



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0190AL-2 for Montgomery Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

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

MPS thoroughly describes a comprehensive and coherent vision for reform through their Equity and Excellence in Education (E3) program designed to close the achievement gap between high and low performing schools in the district. The applicant provides exhaustive evidence of how the E3 program will build on the core educational assurances and align to the absolute priority:

- Alabama College and Career Initiative
- Teacher incentive program in low-performing schools
- State of Alabama's Plan 2020 to increase college and career readiness and related metrics
- Comprehensive data management system
- CompassLearning Odyssey personal learning software system
- Teachscape

The approach is certainly credible and holistic, rooted in a student-centric and responsive philosophy to support the highest needs students and communities. Strategies to address violence prevention, using Response to Intervention to intervene with struggling teachers, intensive blended professional development for educators, training teacher leaders as mentors and peer observers, Saturday academies, providing wireless internet to low income communities, are all examples of their clear vision for reform in MPS.

With a solid infrastructure for reform from their previous investments, the student experience has the potential to be transformed and individualized through their clear alignment to the core assurances and innovative ideas, some of which are listed above.

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

The applicant's approach is strong, based on their focus on the 17 lowest performing schools (PreK-12) in the school district. MPS meets the eligibility requirements and provided documentation to support this criteria, while providing context of the participating students and educators within the entire MPS. 13,045 students will be targeted in these schools, which all have a free/reduced lunch rate above 77%. There is a lack of evidence of how this approach to implementation will be differentiated based on the different grade levels, as the approach will be directed across the entire continuum.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
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#### (A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

There is a clear analysis of how MPS will leverage investments to impact all schools, by inclusion of educators in large-scale professional development activities, curricular alignment and resources developed by teacher leaders, evaluation that includes student outcomes, access to wireless internet and data management systems, and benefits from the violence prevention program. In addition to leveraging RTT funds, the applicant expresses their commitment to seeking additional funding to expand other initiatives, such as teacher leaders, mobile devices, and Saturday academies, to district-wide implementation by 2015-2016. MPS delivers a theory of change that is ambitious and specifies key activities and deliverables that are achievable in their high quality plan. There is a small amount of inconsistency in the plan's writing, such as stating the four fundamental elements to district transformation and then stating five.

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

The vision is well defined by strategies such as Saturday academies, student incentives, project-based learning, and extensive professional development for educators. There is however a less coherent connection between these strategies and how the personalized learning environment will be differentiated by grade levels to realize their relatively ambitious goals in decreasing achievement gaps. The applicant proposes to decrease the gap in graduation rates between subgroups by 10%, and almost closing the gap entirely on the Alabama High School Graduation exam in Reading and Math and College and Career readiness indicators for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. PreK-2<sup>nd</sup> grade students and 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students were excluded from the performance measures, which contributes to the limited understanding of how equity and excellence will be achieved for all students in participating schools. Some of the charts provided by MPS for grade levels were confusing, and lacked clear rationales which further diminished the overall goals for improving student outcomes.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	15	5
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
MPS provides a snapshot of success at 1 school based on performance of low income students, but fails to provide the detail necessary to understand their track record in performance measures over the last four years across the district. Consistent with their discussion about their vision that describes pockets of excellence, it is unclear what 5 years of national accreditation by AdvancED means in relationship to the track record. In addition the fact that 9 students from the district were National Achievement Semifinalists, does not describe improvement over time. Commitment to the core assurances continues to be evident around strategies employed to incentivize teachers to work at one of the lowest performing schools being restructured. While some of the strategies are promising for addressing turnaround schools, there is no other related evidence to determine how ambitious these efforts have been beyond the one school mentioned. State and district level data systems are in place to provide access to all stakeholders and to inform some decision-making.		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	5	3
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
The applicant justifies their stated pledge to transparency through making financial data available publicly on the MPS website, and allowing for public participation in budget hearings and then posting minutes. The district is required to submit information to the Civil Rights Data Collection biannually, and annually to the National Education Center for Statistics. An appendix item that supposedly provides supporting evidence of this was referenced in the narrative, but was not actually included with the proposal. Based on the evidence put forth by the applicant, transparency is a compliance effort to meet requirements of the state of Alabama, rather than an intentional effort to inform the public of processes, practices, and investments.		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	10	7
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
In June 2013, the state of Alabama was granted a waiver from a portion of NCLB from the U.S. Department of Education which allows the State to transition from NCLB to a state developed program called Plan 2020. Plan 2020 confirms successful conditions to implement the proposal and will further efforts around Alabama College and Career Ready standards which are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. This new accountability system is focused on teacher quality: teacher preparation, teacher recruitment and incentives, new teacher induction and mentoring, teacher evaluation tied to student growth, and research-based professional development based on individual growth plans. While the priorities of the Plan 2020 are aligned with the core assurances, there is a lack of specific detail about how this plan will impact flexibility and accountability at the district level.		
The Alabama State Superintendent publicly stated support for innovation to meet diverse learning needs to close achievement gaps, but no related policies beyond Plan 2020 and the adoption of standards is evident. Two districts in Alabama have implemented 1:1 laptop initiatives supported by the State with positive results for student achievement, which demonstrates a move towards using technology to drive personalized learning. There is significant evidence of State level officials support for the proposal, which suggests sufficient autonomy to implement the activities to be supported by		

RTT funds.

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

MPS created an RTT Planning and Advisory Committee that includes students, teachers, district administrators, community leaders, University personnel, and E3 program team evaluators. They initially met in May 2012, but it is unclear how meaningful engagement was sustained and feedback incorporated in the time since, although there is a recognition that the committee is still planning to support full implementation by August 2014. A dedicated email address was established to encourage feedback from August 2012 – August 2013, and positive feedback emails were included in support of the application from educators. The district sought Union support despite being a Right to Work State, and letters of support were included. Additional letters of support were included from educators and the local education association, legislators, higher education, and Chamber of Commerce.

