the County Board sets the calendar, the superintendent makes 		

the choices of contracts for staff and budget are set by The Board of Education and Superintendent's office. This does not demonstrate clear autonomy.

- The applicant describes programs in place for credit recovery such as PUSH, Saturday School, Renaissance however there is insufficient evidence of the programs and their intentions towards credit recovery.

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

10

6

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant mentions various resources throughout the application that are available to students, parents and educators. Student resources include: Edmodo, SuccessMaker, Waterford Early Learning System, Khan Academy, Pearson, PowerSchool. Educator resources include SKYPE, Enrich, Excent, GIFT View and Explore Tests. Parent resources include a Parent Portal on the district website and a parent computer lab. The applicant describes barriers with access to internet to utilize the various software and other web-based applications such as . The applicant further describes plans for adding hot-spots at selected locations within the county and placing refurbished PC's at the library annex so that students and parents may have the access to technology that they require. The applicant plans to have volunteers available at the computer labs to provide support. A range of additional strategies was not provided therefore it is not clear if the computer labs are sufficient support.
- Students, parents and teachers are mentioned however other stakeholders are not mentioned. It is unclear if other stakeholders are involved in the applicant's plan and what their role is in this plan.
- The applicant lists PowerSchools as the source for open data format. This program is web-based and can be accessed via a link on the Parent Portal. It is unclear how the students have access to this source on their own.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application lacks a high quality plan; timelines, deliverables are not evident in the application in regards to providing timely and regular feedback. • The applicant describes employing a well-qualified Program Director who will be responsible for many facets that include supervising instructional technology coaches, filing documentation and "ensuring the spirit as well as the letter of Project REAL are realized." The director will also visit schools and conduct observations and attend monthly meetings with the Director of Student Service and the district grant writer. There are no clear timelines, goals or deliverable listed for this position if this position is intended to act as the responsible party of a high quality plan. • Posting information about the plan on a website is an unreliable means for publicly sharing information as the applicant has noted the lack of internet capabilities in various areas of the application as a barrier. This may hinder the applicant from providing timely and regular feedback. • The narrative eludes to collecting much data from surveys and self-monitoring, this data while valuable is not sufficient evidence to support the proposal as clear goals, deliverables and timelines may not be able to be developed from this type of data collection. • The applicant does not address how it will share information on the quality of the investment in professional development, technology and staff. It can not be determined if these groups of persons are receiving timely and regular feedback. 		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant plans to employ various avenues of communication that include newsletters, TV media, newspaper, auto dialer program, social media, SKYPE capabilities and Board meetings. The multiple methods of communication will ensure equal access to all stakeholders as the applicant has stated numerous times throughout the application that access to internet is a barrier. The other avenues of communication will ensure that communication can reach the intended persons regardless of their access to internet. • The applicant fails to include components of a high quality plan demonstrating timelines, deliverables and responsible parties. Although the applicant describes different types of meetings, the frequency and/or nature of the meetings is not clear. It can not be determined if these meetings adhere to specific goals and deliverables of the plan. Advisory Councils are listed in the narrative to serve as a liaison however no clear explanation is provided in regards to the duties and role of the council or the frequency of meetings. 		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant mentions using a plethora of tests such as Dominie, DIAL-3, EOC, MAP, PASS, SAT, HSAP but does not describe how performance will be measured utilizing these tools or what data collection the applicant intends to utilize these tools for. It is unclear if the purpose of all these tests were intended for purposes data collection for reform and to support this plan. • Subgroups are not addressed in the narrative or charts provided rather the applicant lists all participating students in the column for subgroup. This is contradictory as the applicant has mentioned ELL, African American males and Gifted/Talented subgroups in other sections of the application. Listing all participating students as a subgroup to not meet the required criteria of the application to list participating students by subgroups. • There is no evidence to support how the measure will provide the information as listed in the criteria of this application. • The applicant does not provide sufficient information to determine if the goals are both achievable and ambitious. • The applicant placed the charts for this section after a subsequent section. This may have been an oversight when organizing the document for submission. 		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:		

- The applicant mentions a three-tiered system for evaluation which are data gained from teachers and students, collection and analysis or survey results and performance assessment and evaluation. The applicants description of this system gathers much data from surveys and opinions. This type of data is insufficient evidence a high quality plan as it does not provide clear goals, timelines, or deliverables. The effectiveness of this three-tiered system can not be determined.
- There was no evidence of how RTT-D funded activities such as PD and technology will be evaluated. This oversight does not comply with the criteria for this section of the application.
- The applicant vaguely mentions a national company that evaluates grants however no further information is given with regards to what the company will evaluate and methods of that evaluation. As there are no goals, timelines or deliverables listen for this national company its effectiveness can not be determined. It is unclear if the national company which remains nameless in the application is a worthwhile investment for this plan.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides vague descriptions of other funding structures for this proposal and post award. The limited information does not provide a clear picture of how the award if funded will be utilized for the purposes of this particular plan. • The applicant does not include specific dollar amounts within the narrative rather mentions estimated amounts or amounts "slightly over a million dollars.". It is unclear if the applicant has properly sought out the resources and items and received a fair bid for the purchase and investment. • The application mentions again a national company for external evaluation; the name of this company is not disclosed in the narrative of the application nor the nature of its work and the cost for such work. It can not be determined of this investment is a worthwhile investment for the purposes of this plan. • The application focuses greatly on teachers and also funding personnel with little mention of students and how this will affect their learning. It is unclear if the funding will solely strengthen the teachers and personnel or the impact this will have on the student learning. The applicant further describes in Budget Subpart 4: Project-Level Narrative section that they have received advice from the State Superintendent of Education "that using grant funding to support personnel salaries was not good budgeting procedures". It is confusing why the applicant included this statement in the application therefore the extent to which the applicant attempted a thoughtful plan for budget can not be determined. • The applicant utilizes language within the application that eludes to not having lasting equipment available for the duration of the grant; it is not clear what the applicant intends to do once tablets, etc. require repairs and updates. • The applicant mentions additional funding from Title I. Relying solely on Title I and this award if funded may be an insufficient budget as the application intends to implement much technology which can be very expensive in regards to initial purchase and on-going maintenance of the technology. 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application lacks a high quality plan for sustainability. There are no clear goals, timelines or deliverables to support sustainability nor persons responsible. The applicant mentions "budgeting with an eye for the future" but specific details are provided on how this will be done. • There is no evidence of support other than plans for possibility utilizing Title I funds. This is also mentioned in section F1 of the application. The applicant mentions seeking additional sources from other grants, both private and public however no further evidence is provided to support. Sustainability can not be determined due to the applicants vagueness. • The application lacks evidence to support that the plan has support from State and local government. There is no evidence within the narrative or in the appendix. • There is no clear plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the investment or data to inform future investments. • There is no estimated budget for three years after the term of the grant. It can not be determined if the applicant can sustain the plan post-grant or if the plan will end prior to or at completion of the grant period. 		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant did not provide a narrative to address the Competitive Priority nor could this information be found in other sections of the application. The extent to which the applicant addresses the Competitive Priority can not be determined. • The applicant makes mention of working with an organization called Marion County Men in other sections of the application; it appears this relationship is already established and on-going. This program as described by the applicant is a mentoring program not specifically for academics. It appears this is the only source addressing social, emotional and family supports however the applicant describes that this organization works only with African American males. It can not be determined how other student groups will be supported. • Other partnerships cannot be identified from any other sections of the application in regards to student and family supports. It is unclear if the applicant has or will be able to augment the school's resources. • The applicant mentions having partnership with Francis Marion University and Darlington Technical College however there is no supporting evidence to demonstrate this partnership outside of the mention of it in the other sections of the application. • The applicant does not provide any information on early leaning or public health. 		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application is vague in several sections included but not limited to budget, sustainability and Competitive Preference Priority. • Specific details about the programs and plan for reform are not evident in the proposal. They are lacking in goals, timelines and deliverables. • The application places much emphasis on the teachers and their morale and little emphasis on student learning and student achievement despite advice from the State Superintendent. It is unclear then if the plan will provide personalized learning environments for the students. • The Common Core State Standards are mentioned in name but little evidence is provided to support the rigor that will be seen within the classrooms. As the instruction can not be determined from this applications there is no clear way to determine if this is aligned with college and career ready standards. • The application briefly mentions preparing students for college but a high quality plan was not evident; timelines, goals and deliverable were not addressed. • The application mentions students within subgroups but details about the instruction, remediation and acceleration of the subgroups are not explained in detail. Furthermore, there is contradicting information about which subgroups exist as the applicant mentions some subgroups and not other subgroups in the various sections of the application. Subgroups specifics were excluded from the charts provided. This confusing information does not then address the criteria and vision towards a personalized learning environment. • The information provided for graduation was inconclusive as only data for one school was provided. 		

