



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0071NH-3 for Nashua School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The reform vision is very thorough and convincing. The goals are coherent and aggressive.</p> <p>(a) standards and assessments will be adopted to prepare students for college and careers. Rigorous curricula will be developed and assessments will be designed and/or adopted to measure if they are working as planned. Comprehensive data systems will be designed and implemented to measure student growth. Extensive professional development will be designed and implemented to ensure that teachers and principals are highly capable. Overall, the reform vision is very extensive and comprehensive. It builds upon the four core assurance areas by presenting a table with each assurance area, strategies for reform and tasks, deadlines and parties responsible.</p> <p>(b) NSD Table A(1)(3) articulates the vision in a comprehensive format. Common and individual tasks are outlined, outcomes, sustainability and parties responsible. The reform vision gives details for each step of the implementation and lists each assurance area and an appropriate strategy</p> <p>(c) The reform vision provides evidence that the classroom experience for students and teachers will be highly personalized. Blended learning programs, inquiry-based instruction, interventions, Leveled Literacy Intervention and i-Ready, an adaptive diagnostic system are evidence of the LEA's aggressive reform vision..</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The description of the process to select schools to participate is well detailed. All schools were eventually chosen as the reform vision was communicated. As the grant vision was rolled out, originally to serve only the high school grades, other schools became enthusiastic about the grant and asked to be included. that grew and expanded, and eventually all of the schools in the LEA asked to be included. The applicant has described this process of schools saying "we're in" very thoroughly. Clearly, a lot of thought was given when schools asked to be included and it was decided to let them all participate.</p> <p>(b) The list of participating schools is complete, as more schools became enthusiastic about the grant through the interactive feedback process and solicitation of ideas and input into the the process, the list of participating schools expanded to include all schools in the LEA. The applicant has described this process very thoroughly.</p> <p>(c) All of the required information has been provided and the completion of this section of the application was very well done. All of the schools in the LEA will participate in the program. Both the number of students and the percentage of students from low-income families as well as the number and percentage of high-need students were included, emphasizing the high percentages of these students in the LEA.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Table (A)(3)(1), originally presented as part of the reform vision, is very extensive and a high-quality plan. The plan is extensive in that it provides steps for implementing each part of the vision, who is responsible and individual and group tasks. A logic model is also presented, which illustrates how the district sees students as college and career ready. Throughout the plan for reform and change, aggressive tasks and goals are set for each of the years of grant, with specific outcomes along the way.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The goals are ambitious yet achievable from SY 2013-14 to Post Grant,. However, there is no data provided regarding the State ESEA targets for the LEA, so it is not possible to determine if the goals are equal to or exceed those state targets.</p> <p>(a) The growth rate for proficiency status on assessments is ambitious yet achievable. Again, there is no State ESEA data provided, so it is not possible to determine if the growth rates for proficiency are equal to or exceed those state standards</p> <p>(b) The plan is ambitious in closing the achievement gap of underserved and under represented groups. The data is clear, concise and complete.</p> <p>(c) Graduation rates are ambitious and the goals include all subgroups</p> <p>(d) College enrollment rates are ambitious and achievable, and include Post-Grant goals, with a steady and attainable increase over each of the 4 years.</p> <p>(e) Postsecondary degree attainment goals show a steady growth and are aggressive</p> <p>The weaknesses found are as follows: The achievement gap calculations are not based on comparisons of the same groups - i.e. Latino LEA population for the LEA is measured against the Latino population for the state, rather than calculating the achievement gap for Latino population vs. highest performing group at both the LEA and state levels.</p> <p>ESEA state targets are not given, so it is not possible to compare the goals to state targets.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is a clear record of success in the past four years as described in the application, including a table. However, the table does not present annual data - rather it presents data in a four-year range, presenting the measure at the beginning of the range and the measure at the end of the range, but no specific data for the years in between.</p> <p>(a) The drop out rate reduction is evidence of the district's success over the past four years. ELL students have met proficiency on state assessments at an increasing rate over the past four years, helping to close the achievement gap. The number of high school students receiving college credit has increased, providing evidence of improved student learning and achievement.</p> <p>(b) There is evidence that one of the five low-performing schools has achieved success (Ledge Street). The evidence, as stated in assessment scores, shows an increase in students reaching proficiency, but is not significant. The turnaround strategies for Ledge Street Elementary are ambitious and significant. The plan that will be put into place at Fairgrounds Elementary is ambitious - however, results are not yet available so there is no 4-year history</p> <p>(c) The district does a very good job of making student performance data available. The student data notebooks are especially impressive.</p> <p>Although the applicant shows a clear record of success in many areas, it does not show such success over a 4-year period. There is no evidence of a clear track record of success for graduation rates or college enrollment.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district is required under state Right to Know legislation to make all expenditures public. All four (a, b, c and d) types of expenditures are made public in the local newspapers as well as the schools' websites. The annual budget process is highly transparent, open to the public, publicized and extends over a 6-week period. All information is also available upon request, making the expenditure information highly transparent.</p>		

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The state of New Hampshire grants school districts, through its adoption of a framework of minimum standards, has more than sufficient autonomy to implement the proposal. There is evidence that the LEA has already taken advantage of this framework by developing personalized learning at the high school level through adopting competency based systems to award credit. The autonomy to do this was part of the state's granting autonomy at the local level. In addition, there is evidence that local school boards may request alternative methods of compliance with relevant state rules. Successful conditions and sufficient autonomy are present.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Throughout the development of the proposal, starting as early as September 2012, the applicant did an excellent job of including all stakeholders. Evidence of this is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher survey, which asked for teachers' input into the process and ideas for implementation • A parent survey, which also asked for input into the process and ideas to for activities and programs • The teacher's union (LEA collective bargaining unit), was engaged given several opportunities for feedback <p>(b) There is evidence of letters of support, which are of high quality and greatly support the project. The letters of support are from parents and parent organizations, student representatives, early learning programs, business community and civil rights organizations.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan contains all of the components of a high quality plan, and the applicant has given extensive and comprehensive information, including activities, deliverables, and timelines to implement the program and improve student learning.</p> <p>The strengths of the plan are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early engagement with counselors (beginning in grade 6) to explore careers and becoming college ready, helping students understand how what they are learning will help them to be college and career ready • embedded curriculum strategies • expanded partnerships with Higher Ed • students will have access to cultural awareness and cultural enrichment opportunities • Students will be able to be involved in studies in areas of deep interest • Students will master critical content through technology, enhancement and other extended school day programs • Digital learning is presented • Data-driven processes are in place to ensure that high-need students are on track toward meeting college and career ready standards • World languages are taught as early as the 3rd grade • Advisory opportunities and mentorship programs will help students choose areas of academic interest to be involved in • use of tablets to research and explore real-life, relevant problems helps students connect what they are learning to the real world and see how their learning is connected to college and c career readiness • Students' current knowledge will be assessed through PSAT, SAT and other standardized tests and personalized learning plans will be formed based on that information • Students will be able to access their own data <p>The weaknesses of the plan are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of training and support to students to ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources 		

- Although students will be able to be involved in studies in areas of deep interest, there is no evidence that they will be able to choose their instruction based on their interests
- There is no evidence of high-quality content that will be delivered through the technology that will be implemented

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan is presented in the form of a high quality plan in structure.

Strengths of the plan:

- The use of data to assess students' needs and personalized learning
- The adaptation of curriculum to provide a wider array of instruction as well as curriculum based on student progress
- Individualized academic plans developed with the use of data
- Actionable information is provided through data systems to enable teachers to assess student needs
- Instruction and curriculum will be adapted to provide an individualized learning opportunity
- There is evidence of professional development that will be used to improve teachers' abilities to provide personalized learning
- support from the Collective Bargaining Unit supports teacher and principal assessments, opportunities for correction and discipline if necessary
- Instruction will be personalized, including modifications to provide the instruction to disable students through use of ELO - Extended Learning Opportunities,
- School-wide competencies include students' growth in the areas of self-directed learning, communication, and acquiring information
- The core diploma, for which approximately 33% of students are IEP students, was developed for students to obtain a HS diploma and be career ready

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The current policies and procedures were discussed in a narrative in a minimal manner, and they were not discussed in the form of a high-quality plan. The plan does not include timelines, responsible parties or rationale for implementation.

