



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0073GA-1 for Morgan County Charter School System

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

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

The Morgan County Charter School system has developed a comprehensive vision for a personalized learning system. This was accomplished with a Strategic planning process that has been updated since its first development. The involvement of the community in this has garnered support in terms of a passage of a local sales tax for the schools. The vision statement specifically talks about a personalized educational program.

Strengths:

- A vision statement that has been updated in 2011 calls for a challenging, "...Personalized educational program encompassing advanced technology."
- Vision statement had input from the school system community
- Part of a overall strategic planning process which is updated and reviewed on a regular basis
- Community support for the district is evidenced through a successful passage of a local sales tax which partially supports the system's technology program

The vision is focused over 4 areas which support personalized learning. Technology and infrastructure; research-based strategies; learning management system and digital content project; and assessment are the 4 areas that are addressed in the vision

Strengths

- Wireless capability, a virtualized technology environment, 24/7 internet access at school and at home, desire to increase bandwidth for multimedia and collaborative projects are all components of the technology/Infrastructure area
- College and Career ready standards used by teachers, assisted with the use of 24-7 available technology, various teaching methods are describe in the vision related to research-based strategies
  - District is implementing Georgia's Common Core State Standards that are aligned with college and career ready standards
- Although Moodle and Eduphoria are used in parts of the district, the vision describes the need for a learning management system that incorporates locally developed assessments and has the capacity for social networking.
  - The Georgia Longitudinal Data system provides a dashboard for staff to determine the student's level of performance based on state standardized assessments.
- District would like to develop open-sourced resources including video conferencing, video capture, video archiving and remote learning that ties into the learning management system.
- The district recognized the importance of assessments and how they can be used to measure learning and diagnose student learning
- Teacher developed assessments can provide data to guide instruction in a more timely manner, however these assessments lack validity, reliability and the proper vertical articulation required.
  - District proposed use of technology-based assessment tools to help fill this problem area
  - Technology-based professional development will be used to strengthen teacher capacity in this area as well as the area of personalization of learning for students.
  - The state has two assessment tools that will be used by the district. These are the College and Career Readiness Performance Index.
    - Teachers have been trained on these systems and the scores will have implications on the school's performance rating.
  - And the Sate Longitudinal Data System
    - A teacher desktop level information system which includes student data, curriculum standards and

instructional resources

- The vision for a personalized learning system included the need for a technology based learning system and the need to move from seat-time to competency on standards
  - Flexible student schedules
  - Progress at student's own rate
- The vision describes the organization of teachers by teams of multiple grade levels rather than traditional means.
- Current technology-based programs such as MAP and Compass Learning can be used to monitor student progress and provide prescriptive lessons as part of a personalized learning system.
- Part of the vision and concept for personalization describes that all students and educators will have at least one Internet access device.

**Weakness**

- A(1)a of the vision statement does not include information on recruiting, rewarding and retaining teachers or how the vision can turn around low performing schools. Standards, assessments and data systems are described in detail.
- A(1)b is described in detail as noted above. There is little evidence that talks about personalized learning based on student academic interests.
- A(1)c The actual look of a personalized classroom is not described in detail

Based on the evidence described, Morgan presents a plan that details aspects of a personalized learning system. Based on the fact that this section does not describe how a personalized learning environment would look in a classroom and that the four core educational assurance areas were not fully addressed, the score for this section would fall in the mid-low range.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Morgan has chosen to include all schools in the approach to implementation. They believe in systemic reform. Based on their proposal and the data covered in this section a high score is justified.

- A chart with demographic data is detailed listing 190 educators that will be involved and 3316 students that will be involved in the project. The district is comprised of 4 schools-a primary P-2, elementary 3-5, middle schools 6-8 and a high school 9-12.
- The chart details low income students, participating students as defined, participating educators and schools.
- Other data is described including retention rate, dropouts, academic rates of subgroups and graduation rates of subgroups.
- All information required is evident in this section.

**Weakness**

- Some sections of this grant show dates from last year. This includes sections on C2 Teaching and Leading as well as all of the letters of support in the appendix. The progress monitoring section has tables from last year's RTTTD grant. Part of the progress monitoring section calls for attendance at workshops that have already taken place. No date or narrative describes that the table in section A2 has current student information.

<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:**

The Morgan County Charter School system Logic Model is shown and includes the vision statement from the strategic plan. The logical model is a graphical representation of the project. The logical model does not describe all the components of a high-quality plan. Specific goals, a set timeline, deliverables and responsible parties are not specifically described. The sparse description in this section for LEA-wide reform and change calls for a low medium score.

**Strengths**

- Logic Model is a graphical representation of the project showing inputs which drive outputs through activities and participants. Outcomes are listed as short, medium and long term.
- The project calls for a district-wide plan that will involve all schools, not just pilot schools as part of the plan.
- Model describes the activities that will be required to develop and institutionalize a personalized learning system.
- The final long term outcome is that a personalized learning system will be used which will improve education for students in Morgan County.

Weakness

- The logic model does not list specific goals or timeliness. Although some of this is covered later in the grant proposal there is no evidence that they are in the logic model presented.
- Responsible parties are lacking in this section.

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

**10**

**5**

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

The data included in this section *is inconsistent* with the requirements of the FY13 RTT – D application. This is evident because the charts in the grant proposal do not match the charts in the FY13 RTT – D grant application. Baseline data in the grant is from 2011-12 while the actual application needs data from the 2012-2013 school year. Baseline data is from the 2011-2012 school year instead of the 2012-2013 school year. Because of this the goals for improved student outcomes cannot be appropriately applied. This fact calls for a low score on the application.

The goals are based on the state criterion reference competency test and end of course test data. Methodologies of percent proficient and above and growth levels are then used to determine growth over 5 years. The data is detailed and shows adequate achievement goals.

Strengths

- Data to address the section is provided. The baseline data from 2011-2012 is shown.
- Four data charts are complete showing baseline data from School Year 2011-2012 and represent the following:

Summative Assessments

- Grades 3-8-Reading and Math state summative assessment goals
- Grades 9-12- Literature and Composition End of Course test
- Grades 9-12- Math I and II End of Course test

Decreasing Achievement Gaps

- Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged- Grades 3-8-Reading and Math state summative assessments
- Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged- Grades 9-12- Literature and Composition End of Course test
- Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, Disabilities and Economically Disadvantaged- Grades 9-12- Math I and II End of Course test

Graduation Rates

- Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, Disabilities and Economically disadvantaged-High School Graduation Rate

College Enrollment

- Overall college enrollment rate

Postsecondary Degree attainment data is not included.

Weakness

- Historical trend test data is not shown. This makes improved student outcome goals hard to determine.

**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>7</b>

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

Morgan has presented a case for demonstrating evidence of success over the past 4 years. This is evidenced by a community involved strategic plan initiative, improved student outcomes listed below and the closing of achievement gaps closed. It has a weaker case when looking at graduation rates. The district does not provide data on college enrollment. District low performing schools are not identified in the proposal. The district has won awards and gained honors for their academic program and progress. Based on their narrative, this section is middle low level of score.