Total	210	97
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0083SC-3 for Marion County School District

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 does not present any evidence that it builds on its work in the four 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.

They begin by outlining some of the history and demographics of their district: their county was part of an unsuccessful lawsuit conducted by several counties in the state of South Carolina to increase equitable funding for school districts. They also state that their county has the highest unemployment rate in the state, has experienced a mass migration of workers to more affluent states and counties, and has a poor track record on national and state-sponsored standardized testing. More than half of the working population of the county earns a family income of less than \$35,000 per year, with over a quarter of the population subsisting on less than \$15,000 per (Bureau, 2010). Further, the district has a free and reduced lunch rate of 95%; of the total student population, 51% are male and 49% are female; and 73% are African-American, 21% are Caucasian, and 2.4% are of Hispanic origin, leaving 1.6% of statistically negligible groups. This information strongly lays the groundwork for need; however, past performance on standardized testing indicates a demand to increase efforts to meet the four core educational assurance areas.

The applicant asserts that by infusing elements of technology-enhanced instruction, social media processes, individualized learning plans, and building upon a solid foundation of educator and student support in these elements, they will be able to provide students with the tools and instruction necessary to be prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. By familiarizing students with their individual learning goals and targets, students will develop self-regulation skills. Student goals and targets will be determined by benchmark testing, as well as standardized testing such as Dominion, Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS), High School Assessment Program (HSAP), and Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) testing, as well as by conferencing with both teachers and parents. The applicant does not define the standardized tests they will use or how they will conduct their conferences and thus does not present 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.

In describing what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments, the applicant notes they will provide relevant and necessary professional development in using the technology, assessment tools, standards-based lesson planning and instruction, collaboration, and differentiation needed to implement their vision. Instructional coaches who are well-versed in technology infusion as an education tool will assist in the creation of units and lessons that are rigorous and engaging for the students. The district plans to increase the Instructional Technology department to allow for more one-on-one meeting and planning and provide teachers with assistance and guidance in creation and implementation of lessons. The district will develop a cadre of highly qualified, dedicated educators who will make a commitment to the district and become

part of the process of creating a climate of success. By understanding how to infuse technology into the classroom in a manner designed to foster understanding and support critical thinking skills, teachers will be empowered to create realistic differentiation and individualized learning environments. While this is a positive approach to the classroom, the applicant states it intends to use technology to reach their rural families; however, they also state these families have limited or inconsistent access to the Internet.

In total, the applicant does not present a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that is based on its most recent experience of consolidating school districts into a county system. While the learning curve of consolidation is steep, the applicant does not present evidence of a good plan in place on how to make use of best practices in select schools and apply them district wide.

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

The applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal may not support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of their proposal. The applicant intends to select all students in all schools to participate in this grant but they do not specifically denote which of the eligibility requirements they meet. They intend to purchase tablets running on the new Windows 8 platform, with the Microsoft Office 2013 suite. With a 1:1 tablet initiative, as well as a commitment to implementing social learning groups, they want to be able to ensure students are on the path for college and career readiness, building a student body that is stakeholder-collaborative, globally-cooperative, internationally- interactive, and flexibly innovative. These tools will be a part of their **individualized learning plans**. Each student will be engaged in and utilizing programs that will help them achieve more success and to be able to proceed at an appropriate pace. Students will be able to work collaboratively or individually as needed to acquire necessary skills and then be able to take their work to a higher level of cognitive development, under the guidance of properly trained teachers serving as educational facilitators.

The applicant states that their plan intends to immerse the entire school district in an educational setting that uses the data from education research to benefit the educational opportunities for the students although they are not specific as to how that data will be accumulated and used.. They further provide a list of all the schools and their demographics. However, in one part of their application they noted 14 schools and programs, but the list of all the schools only contains 11 schools. This conflict remains unresolved.

The applicant strengthens this part of their application by noting the district's Free and Reduced Lunch rate is 82% and 54% of the county's families earn less than \$35,000 per year; however, they do not provide any evidence as to whether the annual income translates to a poverty level. South Carolina has adopted a letter grade method for school report cards under the ESEA waiver conditions. Of the nine district schools graded by the state, three received a grade of "F," five received a "C," and one received a "B." This translates into 33% percent of the schools in need of drastic intervention, plus an additional 55% in danger of failure. However, all three former districts received an "excellent" growth rating on the state report card, with one showing an excellent absolute rating. This solidifies the notion that the applicant meets the competition's eligibility requirements although the applicant does not provide any documentation of these factual statements.