A district-wide survey was conducted and general support was given for some of the activities or vision for the proposal. Most notably, insufficient parental involvement was ranked as the number one issue for 34% of survey respondents (the most popular challenge cited), alongside 63% of respondents citing parental awareness training to support the social and emotional wellbeing of students as being the most important need. Parents were not engaged in the creation of this proposal, and are not represented in surveys, committees, and letters of support or other evidence. This could prove problematic given the needs expressed by educators, the limited vision to support parental involvement in the proposal, and the clear lack of engagement of parents in the development of the activities and vision for increasing equity.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>

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

The applicant has already moved in the direction of upgrading the technological infrastructure to support personalized learning environments, and has developed a plan to expand capabilities. Two key initiatives are at the heart of the plan to deepen the academic opportunities through the Odyssey learning management system and project-based learning. Relevant investments in software, increased bandwidth and internet access, mobile devices, and teacher leader teams will enhance their capacity to provide personalized learning experiences that support mastery of content aligned to standards and skills to be college and career ready. Students will be trained in the learning management system, and will have access to a variety of content-rich activities and modalities of instruction that further deepens the potential impact of the new approaches to learning and teaching.

In addition to increased access to an online learning platform and project-based activities, students will have additional opportunities for remediation and acceleration through Saturday academies. MPS does not provide a clear plan for how students will be referred to these academies and how they will be structured to support individual learning needs. On the other hand, the purpose of student incentives based on academic growth is justified, and a detailed plan for their implementation is provided.

Important to note is an inconsistency in the number of mobile devices to be purchased and number of schools to be targeted. In this section it states that 15 schools will be supported with these devices whereas the plan for participating schools in previous sections is for 17 schools.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The key components of the plan to support teaching and leading in MPS are appropriate and relate to the development and implementation of new evaluation systems based on multiple measures and teacher leader teams by grade (K-5) and subject area (6-12). While a Project Director will oversee the teams work to develop project-based resource library, training in the online Odyssey learning system, and modeling personalized learning environments, it is less clear what the timeframe and application of this work will be for the benefit of participating educators. The overall plan for bringing professional development efforts to scale is less coherent and not supported by ambitious outcomes and rigorous timelines. The applicant's qualitative description of professional development outcomes, such as "teachers who are

competent and confident in their abilities to facilitate personal learning environments" diminishes the credibility of the plan without a lack of quantitative focused deliverables. The failure to provide a comprehensive timeline beyond the first year of implementation further weakens the overall plan.

Throughout the proposal there is significant emphasis on prescriptive professional development, yet the purpose for the prescription remains unclear. Integrated data management systems and accompanying dashboard are presented as a way to monitor student outcomes and address teacher development needs. The absence of detail about who will lead professional development or what the expectation will be for teachers to access blended opportunities like Teachscape, is important and relates to a measure in the teacher evaluation system. The use of quarterly surveys of teacher leaders to assess program implementation is a strong strategy to monitoring progress. Unsupported goals for professional development leave questions about how this proposal will support teachers who are transformed into facilitators of personalized learning capable of meeting diverse learner needs.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	15	7
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
MPS describes support for policies that provide authority for decision-making for school leadership teams and flexibility for students to progress based on mastery rather than seat time. This will be a clear shift for the district from a more traditional execution of curriculum and instruction to a more personalized learning environment. There is weakness here in the absence of a high quality plan of how and when these policies will be implemented. This creates an ambiguous picture of whether existing infrastructures will be leveraged appropriately by policy. Central office oversight structure will be in place to help monitor proposal activities.		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>		
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>	10	7
In order to ensure access to relevant data to student learning outcomes, MPS proposes that they will undertake an ambitious effort to integrate their various data systems to become interoperable. This may be an unrealistic goal in the four month time frame in the plan, and it is unclear what the end user experience will be for the various stakeholders. The expansion of bandwidth, proliferation of mobile devices, and establishment of community internet hotspots will serve goals directed at increasing equity through access and personalized learning recommendations. Human technical support will be provided during the school day, and virtual support will be provided outside school hours. The Project Director has a seemingly unrealistic amount of responsibility based on the plan for inputting data and overseeing the project which weakens the overall infrastructure design.		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	15	6
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
The applicant presents a plan that identifies a comprehensive list of more than 30 areas to be measured, as well as an accompanying commitment to share the results publicly and for the purposes of soliciting feedback on the initiatives. There is a wide variety of measures presented and appears unfocused on gathering data that will truly align to improving teacher practice and increasing student achievement. Conspicuously, there is a lack of reference to educator effectiveness data related to the implementation of new evaluation systems. This area of the plan is also less focused on monitoring the closing of achievement gaps and whether the needs of diverse learners are being met. Emphasis on measures that relate to perception and satisfaction seem disconnected from the other measures used to track student academic gains.		
The weakest aspect of their plan to continuously improve the implementation of personalized learning environments, relates to minimal detail about how and who will monitor this data and apply it. It is unclear who is involved in the quarterly RTT stakeholder meeting and who is responsible for gathering and distributing this data.		

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The plan for ongoing communication and engagement will be quarterly with both internal and external stakeholders. Surveys, assemblies, meetings, press releases, and school newspaper articles are all relevant in the context of being able to report on progress. This approach may be fragmented given a limited emphasis on a summative evaluation of the work on annual basis which would bolster the quarterly formative analysis. There is some inconsistency about who is responsible for enacting changes to program implementation based on analysis of data and feedback from stakeholders. There is a vague understanding of how both an RTT Steering Committee and an RTT Planning/Advisory Committee, but also teacher leader teams and the Project Director will have responsibilities in this area,</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>		
<b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>MPS suggests overly ambitious targets for subgroups based on the performance indicators for elementary college and career readiness in the core content areas without appropriate rationales. Measures for high school students, based on the graduation exam are confusing based on the assertion that they apply to all students in grades 9-12 rather than just those eligible for graduation. Without an established evaluation system that measures student growth in relationship to educator performance, it is difficult to ascertain what measures will be used for teachers in all grades and subject areas to determine effectiveness. The applicant does not provide measures related to career readiness or completion of FAFSA forms.</p> <p>There are two worrisome performance indicators that are presented that remain unexplained by MPS. The first is the high number of suspensions of students across the whole continuum, and the lack of emphasis in the proposal on addressing this. Also, only 2.5% of African-American students have achieved the highest level of performance on science, and there is very limited evidence to support the capacity of the district to increase this measure. Closing achievement gaps with the 17 lowest achieving schools is less illustrative than suggesting targets that close gaps between the lowest and highest performing schools across the district. This narrow view lessens the potential of the proposal to achieve equity for high needs students.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>A combination of qualitative and quantitative data will be gathered by MPS in order to evaluate effectiveness of RTT investments, but overall there is inconsistency across the proposal in how this will be accomplished. The notion of a project evaluator is introduced in this section, but it is difficult to determine the details of their plan that focus on prudent metrics related to the impact of project activities on student and educator outcomes. Suggestion that policy development may be impacted by analysis of results is a positive indicator.</p>		