The district uses its strategic plan to provide direction to the school and community. It was created in 1995 and updated in 2012. Over 350 stakeholders took part in its development and each time personalization of student learning was given a high priority.

#### Strengths

- A balanced scorecard was developed in 2009 as a way to measure the effects of personalization of learning on student outcomes. These yearly measures are reported to the Board of Education.

#### Improved Student Outcomes

- Data from the state competency tests show all students in the district are increasing in the meets/exceeds expectation while the does not meet expectation group is declining.
- District students in the 3-8 range had a higher average in all the measured content area tests than other students in Georgia.
- Five year highs were made in 6, 7, 8 grade reading scores and 3, 5, 7, 8 grade Language Arts Scores.
- High school end of course exams showed gains in all subjects except math, which was static over 2 years.
- The state graduation test showed increases in meets/exceed expectations for language arts but not in math areas over 4 years.
- International Baccalaureate program exam scores of 4 or more increased as did the number of IB diploma candidates.
- Students taking AP exams increased as did the number of students taking AP classes.

#### *Achievement Gaps*

- Data shows that with some fluctuations, achievement scores improved in all subgroups with blacks improving 7% and economically disadvantaged improving almost 9%.
- High School Graduation test data is not quite as good showing decreases in scores in the white subgroup and economically disadvantaged subgroup.
- Innovative scheduling initiatives have been used to narrow achievement gaps. This includes after school tutorial sessions with transportation, extended learning year for special education students, a high school enrichment period built into the weekly schedule, morning tutoring, lunch and learn sessions, dedicated reading class at the middle schools, reading and math workshops at the middle schools, credit recover programs at the high school, a team approach freshman academy, a longer school calendar which includes an inter session that can be used for remediation, or extended learning such as field trips and college visitations.

#### Student Performance data Availability

- Student performance data is presented in a variety of ways including at school board meetings, at council meetings, a town hall meetings, at community meetings, and at teacher meetings
- Students in the middle school and high school use their own data to set improvement goals.
- A high school advisory period is set up to allow students to work toward mastery of target goals.
- The district has received recognition for advancing student achievement. They are participating in a Teacher Student data project. They have been awarded a Striving Reader grant. The high school has been recognized as on of America's Best high Schools for 2012. The middle school is a Georgia Lighthouse School to Watch and won the Governor's Platinum Award for student achievement.

#### Weakness

##### *Graduation Rate*

- The graduation rate has declined from 87.3 in 2009 to 86.4 in 2012.

##### *College Enrollment*

- Post-secondary enrollment data is not kept by the district. Estimates from the counselors are that 65% of the senior class moves to post-secondary options after graduation

Reform for Persistently lowest Achieving Schools

- No information on this topic is presented in the grant.

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

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3

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

Being a charter school district affords some flexibility on some legal requirements. Some of details regarding transparency are discussed but details are lacking on major points of B2 including actual personnel salaries at the school level, instructional staff salaries and non-personnel expenditures. Much information is provided about transparency, specific details such as availability of the actual personnel salaries at the school level are not described. This justifies a mid-level score for this section.

Strengths

- Morgan County Charter System is a state of Georgia granted charter district which provides the district the ability to waive some state and local laws. Part of the charter school requirement is higher accountability including more community involvement, and transparency in the operation of the district.
- The schools are governed by a council that recommends personnel to the Superintendent; determines use of funding; develops, approves and monitors the continuous improvement planning process; reviews assessment data; assists with accreditation; and recommends school needs for annual budget process.
- The district has developed a System Charter Leadership team that helps all the individual councils and prevents isolation issues. This group has specific functions including assessing effectiveness of the system's charter; sharing information and innovations from each school; focusing on district goals; oversight for school leadership teams; developing an administrator evaluation system; mediation between councils, discussing charter revisions; and providing recommendations to the Superintendent coming from leadership teams.

Weakness

- The narrative lacks details regarding the availability of personnel salaries. It is unclear as to what is provided publicly regarding salaries and non-personnel expenditures. The members of the Governance Council receive information with actual, school-level expenditures for regular instruction, instructional support, pupil support and school administration. Specific methods by which District level expenditures are available are not described.

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

10

9

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

The Morgan County Charter School System has been granted charter status by the Georgia State Board of Education. Because of this the district is afforded some flexibility from some state and local regulations. The tradeoff is that they must have a higher degree of accountability for raising student achievement. A part of this plan involves school-based leadership and decision making. The ability to waive regulations affords the district opportunities in developing a personalized learning system. The district recognizes the impact that professional learning communities have on school reform. This rates a high score for state context for implementation.

Strengths

- Flexibility allows the district to use alternative schedules to meet the differing needs of students.
- Learning time is extended beyond the school day.
- The district has used professional learning communities to enhance professional development and the delivery of instruction. Professional learning communities are a vehicle to provide support, gather research, reflect and review data for school reform projects.
- Small student learning communities are used to make instruction more personalized.
- Each school has a School Governance Council that has much local control and decision-making authority.

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

15

7

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

The proposal identifies a number of methods by which stakeholders are involved in the school district. Letters of support, use of the school community in the development of a strategic plan, communication strategies and opportunities throughout the district are all used to build support for programs. In the development of this proposal, the district sought

input from many groups and asked specific partners—such as vendors and evaluators to provide input to the district.

The proposal describes stakeholder engagement but falls short in fully engaging the school community. A strategic plan was developed in 1995 and updated to reflect the current need to develop a personalized learning system for students in 2011. The process included many groups from their entire school community. This was one component of an ongoing engagement strategy described. During the course of the proposal process, the planning team called on state-wide leaders, technology vendors, toured schools using high level assessments and researched their own district data. The media was updated on the grant progress weekly. Community engagement was more of a - here is what we are doing, and answering questions. Outside of some teachers who were on the grant planning committee, engagement was in the form of asking for letters of support. There is a question of true ongoing engagement. Because of this lack of true ongoing engagement and the fact that the letters of support and signatures are over a year old, a mid low score is justified.

**Strengths**

- The superintendent started the proposal process with many meetings involving stakeholders. A planning team sought ideas through meetings with staff, meetings with vendors, visits to innovative schools, visits to schools using higher levels of assessments and research on their own district needs. Work on this proposal has been documented through the engagement piece, details of the plan and provided letters of support
- Communication with the School board and local media continued through the development process.
- Partners were brought into the process to help fine-tune the plan with workable strategies.
- Local involvement included School Governance Councils, the Teacher Advisory Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Partners in Education, the NAACP, preschool directors, local civic groups, a Career, Technical and Agricultural Education employee and representatives from local Boys and Girls clubs.
- Students were aware of the proposal as evidenced by student signature pages in the appendix.

**Weakness**

- Included letters of support were from over a year ago.
- The date on one of the pages of support from teachers is from October of 2012

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>

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

It is again unfortunate, that this section was not carefully checked by the grant writer before submission. There are glaring errors on dates. It is clear that this grant was written for last year's RTTTD program and many sections of the proposal were not updated to reflect the current application and updated timelines.