In summary, the total number of participating students is 5184, the total number of participating students from low-income families is 4840, the total number of students who are high-need is 791, and the total number of educators is 328. Since the applicant is including every student and, despite the nuances of consolidating the district, the applicant appears to have a well thought out plan on how to proceed but without supporting evidence.

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

The applicant does not present 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 help the applicant reach its outcome goals.

They state that professional development in the Common Core State Standards is already underway, but they need to provide project-based learning and educators will need to continue and expand their professional learning communities and to share across the district. They provide no evidence as to the process for PD in the CCSS, nor do they provide a documentation of its level of success.

They plan to develop greater facility with technology products and learn to create rubrics and assessments that are targeted towards specific skills. They plan to recruit educators and administrators who are in agreement with these principles and by retaining those educators with valued professional growth opportunities, mentoring, peer support, and recognition, they will provide a foundation that will produce students of high quality and the ability to support themselves in college or the job market. It is unknown the percentage of education who do agree with their principles or provide a plan on how to retain and recruit.

They also plan to develop reflection tools that will allow teachers to be able to assess themselves as well as their development and must provide timely and relevant evaluation and feedback for teachers and administrators which allow a chance for growth and maturation. The professional development opportunities provided by the S2TEM Centers SC will target three main areas: infusion of technology into lessons to support instruction, creating project based lessons, units and assessments, and identifying and creating individualized learning plans for students based on individual learning styles and test data. However, the applicant does not provide any documentation of communication with the S2TEM Centers SC to support this claim.

There is little evidence of the applicant's commitment to LEA wide reform and change other than the statements they make in the application. Also, the size of the district and the number of teachers involved may prove to be a bit cumbersome to address the four core educational assurance areas given the genesis of the district. Of concern is the lack of a theory of change or logic model that would support the applicant's efforts which is a significant weakness to the application.

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

The applicant's vision is somewhat likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup.

The summative assessments being used for Elementary (grades 3-5) and Middle School (grades 6-8) are PASS ELA, PASS math, PASS science, and PASS social studies. High School uses High School Assessment Program (HSAP) – HSAP ELA and HSAP Math, End of Course Biology, and End of Course US History and Constitution. None of these summative assessments are further described in this application, so their validity and reliability are in question. They state the target values shown in the application are based on those established in South Carolina's ESEA Waiver, but do not provide an evidence to support this. Only two subgroups (female and White) met these targets in most of the tested areas.

The applicant's Project REAL is designed reduce achievement gaps by targeting individual weaknesses. This should provide an increase that will be seen

district-wide. It is clear that their subgroups will have to make more than the minimum gains in order to meet SC's stated minimum requirement for proficiency – Elementary 5 points, Middle 4 points, HSAP 3 points, and End of Course 1 point. Currently, the smallest gap they have is 8 points. This means that the smallest gap to reach the next level would be at least 12 points. These point gaps can be extremely difficult to overcome and it is marginally achievable from a statistical perspective.

In order to help reduce achievement gaps, the applicant has formed a group of male mentors who will meet with students to provide quality role models and work with male students to provide support, coaching, encouragement, and impetus to succeed in their educational goals and to plan for the future. It is unclear what the applicant intends to do in this vein with females or any other subgroup such as ELL, IEP, etc. With the inclusion of data based decision making into the district's policy, the **individualized learning plans** and **fluid learning groups** become extremely important. The applicant states that these plans can be tailored to meet each student's educational needs. These needs will be determined based on test results and teacher conferences; each student will be able to make decisions and receive the necessary support to close their *personal achievement gap*.

The applicant states they have already begun an ambitious plan to reduce the drop-out rate but do not state what the rate has been historically. The high schools have begun a credit recovery program that allows students who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out to return to school and graduate with a high school diploma. Additionally, the district has begun an aggressive campaign to increase the graduation rate. This plan begins in the middle school, where repeating 8th graders have the option to "PUSH" and receive two years' worth of credit in one year's time, allowing them to rejoin their peer groups in the high school. The district also provides Advanced Placement coursework and a dual-credit system. With AP classes, students are able to take exams that allow them to exempt college course through fulfillment of course requirements, enabling students to concentrate on new courses in college. The options provided in their plan should significantly reduce the dropout rate and are a strength of their plan; however they provide no evidence of success rate or even that these programs actually exist in their schools.

The applicant notes that many of their students will be first generation college students although they provide no evidence to support this. Therefore, college is not the natural progression after high school because graduating from high school is such a struggle. They intend to help parents and students understand that college (2 or 4 year) will help increase the students' chances of finding successful/stable careers. Students will also be to take advantage of college preparation tools and applications that are available online. Working in their college preparatory learning groups, students will be able to access SAT study workshops, take practice tests, and analyze their results to see in what areas they may need tutorials or some coaching. They will be able to create study groups in their communities and work as a support system for each other. They will be able to share this process with their families and friends and create a more positive environment for change in the attitude of the families about college attendance.

Although there are no colleges in the county, the applicant would like to start taking students on college visits beginning in 7th grade, helping them complete college applications, apply for FAFSA, and prepare for SAT/ACT. The district has received some grants to help promote this for this school year but provides no evidence of grant reception or success on promoting these topics. The applicant notes that Francis Marion University is only a half hour away in Florence County and Coastal Carolina University is only 45 minutes away in Horry County. Horry County also provides Horry-Georgetown Technical College as well as ITT Tech and Florence County hosts Florence-Darlington Technical College and Virginia College. There are other college presences in the county as well. Coker College offers its Alpha Program at the Academy for Careers and Technology and Winthrop University offers graduate classes at the district office.

Regarding postsecondary degree attainment, the high school guidance counselors work to collect data about student success in college. Each in-state college sends a report of an enrolled student's first semester progress, including GPA, to the student's high school. Additionally, information is tracked and gathered by the SC GEAR Up Regional Coordinator, who shares this data with the schools. Reports are being compiled to measure student success at completing a college degree. This program began three years ago; data should become available in one more year. Obviously, this program has little current impact; however it should prove to be successful in the future.

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	8

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not demonstrated a clear record of success in improving student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment because the Marion County School District is only one year old.