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>MPS sets forth what can be considered an acceptable budget total based on the scope of the project described in their proposal, and the number of participating students to be served. The most significant investments will be made in the first of year of the grant with about 50% of the funds being expended right away. The lack of detailed narrative and thoughtful explanation of investments creates an uncertain backdrop for the initiatives to be supported with RTT funds. One project area that while referenced as a priority, Social/Emotional Wellbeing through Violence Prevention, has limited description of who will receive services, and how they will be delivered. Teachers and Principals will receive professional development, but the description is too vague to understand the whole initiative. Other project areas were defined in greater detail, such as student incentives in other areas of the proposal, which supported the limited description in the budget.</p> <p>A justifiably significant portion of funding will be used to upgrade wireless internet and increase bandwidth. Investments in mobile devices are somewhat unrealistic and narrow, given that there is no accounting for educators in this major investment, a description of what type of devices the district actually plans to purchase, or funding for replacements, accessories, and applications that may be required. Another significant and pertinent elaboration in the budget was in</p>		

regards to the investment in the Teachscape online professional learning suite, which lends strength to the proposal overall. Teachscape alongside traditional professional development in the form of workshops and duty free lunches illustrates the applicant's blended approach of both in-person and virtual offerings for educators. The investment strategy of only 1 Project Director and 1 Instruction Specialists is not sound and should have been increased based on the scale of the investments and potential duties.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
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#### **(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant proposes a partial view of how project goals will be sustained after the term of the grant. It is unclear how State funds from the Alabama Textbook Allocation are eligible to be used to fund most of the various activities related to personalize learning environments in the post-grant years. This plan cannot be deemed high quality without timelines and key details associated with how funds will be used over time, and how data will be used to drive outcomes and inform future investments.

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

#### **Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The partnership between MPS and the Montgomery Education Foundation and Alabama State University (ASU) to provide mentoring and one-on-one assistance during the day and afterschool for high-needs students is coherent with the efforts of the district towards the absolute priority. It also should be considered a sustainable strategy based on the lack of financial investment required by the district to continue the partnership. Retired teachers and principals, as well as a consortium of Alabama State University Students will provide the 1:1 services, and will be charged with integrating emotional and academic supports. While a protocol for their participation will be in place, it is less clear how tutors and mentors will be trained to integrate these services and interact with the various stakeholders.

The performance measures are rather general, such as "tutors and mentors will facilitate the acceleration of student achievement through personal assistance to K-12 students", which does not support a deep dive of student performance required to alter their education experience. Other performance measures around college and career readiness align with performance measures from another section in the proposal. The assistance of ASU students with FAFSA is a strong idea for the partnership, but without baseline data and specific targets, the approach is less credible. Also, given the high rate of suspensions in the school district, it is unclear why the more immeasurable indicators of social and emotional outcomes were chosen over tackling specific challenges (i.e suspensions) that the district is facing.

### **Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

#### **Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Overall the applicant has a strength of vision of how to build on the core assurances, and has met the absolute priority based on the activities proposed. Highlights of strengths in their plan "Equity and Excellence in Education (E3)" include:

- 1) Combination of in-person and virtual experiences for both students (Odyssey and mobile devices) and educators (Teachscape and PD workshops)
- 2) Upgrade to district technology infrastructure and proliferation of mobile tech and wireless internet for school community
- 3) Letters of support from policymakers and state level initiatives that support college and career readiness
- 4) Project-based learning and Odyssey online learning system to enhance academic enrichment for students
- 5) Student incentives program to motivate students and celebrate academic growth

- 6) New evaluation systems under development to include student growth measures  
 7) Partnership with Alabama State University and Montegomery Education Foundation to provide 1:1 mentors and tutors for high need students at risk for academic failure

While there is strength of vision, there is weakness in the overall proposal in the fidelity of implementation and ability to track and measure outcomes and use data to inform decision-making. A summary of the weakness of their plan "Equity and Excellence in Education (E3)" include:

- 1) Plans to implement project activities had clear timeline deficits which lessened their quality, with little to no detail about the plans after the first year of the grant.
- 2) If the goal is to end the disparities across schools and close achievement gaps, the application lacked clear focus on outcomes that would track the success of RTT initiatives
- 3) While subgroups were presented by race based on the selection of schools with high levels of free and reduced lunch rates, there was almost no discussion of students with disabilities or English Language Learners.
- 4) Absence of strategies to differentiate across grade levels and vague understanding of how the experience of students and teachers will be different depending on subject/grade/target populations.
- 5) 2 key student issues were not explained in detail enough: High suspension rates of students and violence prevention initiative
- 6) Surveyed educators rated parental involvement as a significant challenge and need for support, but the proposal had almost no evidence of RTT funds being used to tackle this challenge directly. In addition, parents were not engaged in the development of this proposal.
- 7) Teacher professional development is somewhat incoherent based on a qualitative vs. quantitative plan to achieve deliverables.
- 8) Coordination of project activities and evaluation of those activities is incoherent and understaffed
- 9) What type of mobile devices will be purchased, and how will this effort be sustained and scaled?

Total

210

118



## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0190AL-3 for Montgomery Public Schools

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

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6

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

The proposed plan clearly builds on the state's RTTT plan and its core educational assurance areas and on the foundation of the state's RTTT including revised curriculum based on the Common Core national standards; partnerships with local colleges and universities to develop new college-ready assessments; and, a new accountability system including student-achievement measures, achievement gaps, growth measures, college and career readiness standards, and attendance measures.