The proposal is a strong plan that addresses many of the unique needs required in a district-wide personalized learning system.

The roll out of the proposal calls upon current research practices and theory on personalized learning.

**Strengths**

- Strong comprehensive plan based on the strategic plan and vision for the district.
- A learning management system, appropriate device in students and staff hands, consideration of parent participation in a personalized learning system all are addressed to meet the needs of college and career ready standards.
- The plan starts with champion staff who will lead others through the school culture change.
- Outside consultants will provide support in technology integration, personalized learning environments and a Universal Design for learning program.
- The district recognized that changing the school culture is imperative to the success of the personalized learning program. This will lead to a transformation in teaching that engages and empowers all learners.
- The three stages of personalized learning will include teacher centered with learner voice and choice, Learner centered with teacher and learner as co-designers, learner driven with teacher as facilitator and partner in learning
- The Universal Design for Learning is the foundation for much of the professional development teachers will receive for personalized learning.
- Schlechty's *Working on the Work* framework will also be used in the instructional design process. The goal is to

- improve instructional design and move the classroom from teacher-centered to student centered.
- The Logic Flow Model details many of the activities needed for this project. One of the most important aspects of this is the learning management system which will be the connector for resources, standards mastered, assessments, activities, data, digital content, teacher lectures and learner profiles.
- MAP—Measures of Academic Progress is being used now to help diagnose student achievement needs.

Weakness

- The development of a learning management system will require a huge effort unless a vendor with one has been identified. This was not made clear in the proposal.
- A personalized learning profile was talked about but there was no specific information provided.
- The 4 year timetable is feasible; however the dates do not match the current year.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant spells out a detailed teaching and learning plan for all students. The problem is that the plan is a year behind, indicating that the grant application is from a year ago. Staffing changes, attitudes toward the program, student data sets are just some of the reasons that the out of date nature of the proposal hurt the score. A low score is justified

Strengths

- All instructional decisions and methodology revolves around their personalized learning initiative.
- District personal learning coaches provide job-embedded coaching and training opportunities
- Responsibilities for personal learning coaches are clearly defined.
- District recognizes that small successes lead to excitement around the project and a change in school culture
- Universal Design for Learning will be used as a basis for learning and technology integration
- Tasks including data collection, coaching meetings, classroom observations and data analysis are defined.

Weakness

- Timeline is out of date
- Dates in the task plan are past
- Coaches are to attend the International Society for Technology in Education that took place last June
- The plans and specific tasks are a year behind

The plan is very specific on what the district will do to build teaching capacity, but is weak on the roll out and use of college and career ready standards.

Strengths

- Roles and responsibilities, professional development planning, data analysis, data collection and specific off site training locations are detailed.
- The personal learning coaches are a critical component to the implementation of the program.
- The applicant builds sustainability by using Universal Design for Learning for building a community of practice.
- The applicant uses the personal learning component for staff development.

Weakness

- The work with college and career ready standards are only briefly mentioned in this section.
- Details of unpacking and building knowledge of the standards are lacking

**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>14</b>

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

There is detailed information on how the Morgan County Charter School system is governed. The fact that they are a charter school provides extra flexibility on waiving state or local rules governing education. This fact along with the

existence of school leadership teams, a good communication system, and the ability of students to gain credit via mastery of standards rather than seat time are the evidence to support a high score in this section of the proposal.

**Strengths**

- Full central office cadre of administrators that work directly with all schools and staff members
- The comment is made that the central office staff is free to support staff and to provide the services needed to enhance student achievement.
- Size of the district provides familiarity between administrators and staff members.
- Principal's council established to solve problems, set goals for professional development, work with budgets, share philosophies, review policies, schedule events and stay abreast of current educational practices.
- School leadership teams work to improve schools, set academic goals, work with the budget, set the tone for behavior, make assessment decisions, devise flexible groups based on data.
- A School Governance Council helps provide school level decision-making, assists with personnel decisions, works with budgets, recommends policies and helps with overall communication in the district.
- Seat time has been waived so that students can gain credit through mastery of the Georgia Performance Standards. This is supported through credit recovery programs, summer schools and enrichment/advisory coursework.
- Technology programs such as EXCEL are used to help students gain mastery of standards.
- Tutoring, lunch and learn, Read 180, and a spring and Fall Inter session week provide enrichment, and extended learning opportunities.
- All students have opportunities to participate in these programs.

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

**10**

**9**

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

The district has thought about the infrastructure to support a personalized learning system by providing appropriate technology to students and staff. This is supported with a learning management system and student information system with parental access. Their plan uses inter operable data systems for easy data flow and assessment software to determine the students' level of understanding. The details and thought behind the plan is makes this a feasible and workable personal learning system. For these reasons a high score is appropriate.

**Strengths**

- Every student, parent, educator and other stakeholder will have access to an Internet ready device
- District has worked with the local Internet provider to make sure their plan is supported
- A learning management system will be used to support the personalized learning system
- Professional Development will support the teachers and overall plan
- School schedules will be adjusted to provide team and professional development time
- Parent access to information is important to the plan—software used will support access
- The district will use inter operable data systems throughout this project

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

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

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

The school district has a record of using a continuous improvement process to support education and student achievement. This is evident starting with the strategic plan and vision for the district. This has been updated and specifically supports the use of a personal learning system. The use of data for planning and improvement is evident. The district will also use an external evaluator to measure progress and provide feedback to the project. Short, medium and long term outcomes will be used to measure progress over the course of the grant. Surveys, focus groups, and academic data provide more information to their continuous improvement plan. The district has formalized the continuous improvement cycle but did not specify the details of the plan. The bulk of the continuous improvement process is left to the external contractor and graduate professor who will provide information of the effectiveness of the personalized learning program. A high quality plan is not described in detail. Goals are mentioned but not articulated. Activities, rationale, timelines deliverables and responsible parties are insufficiently described in this section. The logic model that is presented earlier is not detailed enough to provide evidence for a good continuous improvement system. The applicant assumes that the external

evaluators will provide elements of a high quality plan. The evidence shows that the continuous improvement plan is low to average.

**Strengths**

- The district received an AdvancEd system accreditation for successful implement of a continuous improvement model.
- The district has developed a system balanced scorecard which is made public. This system is used to develop initiatives, and measures to monitor programs.
- A successful Striving Readers grant has provided data and programs to improve student achievement
- An external evaluation team from the University of Georgia will be used to provide a feedback system for this grant.
- A logic model previously described will be used as the basis for this proposal.
- Short, medium and long term outcomes will be measured with surveys; participation rates; classroom observations; classroom walkthroughs; focus groups; meeting minutes; student and teacher feedback surveys; parent feedback surveys; and student assessment data.