However, the applicant states the consolidation of three districts into one has several advantages. They were able to take an unbiased look at the policies and practices, as well as the test data, of the former Marion 1, 2, and 7 districts to see what was successful and what needed to be discarded. In revising policies and determining goals, the test data was the primary indicator of successful strategies, which follows the district focus of data driven decision making. Although the applicant does not provide Measure of Academic Progress RIT mean scores in their application, they noted minimal change for students in the former districts of Marion 1 and Marion 2 in the past three years but there was a steady increase for Marion 7. In examining HSAP and EOC course data, the same pattern (with slight variations) was followed for the high school students; however, once again the applicant does not present any evidence to support this.

In an attempt to raise student achievement, in 2011 the three districts, although still separate, began the process of uniting under one leadership team, with the implementation of professional learning communities, early interventions, and learning walks. As schools implemented these policies, test scores began to move upward. The applicant states that for HSAP scores, all students increased in Mathematics and in all high schools, except one, they also increased in the ELA scores. The one remaining high school stayed virtually the same. All schools saw an increase in the 8th grade PASS scores. The applicant realizes that one year is not a reliable measure of success. However, based on the trends indicated by the former Marion School District 7, they feel confident that they are progressing in the correct direction. The idea of uniting and analyzing data is a strength to this application; however, the applicant fails to provide any documentation about test scores or trend analysis.

Another factor to consider is that the Marion School District 7 began infusing technology into its curriculum five years ago. As the initial recipient of the "Laptop for Every Child" program in the State of South Carolina, every student at the elementary schools received an XO laptop, beginning in the 4K program - it is unclear to what 4k refers. Students became familiar and comfortable with technology at a very early age. Several years later the district initiated 1:1 laptops in the middle school and last year earned an E2T2 grant that updated PCs and laptops and introduced i-pad carts to the elementary and middle schools. Last year MAP testing was delivered completely online. Given this recent infusion of technology, it is questionable why this applicant requests more technology and also presents no evidence to support previous achievements of the E2T2 Grant or any documentation that these were successful.

The State of South Carolina has changed its delivery of graduation statistics, making comparison scores difficult, but one high school has seen an increase in graduating seniors from 78% to 87%. Data is not provided for any other high schools. The successful policies are now being employed in the other high schools in the district. An auxiliary benefit of increasing the technology presence in the school is the increase in student motivation to be in school. The applicant provides no data to support the graduation percentages or that the presence of technology increases student motivation to be in school.

Regarding achieving ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools, two years ago the schools in this district were seen as failing. On the 2010 State report card, both Marion School Districts 1 and 2 received Absolute Ratings of At-Risk, with growth ratings of Below Average. In Marion School District 7, however, the rating was Below Average with a Good growth rating. Administrators examined the data that they were receiving and took drastic action, based upon the results obtained from schools that did not experience this dip in scores. Students were given more individualized instruction, teachers planned differentiated lessons, and intervention teams were formed. Students received tutoring, and were pulled from non-content area classes to receive additional instruction and remediation. Test scores began to rise again, but the interventions continued, as teachers strove to continue to bring students to grade level, and worked with students "on the bubble" to help them make the step into proficiency. In 2012 the state of South Carolina received a waiver from the ESEA provisions, but by then one elementary school and one middle school had made Adequate Yearly Progress for 2 years in a row. By the 2012 issuance of the state report card, Marion School District 1 had risen to an Average absolute rating with Excellent growth, Marion School District 2 remained At Risk but also showed an Excellent growth rating, whereas Marion School District 7 had ascended to an Excellent absolute rating with Excellent growth. While the applicant makes some strong assertions, they once again provide no supporting education.

The applicant states they make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. The district seeks to achieve these goals by frequent interactions with the students and their families, by providing interventions and additional support as needed, and by providing high-quality instruction and resources. The schools begin the year with an Open House that all parents are encouraged to attend. A mailer is sent out over the summer with the Open House and registration dates, plus it is posted to the district website, the district Facebook page, and announced on local radio stations as a Public Service Announcement. The district also holds parent conferences three times a year, with an open door policy for parents to come in at their convenience to observe or meet with teachers. The parent conferences are held during the interim portion of the marking period, as opposed the end, while there is still time to turn around a problem situation before it is too late. If a student is in danger of failing, parents are notified by mail and by phone call so that they can be included in the process of turning that student around. Teachers meet by grade level and subject area to discuss student progress and to make plans to intervene while there is still time.

The applicant also subscribes to the "Alert Now" system, which enables the superintendent and principals to issue a pre-recorded "all call" contact parents directly with information and updates. This system is used to announce special events, school closings, communications about school news or activities, press releases, and notifications, but it is also used by some principals on a weekly basis to establish a system of communication with parents and to establish a sense of community.

Parents and students are encouraged to stay abreast of their academics. The district subscribes to a web-based data collection system called Power School. This program keeps track of lunch counts, attendance, grades and discipline reports. Teachers in grades 3-12 use Power School to issue report card grades, to take attendance, deliver the lunch count, and maintain contact logs with parents. Additionally, Power School has a Parent Portal, which allows parents to log in to the program and monitor their child's performance. Parents can track everything from test grades to making sure that their child attended school that day. The parent portal is posted right on the front page of the district website, and is also available as a cell phone application. The applicant still fails to provide data or evidence to support their statements and their emphasis on the use of a district website and Facebook page runs counter to its assertion that Internet access is not available in many areas.

The applicant attempts to ensure parents are properly informed, which is a strength to this application. However, overall the applicant has not met this criterion because it does not present the proper evidence to support most of this criterion.

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

The applicant has not demonstrated evidence of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration.

The applicant notes that as the process of consolidation first began to take place, personnel began to work on honest and open communication in all areas and that the district office makes extensive use of its website wherein anyone can access financial reports, vendors, and monthly spending reports. These reports also spell out how much was spent in actual non-personnel expenditures such as travel and supplies. However, the applicant does not specifically indicate that actual personnel salaries are available and it is unknown if the financial reports to which they refer contain this information. Further, the district's use of its website runs contrary to the rural nature wherein it proclaims a lack of Internet access.

They note that the salary scale for teachers is available but administrative salaries are not posted, nor are non-certified staff. Salary scales provide an outline of the parameters of possible salaries, but they are not definitive as to individual salaries of teachers.

While the applicant appears well intended to meet this criterion, because of the consolidation it will be some time before this is possible and they made no indication that administrative or non-certified staff salaries will be posted as part of their future plans, which is a weakness to their proposal.

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

The applicant has not specifically demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in their proposal. They address the fact that they are now a county school district that resulted from the consolidation of a number of districts within the county, that they adhere to all the mandates of ESEA through their state department of education, and that all schools are reviewed by the South Carolina Department of Education and are issued an annual report card. However they do not present evidence such as a letter from the SC Department of Education that they meet the tenants of this criteria; this is a weakness to this proposal.