Montgomery Public School district provides adequate core educational assurance measures to enhance the state's existing

goals and outcomes:

- exceeds states' benchmarks to turn around lowest achieving schools
- ensure college and career ready students
- foster a culture of equity and excellence
- address socio-emotional learning.

Clearly defined, comprehensive, quantitative, and ambitious goals were enumerated to reduce the achievement gap between minority students and whites:

- 80% of students will graduate college and career ready
- increase to 90% graduation rate
- college enrollment increase to 80%
- 95% of students will score college and career ready in math and science K-12
- plan to identify and monitor students in need of intervention.

The district's plan lacked specific information on:

- how the various plans/strategies will be implemented
- what specific resources would be used in creating project-based learning activities
- explanations for picking particular programs and services offered (e.g. Teachscape certification)
- how professional development will deliberately differentiated based on students' needs (e.g. teacher-selected professional development list is lengthy - who will decide which topics?).

The district took significant strides already to enhance teaching and learning:

- purchased personal learning software based on college and career ready standards to measure student growth and success while informing teachers.

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

MPS succinctly described the target audience and a rationale for the participating schools' selection:

- 17 persistently low achieving and low performance schools
- 735 teachers; 21 principals/assistant principals
- very specific demographic data was included further solidifying the rationale for school selection (i.e. free and reduced meals, low performing and persistently low performing status, race)

The participating schools were identified by the RTTT planning committee and district superintendent with a specific intent to close the achievement gap between the traditional schools and the magnet schools in MPS.

By providing a description of the process used for identification, listing participating schools and their respective qualifying data as well as the total number of participating students from low-income families and high needs, MPS met the criteria.

More information on the criteria used for selecting the 17 schools would have enhanced the information contained in this section.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

Plan adequately addressed the tenets of a high quality plan to accelerate student learning through personalized learning environments to provide remediation to low performing students; exposure to 21st century learning skills to be college and career ready; and, to increase teacher capacity. Plan outlined technology upgrades to support personalized environments through infrastructure; acquisition of a data management system; internet access for students and parents as well as extended school time, and student incentives.

Plan included intentions to include non-participating schools' teachers and principals in all professional development opportunities; materials developed by the Teacher Leaders; give teachers/principals/superintendent district-wide access to student-centered evaluation system; access to project-based activities; access to WiFi hotspots in community centers; and, access to the data management system.

The logic model provided a clear descriptions of the current state of the district and deliberate plans to address existing

deficiencies through competition award with specific outcomes for students (motivation, narrowing of achievement gap; student-drive pace and mastery of concepts)

It was apparent that MPS are heading in the right direction based on the logic model presented. Additional specificity regarding instructional tools and practices would have enhanced the plan.

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

The plan has a thoughtful, well-defined vision to close the achievement gap through personalized learning environment. The plan included the necessary charts to address performance on summative assessments; decreasing achievement gaps; graduation rates; and, college enrollment, but the plan lacks:

- specificity in percentage of growth or decrease in the gap
- the variations intra-goal was unclear - some years 4%, with subsequent increases/decreases by 5%-7%
- no clear rationale for choosing the goals or proficiency status/growth
- information about the strategies, methodologies, or assessments used to increase proficiency rates/close achievement gap
- information in charts was difficult to interpret without logical explanation or rationale.

Information contained in the charts were difficult to interpret without logical explanation or rationale. It appeared some data was missing and/or repetitive. It was also unclear if the goals were realistically achievable due to the great variance.

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

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

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

Plan identified notable achievements either for a few schools, teachers, or programs, but it failed to specifically document a clear track record of success over the past four years as a district. Although one school participating in the plan received an award for exemplary leadership, high standards, parental involvement, and student achievement in a high-poverty school, this does not reflect a formidable four-year track record for the district.

This plan demonstrated significant weaknesses in the following areas:

- detailed information about student performance over the past four years was not included
- information about graduation rates was not addressed
- access to student data to all stakeholders was omitted outside of the state's existing access.

There was no indication in this plan that the success of the one school would be connected to the criteria for success in the 17 schools participating in the competition. Evidence of this would have significantly strengthened the plan in this criteria.

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

High level transparent processes were not addressed in this plan. MPS relies solely on the federal regulation by posting its information in the National Education Center for Statistics database. No mention or discussion of specific district-level processes regarding salaries or expenditures was included.

Specific information required for this criteria such as actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional and support staff; actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only; actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and, actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level were missing from this plan.

Additionally, the plan references appendix items and pages (i.e. Appendix B2 1) that was non-existent in any part of the documented plan.

Items such as district budgets, board meeting notes, hearing summaries, individual school budgets are posted on the district's website.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

It is apparent that the state of Alabama has created a sound environment for school districts within its state to implement innovative initiatives to achieve better results for students. The plan for MPS schools to build on the existing initiatives is not overtly identified in this criteria. It would have been helpful to provide:

- specific pathways for MPS to build on state's RTTT plan to address high poverty, lowest achieving schools
- MPS' context for implementing personalized learning environments based on students' needs and teacher capacity.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Significant steps were taken to collaboratively develop a plan to meet the needs of the MPS school district:

- a planning/advisory committee with cross-representation of participating schools (each school had representatives from teachers, central office, community leaders, students representatives, and district leaders)
- union support - letter from the teachers' union president
- multi-stakeholder support
- approval of the plan by the Montgomery Board of Education
- email account established to allow district employees to submit queries.

Plan reflects clear steps post-award to implement, manage, and monitor proposed plan:

- bi-weekly meetings of Planning/Advisory Committee (January-July 2014)
- plan for full implementation by August 2014
- plan to evaluate barriers and successes.

The letters of support lacked specificity to specific strategies, programs, or initiatives outside of transportation, computer devices, and professional development.