**Weakness**

- The elements of a high quality plan are not described in this section
- Some elements of a high quality plan are mentioned but not in an organized, articulated manner. External evaluators will do most of the work of evaluating the personalized system of learning. A university professor will be responsible for developing instruments, analyzing results and synthesizing feedback for the program
- External and internal evaluations will be used but they are not described in detail.
- Internal responsible parties are not clearly identified. Overall the continuous improvement plan is not clearly defined.

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

**5**

**3**

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

A communication plan is explained. Information will be passed to many internal and external organizations through already established connections. An internal system reaching teachers was described through faculty meetings but not through an organized district, building and teacher leadership team structure. An organization having a district leadership team, building leadership team, and teacher based teams was not described. This research-based strategy for district improvement is not documented in the proposal.

**Strengths**

- Well-connected communication system is described including superintendent level communication with a teacher's advisory council, principal's council, board of education, system charter leadership team, through town hall meetings, partners in education group, chamber of commerce and other local civic groups.
- Evaluation of the program will be posted on the district web site which is available to the entire school community
- Principal communication targets are faculty and parent teacher organizations. These are important stakeholders in the plan for a personalized learning system.
- Senior leadership staff meets with local media representatives on a regular basis

**Weakness**

- A formal district, building and teacher based leadership team model is not described. This is an important data-driven tool that is research based. This internal communication structure can be a critical component to provide buy in and support for a personalized learning system.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The performance measure described in the section of the proposal is for the most part based on the Georgia Department of Education College and Career Readiness Performance Index, End of course exams and the Georgia Criterion Reference competency test. The performance measures include the number of participating students whose teacher of record and principal are highly effective (data on this is not available according to the proposal until the 2014-2015 school year); students meeting the "exceeds" level for various subjects on state assessment tests; students who are on track to college and career readiness programs as measured by the state test and number of credits earned; and overall fitness for 4-8 graders determined by a state assessment. Based on the fact that the charts are from last year's grant and the fact the district could not find information of students who complete FAFSA forms pushes this score to the low end.

Strengths

- State assessments are used as benchmark measures for the appropriate age bands
- Growth targets seem appropriate and achievable for all performance measures
- Subgroups have detailed information and represent appropriate performance measures

Weakness

- Other performance measures that are appropriate to a personalized learning program could have been determined such as students who advance via mastery and not time could be measured
- The tables are from last year's grant proposal SY2012-13 instead of from SY2013-14
- Data from the teacher evaluation program is not available until 2014-2015 or later.
- Information on FAFSA is not presented. High school guidance counselors may have access to that information.

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

**5**

**3**

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

The evaluation system was described in detail in the earlier section of the proposal. Table E1 details the information gathered, and when it will be gathered. This is the performance measure on which the district is basing the grant. Since a high quality plan with goals, activities, rationale, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties was not clearly defined a true sense of evaluating the effectiveness of the invest may may be difficult. More planning on the development of the proposal in the section would lead to a higher score. This section of the grant is limited in scope justifying a medium score.

Strengths

- The earlier section of the grant spells out the performance measures and ways they will evaluate the effectiveness of investments.

Weakness

- This section of the grant is very sparse in nature. Nine sentences are used to describe this section on evaluating the effectiveness of the investments.
- All of the data collected on chart E1 is antidotal in nature—observations, meetings with various groups, reports and focus group surveys. Student performance data is collected via state tests on a yearly basis but not reflected in the timeline of the chart. Since a timeframe for all performance measures is not described, adjustments to the grant are harder to determine.
- The district talks about an established culture of being open and explicit about expenditures, yet lacks a complete performance measure section that provides data to measure all components of the proposal.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

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

The budget is described in detail. Budget categories and funds from other sources are described and noted. The project is broken down into 6 functional categories and 1 coordination category. Each project level category is further divided into cost categories that are appropriate to the overall project. It is possible to determine one-time cost and ongoing costs. The overall budget seems appropriate, well documented and reasonable. This leads to a high mark in this section with one weakness noted--travel for workshops in the past.

Strengths

- Much work was done on the budget because of the specific projects and items listed.
- The video server project was very detailed
- Grant calls for local project management costs which is important for accountability
- Indirect costs are not needed or asked for in the project

Weaknesses

- Specific vendors are not listed in the learning management project level section.
- Some of the travel expenses are for workshops that have already taken place. This oversight is important relating to audits and how money will be spent in the future. Had the grant been updated, this would not have been an issue.

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

**10**

**7**

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

The district has a fund source that it has created—a local sales tax—to help fund this program once the RTTTD funds are expended. This provides the district some extra leverage on program design and shows the importance of involving the community in school matters. The work involved in the strategic plan and other community outreach programs has literally paid off for this district. It is evident that the district has thought about sustainability. The evaluation of the quality of investments is not described in this section. This lowers the score to mid level

**Strengths**

- They want to build a cadre of master teachers who are adept in a personalized learning environment
- A personalized learning team will support and train other staff members in this program
- The strategic plan vision statement calls for the use of a personalized learning system.
- District will sustain the project through other federal funds, state funding, local tax revenues and the additional educational special local option sales tax

**Weakness**

- There is no evidence of a plan that evaluates the effectiveness of the investments in this proposal. This makes it difficult to judge what components should be kept, revised or removed

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

This section was not part of the Morgan application.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant put together an interesting proposal that is an overall strong project. The plan was detailed and ambitious, yet had goals that were achievable. The plan was supported by numerous people in the school community—from the local mayor to student’s in the schools. The overlying purpose of the grant—building a viable personalized learning system was evident throughout the entire proposal. As noted some of the performance measures and evaluation plan could be better. The difficulty in judging this grant was that some of the information was out of date and a section was included that was not part of this year’s application. Tables were not updated and the dates in the performance measurement section was FY2011-12 instead of FY2012-13. In the Teaching and Leading section, many implementation dates are past. Conferences that teachers were to attend are from the summer of 2013. It was clear that this grant was written for last year’s RTTTD program. Updates for this year’s grant were not fully completed. All schools in the district will be participating in the grant.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>122</b>
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0073GA-2 for Morgan County Charter School System