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

The applicant has demonstrated minimal evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and little stakeholder support for the proposal. They include a description of how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal and, as appropriate, how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback; however they do not present any

minutes or other summary documents of any proceedings. This applicant does not have collective bargaining representation and does not present any information that, at a minimum, at least 70 percent of teachers from participating schools support the proposal.

The applicant states their pre-writing process included research and discussion groups, meetings, and consultations. The applicant met with students at both the high school and middle school levels to discuss their technology expectations as well as their educational goals. Committees were formed to solicit parent and community leaders' insights and opinions as to the proposal. The committees reported a high level of community support for the proposal. Collaborations and partnerships are being developed across the county to address the issues of unemployment rate, recruiting business opportunities, and improving the workforce's reputation. The overriding concern of the families involved in the discussions was the schools' ability to graduate students who would be able to find a job in tough economic times. Local government officials expressed anticipation of working in partnership to improve the future of Marion County residents, beginning with the college and career readiness skills of students and extending to the community. Meetings with the SC Work Ready committee have led to the integration of district goals in planning for the future. However, the applicant provides no evidence to support these statements.

The applicant states teacher surveys were done in anonymous fashion in order to assure confidentiality as well as honest answers and 97% of the teachers responded positively to the question of supporting the Race to the Top District proposal, but they provide no evidence to support this conclusion. Marion County School District does not have any official union affiliations.

The applicant presents only two letters of support, one from the Mayor of the City of Marion and one from the District's Science Teacher of the Year and does not address letters of support in this section or any other part of the application. Although the applicant mentions several colleges and universities to which their students have access, no letters of support are provided from them either.

The applicant's failure to provide supporting documentation for their efforts is a substantial weakness to this proposal.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant 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.

The applicant claims that Project REAL will support parents, students and educators in an approach to learning that engages and empowers all Marion County School District Learners by addressing these focus areas:

- Develop Professional Learning Communities
- Balanced Literacy
- Instructional Shifts that Support Common Core
- Data-Driven Decision Making

The district Professional Learning Communities will be made larger by utilizing the digital platform My Big Campus to learn about available resources. It is unclear what this digital platform is or how it will be used. They state that project REAL would eliminate the lack of availability to the online resources for teachers by allowing teachers access to devices and Internet access to provide individualized staff development.

The applicant notes a very high percentage of Marion County School District students read below grade level. The district has already implemented a Balanced Literacy Approach to English Language Arts and Reading. The technology would help strengthen the Balanced Literacy Initiative by providing leveled electronic reading material for students. Students need more access to material that is on their reading level and that they find interesting. With the shift to common core, their classroom libraries are lacking non-fiction, informational text pieces. Because of cost, the district struggles to provide the amount of reading material required to increase what students are reading. Project REAL will also provide devices with applications that can be used to help students build fluency. The lack of computers and the poor internet access make the use of certain programs the district has purchased to assist in student learning counterproductive. Implementation of this project will provide all students in the district with current technology and an upgraded network to take the burden out of the experience of the previously mentioned purchased software products and make the product useful. Again, the applicant provides no documentation support the number of students who read below grade level, the effects of a Balanced Literacy Approach, or the manner in which devices will help build fluency beyond the devices they already noted are used in their district.

The applicant facilitates data-driven decision making at the classroom level by enabling teachers to track individual student data using teacher snapshots which are Excel spreadsheets with student names, demographic (subgroup) information, and test scores (reading assessments, benchmarks, quarterly grades, and interim assessments (MAP), but provide no screen shots or any other evidence to support DDDM. Project REAL would provide more resources to help teachers create individualized learning plans for students based on student needs, but it is unclear how those resources would be more effective than those currently available.

The applicant states their plan has been developed and adjusted with advice from the School Improvement Councils. All groups have been included in the process, with the ultimate goal of creating a climate of academic success. By actively involving students and parents in the education process, by advising on test scores, student growth projections, and success on performance task assessments all will become a part of the process. A weakness to this application is that they provide no evidence to support the involvement of the School Improvement Councils such as minutes.

The applicant states that a critical part of their plan is the creation of individualized learning plans for every student, whether they are special needs, Gifted and Talented, college preparatory, or career-focused. Each student will take the VARK learning styles inventory to help teachers determine how best to tailor instruction. Teachers will carefully monitor student progress using such tools as DIAL, Dominic, PASS, MAP and HSAP testing, Excent, Enrich, and GIFT View but the applicant does not state what these specific tools are or how they will be used. Teachers are able to access test results through the research portal of the SC Department of Education website, plus the Department of Curriculum and Instruction helps provide disaggregated data for individual teacher tracking and student results. The State Education Department is also developing a data analysis program called SLICE that the district intends to access when it becomes available. However, the applicant does not address this SLICE program further. Also, specific subgroups are not addressed.

The applicant has determined that district curriculum specialists will serve as data coaches, guiding the teachers in reviewing results gleaned from standardized testing as well as benchmark testing and monthly writing prompts. They will also help teachers with creating lesson plans geared to meet

students' needs as a result of this analysis. The degree of expertise the district curriculum specialists have to serve in this capacity is not evident. The applicant notes teachers in the district have been receiving training in providing differentiated instruction, but provide no evidence. A weakness to this application is that information about how high-need students will be engaged and empowered in an age-appropriate manner is not presented.

The applicant notes they will provide rigorous application of college and career ready standards as outlined within the Common Core standards and supported by research. Teachers will focus upon the creation of project-based learning lessons that allow students to delve more deeply into concepts and skills, as well as develop new ways to demonstrate knowledge through formative assessments and actual projects. Students will create wikis, presentations, movies, blogs, digital media and digital texts, as well as mixed media presentations. The creation of the social learning groups will support peer mentoring. A parent and student training overview schedule is provided. While these are noble goals, it is unclear how the applicant will incorporate all of these into the curriculum, which is a weakness to this application.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	11
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not have a high quality plan for 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

The applicant states that core area teachers receive ongoing staff development during "club" time, but do not clarify who will deliver it. Decisions for professional development are made by analyzing student achievement gaps and areas of underperformance. It is unclear who would make the decisions about professional development or how the data would be gathered or analyzed. All core content areas will be areas of focus for all students. Teachers meet in professional learning groups to study literacy models and make informed decisions about curricula and assessments. Mathematics coaches are hired to help teachers develop better ways to teach and to measure success. ELA and mathematics teachers will focus on Common Core implementations and the thinking skills required to successfully attain these standards. Science teachers will focus on implementing new science standards. Social studies teachers will work with implementation of Document Based Questions to work on reading and Social Studies content training. The district has purchased APEX online curriculum software but does not address the purpose of the system or its utility.