The strengths presented are as follows:

- The LEA central office provides services to all schools - specifically providing professional development
- Students have opportunities, through state legislature and the school district, to earn HS credits while in Middle School
- The schools have the autonomy, through state legislation and the school district, to adapt curriculum so that students have an opportunity to demonstrate mastery in many ways
- Schools have autonomy to develop calendars for professional development opportunities
- The letter of support from the teachers' union states its support for sufficient flexibility and accountability for leadership teams

The weaknesses presented are as follows:

- There is no evidence that learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable to all students
- There is no evidence of a high-quality plan that contains all of the required elements

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

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3

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant responded to this criteria but did not present its responses in the form of a high-quality plan.

(a) While parents and students will have access to technology outside of the classroom as well as during school, there is no plan for the implementation of this technology or other resources

(b) While educators will have access to training, there is no evidence that students and parents will have any technical support. In addition, there is no high-quality plan for implementation

(c) There is no evidence that parents and students will be able to export their information in any format

Data managers would oversee, coordinate and respond to the immediate needs of administrators and teachers. There is no evidence that the data manager would provide services to parents or students - or that anyone within the district would.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan for continuous improvement is clear and concise. It contains all of the elements of a high-quality plan with the exception of timelines.</p> <p>The i-Ready system enables teachers to continuously assess students' performance and progress toward goals</p> <p>The NSD Curriculum, Instructing and Assessment (CIA) committee with teacher/administrative representation from three levels serves to utilize data and assessment results to ensure a full NSD Curriculum</p> <p>The director of Instructional Data (DID) position will be created, and will design and drive a comprehensive program evaluation model that addresses outcomes and performance measures. An ongoing process evaluation will be designed to help explore the comprehensive, systemic reform and improvement to determine if changes or enhancements need to be made. Existing data teams will report to this position.</p> <p>There is no evidence of how the applicant will publicly share the information. There is insufficient evidence of feedback mechanisms.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The annual improvement showcase will engage with parents and other external stakeholders.</p> <p>Websites, newsletters and dashboards allow the stakeholders to have knowledge of the progress of the schools and the grant. However, there is no process for engagement - only communication.</p> <p>The elements of a high-quality plan that are missing are: rationale, timelines, and responsible parties.</p> <p>Although there is some evidence of communication, there is insufficient evidence that feedback loops or mechanisms are in place.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The rationale for each of the performance measures was given and are explicit and complete. They are also very measurable and reasonable.</p> <p>For the number of students served by effective and highly effective teachers and principals, it is unlikely that 100% of all teachers will be effective or highly effective by the end of the grant - this does not allow for teachers that have not yet been assessed or teachers that are in the process of becoming effective or highly effective.</p> <p>Arriving on time to classes is not a reliable or reasonable measure of career readiness.</p> <p>Promotion to the next grade does not always measure whether or not a student is on-track to be college and career ready</p>		

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Methods to collect survey data to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development are given as evidence of continuous improvement efforts.</p> <p>Feedback from parents and stakeholders will help to assess program effectiveness</p> <p>Cost-effectiveness ratios will be implemented</p> <p>The plan is not high-quality. It is missing timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative and tables clearly identify both funds that will be obtained through the grant and outside funds provided by the school district</p> <p>The budget is very detailed for each project and each portion of the plan and the funds are adequate</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The sustainability plan shows support from state lawmakers (letter of recommendation stating intent to sustain project) and school district leaders.</p> <p>The continuous evaluation process, which is high-quality will be used to inform future investments through external and internal evaluations. This same evaluation process will be used after the grant ends to ensure that feedback and assessments will drive future decisions.</p> <p>The sustainability plan will be advised and driven by feedback from the continuous evaluation plan.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan to create the Nashua Educational and Resource Center is a high-quality plan that includes all of the tasks and deliverables for implementation to serve students and parents in the LEA. The description of the partnership is clear and coherent and provides details of each of the partners and how the partners will provide specific services to each family.</p> <p>The partner envisioned in the plan - Nashua Educational and Resource Center - will integrate public and private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students.</p> <p>The performance measures that will be used to assess the progress and success of the partnership are concise and ambitious yet achievable. Both social and academic performance measures are used to assess the progress and success of the partnership. The performance measures are clearly stated by population level and by grade level. The selected performance indicators would be tracked using the data teams and tracking strategies mentioned earlier in the application, as the performance indicators are from the application. The partnership would provide support and assist the LEA in</p>		

reaching their goals. Student assessment data will be available to students and parents at the center, and they will have opportunities to speak and consult with educators about the data.

The partnership would do an excellent job of integrating education and other services for participating students. Bilingual staff would be available to speak with parents about both their students' progress academically and to help parents secure the social and community services they might be lacking. The plan does a thorough job of ensuring that both types of services are available and addresses the importance of satisfying social needs as part of the overall education process.

The center's success will be assessed using data, volunteer hours, surveys and will provide for improvement over the 4 years of the grant. Opportunities for feedback will ensure that the partnership's services can be altered or adjusted to ensure that all students' social and academic needs are being met and the performance measures are being accomplished.

There is no evidence of how the partnership would create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results;

There is no evidence of how the partnership will engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs or how the partnership would Routinely assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The vision for the project was very concise and contained all of the elements of a high-quality plan. It builds on the four core assurance areas and creates learning environments where the learning is personalized, adaptable and gives opportunities to show mastery in a variety of ways. The project has a clear vision for professional develop for teachers, and calls for tools and resources such as integrative technology, support of the teacher's union to modify or augment learning, and autonomy to do so. The plan to increase the number of highly-effective educators is aggressive and has measurable outcomes. The support of the district and the teacher's union will help them to achieve these ambitious goals. All of the data systems that will be implemented as part of the plan will be directly connected to college and career readiness. Student achievement will be accelerated by opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of the content and be able to move on or select learning styles and content that are aligned with their interests. All parts of the plan align perfectly with college and career readiness.

Total	210	178
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0071NH-5 for Nashua School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Nashua School District (NSD) presents a very comprehensive, coherent, deeply thoughtful and aspirational reform vision for its 17 schools, 11,895 students and 955 educators. The plan sets out a robust array of expectation contextualized in a vivid description relative to all students. The application includes a detailed chart that expresses a group of focused strategies, along with tasks, those responsible, planned projects within each, outcomes and ideas for ongoing sustainability, linked directly with each of the four core educational assurance issues. These strategies form a coherent vision for precisely what NSD intends to achieve with this reform proposal. The narrative is rich with descriptions of how the district will shift away from awarding high school credits based on seat time to credits determined on a competency based system thereby accelerating student achievement, a focus on helping all students become critical thinkers through solving problems and deepening their learning, enhancing personalized learning strategies through the work of the Center for Secondary School Redesign, combined with a cadre of appropriate assessments for all student populations. The plan reflects a broad approach to new and existing programs that will maximize appeal to all student interests aligned with college- and career readiness objectives. Regarding educators, the plan describes a simple, direct philosophy to support teachers as they embrace better practices known now without repudiating their past as if it were wrong of ineffective. This indicates a solid, inclusive approach that ensures maximum buy-in from all educators. and greatly strengthens the application. There are 11 identified project outcomes in the application that, in the aggregate, are exceptionally transformative, ambitious yet achievable while including all student populations an demonstrating a deep commitment to increased equity. The plan offers a clever visual portrait of a college and career ready student coupled with a narrative description of what the classroom experience, supporting the development of this successful student, will be like for students and teachers.

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NSD describes its process in determining the focus of its reform proposal and, in doing so, reveals the extensive, thoughtful approach undertaken to determine the very best path for the district overall. In the end, the proposal includes all students, all schools and all educators. The application includes a list of schools and total number of participating students by subgroup as required by the criterion. NSD’s approach to implementation is designed to offer high-quality LEA-level and school-level support for the proposal.