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant details a reform vision that demonstrates systematic reform in student assessment. Examples of technology the applicant would use to measure student progress included norm-referenced assessments such as the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). In addition, the applicant correlates norm-referenced assessments with state standardized assessments and prescriptive software programs. One software example was referenced by the applicant, CompassLearning, which is currently in use as two of the four schools.</p> <p>The applicant states the need for 24/7 technology and Internet access for all students and teachers. The applicant supports this need by having student learners who are traditionally marginalized in educational settings including those who are low-income, minority, English language learners, have disabilities, and reside in rural areas. However, the applicant does not support this need with sufficient examples or success in accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning with 24/7 technology and Internet access. Technology is a tool and the applicant does not provide a clear approach to how the 24/7 access to technology and the Internet will help achieve goals within the application. In addition, the applicant does not adequately address how the proposed vision will be based on students' academic interests. Overall, the applicant's learning management system program is not described as a robust data system.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant provides a mediocre approach to support its work in the four core educational assurance areas. Specifically, the applicant does not detail a distinct evaluation system for teachers, principals, and the superintendent.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant met all criteria for this section. Specifically, the applicant detailed the selection process of all students (3,360 total) to promote vertical alignment of the instructional process. The participating schools collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements. The applicant also stated 254 full- and part-time teachers and 25 full- and part-time administrators would participate in the project. The applicant provided demographic information for the student population. The low percentage for low-income families at the secondary level (26 percent) is explained adequately by the applicant.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides inputs, outputs, and outcomes for the project. However, the applicant does not detail a high-quality plan for the project or how the proposal will support district-wide change. Specifically, the long term outcome provided by the applicant is not measurable or specific as stated "personalized learning systems benefit students and improve educational system in Morgan County."</p> <p>Some of the inputs, assumptions and partners, do not have a supporting rationale or description thus far in the application. Therefore, it is unclear why the applicant considers these inputs significant or what the anticipated impact on the project is.</p> <p>Several outputs and outcomes are not measurable or specific and therefore unattainable. For example: one of the activities is to "deliver professional learning." The applicant does not state what types of professional learning will be delivered. Likewise, the applicant states a short outcome is "increased frequency of use" for students and parents. The</p>		

applicant does not provide an expected increase or how the expected increase will positively affect the overall project.

No timeline or responsible parties are provided by the applicant. The lack of a timeline and responsible parties greatly diminishes the applicant's chances of a successful project. Without a timeline or responsible parties, it is impossible to monitor the project throughout the duration.

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

**10**

**5**

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

Overall the applicant sufficiently addresses all components of this criterion. The applicant details performance on summative assessments (proficiency and growth). The applicant also expects to decrease and in a few instances eliminate achievement gaps in reading and math performance as evidenced by chart (A)(4)(b). The graduation rates and college enrollment rates are provided as defined in the notice.

The annual goals provided by the applicant are ambitious yet achievable. They are ambitious because in most cases the current performance of students exceeds State ESEA targets. They are achievable because the expected increases are attainable. However, the goals are one-year old. This is a clear weakness for this criterion.

**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>13</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Overall, the applicant demonstrates its ability to improve student learning outcomes and achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its schools. The multiple recognitions received by the applicant at all grade levels is noteworthy. Specifically the state-level and national recognitions such as Title I School of Distinction and America's Best High School. Student performance data is made available to stakeholders in a variety of methods including: monthly board meeting presentations, parent and teacher advisory committee meetings, and town hall presentations. The data is also posted on the individual school websites as well as the district's website.</p> <p>The applicant's method of disaggregating data with teachers through local and regional "data digs" is clear of evidence of using data with educators to inform. However, the applicant does not clearly link the sharing of data with students and parents in ways that improve participation and instruction.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Each school is governed by a school governance council which is comprised of teachers, parents, community members, and students. Each school governance council is subject to and complies with the Open and Public Meetings Act and is responsible for decision-making authority related to personnel recommendations, use of funding in technology and instructional materials, reviewing assessment data, assisting with school accreditation, monitoring the school improvement planning process, and recommend needs to the Board during the annual budget process. In addition, two members from each individual school council serve on the System Charter Leadership Team. The applicant provided an example of the agenda and meeting minutes from the System Charter Leadership Team. The applicant also identifies actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level.</p> <p>The applicant has clearly demonstrated evidence of a high level of transparency as detailed by this particular criterion.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant adequately demonstrates evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environment detailed in the proposal. Specifically, the applicant has been granted charter status by the Georgia State Board of Education. In addition, the applicant has made full use of the autonomy granted in their charter system contract.</p>		

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Overall the applicant demonstrates evidence of involving and engaging stakeholders through the development of the proposal. This included soliciting input from teachers, students, parents, and a variety of community organizations and businesses. It is especially noteworthy that members of the grant planning team met with the media every week to update them on the grant application's process.</p> <p>It is unclear how students were able to access and assess the proposal other than the two student government leaders at the secondary schools. The limited involvement and engagement of students does not support meaningful engagement as described within this criterion. The students are the proposed users and direct beneficiaries of the project. Knowing this, their involvement is critical to meaningful engagement.</p>		

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Overall, the applicant details an approach to learning that proposes to engage learners. This approach includes sufficient and timely training for the students, teachers, and parents on the technology and Learning Management System (LMS). The Personalized Learning (PL) Coaches will assist with the necessary professional development for the teachers. The three stages of personalized learning described by the applicant are strengths of the proposal and are necessary components of a high-quality plan. These stages will support students understanding of what they are learning, promote deep learning experiences, and aid in the mastery of critical academic content. The applicant describes how "design thinking" will play a significant role in the transformation from current standards to a learning organization. The "flipped" classroom model and videoconferencing will provide beneficial instructional approaches.</p> <p>The timeline and progression of the project are clearly described by the applicant and support the project as defined.</p> <p>It is unclear how the optional portion of the LMS as described by the applicant (possible assignments and activities made accessible through the LMS dashboard) would be used or monitored. This is a critical portion of the personalized sequence of instructional content. The optional portion, as briefly described by the applicant, is the portion which would clearly provide the personalized learning component. The applicant states students will have access to the Internet and engaging digital content 24/7, but it is unclear how this will be monitored or assessed for effectiveness of the project. Other than the inclusion of videoconferencing for college level courses, the applicant does not sufficiently address other college- and career-ready proponents of the project. College- and career-ready skills are one of the four core assurance areas that is not clearly described by the applicant. This includes describing a direct approach to learning that proposes to engage learners.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant's plan to implementing instructional strategies for improving teaching and leading will assist educators to improve instruction. Specifically, the three stages and inclusion of Professional Learning (PL) Coaches is significant. The three stages model an achievable transformation for teachers to adapt content and instruction. The required prior experiences and traits of the PL Coaches, enthusiasm, teaching practice, and integration of technology in their classrooms as an educator, are strengths of the project. The responsibilities of the PL Coaches are noteworthy: moderating online discussions with PL pilot teachers and creating model universally-designed standards- and inquiry-based lessons that integrate technology and build on the stages of personalized learning.</p> <p>The small number of teachers in year one of the pilot is a strength. This will allow for immediate, continuous improvement as necessary for the project. The applicant describes a community of practice model which is self-sustainable.</p> <p>The applicant states the PL Coaches will be paid stipends for afterschool responsibilities. The significance of these positions is diminished with the minimal time expectations. It is unclear why these key positions are not full-time.</p> <p>The teacher evaluation system is not detailed and there is no implementation plan for providing feedback to teachers.</p> <p>Year one of the project refers to dates which have already passed including attendance at the International Society for</p>		

Technology in Education in June 2013. Out-of-date references occur throughout the proposal. These occurrences do not demonstrate a strong, well-thought out project.

