



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0011MS-1 for Tupelo Public School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The four core assurances are discussed throughout A1. The District identifies its commitment to personalized learning through differentiation, individualized learning goals, and using data to drive instruction. In addition, the District reported that it will focus on the common core state standards, target college and career readiness to increase graduation while providing access to all students. The response articulates a well thought out and credible vision. The plan outlines a general sound approach and articulates goals: universal pre-school, parent resources to private pre-schools, kindergarten readiness, ACT opportunities for high school students, additional counseling and dual enrollment courses in high school, data coordinator to assist with differentiation and data analysis K - 12, and supporting personalized learning and differentiation through formative and summative data sources. The vision articulates that "all educators are accountable for the academic growth of each and every child." The plan is comprehensive in its vision. The visionary description provides a well thought out general overview. The District overview is lacking specific details pertaining to each level for students and teachers. The overview provides the most information related to the pre-school initiatives and the least details were provided for middle school experiences for teachers and students.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The application identified that the entire District will participate. All 12 schools in the District, 542 educators, and 7,366 students will participate in the initiative. The selection process is completely outlined. Of this population, 4,531 students meet the definition of high-need students. The District provided a chart outlining the number of participating educators, students, high-need students, and low-income students.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>This application outlines a comprehensive high quality plan. The reforms proposed will impact students at all levels PK through 12th grade. Significant academic reform with support is proposed to enhance graduation rates and increase college enrollment. The plan integrates personalized learning as the focal point through the integration of technology (1:1 initiative expanding into 3rd grade - 12th grade), using data to drive instruction, and the strong focus on differentiation. High standards are maintained through the focus on the common core state standards, increased graduation rates, and alternative options for accelerated learning experiences (dual enrollment, Chinese instruction, etc...) Specific initiatives (ie. curricular program adoptions) are currently in place to serve as a strong foundation for this plan to be achievable yet ambitious.</p> <p>Throughout this narrative the District described ways in which to initiate school reform from birth to grade twelve. For example. parent resources will be made available through an Early Beginning Resource Center for students aged birth to five. Universal pre-school committed to preschool learning standards aligned to the CCSS (Common Core State Standards). The plan also discussed programming through differentiation in detail for grades K - 6 as well as in the area of the arts. The District describes the relationship between the arts and the curricular alignment to CCSS.</p> <p>The ambitious but achievable plan to increase graduation rates is focused upon in grades 6 - 12 with the enhanced of graduation counselors as interventionists. Students in grades 6 - 8 will be provided with trips to colleges for exposure and middle school 8th graders and high school freshman will be targeted through a career exploration program (ACT Explore).</p> <p>The particular high quality plan is strengthened through its strong community outreach program that has already been established, and the District's outlined initiatives are supported by best practice research based sources.</p>		

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
--	-----------	----------

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

The District documented strong growth on the state assessment in all sub-groups with the exception of SPED and HISPANIC. However, although growth was minimal it was documented. Therefore, overall the District reported adequate academic growth since 2008.

The District's graduation rate minimally increased between 2008 and 2013 (1.3%) while an adequate increase in college enrollment was documented ( 8% between 2008 and 2012).

Aggressive academic growth target goals are identified for some sub groups while other sub groups reflect inadequate growth targets. The District table identifies goals as 2% higher than ESEA AMO targets; however, the Gr. 3 Asian sub group growth between 2013 - 2017 the target remains the same (86%). Some goals reflect unrealistic expectations: (ie. Gr. 3 LEP) will be difficult to achieve 27% proficient to 78% proficient (51% gain).

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

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

The application identifies clear successful academic achievement since 2010 throughout the District by identifying numerous awards in the area of academics and extra curricular activities. The District was featured in a book called THIRD SPACE, the Early childhood Center was identified as a Title I Distinguished School, and the Whole School Initiative (WSI) was designated as a USDOE school reform model.