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

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Given that NSD is including all schools, encompassing district-wide change for all students and educators, along with a strong logic model for how to achieve significant student learning outcomes. The application offers a high-quality plan for change and presents specific strategies for translating these activities into meaningful reform, including providing time beyond the school day and school year for educators to develop rigorous standards-based curriculum and assessments, providing 21st century teaching tools to educators along with appropriate training, creating schools-within-a-school at the middle and elementary levels to assist lowest achieving schools, and a target to ensure students are on grade level by the end of grade 3 in literacy and numeracy. This level of thought reflects a high-quality plan consistent with the requirements of the criterion.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

NSD’s application methodically addresses each element of this criterion with textured detail including all summative assessments deployed for each age group, explanation of the methodology for determining student status (proficient, etc...), and methodology for determining growth beyond this measure. However, the methodology used to determine achievement gap baselines and progress is not consistent with the methodology required by the definition within this notice. Achievement gaps should be measured as LEA sub-groups against the highest performing sub-group at either the LEA or SEA level. The application calculates achievement gaps as a measure between LEA subgroups against those same subgroups at the SEA level, not against the highest scoring subgroup at the SEA level. Therefore, it is not possible to determine an accurate picture of achievement gap data resulting in a reduction in points. The goal areas are clearly explained and target goals are provided for all subgroups in each category required by the criterion. Though Latino students are included in the subgroups, no designation is made for Black students, nor is there an explanation for this absence leaving an inference that the Black population is not sufficient to warrant a subgroup. The annual goals are indeed ambitious, yet achievable, with targets that reflect substantial, meaningful change resulting in significant student learning and performance. The narrative refers to a decrease in performance in a few subject areas, grades 3 and 4 NECAP Math scores, grades 5-7 NECAP writing scores, and grades prek-4 and 9-11 science proficiency status. These

are evidenced in the accompanying charts along with ambitious, corrective targets beyond this baseline. An interesting growth surge is evidenced for IEP students, from 37.90% to 57.90% between SY11-12 and SY12-13 regarding prek growth in appropriate behaviors that is particularly impressive, though the narrative does not explain how this happened. The goal for the number of students identified as proficient, across subgroups, post-grant reflects ambitious yet achievable targets to impact decreasing the achievement gaps across all age groups and reflects a substantial increase in equity. The application seeks graduation rates of 96% post-grant for all subgroups and an increase in college enrollment rates ranging between 86% for IEP students to 94% for Latino students, again, reflecting ambitious annual goals consistent with the requirements of this criterion. NSD also describes a working relationship with Dartmouth College to assist in achieving the optional goal of 96% postsecondary degree attainment.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	11
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative evidences a clear, strong record of success across three important metrics, over a four year period, as required by this criterion, including a 5% decline in the drop-out rate, an increase in the number of ELL students meeting all proficiencies, and consistent increases in the number of students completing AP exams and scoring three or better. However, data are not included that demonstrate a clear record of success in the past four years for raising high school graduation rates or college enrollment, as required by the criterion, and resulting in a reduction in points. Also provided, though data are only available for a two year period, is evidence of a strong increase in the number of Nashua high school students receiving college credit. The narrative explains that the Nashua community has experienced explosive growth in the poverty rates as well as doubling the number of ELL students in the district over the past decade. Accounting for these challenges, NSD NECAP scores reflect flat to modest gains over the previous four years, which the accompanying data portray with several notable examples of growth in student learning outcomes, particularly in reading and a decrease in achievement gaps for grade 4 and 8. The narrative provides evidence of successful and significant achievement of ambitious reforms in NSD's lowest achieving schools. The district has five elementary schools in this category with one of these schools achieving significant gains and the others engaged in similar reforms indicative of a successful path forward. The plan offers detailed evidence of how student performance data is available to parents, students and educators in creative ways that inform participation, instruction and services. These include providing middle and high school students and their parents with secure, online access to the student grade book and attendance data and teachers have access to individual student data through a statewide software package. However, the narrative references that additional student performance information will be added to the district's website over time but fails to describe what this includes.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>NSD is fortunate to be in a State where a high degree of transparency is deeply embedded in the culture through long-established Right to Know Laws. The narrative provides rich, demonstrated evidence of this transparency in each dimension required by the criterion including all district investments, extensive annual public review periods to approve all line items in the budget comprising regular k-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support and school administration and also addressing each of the four school-level expenditure categories.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The State's long held emphasis on local control creates successful conditions and full autonomy, through legal, statutory and regulatory authority, to create and implement approaches to personalized education as presented in the application. This includes broad authority at the school board level for all decisions necessary to provide the conditions necessary for success. The narrative provides demonstrated evidence through the State's existing framework to allow alternative approaches for earning credit through extended credit opportunities as well as the development of course level competencies and assessments. Further, there is very clear evidence of full capacity to implement course mastery over the dated methods of seat time. The State's framework sets minimum standards leaving the model for local curriculum development and delivery to local decision and also provides for local autonomy regarding local credit requirements to issue a high school diploma. The narrative provides examples of how NSD has made local decisions to enact many of the opportunities created by strong conditions of autonomy over school policies.</p>		

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This is one of the strongest sections in the application and substantially strengthens the overall high-quality characteristics of the reform proposal. First of all, NSD has demonstrated evidence of a deep, authentic and constructive partnership with the local teacher organization ensuring complete buy-in by educators and administrators. This powerful relationship shows the extent to which reform can be achieved working in concert with one another and not in an environment of suspicion and anxiety. This is a tremendous credit to the leadership of both organizations and accrues many benefits to the children in Nashua. The application provides thorough evidence of wide-spread engagement by students, families, teachers and principals including descriptions of how the application was improved and shaped by the input received. This is vividly supported through a large number of stakeholder letters, generated out of extensive outreach, discussion and consensus, that reflects a serious commitment by NSD to ensure long-term success of the proposal. In particular, the student letters are moving in their passionate belief in this proposal, the Governor's letter is thoughtful and indicates deep knowledge of the plan, and the beautiful letters from all walks of community life from church leaders, to business executives, civic groups, parent organizations and teachers are a great testament to the community's embrace of Nashua's children. Well done.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This application presents a high-quality plan reflecting the spirit and intent of this competition. The narrative lays out a crisp, powerful vision of what is meant by a multi-faceted definition of learning in the 21st century that will empower all NSD students. The plan recognizes the impact that technology should have but meaningfully couples this with ensuring access inside and outside of school, aligning curriculum, building educator capacity, creating a community resource to enable community access to support student learning, and expanding career and technical education programs. These elements provide evidence for how students will understand the link between their activities and achieving their future goals, align all activities with college and career readiness, deepen learning and master critical content. The narrative describes an innovative approach to embed cutting-edge, research-based approaches for learning world languages, including Arabic and Chinese and redesigning competency-based learning and assessments while increasing student voice and choice. A particularly strong aspect of the plan is the description of how NSD is questioning the fundamental understanding of how knowledge is actually transferred. Evidence is provided that exposes how the district intends to illuminate conditions that support this transfer in desirable and attainable ways, supported by the rigor that exists through the Ongoing Assessment Project's use of assessment and feedback. The plan intends to expand the Nashua Technology Center to extend outreach to middle school students as these students begin to explore career options and possibilities. These activities are supported by the use of a variety of resources, among them Naviance, which promotes college and career readiness. The plan consistently provides evidence of partnerships with U Mass, Dartmouth and the University of New Hampshire resulting in enhanced student outreach through college fairs and college nights. Finally, the plan includes detailed charts illuminating strategies, activities, deliverables, timelines and responsible parties that address high-quality paths for high-need students and a wide array of embedded mechanisms to provide support and training for all students in the use of resources and tools available to them.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>NSD presents a high-quality plan for improving teaching and learning through the development of personalized learning plans by particularly emphasizing expanded capacity to support student progress through careful assessment of existing practices, ensuring data systems are available to the classroom, school and district-level staff in all schools, and that educators have the training and tools necessary to identify and execute transformative strategies. Consistent in the narrative is evidence linking investment with effective implementation of personalized learning for all students, especially those in lowest achieving schools. The plan describes a comprehensive professional development system available to</p>		