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

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

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

Plan presents adequate ideas to address personalized learning environments to increase student performance through:

- upgrade technology infrastructure to support new data system and personalized learning programs (wireless classrooms, additional smartboards for interactive web-based learning tools)
- professional development on technology tools
- purchase CompassLearning 1:1 Odyssey software for K-12
- contract consulting group for professional development on project-based learning for high school teacher s
- mobile devices for participating students
- Saturday academies
- student incentives.

While the plan boasts ideas, software, and devices to promote individualized learning, the plan lacks specificity relative to the teachers' role in providing direct instruction to students.

- How will students be taught the information or remediated outside of the Odyssey options was not indicated.
- The direct correlation to the packaged software programs to enhancing the physical learning environment was not fully explained.

- The pathway for teachers in monitoring student performance on the electronic devices was unclear.
- A clear plan for selection process to the Saturday Academies was not included.
  - The number of mobile devices needed to appropriately meet the needs of all students and to ensure access was not evident in the plan.

A variety of high-quality instructional approaches was not proffered in this plan.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The plan identifies specific steps to ensure teachers receive professional development on:

- effectively implementing personal learning model by assessing teachers' needs; focus group; resource library; teacher leader teams
- monitoring student progress through college and career ready pre/post assessments.

A teacher/principal evaluation system is being developed that will address multiple methods and measures of data collection, which could be 50% of growth; professional development 15%, classroom evaluation, 25%, and attendance, 10%.

The plan lacked the following information that would have contributed greatly to the plan's intent:

- forethought into the significance of each weight in the proposed teacher evaluation model
- professional development goals for teachers
- was lacking and the primary component of student data being pre/post assessments is not a multiple measure.
- extended timeline for professional development and relevant instructional strategies (plan only included one year)
- inadequate focus on the principle of ensuring a highly effective teacher in every school.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

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

This plan inadequately addressed the criteria outlined as it only proposes outcomes:

- opportunities to provide accelerated pacing where students can complete more than one course in a single school year
- will develop new policy requiring teachers to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery
- Carnegie units will no longer require seat time hours
- dedicated link to post pertinent information to parents regarding grant areas.

Some flexibility for school-based teams related to roles and responsibilities was identified.

Plan describes rigorous efforts to provide personalized learning for students, but specific information regarding:

- current policies and practices available to leverage proposed plan
- a clear plan to support the proposed aforementioned areas
- none of the intended outcomes are currently implemented and are solely contingent on a grant award.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Plan contains high quality aspects for communicating with key stakeholders:

- Odyssey software provides anytime anywhere access for parents, students, and teachers, which is increased parent access

- proposed electronic dashboard to link student achievement data to payroll/human resource systems with the capability to extracting, transforming, and loading information from the existing student information system
- addition of wireless and internet capabilities at three community centers
  - technical support will be provided during the day with a phone service during the evenings and weekends.

A table identifying goals, timelines, activities, deliverables, and persons responsible was clearly listed:

- acquire and enable data management system
- provide students, teachers, and parents internet access outside of school
- provide effective but reasonable technical support.

While the plan ensures access to data for participating stakeholders, the reasonableness of only one or two personnel to address potential barriers seems insufficient to fully accomplish the goals set forth.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>

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

MPS presented a vague continuous improvement process collection of data that will be gathered and reviewed quarterly by the RTTT stakeholders committee and determined that the any recommendations would be given to the RTTT steering committee. Summary reports would be posted on the district's website (public sharing of information) and published in the local newspaper.

Information was lacking regarding:

- additional rigorous data points other than repeated attempts on pre/post assessments
- rubric/questions to determine perceptive data from stakeholders
- definition of "quality" as related to project-based learning activities
- measurement/tracking tool to evaluate "time" spent using web-based software
- outcomes for parent personal learning workshops.

The overall measuring tools rely heavily on qualitative data. It appears within the plan that educator effectiveness is determined primarily by perceptive feedback rather than on more qualitative data. The plan lacks specificity regarding the frequency of the surveys/assessments, the instruments used to measure the qualitative or quantitative data, the distinction between the stakeholder and steering committee, and, the rationale for selecting the specific measures along with the alignment to the plans' goals.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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### **(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Plan describes a preliminary plan to maintain ongoing communication with internal and external stakeholders through:

- satisfaction surveys
- quarterly assemblies to update stakeholders on strengths, successes, and opportunities for improvement
- articles in school papers to present current results
- external stakeholders' invitation to quarterly assemblies with comments/suggestions
- press releases to all media sources
- Teacher Leaders to present at PTA meetings quarterly.

Additional opportunities and venues as well as more frequent opportunities for teachers to provide feedback would be helpful in making more immediate modifications toward effectiveness.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

Plan appropriately designated 13 targeted performance measures and a broad rationale, which included a 4% increase on the state assessments across grade levels; reduced suspension rates; and an increase in the completion of the FAFSA. Plan identifies its logic model and the theory of change as the catalyst of its educational reform.

A more detailed rationale for each performance measure would have been helpful in understanding the selection of that specific measure.

The plan lacked evidence of how the performance measure would provide incremental formative information toward meeting the set target.

Being that the district as a whole has not had tremendous success meeting the yearly benchmarks, it appears the 4% goal is ambitious, but may not be achievable. Although this fact is noted, a plan to address implementation progress was not included.

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

5

2

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

The plan approaches evaluation through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis of:

- interviews with project personnel and participants as well as observations
- evaluation activities at the conclusion of each quarter
- summative progress toward program outcomes
- characteristics of participants who are not making adequate progress
- attrition data-analysis.

Plan proposes to use a specialized data software to analyze information for interpreting data.

Plan did not present a high quality structure for continuous improvement. The feedback interval will not appropriately address immediate issues that teachers and students may face.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	10	5

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

The overall budget described is inconsistent with the priorities outlined in previous sections. It does not accurately reflect the district's impetus for the plan according to its logic model - the level of investment in teacher capacity is not commensurate with the allocations for supplies, fringe benefits, and contract. It appears the majority of the award is for personnel, equipment (which is reasonable), and contracted services, software, or programs.

No other fiscal sources were identified to supplement the district's efforts.

The line item indicating "other" has no explanation, which would have been significantly helpful.

It is unclear as to what "supplies" will be purchased through the grant funds other than student incentives - it is a significant allocation - a rationale is warranted.