The District also made gains in ELA and Math since 2010 as identified using the Mississippi Curriculum Test. (MCT2) in grades 3rd - 8th. Reported student performance indicated that all students grew from 48% proficiency to 65% proficiency in ELA and 57% proficiency to 73% proficiency i n Math. Consistent growth was also noted among sub groups in ELA and Math - Black 36% to 51% in ELA, Black 42% to 61% in math, special education 20% in ELA to 30% and 24% to 29% in math. The District documented growth within multiple sub groups using the Mississippi Curriculum Test. (MCT2) in grades 3rd - 8th: Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, ED, SPED, and LEP.

Between 2010 and 2013 the District's QDI Rating moved from the level of Academic Watch to a grade of an A or B in 5 of the elementary schools. The District has made gains in attracting and maintaining highly qualified teachers as well. Over 50% of the teaching staff holds advanced degrees and 90 teachers are Nationally Board Certified. Strategies to retain highly qualified teachers include: annual scholarships, recruitment teams, induction and mentoring programs, etc...

The District documented reforms in high economically disadvantaged schools. The Pierce Street Elementary become a Whole School Improvement (WSI) model in 2002 and the school has reported the highest state accreditation ranking (Level 5 / A).

The District's only middle school utilizes hands on programing with a strong focus on math, science, and technology. Significant reforms through transportation and Civil Engineering programs were provided to students. Noted gains on the science Terra Nova were identified. A slightly greater than a 1% graduation rate increase was also noted in the District's only high school.

Data is made available to parents through online data bases (Haiku portals). It is an interactive portal for families and provides stakeholders with data that is used to personalize instruction. Reading Street, Classworks, and EnVision math data analysis is available to parents as well through 1:1 meetings with teachers to discuss the collected data. Parents also have daily access to term grades, attendance, and schedules through Active Parent. School staff focus on data. Meetings are held between Principals and teachers as well as Principals and the Superintendent. Common benchmarks are administered and discussed every 4.5 weeks. Limited discussion focused specifically on achievement gaps were provided.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
---	----------	----------

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

The District posts budget information in the newspaper, online, and submits it to the local County Board. An annual audit is

conducted, results are documented on the state auditor's website, and monthly financials are shared with the Board of Trustees. These measures provide transparency. The District provided a chart which documented information pertaining instructional staff, teachers, and non-personnel expenditures for the F-33 survey. Actual salaries were presented for each school in the District for: school level instructional and support staff, instructional staff only, teachers only, and non-personnel expenditures.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
--	-----------	----------

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

The District documented its independent decision making abilities the following areas: instructional intervention models, personalized learning environment models, curriculum and pacing guides, acceleration of courses, and gifted and talented programs. The District is responsible for designing its own curriculum, developing pacing guides, delivering professional development, and the delivery of curriculum at the local level. The District identified components of the law that must be maintained such as: differentiation, targeted interventions, etc... however, the District makes decisions on how to structure the learning and the delivery of learning to meet legal mandates.

Examples of autonomous decision making was documented through the District's decision to develop programs such as the PET program (Program for Effective Teaching) and partnerships with SEE (Association for Excellence in Education).

A direct correlation between the delivered professional development and specific absolute priority of personalized learning environment was not outlined. The District only reported a general overview.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
--	-----------	-----------

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

The District held a one year informal and formal comment period for the proposal. The application documents that letters of support were received by the Mayor, a Senator, and the Mississippi State Department of Education. Letters were also included to the US DOE Secretary from a parent coach (representative of Parents for Public Schools) and the Vice President of the Create Foundation. The District further outlined involvement by: the Teacher Advisory Council, the Parent Forum, Principals' Team, Committee of 200 (a grassroots group of parents and leaders) as well as students. 81% of District Teachers responded to a survey with strong support evidenced in support of new curricular programs, Chinese instruction, additional interventionists at the K - 8 level, and graduation coaches at the middle and high school level.