teachers, counselors, principals and administrators designed to provide structure that transforms information into knowledge. The plan calls for additional investment in tools and resources to support specific objectives anticipated to improve teacher effectiveness. NSD is preparing for this investment by frequent site visits to schools in other locations already using these tools, as well as vendor presentations, to ensure the best are selected to meet NSD's needs. NSD is focused on linking teacher certification to student learning as well as innovative collaborations with the University of New Hampshire to enhance hard-to-staff subjects in STEM learning for ELL students by developing two cohorts of 40 education professionals in this subject area. NSD is also addressing principal and leader evaluation as evidenced by a revised rubric introduced in SY11-12 while enhancing the teacher evaluation rubric, in partnership with the local teacher organization, around ten high-quality teacher principles. In the aggregate of the detailed information presented, processes and activities like summer institutes, aggressive curriculum review teams, an evidence binder for all Title I students in the district, data to personalize learning, focus on effective instruction aligned with 21st century learning tools, all of which is in compliance with each aspect of the criterion, is the statement that this is "the first time that there is a real continuum of educational thinking and habits of mind across all grade levels." This high-quality plan demonstrates access and knowledge about a great deal of cutting-edge research to yield what is most likely to work best for all of Nashua's students.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	14
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application presents evidence of a high-quality plan ensuring that the NSD central office is currently organized to provide project implementation support to all participating schools through monthly principal meetings, active school leadership teams, enacting Building Action Plans, and including ongoing inspection of success indicators, awareness of needed professional development, and all are linked to district initiatives and vision. The policies and procedures presented in the well-labeled appendices provide evidence that school leadership teams have ample flexibility and autonomy over school schedules, personnel decisions, staffing models, educator and noneducator roles and responsibilities and school-level budgets. Throughout the application, solid, specific evidence is given allowing students the opportunity to progress on demonstrated mastery, at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. Evidence that a great deal of time has been spent by teacher teams in discovering the best way to assess mastery and to measure for it is presented throughout the narrative. This is particularly high-lighted by the chart included that identifies specific competency goals by subject, activities to complete the development and implementation of these competencies along with timelines, deliverables and identified responsibilities. Alternative Learning Plans are provided through the Nashua Board of Education Policy IHBI, included in the appendix, that address resources and instructional practices adaptable and fully accessible to all students including students with disabilities, high risk students, and English learners.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application presents a high-quality plan demonstrating careful consideration with regard to ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators and other stakeholders have access to necessary tools and resources. The availability of necessary access to technical support for students and parents is specifically addressed elsewhere in the application through the proposed creation of the Nashua Education and Resource Center. The narrative focuses on two themes, technology and organization, as the framework to address appropriate levels of technical support through expanded numbers of elementary curriculum specialists and high school teacher leaders, and the ongoing work of the Nashua Technology Committee and its responsibility to monitor and build the capacity of the district to respond to teacher and student needs. The use of Google Apps and cloud technology enables that information to be exportable by parents and students as well as greatly enhancing constant access, though it is not clear how parents and students will be able to export information in an open data format, as required. NSD's Aspen student information system is interoperable with the district's other data systems including human resources, budget and instructional improvement as required by the criterion.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district created what is known as the Kid Grid, the Student Performance Profile, launched in SY2012-13. This data is utilized by teachers and administrators to inform the creation of individual student learning plans. Along with the newly created position (SY12-12) of Assistant Superintendent for Accountability and Assessment, NSD presents evidence of a high-quality plan for collecting sufficient data toward progress in project goals that will provide timely and regular feedback as required by this criterion. These systems are augmented by several tools presented in the narrative including iReady assessment for grades 3-6 and high-risk students in grades 7 and 8 and the Student Performance Assessment Tool included in data packets. Each school has a data team working to build capacity at the school level to develop and conduct aligned program evaluation studies. The application presents a high-quality plan for implementing rigorous continuous improvement through ample staff, a high priority by the district leadership, and sufficient supporting tools and resources. though the plan references a comprehensive strategic planning process that results in the publishing of annual measures of success for a set of district strategies, it is not clear that this report or any other is conceived to publicly share information on the quality of its RTTT-District investments, as required by the criterion.

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

5

4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application presents a high-quality plan comprised of web-based tools, an interactive Data Dashboard available to the public allowing complete monitoring of assessments in all subjects, a weekly electronic newsletter that ensure ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Responsibility for this high-level communication is placed within the envisioned Grant Advisory Team that will lead an innovative Improvement Showcase each spring to share progress with the public in a meaningful way adding strength to the application.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

NSD's proposal encompasses each of the performance measures required by the criterion while also adding measures for the broader Nashua community providing a deeper dimension with regard evidence for ongoing success or triggers to alter the course of action in order to ensure positive outcomes. The rationale for selecting each measure is fully addressed in the narrative, including expanding the prek-3 measures to each grade level from the current assessment measure, annual measures for each sub-group across all grades, a description of how the measures will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information organized around existing data teams at each of the 17 participating schools, and offering adequate training and professional development support for staff and educators to effectively integrate new evaluative measures. The plan calls for the CIA Committee and building data teams to design and drive a comprehensive program evaluation model that will focus actionable steps based on the information generated from multiple performance measures. The logic model discussed in the narrative is well aligned with the district's theory of action to actually use the information learned to impact improved student achievement. NSD proposes to rely on a baseline survey developed by the newly created Nashua Education and Resource Center to survey parents, students and community members to assess awareness of available tools and provide regular feedback with regard to their effectiveness, reflecting a comprehensive approach to reviewing and improving measures over time. The plan presents a large number of performance measures, as many as 26 depending on how individual measures by age group are counted, which is twice the range indicated by the criterion. Measures, as required by each category of the criterion, are each included in the plan. Overall, the rationale for each is well explained and the use of the data is detailed generating a robust evaluative portrait of the reform proposal's effectiveness that is impressive and evidences a strong likelihood of success. Importantly, the performance goals are ambitious yet achievable indicating high expectations aligned with a strong plan for how to achieve them. In the aggregate, the plan evidences a well-conceived system of responsible parties, multiple performance measures, and timely reporting structures that meet the elements of the criterion..

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application incorporates a vision and high quality plan for sustaining its evaluation system of Race to the Top - District funded activities beyond the grant period including a rigorous approach for evaluating professional development through summer institutes, the deployment of Consulting Teacher Leaders, internal data sources monitoring the enrollment of students in AP classes, surveys to assess technology investments and college and career readiness measures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget narrative and tables included in the application offer a comprehensive response to each element of the criterion. NSD contemplates a significant co-investment of approximately \$7 million to augment the RTTT-District requested investment of \$24.5 million and identifies the expected sources of this additional investment. The budget is completely aligned with each project presented in the reform proposal and includes a budget table within each section of the application, greatly strengthening the overall plan and illuminating the intent of each investment request. The amounts indicated are reasonable and sufficient, supported by narrative describing a thoughtful, coherent rationale for each amount requested. One-time investments are noted where relevant. The budget narrative is further enhanced by being specifically aligned with each of the four core assurance areas to ensure long-term sustainability.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application includes a high-quality plan that addresses long-term sustainability of the project's goals beyond the grant period. This is evidenced by two charts that identify the personnel, costs, and purpose of ongoing personnel investments to be made by NSD. Annual personnel investment is projected to be \$654,606 and annual non-personnel investment is projected to be \$525,512, representing a substantial and carefully considered budget to ensure the hard work reflected by this plan is not diminished at the conclusion of the grant period.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>NSD identifies a substantial area of need within the community to better support four major stakeholder groups, students, parents, schools and the greater Nashua Community and proposes the creation of a new Nashua Education and Resource Center. The express purpose of the center is to ensure that every student accessing the center has the resources and support they need to become college- and career-ready. The plan recognizes that it is not always easy for a parent to become involved in their child's education. The center is conceived as a place to help ease this participation by being staffed by bilingual individuals and open from 12 PM to 8 PM to better accommodate parent work schedules. A particularly prescient observation is made in the narrative, "we want parents to be able to ask questions but if the parents don't even know what to ask, then how can this be accomplished?" This demonstrates a critical analysis of fundamental issues that, if addressed by this center, have the potential for truly transformative change as required by this criterion. The plan describes a coherent, rational partnership among a large group of appropriate and relevant partners that will ensure success of the center's goals. The plan includes detailed charts describing educational and non-educational results in 12 areas, exceeding the 10 cap in the criterion. These outcomes are comprehensive and well-aligned with the two performance measures indicated, to increase the number of parents that are directly involved in their child's education and to increase student achievement for those families who access the center. The plan describes a process for evaluating and improving performance. The annual performance measures are quite comprehensive for all age groups, including all participating students, and are ambitious yet achievable as required by the criterion.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Nashua School District application is powerfully and persuasively presented with consistent alignment throughout to each of the four core educational assurance areas that express a deep understanding of what is meant and intended by each. NSD envisions creating learning environments that are highly-nuanced to better meet the needs of individual</p>		