Rationale for personnel under the grant award would be helpful in distinguishing between existing personnel and the need to allocate funds through the grant award.

One-time investments was not included (except the mobile devices based on budget chart) and information related to inflation was not addressed.

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

10

3

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

At this time the plan identifies state and federal fiscal resources to sustain some instructional materials and professional development (state allocation, Title I and II).

Plan acknowledges other funding sources will need to be obtained to sustain mobile devices and continuation of the violence prevention program. Those sources have not been sought as yet.

A fiscal plan to sustain personnel and direct services sans the Alabama Textbook Allocation has not been developed. Plan lacked detail and rationale. Plan does not explain how the district will be able to re-allocate designated funds (textbook) to cover personnel, equipment, and supply costs.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Plan describes triangular partnership between the school district, Alabama University, and the Montgomery Education Foundation to provide mentoring and one-on-one classroom assistance. Mentors would be designated retired teachers, principals, and AU students serving as facilitators to help with identified students in need of extensive remediation or social-emotional support.

A clear procedure for referring students was outlined. High need students needing academic, social skills, emotional, or behavioral support would be eligible to receive mentor services or one-on-one assistance. Plan broadly identified possible ways to ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluating supports (self-assessments, communication with parents).

Although directly related to the immediate goals of the district, this plan inadequately addresses key goals the district hopes to accomplish. Limited information is offered related to targeted outcomes, population (subgroup other than high risk students), and monitoring strategies.

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the high quality plan proposes to extend, enhance, and accelerate the state's RTTT initiatives and references many of the states' priority programs as a result of the RTTT award. The overall strength of the plan lies in its strategies to address the four educational assurance areas:

- prescriptive professional development, teacher leaders to help struggling and novice teachers, frequent classroom evaluation for struggling and novice teachers
- identified a specific high needs, low poverty, low achieving schools
- increase social, emotional well-being of students
- improve information accessibility and literacy
- create personalized learning environments for students and teachers

Plan proposes activities linked to its goals that would enhance capacity and learning for key stakeholders and has potential to be scaled up to benefit the entire district.

Specificity regarding information around rationale for ambitious goals, feedback cycles for all stakeholders, detailed information about the students' classroom experience, and the level of engagement for teachers in areas other than technology would have added value to the plan.



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0190AL-1 for Montgomery Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

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

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

- the state has already launched its effort in support of the Race to the Top initiative and, with this grant, this LEA is proposing to accelerate goal improvement in the four core educational assurance areas beyond what is projected by the state.
- the vision statement reflects a clear understanding with a credible approach numerating many intended strategies for accelerating student achievement.
- this list of strategies incorporates the district's partnership with Teachscape, and contains prescriptive professional development activities that include supporting personalized learning through common and individual tasks.
- their drive for equity is prefaced by ensuring that staff evaluations incorporate student achievement measures: indeed, all aspects of their proposal are focused on student success.
- the only weakness evident in this section pertains to a description of what the classroom experience will be like in a personalized learning environment.
- the overall assessment of this section is at the high range and at the mid-point of this range.

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

- the process used to select participating schools involved the planning committee for this project in conjunction with the superintendent. Essentially, schools identified were the most disparate in their educational performance and, coincidentally, had students from the most disadvantaged communities.
- the application documents the demographic situation for each school in the district and clearly identifies the disparities of those identified for the project.
- all schools within the project will qualify under the competition's eligibility requirements.
- the table is provided which numerates all of the categories of students and educators for those required by the RTT-D competition.
- the overall assesment for this section is in the high range and in the high end of this range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
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#### (A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- the district intends to scale-up the benefits from this application to the non-participating schools in 7 goal areas but has not included a high-quality plan as to how this will occur. Presumably a table in (A)(4) might be applied to this planning requirement because it identifies year 1 activities as well as timeline and the member responsible. Absent in this plan is reference to any activities contemplated for subsequent years as well as rationale for the activities.
- the narrative provides a clear rationale outlining why the district has proposed their E3 (Equity and Excellence in Education) plan, which is focused on eliminating the achievement gap between student populations.

- the section also includes a comprehensive logic model demonstrating what the situation is which needs to be addressed, the inputs which need to be applied, the activities which will ensue, and the outcomes that will accrue.
- the overall assessment of this section is at the medium range and at the upper end of the range.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- this section is somewhat confusing because of the repetition of several tables.related to test results at the elementary school level. Some tables are repeated on 3 occasions.</li> <li>- for each of the 4 areas identified in this section's requirements, baseline information is presented followed by 5 years of targets.</li> <li>- these targets project varied incremental improvements based on how low is the current levels of performance. In other words, baseline data in the 50% range demonstrate larger annual increases than data in the 70% range, The culminating achievement levels project improving performance by huge annual increases where some results will almost double - e.g. 45% to 85%. Virtually all achievement targets related to reading and math achievement conclude in the 80%+ range. Certainly these are ambitious targets but there is concern that these are achievable given the current levels of performance.</li> <li>- the overall assessment of this section is at the medium range and at the high level.</li> </ul>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- only a narrative is provided without the use of charts or graphs summarizing overall district success. This narrative identifies one of the district's schools being identified as a Torchbearer school, nine students semi-finalists for a national achievement award, and the district being granted system-wide accreditation. These contribute to records of success but are insufficient in demonstrating a clear record of success over a 4 year period. This lack of evidence is a significant weakness within this section.</li> <li>- the narrative also describes the district's reconstitution of one school following 4 consecutive years of failure. This is a welcome activity in achieving significant reform in a low-achieving school.</li> <li>- the narrative succeeds in meeting the requirement for providing students, educators and parents with individualized performance data necessary to improving educational services.</li> <li>- overall this section is assessed at the medium range but at the low end of the range.</li> </ul>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the sparse narrative describes transparency regarding financial records and meetings to discuss budgetary issues. There is no indication, however, that other board processes and practices such as board meetings and minutes are made available on the website.</li> <li>- the F-33 survey is submitted annually which addresses one of the essential requirements; however, requirements regarding actual salaries at the school level for both instructional staff and teachers is not addressed.</li> <li>- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range and at the low end of the range.</li> </ul>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		

- the narrative presents evidence regarding the state's support for innovation but is silent on the conditions within the district that will facilitate implementation of personalized learning environments. The implication, however weakly presented, is that the district will be able to provide the necessary conditions because the state supports the RttT initiative. Evidence regarding legal and statutory supports from the state's perspective are then implied for successfully personalizing learning environments; however, evidence does not exist regarding what regulations the LEA has in place to support schools and utilize autonomy in their pursuit of implementing personalized learning.