#### 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>12</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant's charter school status and recent evidence of practices and policies supports their structure and ability to support the personalized learning environments described in the proposal. The system has several leadership teams in place including the senior leadership team, an administrative team consisting of program directors, School Governance Councils, and a Principal's Council. In addition consistent communication is demonstrated through a Friday Update by the superintendent to the Board of Education.</p> <p>Students at the secondary level have the opportunity to earn class credit based on mastery of standards instead of designated seat time. This is also true of credit recovery and summer school classes as stated by the applicant. The applicant also successfully implemented a week-long fall and spring intersession for remediation and mastery of standards. This is one example of a unique method for providing learning resources to students during non-school hours.</p> <p>The applicant did not specifically state resources or instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to students with disabilities and English learners.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant meets some components of this selection criterion. Specifically, the applicant describes a comprehensive plan to support the one-to-one initiative which includes 4G coverage in the county and providing "hot spots" in outlying areas of the county. In addition, teachers will be provided with the same devices as their students to assist in learning how to use the devices and being able to trouble-shoot simple problems. The applicant's week-long fall and spring intersession for remediation and mastery of individual missed standards is a strength of the applicant's accessibility to students during non-school days. The applicant currently uses interoperable data systems.</p> <p>It is unclear how the one-to-one initiative will be deployed or consistent based on the applicant's statement that each student will receive an iPad or laptop based on their needs. The applicant has not stated both devices are interchangeable with the Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS has yet to be determined which is a concern because it may not be operable on both laptops and iPads. The LMS is essential to the applicant's proposal to personalized learning. The LMS should be selected prior to selecting devices. It is also unclear how parents and students will export information and use with other learning supports. Without stating the LMS, the applicant fails to ensure criteria a, b, or d.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Overall the applicant meets the components of this criterion. A continuous improvement cycle is clearly described which includes setting goals, a high-quality plan, implementation, and evaluation. The applicant is accustomed to utilizing a continuous improvement process due to being a recipient of a Striving Readers grant in their primary and elementary school. The applicant has partnered with an external evaluation team to aid in the objectivity of the process and to benefit from expertise that does not currently exist in the school system. The external evaluation team will be responsible for the development of instruments, analyzes results, and to synthesize feedback about the use and effectiveness of the project. The timeline provided for years one and two and description of each evaluation tool is a strength of this section.</p> <p>The applicant does not adequately address how the information will be shared publicly in this section, but does do so in the next section.</p>		

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant describes methods for ongoing communication with a variety of stakeholders.</p> <p>The applicant does not detail any engagement practices. Specifically, there is not expectation for the the stakeholder to react, respond, or become engaged in the continuous improvement process. The methods described are informative, but not engaging. Details regarding a high-quality plan are not provided. Specifically, there are no details regarding what the applicant intends to do with the information collected which is a critical component of engagement.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant details twelve required performance measures and provides a rationale for each measure. The applicant includes the number and percentage of participating students by all required subgroups. However, the performance data charts are one-year old making the data outdated.</p> <p>The inclusion of the PSAT performance measure will support the measure regarding students college-readiness. The baseline data (one-year old) and annual targets for all performance measures except one (FAFSA) are expected to improve over time and is sufficient to gauge the implementation process.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide data or annual targets for the measure regarding the number and percentage of students who complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It is unclear why the applicant can't obtain this information moving forward or makes no effort to do so.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant details a sufficient plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Components of this plan include goals, a timeline, and a variety of stakeholders both internal and external. Quantitative and qualitative measures of stakeholders' experiences and perceptions will be evaluated. The applicant does not describe a rigorous continuous improvement plan as detailed in the narrative.</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>7</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Overall the applicant's budget tables support the project goals although some of the line items are categorized incorrectly. For example, the travel line item includes the cost to pay the trainers for their time.</p> <p>The weaknesses noted are the lack of a budget narrative and rational for the investments. Also the personnel costs so not appear to match the formula used. As stated, a teacher would receive \$150.00 for 80 hours of professional development which is approximately \$1.80 per hour. In addition the travel expenses for the two trainers detail what appear to be contracted services, not just travel.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Overall, the applicant details a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project. In addition to specific, measurable, and attainable goals, the plan includes support from Federal, state, and local sources. The plan to train all teachers will be sustainable for years to come as described by the applicant. There will be a number of Master Teachers to provide support to current and future staff as needed. The sustainability plan also includes funding for the replacement of one-hundred devices per year.</p> <p>The applicant states project evaluation and coordination will not be necessary at the end of the grant. With the ever-</p>		

changing nature of technology and Learning Management Systems, while an extensive, external evaluation may not be necessary or the best uses of resources, the notion that it is not needed at all is the only weakness noted in this section.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b> Not applicable.		

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Not Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b> The applicant states the need for 24/7 technology and Internet access for all students and teachers. The applicant supports this need by having student learners who are traditionally marginalized in educational settings including those who are low-income, minority, English language learners, have disabilities, and reside in rural areas. However, the applicant does not support this need with sufficient examples or success in accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning with 24/7 technology and Internet access. Technology is a tool and the applicant does not provide a clear approach to how the 24/7 access to technology and the Internet will help achieve goals within the application. In addition, the applicant does not adequately address how the proposed vision will be based on students' academic interests. The applicant has yet to determine which Learning Management System (LMS) will be used. And in several instances, does not clearly identify what the LMS will provide to all students and how it will be regulated and used by all students. A one-to-one initiative alone, is not a personalized learning environment.		

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>145</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0073GA-3 for Morgan County Charter School System

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

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b> The applicant builds on the four core educational assurance areas by adopting CCSS and clearly proposing how the data systems and learning plans will be coordinated to help students succeed through a personalized environment. The classroom environment is credibly described as being one in which students will be provided opportunities to meet standards and not be limited to a traditional grade and seat-time environment. This has the potential of deepening student learning by allowing them to achieve at rates that are differentially challenging. The applicant presents a high-quality plan		

for providing teachers with experiences to help them meet the challenges of this new environment by helping them to learn to build on the learning management system to address student needs and interests; the plan includes short-, medium- and long-term outcomes that will develop and reward teachers as they implement the new system. The plan also includes ambitious goals of expanding infrastructure beyond the school and into the community; this is a necessary step if the vision is to become a reality.

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

**10**

**6**

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant makes a compelling case for the need that all schools, students and teachers in the district be included in order for the initiative to be implemented systematically and make a systemic impact. Data are provided that show that significant percentages of children meet the definition of high need, especially in the primary (465 of 815 students) and elementary schools (412 of 720). There are, however, inconsistencies between the narrative and the table. In the narrative, the applicant states that 53.7% of students are low-income, as defined by free and reduced lunch numbers, while in the table that figure increases to 57%. It also appears that the applicant is implying that only low-income students are high-need, since the numbers at all levels of the county schools are the same in those two categories; this seems incongruous with the definition that high-need include students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students far below grade level. While the percentages in these categories are likely to be highly correlated, the probability of there being a perfect correlation is highly unlikely. These likely inconsistencies call into question the applicants' credibility in using data effectively in implementing a high-quality plan.