students and that are developed through a close collaboration between district leadership and the local teacher organization. The plan makes crystal clear the strength of having all professionals working together in concert for reforms that they conclude are in the best interest of their students and community. This exceptionally impressive relationship also enhances the quality of the elements within the plan to increase the number of effective and highly effective teachers. The strategies presented are supported by a rich assortment of tools and resources, strong professional development and training, and fully aligned with college- and career-ready standards and requirements. Not as a casual reference in language to assert compliance with the criterion, but rather as a fully developed, specific and comprehensive approach, NSD has presented a plan to deepen student learning with sufficient evidence to suggest a high likelihood of success for all of the students and educators in the 17 participating schools. Its focus on individual learning for each student allows for accelerated learning while concomitantly monitoring the accuracy of achieving the required standards. The plan goes to great lengths to ensure all students are included, that efforts are focused on decreasing the achievement gaps across subgroups and to ensure increase graduation and college enrollment rates. The performance measures throughout the application reflect high expectations, ambitious yet achievable goals and a commitment to dramatically improve the outcomes for all students. This is a plan that brilliantly captures the intent and spirit of the Race to the Top - District competition.

Total	210	195
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0071NH-6 for Nashua School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Nashua School district has a vision of creating flexible life-long learners who are able to apply their skills to solve problems that have not yet been imagined. Their goal is to prepare students by adopting 21st Century standards and assessments that ensure students have the skills necessary to succeed in college and the workforce. It proposes to build upon the its work in the four core educational assurance areas to accomplish this goal. NSD has a commitment to using data to inform instruction and will improve and expand upon its existing data system tools to provide additional information to stakeholders. In addition, the district will provide additional professional development to educators on how to use the data to inform instruction. In the area of standards and assessments, the district will work to develop more rigorous curriculum aligned to the CCSS including the development a vertically aligned 6-12 curriculum. Related to effective teachers and principals, the district is in the process of revising its teacher evaluation system. It is also working to expand its professional development system so that it informs and is informed by the teacher and principal evaluation system. Finally, NSD will support its low achieving schools by creating "Innovative Teams" that will research and develop new instructional strategies for elementary and middle schools. Additional supports in math and literacy will also be provided to these schools.

NSD further describes its vision of implementing blended learning strategies and incorporating resources such as SpringBoard to support personalized learning. It provides a snapshot of the different pathways high school students can take to graduation.

Though it has painted a clear vision, in this section and throughout the application, NSD does not pain a clear picture of what a classroom experience will be like for students. Examples are given of different types of courses, out of class experiences, and pathways to graduation but this does not paint the picture of what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers, particularly at the middle and elementary school level.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All schools and all students in NSD will be participating in the district's RTT-D grant. The applicant originally envisioned a plan for high schools. This was expanded to include middle schools and then elementary schools were included as the district realized that the whole district could benefit from this work. The district has a total of 17 participating schools, 11,859 participating students. 40.43% of these students are from low income families and 50.4% are identified as high need. The applicant has provided a list of the participating schools as well as the number of participating students, number of high-need students, number of low-income students, etc.</p> <p>The applicant has provided a good explanation as to why it included all of its schools. It is worthy of note that the applicant barely makes the 40% threshold for the number of participating students from low-income families. The applicant chose to include all of its schools, not just its schools with a significant number of low-income students so this explains why its percentage of low income students is not higher.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All schools in NSD will be included as part of the district's Race to the Top-District grant implementation. It originally planned to include just middle schools then middle and high and ultimately determined that all schools in the district would benefit from this work. However, throughout the application, the focus does appear to be predominately on high school, then middle school, with some supports for elementary schools. This is not to say that elementary schools will not be supported but more attention was paid to other grade levels. The district provides a detailed plan for implementing its plan as demonstrated in the chart in the (A)(1).(A)(3) section. Based on the performance measures established in (A)(4), the applicant expects this plan to have a significant impact on student achievement.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>For pre-K students, NSD is using Testing Strategies GOLD data. This data will be available for all students beginning in SY 14-15 and the applicant has estimated targets based on expected outcomes. Overall, NSD expects that pre-K students will reach an achievement rate of 98% by SY 17-18 in the different areas of assessment. Its total population will start at an expected proficiency rate of 85% in Sy 14-15 so this rate of gain seems ambitious yet achievable.</p> <p>The results for kindergarten reading based on the i-Ready assessment seem much more ambitious as NSD expects growth from 33% proficient in SY 12-13 to 95% proficient by SY 17-18.</p> <p>The expect growth for grade 1 reading on i-Ready is 24% which is ambitious. This could be achievable but given that much of the applicant's plan is focused on high school students with brief mentions of elementary school students, it is unclear how it will support this growth.</p> <p>For grades 3-8 reading and math, achievement increases are expected at around 20% with expectations higher for subgroups.</p> <p>The expected increases at the high school level are ambitious but could be achieved based on the applicant's focus on the high schools.</p> <p>The projected increases for 5-8 science and 9-11 science are incredibly ambitious with an increase from 17% proficient to 80% proficient in grades 5-8 and 24% to 75% in grades 9-11. It is unclear how the applicant will achieve these significant gains.</p> <p>(b)</p> <p>For this section, the applicant was required to set achievement gap reduction targets by comparing its overall population and subgroups to the LEA or State's highest performing subgroup. However, the applicant determined its targets by taking the district subgroup and comparing it to the performance at the state level of the same subgroup. Because the applicant has not followed the correct methodology in settings its target, the reviewer cannot accurately judge this section of the selection criterion.</p> <p>(c)</p> <p>The applicant's targets for graduation rates are ambitious and achievable. It expects that overall, the graduation rate will increase from 85.5% in SY 11-12 to 96% in SY 17-18. The lowest performing subgroups in SY 11-12 were SES (low-</p>		

income) and IEP (students with disabilities) with a graduation rate of 72%. It is expected that these groups will also increase to a graduation rate of 96%. Because of the applicant's focus on college and career readiness at the high school level and the alternate pathways to graduation in New Hampshire, these goals appear to be ambitious yet achievable.

(d)

The college enrollment projections are quite ambitious with an expected increase of 36% for the overall population subgroups. This is certainly ambitious and with the applicant's focus on college and career it may be possible, but will likely be challenging to achieve.

(e)

The postsecondary degree attainment is extremely ambitious with an expected increase of 60% (from 36% to 96%).

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	7
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>As evidence of its success in improving student outcomes over the past four years, NSD provided data on the change from 2005 to 2011 for grades 4 and 8 reading and math and from 2007 to 2011 for grade 11. The gains for all students are relatively small in grade 4 (6%) but higher gains were shown in grade 8 and 11 (13% and 12%). The gains in math were relatively small in grade 4 at 7% and 5% in grade 11. Grade 8 saw a 4% decrease. The applicant provided the results for the first and last year but did not provide data on the intervening years so it is difficult to determine what these numbers truly say about the applicant's progress history of improving outcomes.</p> <p>The applicant did not speak to its record in the past four years as it relates to graduation rates or college enrollment rates. It did offer other indicators such as a decrease in the drop-out rate and an increase in the number of students taking and passing AP exams</p> <p>The applicant has shown a bit of progress as it relates to student achievement on the State's assessment but has failed to address graduation rates or college enrollment rates.</p>		
(b)		
<p>NSD has identified five low achieving schools. These schools may not meet the definition of persistently lowest-achieving or low-performing as defined in this notice but they are some of the State's lowest achieving. NSD speaks to the success of improving student achievement in reading, math, and science in one school but does not speak to the achievement results in the other schools. The applicant speaks to interventions that it will undertake for these schools but little information is provided on student achievement or interventions in past years. As such, the applicant has failed to adequately respond to this section of the selection criterion.</p>		
(c):		
<p>NSD makes student data available in a variety of ways. Annual NECAP results are posted on the NH Department of Education website and letters are sent home to parents explaining the results. In 2012, NSD began building a page on its website that has NECAP results from the last six years, district-developed elementary math benchmark assessment results, SAT participation rates, AP statistics, and attendance by grade level. In SY 11-12, the district established a family portal which allows middle and high school students and parents to access on online student grade book. Teachers can access student data through a program called Performance Pathways. Information available here includes NECAP and district benchmark assessment data by individual student. NSD is also piloting i-Ready which provides teachers with immediate feedback on student progress against CCSS. Several of the Title I schools are requiring students to maintain data notebooks.</p> <p>NSD has clearly demonstrated that it has a history of making data available to stakeholders. Teachers, students, and parents are able to use this data to inform student instruction.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>NSD states that NH laws require a high level of transparency in public governance but fails to provide evidence that it</p>		