The district intends to partner with a minimum of two outside groups to provide high quality professional development, but it is unclear what these groups are or what is considered high quality professional development. These development plans include:

- Facilitation of new learning:
 - Teachers will receive instruction and coaching on the new technologies, implementation of Common Core standards, and assessments
 - Training in quantifying 21st century learning skills and developing strategies to teach these skills
 - Aid in creating and revising lesson plans to reflect collaboration skills, teamwork, and individualized learning plans
 - Technology integration in classroom instruction, especially as concerned with group work and project based learning
- Support, Observation, and Feedback:
 - Working with the school leadership teams to establish benchmarks from which to plan and implement professional development
 - Assistance in formulating plans to launch individualized learning plans
 - Teacher assistance in creating and implementing individualized learning plans
 - Training and support in implementation and assessment of Common Core and the new South Carolina Science standards
 - Research and data tracking tools to ensure success
 - Training and monitoring of coaching in new tools and strategies
 - Training of school-based coaches to ensure sustainability
 - Reflection and assessment tools

The applicant notes that accountability still has a major role to play in the implementation of new strategies and methods. Teachers will need to receive reliable and valid evaluations of their methods and results. The district believes that a system of ongoing evaluation and support is necessary for teachers to be able to achieve as well. The district supports mentors for new teachers and a graduated system of evaluation that leads new teachers into higher standards of accountability while factoring in inexperience or mishaps. The State of South Carolina has proposed a new teacher evaluation system under the ESEA flexibility waiver request; this new system will provide not only school districts, but also teachers, with a letter grade to report proficiency.

Provisions must be made for non-content area teachers, who play a valuable role in not only teaching their special content areas, but work collaboratively with other teachers to enhance core areas and provide support and supplemental instruction. The proposed plan, in the pilot stage right now, calls for five levels of teacher effectiveness. The weighting system is comprised of 50% teacher observations, 30% for student individual growth, 10% for school growth, and 10% for community growth. The applicant currently employs the evaluation system currently described by the South Carolina Department of Education and will use the new system that is adopted. However the applicant does not specifically denote what that new teacher evaluation system is or even if it knows the name of the proposed system, which is a weakness to this application.

The applicant has determined that a high teacher effectiveness rate can be determined by calculating if their students score 80% or better on standardized tests of achievement of education standards. This includes the PASS test for grades 3-8, and HSAP and End of Course testing for high school students, none of which are further defined. It is the goal of the district, after implementation of teacher goals and development opportunities, to increase that score to 85% to achieve highly effective teacher status and 80% for effective teachers. Teachers will receive guidance and support in achieving these goals through professional development, online classes, peer mentoring, and meetings within their professional learning communities and with administration. Although not part of the official state evaluation plan, it is part of the district program to support and mentor their teachers. This program has been developed with the goals of producing highly effective teachers and retaining these teachers. It appears this approach is in direct contravention to the state sponsored teacher evaluation system. Another weakness to this application is that it is unclear how implementing these goals will help retain teachers.

Overall, the applicant has formulated a plan to address student needs and the demands for high quality and effective instruction, but it is not supported by any evidence such as a letter of review by the state.

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 has a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

The applicant claims the newly formed Marion County School District office is centralized and well-organized. Each facet of the structure of the school system is managed by one of six directors - Instruction, Special Services, Human Resources, Finance, Technology and Operations - who report to the Superintendent. The Directors, Coordinators, and Superintendents meet once a month for a Cabinet meeting. In these meetings, the directors share updates on their respective departments, and the entire group brainstorms to try to solve any problems. At a second time in the month, the cabinet also meets with the school principals for a Leadership Team meeting. It is unclear what the purpose of this meeting is and no sample agenda is provided.

Although the applicant does not address school leadership teams, they claim individual school schedules are implemented by the principals and guidance counselors. The principals interview and recommend for hiring of school staff, both certified and non-certified. The principals observe and evaluate all positions in their schools, from the teachers to the custodians. Based on these observations and evaluations, the superintendent makes the choice of renewing the contract for that individual. Although they are guided by the district evaluation forms, principals have sufficient autonomy to determine the level of competency of the staff that works in their schools. Principals create the budget for their buildings, managing funds set aside for their school by the Board of Education and the Superintendent's Office. Working with the Director of Finance, principals create and maintain the allocated funds, operating within state and federal guidelines.

The applicant states that one of its priorities is increasing the graduation rate and keeping students in school. In order to facilitate this process, the district has created create recovery programs, including Saturday School and the PUSH program, which allow retained eighth graders, to try to manage two years of schooling in one year and catch back up to their peers by 10th grade. The district also has an Adult Education Center, which helps recent drop-outs recover their credit and take courses that allow them to graduate with a high school diploma instead of a GED certificate. The district has expanded opportunities to take dual-credit classes, where a student receives both high school and college credit for certain classes, and has instituted a Personal Financial Literacy program through Discover Card and Acellus that also allows online access to the International Academy of Science's online science modules. They also have the Renaissance Academy, which allows students who have been expelled or who have attendance problems to attend after school credit and content recovery programs, on a flexible schedule, in order to forestall dropping out or giving up on the part of the students. The applicant does not present evidence of opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery and no evidence to support the existence of any of these programs.

The applicant's notes their schools have supported differentiated instruction since 2004. Teachers have received professional development in differentiating instruction and assessments and are expected to implement it in their classrooms. Teachers use standard unit tests, group projects, individual projects, multi-media presentations, oral reports and classroom observations to ascertain the mastery of standards. Students are made aware of the standards as they are being taught as well as when they are assessed. Evidence of the use of DI is lacking.

The applicant's schools maintain ESOL family coordinators to expedite communication with the families of our ESOL students, in addition to ESOL specialists who work with the students. The applicant has not presented evidence of having ESL students in this application. The Department of Special Services contains three school psychologists, as well as two counselors. Support staff includes a transition specialist, a low incidence specialist, and a truancy officer who also serves as a community liaison. The applicant does not state if this is a sufficient number of people to address these specialized areas.

In sum, the applicant has some practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning; however, there are weaknesses to this application in that they provide no supporting documentation or evidence.

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

10

6

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

The applicant makes note of the rural nature of their district and the low average income. Both combine to make Internet access difficult physically and financially. Investigation into the possibility of setting up sites of internet access for the more remote parts of the county proved that the cost was too high and certainly not sustainable. So the district chose instead to concentrate on what it could reasonably provide and maintain. As the desktops are upgraded within the schools, the replaced units will be placed in locations throughout the district to be used in parent education classes and maintained by the district. A secondary source of parent/community outreach lies in the district's afterschool programs. The Marion County Council applied for and received grant funding to provide wi-fi hotspots at selected locations in the county. While it is not enough for providing the necessary Internet access, it is an important first step in creating a more digitally-connected community. However, the applicant provides no evident to support the grant for which the Marion County Council applied or that the parent education classes or afterschool programs are effective.