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

**10**

**5**

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a logic model that shows the inputs to be implemented, the outputs (identifying both activities and participants) that will be created, and outcomes (short, medium, and long) achieved within their proposal. This flow chart shows the general path that the district will take to implement their plan and identifies both primary and secondary beneficiaries of their efforts. However, this does not meet several elements of a high-quality plan because it does not identifying specific activities (e.g., in the PD for teachers), the participants in these activities and the parties responsible for them; while the likelihood is high that these activities could lead to the outcomes that are established as benchmarks, the lack of details do not allow a reader to have sufficient information to determine this likelihood on all activities. Since all schools are participants, there was no need for the plan to discuss scale-up efforts.

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

**10**

**6**

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

The district is to be commended for using a higher standard (percent exceeding CRCT test proficiency standards) for measuring their success rather than just meeting the state standards in the CRCTs and EOCTs. This is already a high-achieving district as indicated by their 90% overall meeting of proficiency standards, and their goal of increasing by 2%/year those students overall exceeding performance on both math and reading in grades 3-8 seems both ambitious and achievable. Efforts to decrease the achievement gap seem less ambitious, especially where it concerns both Black children and SWD in mathematics. There is no explanation for using different metrics for accelerating these two subgroups' performances in reading (4% gain/year) and mathematics (4% gain/year) at those grade levels as compared to White students performance increases of 2% and 3% in reading and math, respectively. This makes closing the gap in mathematics a longer process. It appears that other goals (grad rates and college enrollment) are achievable, with average annual increases, but there is no narrative or data to support that these are particularly ambitious when compared to other like school districts or to the state as a whole.

**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>12</b>

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

The district clearly demonstrates a record of success over the past 4 years by outperforming state means in most tested areas and demonstrating significant increases in student performance in AP courses (while nearly tripling the number of students taking these courses) and IB diploma candidates. They also demonstrate some closing of the achievement gap in

CRCT math scores, noting that Black and Economically Disadvantaged students have the greatest change in performance with increases of 7% and 8.6%. The graduation rate, however, has remained relatively stable and the district currently lacks sufficient data to compare college enrollment patterns; both of these are mitigated somewhat by a relatively high estimate of 65% of graduates attending post-secondary options. The school leadership is doing a commendable job of making student performance data available to educators, students and community. Data disaggregated by subgroups have been used to inform educational practice by engaging significant and ambitious reforms, such as providing students with additional support like morning tutoring, "Lunch and Learn" sessions and other programming; the applicant proffers that this is directly related to narrowing of achievement gaps. The Strategic Planning Group (made up of community members, educators and parents) consisted of approximately 350 people, was instrumental in the 2012 Strategic Plan that incorporated personalized learning into the district's operations, and demonstrates how data have been used to improve instruction through wide-scale participation. The district also makes information available to improve participation to community members through a variety of meetings and presentations to civic groups

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The district has a clear structure for and defined policies that maintain a high level of transparency in processes, practices and investments. The infrastructure includes the school governance council that are charged with determining the use of funding on a yearly basis, including recommending personnel for hire and identifying school material and financial needs as part of annual budget review process. The oversight provided by the System Charter Leadership Team facilitates transparency among the individual school governance councils and ensuring their adherence to state policies. This transparency includes having information from the following categories available for the school governance councils:

- Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all instructional staff
- Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all teachers
- Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level

There is no evidence that the US Census Bureau's F-33 Survey was used.

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

As a charter school under state law the district has clearly been given the autonomy to implement the activities required for personalizing learning environments for students; this increased flexibility has already been provided to the district with a concomitant increase in accountability. It is also clear from the narrative that the school has already attained some experience in utilizing the flexibility allowed by the charter in attempting to address specific student needs (e.g., extended learning time beyond the school day and providing students with small learning communities as an environmental context). With the goal of the grant RFP to be increasing personalized learning, the district's current conditions of small learning communities and flexible scheduling will allow for students to have multiple ways of addressing standards that exist beyond the traditional model of schooling. In addition, the current structure of each school's governance council working under the umbrella of the System Charter Leadership Team is created to ensure that the former addresses implementation strengths and needs at the school level while the latter ensures that decisions made at the school level conform to the regulatory requirements of the charter.

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

The district has a variety of structures in place that facilitate meaningful stakeholder engagement. Their narrative shows clear evidence of their engaging in a multivariate approach to planning that has called upon school and community members, outside experts and local leaders to engage with the school in drafting or commenting on this plan. The appendices provide multiple letters from parents, community service agencies, students, teachers, political leaders (both local and state) that convincingly makes the case for wide-ranging support; there is no specific evidence provided about revisions based on engagement and feedback, although the multi-stage process implies that feedback was incorporated throughout.

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

	Available	Score
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<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant makes a compelling case for the potential of the learning management system (LMS) to provide sufficient information to engage and empower students, parents and teachers in understanding what students need to learn as well as tracking what they have learned in order for them to be college- and career-ready. Students and parents have access to dashboards that will provide information on where the student is in terms of standards met and activities to support their learning of those standards not yet attained. The district wisely proposes to phase in the initiatives in order to take advantage of teachers who are already effective and excited about the new initiatives, then build capacity by using those classrooms as demonstration classrooms. The potential of 24/7 electronic access to the learning management system for students and their parents also provides advantages to personalize each child's learning environment and "flip" the classroom so that teachers can help students with individual needs and deepening understanding as students master critical skills and content. The flipping of the classroom and using teachers as facilitators of specific learning needs and goals has the potential to positively impact both high-achieving and high-need students. The logic model shows many of the elements of a high-quality plan for effecting change in the district and classroom and the four-year plan indicates how the district plans their phase-in. The dashboards will be effective tools in communicating feedback to individual students and their parents, and web-based field trips and video conferencing tools will provide students with virtual access to high-quality content. The district already has in place a number of interventions (e.g., Read 180, FastForward, after-school tutoring, International Baccalaureate Program, AP classes, etc.) that differentially address both struggling and high-achieving students; these can be even more effective through interfacing with personal tablets that each student will have. There is a plan to provide training to all teachers and students so that the hardware can be effectively used. The dates of the four-year plan, however, appear somewhat confusing as the district indicates that Year 1 will begin in December of 2012 and Year 4 will be completed in 2016. Given that a high-quality plan requires an alignment among the timeline and activities, this lack of alignment makes this a medium response.</p>		

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>
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<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides some of the elements of a high-quality plan to improve instruction and build capacity within the district. The strengths of this plan lie in the plan to phase in the project by building on successes and help students to meet college and career-ready standards. There appear to be several levels of support for teachers as they undergo PD; these include identifying personalized learning (PL) coaches and building capacity to enable teachers to become master teachers and support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments. As described throughout the application, students and teachers will have ongoing access to data to measure progress. The dashboards are also identified as a major tool for providing teachers with actionable information to identify optimal approaches; in addition, the district has made a commitment to use grant funds to seek out additional resources and tools for improving the learning context. There are several concerns, however, in this criterion. While there are several brief mentions of "evaluation" and a statement that PL Team will provide feedback to teachers, the narrative fails to mention to what extent the PL Team structure is related to the district evaluation system and lacks explicit ways in which the schools evaluation system will be used within the feedback loop. This is especially disconcerting when there are mentions of the master teacher designation, as the applicant has predetermined the number of teachers who will be invited on a yearly basis to be master teachers without any mention of how the criteria for invitation intersect with the district's evaluation system. Finally, as identified in the previous section, there are concerns about the time schedule provided, which indicate that some of the resources planned for accessing for training (e.g., ISTE conference in June 2013) have happened in the past.</p>		
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**D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)**