makes the information requested in this selection criterion publicly available. NSD states that it makes information about all Board of Education meetings publicly available. Collective bargaining agreements are posted on NSD and City websites and NSD says that the salaries of those staff not covered under a collective bargaining agreement are made public as part of the annual budget process. The salaries of senior and middle managers and school principals are posted annually in the local newspaper. Salaries are also available under public information "Right to Know" laws. During the budget process, information such as non-personnel allocations by school are made publicly available.

The applicant clearly makes a significant amount of salary data publicly available. However, it is unclear if salary data made available via the collective bargaining process or other methods is available at the school level. School level data, at the very least, is made available through public information requests.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

NSD states that New Hampshire has always "cherished" a local control. It says that the State provides a framework for education with many decisions left to local control. One example of this flexibility is the State's decision in SY 08-09 to eliminate the Carnegie unit as the method for awarding credit to students and replacing it with the demonstration of what students who and can do as the avenue for awarding credit. This framework also allowed for flexibility in how students demonstrate mastery of the competencies. Districts are required to have a competency assessment process and defined course level competencies in place for all public high schools.

The State has also provided flexibility for local districts to extend learning opportunities to middle and high school students that extend instruction outside of the traditional classroom. Opportunities include independent study, community service, apprenticeships, and online courses.

The laws allowing this flexibility does not speak specifically to elementary schools but the applicant states that it does not believe that any laws prohibit this flexibility at the elementary school level.

NSD states that it has fully embraced this flexibility. It developed initial competencies in 2008-2009 and high school faculty are currently in the process of rewriting the course competencies. It plans to have a full competency-based system in place no later than the beginning of the 14-15 school year.

State law also allows for local autonomy in determining credit requirements for a high school diploma. The state minimum requires the attainment of 20 credits but districts can set higher standards. NSD offers a core diploma of 20 credits, a regular diploma with 27 credits, and a diploma with distinction with 32 credits.

Based on the information provided by NSD, the applicant clearly has autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement its plan. New Hampshire allows for local control including flexibility in how credits are earned and the requirements for a high school diploma.

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

15

15

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

NSD indicates that it solicited feedback from hundreds of stakeholders in the development of its application. The process included meetings, consultation, focus groups, surveys, concept teams all with the support of parents, students, teachers, support staff, principals, senior administrators, and community members. Evidence of union support for this application is demonstrated by the union president's signature on the application. Nashua Teacher's Union representatives were involved in the planning and writing of the application. It also held a union membership meeting and the application was discussed during this time. Surveys were given to high school students, teachers and support staff, principals and assistant principals, parents, and community members. Sample results from the teacher pre-survey as well as minutes from the union meeting are provided as evidence. Approximately 30 letters of support from parents, educators, community members, and legislators are provided in support of the application.

NSD has provided ample opportunity for stakeholder input on the RTT-D application. It engaged the community, educators, parents, students, and the union. As demonstrated by its letters of support and the signature of the union president on the application, NSD has the support necessary to move forward with its proposal.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

NSD's plan for personalization includes shifts in curriculum and grading, infusing rigor in career-and college-ready coursework; embedding 21st century technology and providing world language curriculum. The plan provided by the applicant is a strong vision for increasing college and career readiness and begins to touch on personalization but falls short of fully addressing its personalization strategy in some areas.

(C)(1)(a)(i) asks the applicant to provide a plan for how students will understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. This is not explicitly addressed in the narrative but it is clear throughout the application that the applicant's goal is to increase student ownership of learning and ensure that they understand why they are learning.

The applicant plans to implement a number of initiatives in support of its plan. These include:

- The establishment of a world language program that will begin in elementary school and extend through high school
- Restructuring curriculum to align with CCSS and 21st century skills. NSD will use the Understanding by Design model to revise curriculum. This will incorporate inquiry based learning experiences and performance assessments that the applicant believes will allow for more student voice and choice and foster more personalized learning experiences.
- NSD will continue its partnership with the New England Network for Personalization and Performance which it says will ensure that student voice and choice is embedded in common assessments. What is meant by this is unclear and no explanation is provided.
- NSD will focus on career pathways for students. At the elementary level, student data, electronic portfolios, mentorships, and connections to the community will allow younger students to learn about their community and expose them to different opportunities. Middle school students will access academic and technical courses and in high school, curriculum revisions are being accelerated which the applicant believes will lead to better college and career readiness.
- The applicant plans to develop vertically aligned 6-12 rigorous core academic curriculum.
- In high schools, NSD is proposing to return to a modified block schedule that will allow for an enhancement block. This block would be an opportunity for students to connect with adults to pursue personal interests through clubs and activities, to work with guidance staff to create four-year plans and college application plans and to meet with instructors to remediate classroom skills.
- Tablet technology will be utilized. Teachers will provide students with real-world problems and students will use the tablets to research and analyze the problem.
- All high school students will take the PSAT and use the information from this assessment to help drive decisions related to college.
- RTT-D will allow the district to expand upon a program that pairs disengaged seniors with college students to get the seniors interested in the idea of attending college.
- NSD will continue a program that engages high-need 8th graders to engage them as they transition to high school.
- Programs like Extended learning opportunities allow students to pursue opportunities outside of the classroom.

(a)

Students will have the opportunity to pursue learning opportunities linked to college and career ready standards through programs like extended learning opportunities, opportunities to take the PSAT, and support in the enhancement block. This work would be enhanced by access to technology.

The expansion of the world languages program as well as programs like Extended Learning opportunities will provide students with access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives.

The focus on 21st century skills will help develop skills such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, and critical thinking.

(b) Through the variety of initiatives NSD is or plans to implement, it will be offering high-quality instructional approaches and environments. It will also be working to develop more rigorous curriculum. Though students will have choices, especially at the high school level, the applicant does not address how it will personalize the instructional content for students.

In (B)(1), the applicant describes how it will work with students to begin tracking and analyzing their student data and begin setting their own learning goals. However, the applicant does not provide a detailed plan for how or when this will occur.

Accommodations and strategies for high need students is only briefly addressed. A brief mention is made of the applicant's plan to continue to research to develop a program designed to accelerate reading achievement for students who are seriously below grade level but little other information is provided. The applicant provides Alternative Learning plans which help support high-risk students and a core diploma is offered which is often utilized by students with disabilities. The opportunities described are for high school students with little mention of opportunities for these populations in middle or high school.

(c) The applicant does not explicitly address this selection criterion. The enhancement block will provide students with some training opportunities to meet with adults to discuss options available to the student. Additionally, support on accessing and using technology will be provided.

The applicant provides the elements of a high quality plan but the plan is insufficient. In many cases, a timeline is not provided. The applicant simply states "new initiative." The activities and deliverables are very broad and do not provide a clear picture for how the applicant will implement its plan.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	13
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NSD has provided a detailed list of supports it will implement for creating the pathway to a personalized environment. It has provided a detailed chart that lists the activities and deliverables associated with this endeavor though the activities and deliverables are quite broad as are the timelines so it is difficult to closely follow the district's plan for implementation. The district has a clear vision, but at times, it seems that the district does not have a clear plan for implementing its vision. It is laying the groundwork in a variety of ways such as supporting middle and elementary school teachers in creating an innovative learning space but does not describe the plan or full purpose of the innovative learning space. The district want to adopt new learning tools and says that it will visit other schools to check out these learning tools but this plan is quite broad and it is unclear what the district plans to do once these new tools are acquired.