- the overall assessment of this section is in the medium range but at the low end of this range.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

- the planning committee for this proposal had broad involvement from stakeholder representatives for principals, teachers, central office, community leaders, students, university, and educational organizations.
- the local teacher representative has signed a letter of support.
- numerous letters of support from key stakeholders are included from the school board, post-secondary, politicians, community representatives, students, educators within the district and advocacy groups.
- the narrative indicates that the planning committee met but does not indicate how the community had opportunity to provide feedback on this proposal or how the proposal was modified based on feedback.
- the overall assessment for this section is at the medium range and at the high end of the range.

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

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

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

- this narrative provides a comprehensive description of how the district will achieve a personalized learning environment for students to ensure that they are college - and career-ready upon graduation.
- a high quality plan is provided which details the activities to be implemented, rationale, timelines and persons responsible. Examination of these activities provides convincing evidence that the district is considering a thorough analysis of what constitutes an effective learning environment.
- a vast array of technology tools are provided to ensure that individual needs and learning processes are accommodated.
- learning at their own pace will occur because programs are utilized which address both enrichment and remedial needs.
- goal-setting, teamwork, critical thinking, effective communication and problem-solving skills are addressed through the use of project-based activities and individualized learning projects.
- students' will monitor their progress by mobile devices which provide a web-based learning management system.
- software is identified which will monitor student gains in their individual as well as group learning as well as providing learning materials consistent with their learning needs. The effort will ensure mastery learning because the instructional material is mastery-based.
- ensuring that students benefit from the technology in place to achieve personalized learning, all students will be in-serviced at the beginning of the school year in using these tools.
- project-based learning will be interdisciplinary which increases the potential for real-life learning resulting in increased student motivation. This involvement encourages a deeper understanding of the curriculum, and allowing students autonomy to pursue areas of interest deepens their learning experience while attending to rigorous standards. The narrative includes practical examples of how such an environment will look in the classroom further supporting an assessment that the district understands this key concept of personalized learning.
- personalized learning will also be supported with extended learning time by making Saturday Academies available to all students on the learning spectrum. A weakness in this important strategy is that there is no discussion regarding how students will be selected for participating in this program. The narrative merely suggests that this program will be available,

but is a decision to participate exclusively within the purview of the student or are teachers involved? Indeed, where is the fulcrum of the decision? Is it with the student or the school system?

- the narrative identifies an appropriate, convincing strategy to implement incentives for students who have struggled in school and are, in effect, feeling disenfranchised.
- overall, this section is assessed at the high range.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

- several elements for improving teaching and leading emerged in (C)(1). Software would be utilized which provide professional development for high school teachers in utilizing projects for creating a personalized learning environment. Software associated with monitoring student achievement also provides professional development for teachers. Teachscape 360 technology utilizing video cameras and coaching will assist teachers who are struggling in their efforts to provide a personalized learning environment. Teacher leader teams will develop and implement learning projects for use in the classroom.
  - personalized learning environments will be strongly supported by using district-wide surveys to help teachers self-assess their preparedness and the programs they are using. Teachers will also benefit by being participants in communities of practice which provides a support base for their growth.
  - workshops are planned for teachers to provide ongoing training including an emphasis on how to incorporate the data management system into their instructional activities. Therefore, teachers can use the data management system to inform their own successes and understand how the same system can assist principals in how they can gage teacher effectiveness. The technology efforts in the district will then create an electronic dashboard which will link student achievement data to teacher and principal pay systems.
  - the teacher evaluation system within the pay system incorporates a significant portion (50%) based on student assessment results.
  - a high quality plan is presented within this section to describe how teacher development will be addressed. Somewhat lacking is an adequate focus on the development of principals in their work of ensuring that students are receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers.
  - the narrative does not address the issue of ensuring that hard-to-staff schools and subjects with effective teachers will be addressed.
  - in summary, the plan to ensure that teachers are prepared to provide personalized learning for their students is well-developed with only a few omissions evident.
- overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the low end of the range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>

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

- the central office will support this project by containing all RTT-D personnel within the this office. This arrangement will support communication and collaboration; however, information regarding how this structure will fit into the management structure of the district is not explained. For example, the reporting line is not explained.
- each school's leadership team has various authorities identified such as school schedules, budgets, calendars, and roles and responsibilities of staff.
- the narrative acknowledges that students will now have opportunity to accelerate their learning and removing the number of seat-time hours as well as utilizing multiple methods of assessment will be implemented. While this acknowledgement addresses the requirements for this section, details of how these critical components will be accommodated are very sketchy and weaken the quality of their response.

- the software underpinning this initiative is adaptable and accessible to all students including those with special needs.
- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range and at the medium level.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a table depicting all elements of a high-quality plan to address required elements identified in this section is provided.</li> <li>- increasing parent access to on-line components of this plan is enhanced by installing wireless internet service to community centers and churches in high need areas of the community. all parents then will be able to access critical information on the personalized progress of their child.</li> <li>- full-time technical service is available during the day-time and pre-recorded phone support is available during off-hours. It is questionable whether one full-time person will be able to service all technical support in a district of this magnitude.</li> <li>- teachers have a unique identifier which ensures that they have access to all records as long as they are in the employ of the district. This means that they can readily access critical information on their students as well as see how their evaluations will be impacted. The system will address the interoperable data needs within the system.</li> <li>-overall, this section is assessed at the high range.</li> </ul>		