An overview of multiple sources of input is provided; however, the application is lacking detail on the types of feedback gathered in relationship to how that feedback modified the proposal.

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

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

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

Elements of a High Quality Plan are outlined throughout this section. The District provides a description of personalized learning through the use of aligned assessments administered every 4.5 weeks with the goal of using data triangulation to generate data that will drive individual instruction. The District utilizes several data systems (such as Haiku) that assists with the management of student data. This information is shared and discussed with both students and parents. Parents also have independent access to the Haiku data system. RTI (Response to Intervention) is also used as another way to personalize learning for at-risk students. Data meetings are held with parents, students, and teachers which supports stakeholders understanding the learning and establishing learning goals. The process of sharing of data documents on-going feedback, progress toward college and career readiness for all students (including high needs students), guides the personalized learning process.

The LEA documented that all learning goals (K-12) and pacing guides are aligned to the Common Cores Standards and the LEA offers multiple diploma tracks with advanced learning opportunities for students. Accelerated learning is generated through the integration of ACT Explore, ACT Plan, Act Plus Writing, college tours offered to students, and through the dual enrollment program. The accelerated learning plan targets increased graduation rates and college and career readiness. The District accommodates high need students by providing both a non-traditional and traditional track for students to earn

a high school diploma. In addition, a TST (Teacher Support Team) is established to provide intervention services to students. This all assists teachers, students and parents to identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards.

Technology expansion is evident in C1 and supports a high quality digital learning environment . Every student in grades 6 - 12 are provided with their own Macbook. "Technology walks" were completed to integrate technology into the District curricular pacing guides. This is an accommodation to ensure equal access to all students.

While a comprehensive description is provided, the application lacks a description of the "ambitious and achievable" goals set for the District for high - need students. The application also lacks a thorough description of how diverse cultures and backgrounds are being adequately addressed and accommodated. In addition to providing 1:1 computer integration, the District lacks a thorough description of how technology is going to result in high quality content. The District also lacks and explanation of high the higher level critical thinking skills will guide personalized learning and/or are integrated into the curriculum.

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

**20**

**14**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Goals for students are aligned to the common core state standards, data is utilized to personalize instruction, common benchmarks are used at all levels to monitor college and career readiness for all students PK - 12, and resources and supports are available to all students. Therefore, the District provided evidence of a high quality plan within its response.

Evidence of the District's effective professional development practices are outlined in the comprehensive model of professional development for teachers which was embedded in the state teacher evaluation system. The District utilizes the PD360 resources that provides a library of videos for professional development purposes. Principals utilize this tool to identify 4 objectives aligned with district goals for the purposes of providing professional development for staff.

Ways in which to improve the effectiveness of the teaching staff is documented. The District has implemented the state teacher evaluation system (M-STAR state system). This process will provide formative assessment information about individual teacher strength and challenges. Using this data, teachers will be supported to maintain high levels of effectiveness through the PD360 system. Teachers also have input in the process and complete reflection sheets twice a year for professional development focus goals.

Access to high quality learning resources, meeting rigorous standards, and preparing students for college and career readiness is supported through the integration of the Next Network and Next Navigator systems which focus on assessment items and lesson plans that meet standards for rigor and relevance as determined by the international Center for Leadership in Education. Training is also provided on how to implement curricular initiatives, use/relay data to parents, and adapt individualized learning plans to create a personalized learning environment.

A complete description of personalized learning and opportunities frequent opportunities to measure progress is provided. Evidence of teachers being able to adapt content, initiate effective personalization practices, and measure student progress is documented. Teachers will use data to personalize learning through a formal RTI system, Classworks universal screeners, From these sources, individualized learning plans will be created in conjunction with parents and students - areas of interest, measures of progress, expected to learn. Students will monitor their own progress through Active Student and Haiku with support form their teachers and guidance counselors.