At the middle school level, teachers are reviewing teaming, curriculum, and student behavior. Teachers will review the grouping practices to accommodate the different learning styles of students in their classrooms. Teachers will also work together to develop curriculum that the district hopes will excite and motivate students. The district is also working with a group of middle school teachers to pilot an innovative model during SY 14-15. The selected teachers are visiting innovative schools to get ideas for NSD. This group will create innovative learning spaces and build individualized learning plans. At the elementary level, the district would provide funding for one low performing elementary school to develop an innovative reform effort. It is unclear if this will be expanded to other elementary schools or what support they will receive.

NSD plans to adopt new learning tools to help support teachers increase personalization. It will visit other schools to see the resources offered by vendors but does not adequately describe what it will do once these tools are acquired.

NSD will work to select a series of non-cognitive skills it believes are needed for every college- and career-ready student in the 21st century and will incorporate these skills into the daily work in schools. NSD will convene a curriculum committee made up of consulting teachers at each school. Information will be shared with these teachers who will bring the information back to schools. The schools will provide feedback and then the teachers will bring this information back to the committee allowing for two-way communication.

The district will enhance use of data by hiring a lead data administrator and providing support at each school. It has demonstrated a clear commitment to using data to inform instruction throughout the application.

To further support this work, NSD will build on successful practices or begin pilot programs. Master teachers will be given a reduced teaching schedule and will co-teach in other classrooms.

NSD plans to offer many supports that help teachers in personalizing learning for students but fails to tie the activities together to explain how it will all work together to personalize learning. Some assumptions can be made as to what the district hopes to accomplish with its work but this is not always adequately explained.

NSD is currently revising its teacher evaluation system. A committee managed by school administrators and the teachers' union have created an evaluation rubric and pilot observation model but does not clearly state the next steps related to this evaluation. It states that the teacher evaluation system will inform and be informed by district PD but little other information is provided as to how this will occur. The applicant does not adequately address how data from the teacher evaluation system is used to improve teachers' and principals' performance. NSD believes that it will increase the effectiveness of its teachers through professional development and strong recruitment. However, it does not explicitly address how it works to ensure that more students are being served by effective and highly effective teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a)

NSD is well organized to provide support to its schools. Numerous opportunities for professional development are provided to schools. The district works with schools on the development of each school's building action plan. Additionally, the district mentions in (D)(2) that it has expanded the number of elementary curriculum specialists from 2 to 7 and expanded the role of high school teacher leaders to include work with middle school teachers on curriculum development. The district is also supporting schools by taking advantage of the flexibility offered by the State. This includes pursuing opportunities to award credit based on master rather than seat time and flexibility related to graduation requirements.

(b):

The applicant has provided some mention of school-level flexibility and autonomy but has not fully described the extent of the flexibility and autonomy. NSD briefly mentions that in 2008-2009, NSD requested a school calendar based on instructional hours. This allowed for schools to pursue professional development opportunities for teachers during the school day with early release for students and time between high school semesters for teachers, students, and guidance counselors to complete assessments. Little information is provided beyond this. This appears to give schools some flexibility in regards to scheduling but it is not clear that schools can make this choice on their own or if the decision is made by the district. Additionally, NSD mentions that each school has a school leadership team that creates a building action plan to support the district's strategic plan. The plan is then reviewed by the school district. However, it is unclear what flexibility and autonomy this plan affords the schools. It is unclear if schools have flexibility and autonomy in any other areas. The applicant has not provided any plan related to addressing the flexibility and autonomy provided to schools.

(c) and (d) giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic and giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways

NSD describes a number of alternate ways for students to earn credit.

The applicant first mentions Alternative Credit Options which outlines means for students to earn credit through alternative methods outside of regular classroom-based instruction. The applicant explains that students in grades 6-8 earn credit for Algebra I, Geometry, French, and Spanish with "successful mastery of the course competencies." Additionally, students in 8th grade may show competency in physical science by passing the district's physical science end of course exam. Students can also take Introduction to High School Art in 8th grade.

The Alternative Credit Option as described provides the opportunity for middle school students to earn high school credits but it does not explain how or if students can earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than the amount of time spent on a topic. It does allow for students to demonstrate mastery at a different time (i.e., middle school rather than high school) but not necessarily in a comparable way as the course in middle school sounds quite similar to the high school course, just offered in middle school.

The next option described is the Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO). The district says that this allows for students to earn high school credit based on demonstrated mastery of the competencies addressed in an ELO. Examples of ELOs include apprenticeships, community service, independent study, online course, internships, performing groups, and private instruction. The applicant states that experiences are assessed using a statewide rubric. However, the applicant does not provide any information on the rubric or what type of high school credit is earned. This sounds like an option that provides for personalized learning for students but without additional information, it is hard to determine what type of credit is earned by a student and therefore make an assessment on whether the applicant is allowing students to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than seat time and if students have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in different times and in multiple comparable ways.

In the introduction to this section, the district mentions that another method it is pursuing is the opportunity for high school students to earn high school credit by demonstrating mastery of required competencies for courses. Later in the narrative, the applicant discusses the development and assessments for these competencies but does not explain how these competencies are allowing students to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than seat time or that opportunities for demonstrating mastery can be done at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The district does mention different options for assessments which may allow for students to demonstrate mastery in different ways but this is not sufficiently explained. The applicant provides a timeline for developing the competencies but again, because the applicant has failed to adequately explain how competencies meet the requirements of this selection criterion, the timeline becomes irrelevant.

NSD has two options for earning a high school diploma. A core diploma can be earned with 20 credits and an academic diploma earned for 27 credits. The core diploma is often used for students with an Individual Education Plan as well as those pursuing opportunities in the military, apprenticeships, or those with socioeconomic concerns. Offering students different options for graduation does allow for some flexibility in demonstrating mastery though this connection is not adequately explained by the applicant.

NSD offers an Alternative Learning Plan for at-risk students to obtain a high school diploma. The applicant states that “the purpose is to provide students with learning experiences that are meaningful and offer opportunities for exploration of interests and result in achievement levels that assist students in gaining access to beyond high school opportunities.” The narrative the includes a list of requirements for an Alternative Learning plan none of this explains of flexibility of allowed for students to demonstrate mastery in multiple times and in multiple comparable ways or if credit can be earned based on demonstrated mastery rather than seat time.

In (B)(3), the applicant provides a clear description of the flexibility offered under the State that it allows the district to develop a system of competencies which allow students to demonstrate mastery based on what is known and skills that can be demonstrated rather than based on seat time. The applicant developed its initial course competencies in SY 08-09 and is in the process of revising with the support of high school faculty.

With the exception of the plan for developing competencies, the applicant has not provided a high quality plan related to this section of the selection criterion.

(e) providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, include students with disabilities and English learners.

As discussed above, the applicant provides Alternative Learning plans which help support high-risk students and a core diploma is offered which is often utilized by students with disabilities. However, little mention is made about opportunities for ELL. Additionally, the opportunities described are for high school students with little mention of opportunities for these populations in middle or high school.

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

10

8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Selection criterion (D)(2)(a) asks the applicant speak to its plan related to how the LEA and school infrastructure support personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders, regardless of income, will have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant’s proposal. NSD states that it is updating its plan to address students bringing their own

device to school, home-lending for students in need, instructional shifts based on the CCSS that demand technology, online assessment, and improved communication using its students information system. NSD recently rolled out Google Apps for Education in its secondary schools which it says increases students communication and productivity skills. It is also looking to build a more robust infrastructure especially in its two comprehensive high schools.

Teachers, students, and parents are using Aspen, the districts data hub to view students' progress. Teachers use this system to access curriculum maps, instructional resources, and student work. The IT team recently developed an assessment module that holds state and local assessment data and generates student data reports.

Through the Nashua Education and Resource Center, the applicant plans to provide parents access to computers and internet access. Additionally it has partnered with an internet provider to provide reduced rate for families of free/reduced priced lunch students.

The applicant has failed to provide a high quality plan for how it will address this section of the selection criterion.

(b) In terms of providing technical support to stakeholders, the applicant states that its will be hiring technology coaches. Based on information provided by the applicant, it seems that these coaches will provide support to educators and students. However, it is unclear how parents will be provided with needed technical supports.