The applicant also participates in the Power School data management system. A link to the Parent Portal appears on the home page of the district website. Parents with Internet access are able to access and view their children's school records securely. Many parents are at work during school hours and cannot visit the schools at the time that they are in session. By providing teacher email addresses and the Parent Portal, concerned parents can access their student's information at a time of their convenience and carry on electronic conversations with the teachers as their availability allows. Access to this data management system is limited by the stakeholder's ability to access the Internet.

In addition to the Power School program that manages student data from attendance records to report cards, the district also purchased software that manages Human Resource applications. Using this system, the district office is able to maintain staff data on everything from paychecks to certification status. This software was designed to be compatible with Power School; however work continues to improve compatibility. It is unclear what this software is or its utility to the stakeholders.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8

Available

Score

15

8

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not have a high quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant that lack timelines and

deliverables.

The applicant intends to employ a well-qualified Program Director who will be responsible for many facets of the grant, including supervising the Instructional Technology coaches and filing documentation, and for ensuring that the spirit as well as the letter of Project REAL are realized. The director will be visiting schools and conducting observations, as well as meeting monthly with the Director of Student Services and the district grant writer. The director will attend all monthly data conferences and work with Curriculum and Instruction in reviewing of goals and progress. If and when adjustments need to be made, based on what is discovered during the data analysis of all tests (benchmark, standardized, and formative assessments created by teachers), evaluations of inservice professional development, feedback from teachers and the Technology department about equipment, personnel evaluations and GBE goals (this is not further defined), the program director will be included in planning to re-create or adjust instructional practices, testing procedures and assessments. The applicant does not present what the actual qualifications for the Program Director will be or the process by which they will be hired.

The district will also be examining graduation rates, conducting graduation audits, receiving reports from various departments, and soliciting feedback from teachers, students, parents and the community. One method employed by the Superintendent to increase community communication and partnerships is the Superintendent's Advisory Councils. These six councils (Business/Industry, Faith-based, Principals, Teachers, Parents and Student) serve as a liaison between the school district and the community; however, the applicant provides no letters of support from these councils to bolster their application.

The monitoring process will begin at the Professional Learning Community level. As teachers meet in their communities, they will compare observations, review assessment data, and evaluate the effectiveness of their assessment rubrics. They will be coached and guided in this process through professional development led by the S2TEM Centers SC; a process that will continue under the Instructional Technology coaches and mentors. These discussions will take place with, and be reported to, the department chairs, curriculum coaches, instructional technology coaches and building principals. Building principals will meet with coaches, the Program Director and the Director of Instruction to evaluate and make plans for adjustments as necessary. These reports will be monitored by the Program Director, who will report to the District Leadership Team.

There will be a continuous data collection system in place which will include, but will not be limited to, student response to surveys relating to the efficacy of instruction, student self-monitoring reports, and student blogs about the process as they experience it. Other data to be collected include standardized test scores, percentages of students applying to four year colleges, percentages of students applying to technical schools, and employment rates at one and two year intervals out of high school for non-college applicants. Community surveys of local businesses, the Economic Development Council, and parents will help track community perception of the effectiveness of the grant's goals, and impact upon the social and economic climates of these communities. Teacher qualitative data will be researched as well. Teacher surveys will question the impact of the learning groups upon teacher instruction and comfort level. Educators will be provided with test data to compare to the previous instructional practice's data. It is unclear what the content of the surveys will be or their value to the monitoring process.

Arrangements have been negotiated with BCBS, a national company that provides unbiased critique and comments. This company will measure the success of measurement tools, the level of quality provided by outside vendors, and the effectiveness of the goals and objectives in meeting the proposal's stated objectives. They will evaluate the efforts of the coaching staff, the inservice providers and the administrators in bringing results down to the school level and in terms of student impact. The applicant provides no evidence of any negotiated agreement or the qualifications of BCBS to function in this capacity.

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

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not presented a high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Although they mention the six Advisory Councils which serve as liaisons between the schools, the district office, and the communities, they never state when they will meet or what their specific functions would be or provide any letters of support from these councils.

The district states they also try to provide communication with the community at large. Board meetings, including agendas and minutes from previous meetings, are posted on the school webpage. The local media is alerted to meetings and provided with a copy of the agenda. The district publishes a newsmagazine, *The Beacon*, that is available at the district office, emailed to board members and community leaders, and published on the district website as well. The district maintains an active line of communication with all local media, and has established a good working relationship with them. The local newspaper publishes a monthly column by the Superintendent and also articles pertaining to the schools that are submitted by the district's PR Coordinator. The problem with this plan is that the applicant has already noted poor Internet communication so it is unclear how beneficial these efforts would be.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not demonstrate ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures.

Although the applicant states it has valuable performance measures in place, there will need to be some adjustments made in order to apply these measures to college and career readiness standards. South Carolina has chosen to join the Smarter Balanced consortium for testing of the Common Core standards in ELA and Math. The district piloted the elementary school assessments last year and a complete switch will occur in 2015. For Science and Social Studies, the state administers the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) and High School Assessment Program (HSAP) testing. These are the accountability measures reported in the state report card and are given each spring.

The district uses a number of assessment tools to determine student progress and attainment of standards at all levels. Each student is aware of their score goal on the tests and the strategies to be utilized to attain it although the applicant does not state how this occurs. Parents are included in the process during interim conferences and parent conferences, but the applicant provides no data to support the degree of participation in these conferences. Data walls help teachers and administrators chart student progress and help identify not only struggling students, but "on the bubble" students and students who achieve their goals but it is unclear how these are utilized or even what a data wall is.

Data is collected for the state report card on the results of the PASS, HSAP, EOC, and SAT exams. Since these are the state indicators of academic progress and success, the district uses this data from the required tests as a baseline for comparison to similar districts and as a benchmark for charting improvement and trends, and as an evaluation resource for effective teaching.

The district also provides opportunities for advanced work through the Advanced Placement courses and dual credit opportunities, wherein students take actual college courses while at school and receive both high school and college credit, but presents no articulation agreements to support this statement.