Processes and tools to match student needs and personalized learning occurs in the process of tying each student's learning goals to the Common Core. The plans identify what the students are expected to learn, areas of interest, and specific measures of the student's progress. This data is all managed and monitored in the Haiku data management system. Students learn to monitor their own progress using this system - along with the guidance of teachers and counselors.

The District reports a very high level of effective and highly effective teachers as defined by this notice. However, the application is lacking information specifically pertaining to the recruitment of hard-to-staff subject areas.

Although a strong description is provided to outline the multiple areas of focus in this response, the District is lacking evidence to support the specific resources that will be matched to the students and technological learning resources available to students.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The provided response outlines an appropriate and reasonable description of the District's organization to provide support as well as ways that the school leadership teams maintain flexibility and autonomy. Weekly meetings where the creation of district level practices are discussed and policies are updated and revised. The description reports the District's ability to adjust schedules, make staffing, curriculum, and budgeting decisions. Autonomy exists; however, data and collaborative meetings drive the decision making process.</p> <p>Elements of a high quality plan are noted in the infrastructure. The District will review curriculum policies and implementation plans to ensure college and career readiness as well as alignment to the common core state standards. The weekly discussions will include analyzing data and prescriptive professional development for teachers. This creates personalized learning for teachers. Recent policy changes support personalized learning for students through extended summer programs and block scheduling practices. All students are included in the eh 4.5 week benchmarking period and adjustments within the classroom practices.</p> <p>A comprehensive description of learning resources for ESL students was provided. Adequate services and resources were identified for students with special needs. The District provided a limited description of how students are able to demonstrate mastery of the standards is provided.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The District has a partially complete description of a high quality plan. Evidence of personalized learning and equal access is noted in its 1:1 laptop initiative for all students in grades 6 - 12. In addition, personalized learning will be provided through technological resources embedded within Classworks software, PD360, Reading Street and EnVision Math curriculum. College and career readiness and high standards are not specifically addressed; however, it is inferred since programs noted in this section are discussed in previous sections as being supports for college and career readiness and aligned to the CCSS standards.</p> <p>The District provided complete evidence that all participating students have equal access to technology (1:1 laptop initiative and access to in PK - 5 to desktops, laptops, iPods, and iPads). Collaboration is noted between the special education and technology department to ensure equity and instructional needs. An adequate description of the two major data management systems was provided. The District utilizes their web-site as well as Haiku and Active Parent to keep parents up to date with student specific data, assignments, notices of upcoming events, etc...</p> <p>The need to align all data sources is being addressed through the District's data is management by School Interoperability Framework (SIF) Initiative. The goal is to move data automatically. The SIF manages library software, food service, transportation, and student information.</p> <p>The response is lacking a description related to the ease of exporting data/student information as well as a description of the appropriate levels of technical support.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Evidence of a high quality plan is documented in the Plan-Do-Study-Act organizer. The organizer identifies who is responsible for continuous improvement of reform at each stage: planning, doing, studying the reform, and acting to modify where appropriate. The organization describes the roles and responsibilities at the district, school, and classroom level. The programs, resources, elements, and components of the outlined reform throughout the proposal are embedded in this document to support college and career readiness, common core state standards, personalization through differentiation, access to all students, and data collection. The cyclical revision model is complete and appropriate in structure for the revision task at hand.</p>		

An adequate plan for monitoring is presented and an overview is provided in the description; however, the District description is limited in regard to specific timelines.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The communications plan is vague. Key internal and external stakeholder groups are not discussed. The District does not various ways in which it will reach out to the community which will include community groups, a new Council of Excellence, and school newsletters, data meetings, parent teacher conferences, etc... Elements of a high quality plan are not specifically outlined.

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

**5**

**3**

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

All grades and all schools are included in this grant proposal; therefore, the population targets all students. The identified performance measures embody all students throughout the district.