(c) The applicant does not address whether or not it has an information technology system that allows parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems.

(d) The applicant's description of Aspen describes a system that appears to be inter operable with other systems and provides teachers and district-level staff with needed information.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>NSD provides a significant explanation of its existing work related to assessment and accountability. It will build upon this work with the support of Race to the Top-District funds and will hire a Director of Instructional Data to coordinate data-related activities in its seventeen schools. The district's data team will track the outcome and performance measures detailed in NSD's application. It will also design an evaluation which will examine which programmatic elements and activities are linked with the most successful outcomes. NSD states that this evaluation will allow for leadership to have frequent conversations about the work being done under RTT-D. NSD also states that its continuous improvement process is focused through a comprehensive strategic planning process.</p> <p>The applicant has a robust system for tracking and analyzing data but the narrative does not fully explain how feedback will be provided in areas that aren't directly tied to student achievement. It is also unclear how frequent the feedback will be. Some assessment data is available multiple times a year but with these missing elements, the picture is murky. Additionally, NSD does not describe how its evaluation will be publicly shared. Finally, the applicant fails to offer a high quality plan for this work. Responsible parties are discussed detailed timelines are not provided.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The district will implement an annual Improvement Showcase that publicly revisits the progress of the grant initiatives. This process will serve as the basis for planning program and evaluation activities for the coming year. The NSD newsletter will be used to communicate with stakeholders and data will be available via a data dashboard. Different stakeholders groups will be represented on the grant advisory team.</p> <p>The description of ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders is minimal. Though the Improvement Showcase will likely provide stakeholders with needed information, this is only held once a year. The applicant also mentions a newsletter and stakeholder group, but it is unclear how many individuals these communication methods will reach.</p> <p>The applicant has not provided a high quality plan for expanding upon its existing work.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Performance Measure (a): Highly effective teachers and principals

In the 12-13 school year, no teachers and only 1 principal was rated as highly effective. The district expects that this will increase to 10% (20% and 30% in a small number of cases) for teachers and principals in SY 13-14. On average, the expected increase is 5% a year reaching a target of 25% highly effective teachers and principals in SY 17-18. The vast majority of NSD teachers were rated as effective in SY 12-13. In some grades this number was as high as 100%. By Sy 17-18, the applicant projects that all of its teachers and principals will be rated as effective or highly effective. These targets are certainly ambitious but even given the high number of effective teachers, it seems incredibly ambitious to assume that *all* teachers and principals will be effective or highly effective. It is not clear how this will be achieved.

PreK-3 performance measures:

NSD has established a number of performance measures including social and emotional and academic measures. Some increases seem quite ambitious such as an increase in the proficiency in acquisition and use of language/communication and early literacy knowledge and skills from 24% to 100% over the life of the grant especially as the grant does not place a particular focus on this work. Other measures are ambitious but possibly more attainable. Suspensions for these students are expected to decrease from 70 in Sy 12-13 to zero in SY 17-18.

Grades 4-8 performance measures

The applicant has proposed a measure that evaluates the number of students promoted to the next grade. However, it is unclear how this performance measure is relevant because 100% of students are already being promoted to the next grade. Other performance measures include the number of students in grades 4-8 earning a C or better in math and English class. The increases are generally ambitious and achievable with increases ranging from 11% a high of 34%. The average increase is close to 20%. Suspensions are expected to decrease from 1179 for all students in Sy 12-13 to 282 in SY 17-18.

Grades 9-12:

The number of students promoted to the next grade is expected to increase to 100% for all populations by Sy 17-18. This is ambitious but achievable. The current low is 75% of grade 12 students with disabilities being promoted to the next grade but the average is closer to 90%. In school suspensions are expected to decrease from 747 to 245 over the life of the grant and out of school suspensions are expected to decrease from 994 to 326 during the grant.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant speaks to incorporating a cost effectiveness analysis to examine the cost and outcomes of intervention and improvement strategies. NSD also states that it will monitor professional development through a variety of processes including surveys. Internal data sources will be used to determine the effectiveness of programs. A survey will be developed for parents, students, and community members to assess awareness of resources. A mention is made in the budget of using an external evaluator to support this work though little detail is provided. NSD has multiple strategies but has not explained how these strategies will align to provide the overall picture of the successes and challenges of the grant. The applicant does not provide the elements of a high quality plan for this work.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

NSD's budget totals \$24,949,573 across nine projects. It expects that only \$1,043,769 of these costs will continue after the conclusion of the grant. The district a clear breakdown and description of each of its nine budgets. This funding will be used for the following projects:

Managing the grant

Building standards-driven curriculum for college and career readiness

Increasing access to AP courses

Engaging students through technology

Personalization through college and career planning

Building a data-driven infrastructure

Developing effective teachers and administrators

Turning around lowest-achieving schools

Reaching the community

The budget description outlines the activities that will be funded and the detailed budget aligns with the description. The costs are justified and seem reasonable. The applicant provides a great deal of detail in the appendices that outlines the duties of individuals, breakdown of salaries, and justification for training costs and stipends. The applicant also includes a detailed description of the matching funds.

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

10

10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

NSD indicates that it has focused its application and funding mostly on short-term investments that will not need to be sustained after the end of the grant. It expects that only \$1,043,769 will need to be continued after the grant ends. This includes an ELO Coordinator, Technology support staff, career development counselor and business liaison, director of instructional data, outreach director, and secretary. Other costs include integrated online instructional modules, increased technology allowance, extended progress monitoring software, and off-site community learning center. Though it cannot commit funds at this time, it is clear that the district has thought through the cost implications of continuing this work. In addition, the applicant has discussed its plans to analyze the grant work to determine which programs should continue.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

NSD plans to create the Nashua Education and Resource Center for the purpose of providing all students an equitable education. Building on research that supports that importance of parental involvement in a child's education, the district will provide opportunities to foster this involvement. Through this center, parents would be offered services including: parenting seminars, literacy and numeracy family nights, access to school personnel, parent portal access, computer skills, and tools to advocate for their children. The centers will be equipped with an online learning lab that will allow students to work on schoolwork, conduct online research, participate in PSAT/SAT prep classes, enroll in online learning opportunities and access other online resources. The goals for this center include an increase in the number of parents that are directly involved in their child's education and raising student achievement for those families accessing the center. This would be tracked by monitoring indicators such as volunteer hours, increased payroll for interpreting and translation services, survey results from community partners, and student achievement data.

The applicant has provided a plan for this work but the timeline is unclear. It simply says "ongoing" or "new initiative."

The performance measures provided are insufficient. For one set of measures, the applicant simply lists a broad desired result such as "more parents will encourage their children to take a rigorous program of study in high school" but does not provide an explanation as to how this will be tracked or yearly targets for this goal. The remaining measures seem to be a repeat of the measures established in (E)(3) and the applicant does not explain how the work in the CPP priority will have a direct impact on these performance measures.

The performance measures are the same as those proposed in E3, not clear how they correlate.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Nashua School District has provided a clear vision of personalizing learning for students and developing 21st century learners who are prepared for college and the workforce. As described in (A)(1), the applicant is building upon its existing work in the core educational assurance areas. It is expanding its data systems and professional development related to using data to inform instruction. NH has adopted the CCSS and NSD is providing professional development to support CCSS implementation. Additionally, NSD is working to develop more rigorous curriculum. The district is working to develop a new teacher evaluation system and is working to align its professional development system so that PD is informed by the results of the evaluation system. It is supporting its lowest achieving schools by creating teams in the elementary and middle schools to develop innovative educational opportunities. NSD has established ambitious performance measures as outlined in (A)(4) and (E)(3). Most of these targets are ambitious and most appear to be achievable but some may be particularly challenging.</p> <p>In (C)(1) and (C)(2), NSD outlines its plan for providing professional development for teachers and expanded learning opportunities for students. The vision is robust though at times it is difficult to understand how all of the pieces fit together to support the vision and what the day to day looks like for teachers and students. Though there is room for improvement, applicant has developed a communication plan and a continuous improvement strategy. Finally, the applicant's budget clearly supports the activities outlined throughout the application.</p>		
Total	210	158