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

<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district clearly has already created the infrastructure and has policies and practices in place that will support the implementation of personalized learning. Several levels of leadership structures are already in place, including Senior Leadership teams, Principals' Councils and School Governance Councils that are empowered with significant amounts of autonomy to district and school policies under their charter school status. Seat time has already been waived and structures in place for students to earn credits as they master standards. Numerous resources (Read180, tutoring, enrichment classes) are available to students that provide adaptations and accessibility to all students. Because the district</p>		
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already has practices, policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning, they are considered ex post facto to have a high-quality plan that has already been put in place and need not unfold throughout the grant period.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has some aspects of a high-quality plan to ensure that the infrastructure is available to support implementation. The general plan and the expressed intent of having each student have access to an electronic device will ensure that students and their parents have access to content and resources. Teachers will also have access to these tools and will provide initial support for students and their parents. The plan also includes a tech support helpline for users experiencing difficulties. The plan also shows how evidence flows from the school to users through their interoperable data systems; however, it is not clear that the flow is reciprocal, which is a requirement of the application. Of greater concern is the statement that the district will know by January of 2013 whether 4G coverage will be in place; again, it is unclear as to whether this is a typo or whether this is a previously submitted aspect of a prior grant application. If the former, the concerns are not as great; if the latter, the applicant should be able to update reviewers on whether that was achieved. Regardless, there appear to be concerns even within the document about pockets of users who may not have access. Additionally, the applicant states that parents are already at ease in using the Parent Portal, yet earlier in the grant, the applicant noted that there are some areas of the rural county that do not have easy access to the technology required; those parents are likely not at ease with the portal and there appear to be no specific plans to assist them

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

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

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

The applicant provides a high-quality plan that, if implemented as proposed, will complement and advance their current practices and infrastructure for managing their continuous improvement process. The district provides compelling evidence (approacAdvancEd system accreditation) that they have some experience and expertise in managing continuous improvement. They cite previous internal evaluations of system initiatives as evidence of this expertise in practice. In addition, they will contract with the University of Georgia to lead an external evaluation. The evaluation plan builds upon the logic model and specifies a mixed methodological approach to measuring short-, medium-, and long-term goals and shows by month when data will be gathered or shared. Multiple techniques, including focus groups, surveys of participants, and classroom observations. Ongoing meetings with stakeholders will enable adjustments based upon both internal and external data. Regularly scheduled meetings of various groups (Board of Ed, Principals' Councils, etc) will ensure that information is publicly shared in to internal and external audiences.

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

The district provides a high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. They already have in place the infrastructure to successfully engage in ongoing communication with internal and external stakeholders. Senior Leadership and School Councils have established meeting times. The superintendents has committed to making report outs on grant activities part of his quarterly town hall meetings. The business community will be engaged through a Partners in Education group and through the local Chamber of Commerce board, and the district has made commitments to engage in discussions with civic groups (e.g., Lions, Rotary). In addition, evaluations with opportunities for feedback, will be published on the district's website.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a clear rationale for selecting each measure and each measures' importance in the accountability system of the state and meets expectations in both required and applicant-proposed measures. Lacking in most all of these performance measures is an explanation of how any of these, with the exception of tracking credits, will provide formative and timely information tailored to the personalized learning environment that is proposed within the grant. In addition, many of the measures appear to have achievable, yet less than ambitious goals. For example, the percentage of students with highly effective teachers begins with a baseline estimate of 16% then goes down for 3 years before rising

past baseline in the last year of the grant. This seems to contradict the district's intent to have 64 master teachers by year 3.

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

**5**

**5**

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

The district provides a high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of RttT-D-funded activities by hiring an external evaluator in addition to running its own internal evaluation plan. The external evaluator provides a detailed plan for evaluating PD and technology, through methods as varied as focus groups, surveys, and classroom observations, with timelines for gathering and reporting data. The various infrastructures already in place, and the relative autonomy of both the district within the state and the school councils within the district, provide confidence that the flexibility exists to make course adjustments as information becomes available.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

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

The applicant's budget appears to be sufficient to support the development and implementation of the project. The proposal appropriately identifies significant costs in year 1 for the purchase of hardware and software to provide students and teachers with devices to implement and manage the personalized learning system. Training costs are identified, along with sufficient travel budgets for team members to take advantage of learning opportunities as they strive to create new learning opportunities for both teachers and students. Planners have identified local sources of funds (e.g. ELOST, Title I, Title 2A) to pay for costs of substitutes as appropriate and to cover the costs of internet access within and out of school. This latter expense will be an ongoing one and the use of local funds is appropriate for sustaining the personalized learning environment beyond the grant period. There is no apparent funding for replacement of hardware during the scope of the grant.

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

**10**

**2**

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

The applicant will use the grant period to develop internal capacity to continue to model and train new teachers and those who are in the latter phases of implementation of the initial proposal. Accordingly, they anticipate minimal costs associated with training new teachers and have identified Title I, Title VI-B and local revenue for this purpose. Tax revenues and ELOST funds will be used for maintaining the LMS. It is not clear, though, from either the narrative or the table how the district will maintain the equitable access portion of the project, which is the major expenditure at a projected \$3.5M/yr. This includes anticipated replacement of 100 pieces of hardware/year. Given that there are 3700 tablets and that these will already be 4 years old at the end of the project, this estimate seems low as it will take 37 years to replace all hardware funded by the grant. As the lynchpin of the grant, this area is of great concern and the anticipated source of funds is better utilization of E-Rate, which is underdeveloped in the explanation (i.e., there is no explanation of what E-Rate is or the extent to which this will be a meaningful source of funding).

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant did not address this criterion

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<p><b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant coherently and comprehensively addressed the core assurance areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adopting college- and career-ready standards in their plan within a personalized learning management system</li> <li>• building upon currently-available data systems to improve the potential for students to enhance the current mastery context in which they have been freed from seat time requirements</li> <li>• developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals by establishing a master teacher ladder</li> <li>• addressing the needs of learners by setting achievable goals designed to improve learning for all students and close achievement gaps for high-need students through the systemic implementation of the personalized learning environment</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the plan to provide a personalized learning management system has the potential to significantly improve learning for students as they strive to meet college- and career-ready standards by meeting their individual needs more effectively. The proposal provides a clear plan for improving educators' effectiveness and, since it is a district-wide initiative, this will expand student access to effective educators. This should decrease achievement gaps as proposed and increase graduation rates if implemented with fidelity.</p>		

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>144</b>
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