The Physical Education instructors provide health and nutritional support, as well as exercise. They administer a program called FitnessGram, which allows students to track the changes caused by better nutrition and an exercise routine. Student involvement with making good choices is encouraged at all levels. School nurses conduct mass screenings for vision, hearing, dental, blood pressure and Body Mass Index on a regular schedule. The applicant states these

screenings are recommended as priority screenings in SC, but provide no supporting documentation. The school nurses also work with families to promote better health through exercise and nutrition. They also track immunizations, and the middle schools are now offering teen pregnancy prevention programs. Schools sponsor health fairs and Family Fitness nights.

The applicant has three psychologists and three counselors within the Department of Special Services. Students can avail themselves of these services through the local guidance counselor or a teacher may request a screening for a particular student. The Department of Special Services works with the Department of Social Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice to provide service and support for students and families. MOUs with these departments are not provided.

The applicant claims it tracks longitudinal data, individual student progress, and test results to ensure the best possible education for every student. Counseling services, credit recovery programs, and after school and Saturday tutoring programs are all available. A comprehensive portrait of each and every student's progress is compiled every year, with services available to meet the needs of every student in the district. The applicant does not define how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

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

The district plans to use a three-tiered system for evaluation. The first and broadest level is the data gained from teachers and students. Student surveys will be conducted once a marking period; in these surveys students will rate the value of the instruction to their education goals as well as their perception of their own performance. Teachers will be surveyed to gather information on their perceptions of worth and to measure student performance as reported on the report cards. The analysis of student performance will be reported to teachers on a regular basis. School level administrators will also report on the perceived value and results of this instructional method. Students will provide their opinions on the quality of project based lessons and also the effectiveness of the technology being used, both in terms of user-friendliness and application to real life circumstances. Teachers will report on these conditions as well, but furthermore evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development provided within and without the district. This will include the contracted professional development as well as conferences and conventions attended. Since surveys are not necessarily valid and reliable and the applicant presents no samples of the types of surveys to be used, the value of this approach is questionable.

The second tier requires the collection and analysis of survey results and performance assessment results. At the district office level, members of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction will meet with coaches, curriculum specialists, the Program Director, and the deputy superintendent in order to scrutinize the survey and test results. Using the data driven decision making model already in place, these people will look for trends, seek areas of improvement, and report to the superintendent on the impact of this education strategy. They will be seeking replicable results, strong upward trends, and parent feedback as well as considering such factors as attendance rates and on-time graduation figures. How parent feedback will be obtained is not addressed.

A third tier of evaluation will be performed by a national company that specializes in grant evaluation. They will monitor the performance of the equipment, the strategies employed by both in-service professionals and coaching staff, and the validity of the conclusions reached by administrators. These findings will be provided to the administrators to help guide adjustments and to refine practices for better results. These finding will also be published for community view as a report and included in the district's Annual Report to the People. These findings will also be provided to the grant funding source as part of the Program Manager's reports. It is unclear what this national company is and no evidence of their veracity is presented.

The district also intends to provide results and strategies to other districts through professional papers and conference presentations. They will share data with their education partners in order to elevate the level of student achievement across the country. Throughout all of this, the applicant does not present specific timelines or deliverables.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's budget, including the budget narrative and tables identifies all funds that will support the project, is somewhat reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal, and provides some thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities.

The district intends to spend the majority of the funds requested on providing teachers with a tablet powered by the Windows 8 Operating System with the Office 2013 suite, the Microsoft Surface with integrated keyboard cover. I-pads will be used for grades 5K-2 - it is unclear to what 5K refers and the applicant earlier referred to 4K. Money is budget for the tablet devices. Additional money is requested to provide PC support for managing and syncing the devices, as well as for backup for students who are awaiting a tablet, such as new students and students who have damaged their equipment. The technology infrastructure of the district must also be upgraded to support the simultaneous use of so many devices and the upgrades will include wiring and wireless access points. Since the applicant has recently upgraded technology, it is unclear to what degree this plan will benefit teachers and students.

The applicant states the majority of funding will come from an awarded Race to the Top-District grant. Additional funds will be allocated through Title 1 funding under the Marion County Board of Education's plan for technology upgrades. The RTTT-D grant will provide the funds to purchase the tablets and pay for upgrading the current infrastructure of the school's technology to support the wireless use of so many tablets simultaneously. Clearly, no local monies will be committed to this part of the project.

Another provision from the grant will be for certified staff professional development to acquire the knowledge and skills to successfully integrate this technology into the personalized learning plans within fluid learning groups theory; which is not explained further. Some of the professional development in this area will come from funds already set aside for Common Core professional development by the district. They will also hire an outside evaluator to judge the effectiveness of the professional development.

They intend to replace outdated internet cables in a majority of the buildings in the district, to install wireless access points in all classrooms, and to install necessary switches and equipment where needed. Purchasing new servers to maintain this network and provide additional storage is also necessary.

Much of the funding requested for this project will be one-time expenses: \$8,926,943 for equipment, \$2,968,550 for structural upgrades to support the

equipment, and installation of these upgrades will cost \$197,500. Professional development courses will be one-time expenses. As technology needs to be replaced, money will be allocated from ESEA Title 1 funds.

Budgeting for travel and national conferences is included in the proposal to ensure that they are able to share the data and conclusions with educators across the nation.

The final budget item is external auditing of processes and evaluation of the program for effectiveness.

While the applicant clearly outlines budgetary line items, it appears their sole investment will be from another government sponsored program in Title 1. They do not denote any other local support in terms of funds or in kind support.

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

The applicant does not have a high quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The plan does not include support from State and local government leaders, but they do indicate district financial support, the use of Title monies, and a description of how they will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments.

The applicant believes that although equipment will fail and eventually become obsolete, the principles and strategies utilized in the proposal will remain timeless. That by training internal staff to serve as technology coaches and mentors, the district will eliminate the need to continue to purchase outside professional development. With a goal of maintaining Instructional Technology department staff and technicians, the applicant plans to incorporate funding in future budgets.

The district plans on seeking additional sources of funding from other grants, both private and public, and to work with Microsoft as Beta testers for new software. The district employs a grant writer who will continue to seek additional sources of funding to maintain the equipment and supplies, and professional development will be handled in the future by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

The final budget item was noted to be external auditing of processes and evaluation of the program for effectiveness.

The State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Mick Zais, commented that using grant funding to support personnel salaries was not good budgeting procedures. While the applicant agrees, they feel they have no other recourse since they could find no other way to fund positions. However, as the grant cycles through, plans are made to consolidate positions by attrition and by training current personnel to take over jobs as necessary. The applicant presents no evidence to support Dr. Zais' comments.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not address the competitive preference priority.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not coherently and comprehensively addressed 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.

Total	210	103
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