A total of twelve performance measures are identified in this application and the rationale for selecting each is complete. Achievement goals for each performance measure and sub-group are noted. The LEA identified how the District will utilize the data to inform instruction. For example: collecting FAFSA data for grades 9 - 12 will provide a predictor of how many students will be able to obtain financial aid; Classworks data will identify students below target who will receive intense remediation.

All goals appear to be achievable; however, the District did not provide a discussion as to how the baseline data was used to establish the goals; therefore, it is difficult to evaluate them as ambitious. The District also only includes academic based performance targets for grades PK - 8.

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

**5**

**2**

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

Elements of what will be monitored by the Grant Manager and persons with whom the manager will collaborate are identified; however, a detailed plan was not presented as to how the Grant Manager will monitor the plan. The identified resources, tools, or timelines to complete the tasks are not presented; therefore, the specific tasks/role of the Grant Manager is limited.

However, the general overview briefly identifies the important components of a high quality plan. The Description of what is to be monitored reflects: the data necessary for personalized learning, the necessary alignment of the initiatives to personalized learning, aligned common core standards using PD360, the PET model which will focus on getting 100% of students college and career ready; however how the Grant Manager will monitor, evaluate or gather "actionable feedback" is not described.

An inadequate description of technology is noted.

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

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

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

The District identified grant, state, federal and district funds required for the implementation of the grant/plan. The funds requested are reasonable and appropriate for the scope of the project. For example, the LEA identified salaries for personnel and included a description of the role of the staff member. The District identified the full / part time status of the employee, the salary guide and the sliding pay scale for future employment. In addition, the District identified mileage and distance for travel, supplies purchased from the current bid list, software licenses, and the total number of family visits over the course of the year where appropriated, etc...

The description of all funds and rationale is logical, reflective of the proposed components of the reform, and comprehensive in its description. The District provided a detailed chart and itemized costs by year and project for each of

the 4 years of funding. The District specifically identified which funds by year and by category are state, federal, and local. In addition, professional development funds which are critical to sustainability are being funded from district / state funding - outside the confines of the grant; therefore, this will support sustainability of the reform.

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

**10**

**8**

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

The District outlines numerous civic and community resources and outreach plans. A core team will serve as an Advisory Council: community members, teachers, business individuals, faith based leaders, local government officials and the grant project manager. Evidence of a high quality plan is noted in its description of the communication plan to communicate how and why the project will advance personalized learning for all students. The communications plan will target children from birth to age 4 to increase the number of students ready to enter kindergarten. In addition, the District noted that it will discuss how it will utilize differentiated instruction techniques through the use of technology to personalize learning. The District noted that the focus of the meetings will target college and career readiness programs and the encouragement of enrollment of high school graduates into college.

Most of the funds for continuation of the grant includes staffing, software upgrades, professional development, annual subscriptions, etc... In order to plan for maintaining reforms after the conclusion of the grant, the District indentified an overview of its plan to re-purpose local funds. The plan set forth describes a savings of 4.5 million to sustain the program into year 5. The District has a documented track record of community support and securing outside resources to fund programs.

Specific areas in which the District will target to "re-purpose" funding was not identified. An estimated budget for 3 years after the grant is not provided. The District provided an overview plan.

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b>		
N/A		

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
Throughout the entire application, the District continually referred to rigorous standards through the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, a focus on college and career readiness while focusing on graduation rates as well as college enrollees, personalized learning opportunities for all students, and equal access for all resources to all students.		

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>157</b>
--------------	------------	------------

**Race to the Top - District  
Technical Review Form**



## Application #0011MS-2 for Tupelo Public School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

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

The Tupelo Public School District (TPSD) has set an ambitious vision aimed at allowing the district to earn broad recognition for the excellent education it will offer its students. This vision of the applicant is to build on current successes while using RTTD funds to achieve success in the four core educational assurance areas.