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the narrative describes a comprehensive array of measures for monitoring the effectiveness of this grant. The district is committed to reviewing the data quarterly which will lead to program modifications. The public will have access to these reports through the local newspaper with an e-mail address provided for questions and comments. The results will be reviewed quarterly by the stakeholders whose recommendations for modifications will be reviewed by the project's steering committee.</li> <li>- the list of identified measures includes student learning as well as satisfaction and usage measures associated with professional development and technology. The list also provides feedback on the quality of services being provided by staff. In other words, the list encompasses a relatively long list which is a strength because a comprehensive 360 degree analysis is being used to assess performance from which the LEA can be informed regarding their effort. Some of these measures are more important than others understandably, but the lesser important ones can provide additional understanding of certain results on the important measures are occurring.</li> <li>- the plan fails to identify the person specifically responsible for conducting each aspect of the reviews.</li> <li>- details are somewhat sparse regarding how the final evaluation will lead to improvements after the term of the grant.</li> <li>- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range and at the high end of the range.</li> </ul>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the narrative describes a quarterly process related to the goals of communication and engagement with stakeholders but the detail is rather sparse. The plan also deals with opportunities to suggest revisions leading to ongoing improvement.</li> <li>- missing in the plan is appropriate identification of persons engaged in specific responsibilities. For example, it is not indicated who will write the newspaper stories, or who will be conducting the various meetings. Therefore, the goals and timelines for a high-quality plan are addressed but specific responsibilities are a weakness.</li> <li>- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range.</li> </ul>		

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	5	1
<b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the applicant lists 13 measures it intends to monitor and improve. The applicant's rationale for selecting a measure is frequently omitted and there is no indication regarding how it will review the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress. This is a different requirement than the earlier section where results are the focus rather than the implementation. Both foci may be implied in the earlier section but clarity in this section that implementation is the focus would have addressed the matter.</li> <li>- measures are reported for overall as well as subgroups. Baseline results are provided followed by the targets for each year of the project as well as the post-grant year.</li> <li>- a rationale is provided for a significant stretch on the graduation rate based on the success of another district, but there is not sufficient rationale supplied for the remaining measures. There is a concern that targets are too ambitious and will require modification. It may be reasonable to suggest that someone else experienced dynamic success in one measure, but it may not be feasible to experience similar success across the array of measures. Many measures feature targets which project improvements which not only double or triple degrees of success but even project 1000% improvement. This is simply unreasonable and will lead to embarrassment and frustration.</li> <li>- overall, this section is assessed at the low range.</li> </ul>		

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	5	3
<b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the narrative provides an extensive description of how thorough the evaluations will be and how the analysis will be conducted to produce a highly reliable evaluation. The process described appears to be universally applied to all aspects of the project but does deal specifically with professional development for teachers. Since it specifically deals with one of the section's requirements it is then expected that it would also deal with the other - activities that employ technology. This technology focus is missing.</li> <li>- some elements of a high quality plan are evident. Certainly the activities associated with evaluations and the rationale are explained. Quarterly timelines are utilized. Deliverables are projected. Missing, however, are the parties responsible for these evaluations.</li> <li>- despite the weaknesses in this section's response, the evaluation plans are impressive for the reliable information they will provide.</li> <li>- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range.</li> </ul>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	10	8
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a narrative for this section is not included; however, detailed budget sheets are incorporated in the appendices.</li> <li>- the absence of a narrative requires analysis of sections C 1 and 2 in order to ascertain the rationale for expenditures. From those narratives it is evident that a major item in the budget's supplies section (perhaps this is a more appropriately identified as equipment) are the student mobile devices, which require approximately one-quarter of the budget. Indeed, the explanations in section C become the narrative for (F)(1).</li> <li>- the budget's designation for travel and supplies not related to these mobile devices is reasonable.</li> <li>- the budget indicates that no other sources of funds will be utilized.</li> <li>- it is evident in the allocations how one-time funding will be applied versus ongoing.</li> <li>- one concern pertains to costs of personnel which do not incorporate a salary-inflation factor.</li> </ul>		

- with so much invested in the mobile devices, the application should address whether sufficient funds are designated for human activity such as professional development. Many of the activities listed in the activities section for the outputs in the logic model are labor intensive. There are considerable requirements for professional development in this model which raises a concern that too much of the budget has to be designated for the mobile devices thereby shortchanging the human elements.
- overall, the assessment for this section - incorporating the explanations available in section C - is in the high range.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the narrative provides information regarding sustainability for the project. It is unclear whether the post-funding budget is for one year or the specified three years.</li> <li>- three sources of government funding are identified which will meet almost all of the budgetary needs for the period identified. The one significant item of student mobile devices for future students will require funding from other sources yet to be identified. The violence prevention program will also require an additional source.</li> <li>- the narrative is weak in its descriptions pertaining to a high quality plan. Persons responsible are identified; however, key goals which would identify foci of evaluations, timelines, and activities are omitted. It may be that the applicant assumes a similar pattern of assessment as that which will be followed during the grant, but this is not specifically stated.</li> <li>- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range and at the low end of the range.</li> </ul>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the narrative presents a partnership with a university situated in the area identified as having the greatest need in this project. Mentoring and 1-1 assistance in classrooms as well as afterschool will be provided by retired teachers and principals.</li> <li>- the criterion for population-level desired results is met with 10 measures identified.</li> <li>- the descriptions regarding how this partnership will track indicators, target resources, expand the program and work to improve results over time are sufficiently detailed.</li> <li>- the process is articulated regarding how integration of education and other areas of need will occur.</li> <li>- the requirement for indicating how the partnership will work with the school is somewhat sparse by indicating only that a protocol will be devised.</li> <li>- the requirement for annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures is not provided.</li> <li>- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range.</li> </ul>		

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- throughout the project's description, clear evidence is provided which demonstrates the applicants commitment to implement personalized learning environments for participating schools. The intention is to accelerate student achievement by experiencing a huge change in results occur ,which will ensure that students are achieving standards for college- and</li> </ul>		

career-ready success.

- the implementation of these personalized learning environments requires student access to effective teachers and principals, and the project describes how this criterion will be achieved.
- an aggressive program of ongoing assessment to determine success is identified.

Total	210	140
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