The TPSD indicates that it was recently recognized for its attempt at turning the district around earning a “High Performing/B” on the Mississippi department of education accountability rating after earning an “Academic Watch/D” after several years flat tests scores.

The TPSD has focused its efforts on what happens in the classroom for students enrolled in the district from birth to graduation. The TPSD’s application is articulated around a set of principles summarized in the motto “The Race in On” for “Raising Achievement-Committing equity is On”.

The TPSD has set forth an ambitious vision built around four core educational areas:

- Assurance 1: Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.
  - o The TPSD is expanding its Early childhood education center to offer universal Pre-Kindergarten to more families in the district, also adding PATs (Parent as teachers) to serve the needs of at-risk pre-school age children. With this initiative that district aims at increasing the number of children entering TPSD Kindergarten ready.
  
  - o The TPSD indicated that it will add digital devices and personnel to reform differentiated instruction in Pre-K through 12 classrooms, partnering with a local research intensive university to offer Chinese as a Foreign language at Tupelo High School and use funds to provide professional development to teachers in the areas of Arts integration and English as Second Language and administrators through the National Institute of School leadership. The district is to be commended for its vision, however it did not provide a rationale for the use of digital device in its efforts at reforming differentiated instruction. While the partnership with the University of Mississippi to offer Chinese as a Foreign language at Tupelo High School is an interesting initiative that could help students in the TPSD to compete in the global economy; the district does not provide sufficient background information on the number of students that would benefit from this initiative nor does it provide a clear rationale for such partnership. The applicant indicated that it would use RTTD fund for teacher and administrator training but did not provide specific information on the ways in which such initiatives would enhance student achievement.
  
  - The TPSD has indicated that it will prepare all students for college and career readiness by paying for dual enrollment for high school students and adding additional personnel (graduation coaches and GED instructors) to deter middle school students from dropping out. The district’s plan is interesting but does not provide sufficient information about the institutions of higher education (community college, University) it will be partnering with for dual enrollment. The district is to be commended for wanting to hire more personnel to deter students from dropping out, however it does not describe what this plan will look like or how it will help prepare students for college and career readiness.
  
- Assurance 2: Building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction.

The TPSD indicates that teachers and administrators will be working with a data coordinator and indicate that the district will be using a professional development tool (PD 360) and Next network. The applicant did not provide specific information about the ways in which the new data systems will measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction.

- Assurance 3: Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.

The TPSD does not provide information about how it intends to recruit, develop, reward and retain effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.

- Assurance 4: Turning around lowest-achieving schools.

The TPSD does not provide specific information about how it intends to turning around lowest achieving schools.

The TPSD describes what learning will look like in a 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom but does not support its claim with sufficient evidence explaining how it will reach its goal. The district intends to infuse technology in instruction as well as tying instruction to common core standards while at the same time incorporating art disciplines. The district also appears to relying heavily on learning styles, this approach has historically not been deemed very reliable in increasing student achievement.

Overall the TPSD offers an ambitious but incomplete vision for the future.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
--	-----------	-----------

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

The TPSD indicates that it will taken a system-wide approach for The RACE is on. The twelve schools that comprise TPSD were selected to participate in grant activities. TPSD has demonstrated effectively why it selected all schools in the district that to participate in RTT-D funded activities (raising achievement and committing equity for all students). The district has listed the schools that would be participating as well as the number of students being served, as well as information about all sub-groups that would be served if RTT-D funding were received. TPSD has presented a well-documented plan for its approach for implementation.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
--	-----------	----------

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

A3

The TPSD has developed 4 projects aimed at implementing meaningful reform district-wide. The four projects are centered on specific areas:

- Project 1 focuses on initiatives related to Early and Elementary Education initiatives. The applicant described several initiatives aimed at reducing drop out rates, TPSD uses research to justify expanding Early childhood Education centers, Early Beginning resources centers to serve the needs of more children in the community and expanding the community literacy initiative *Tupelo Reads*. The district provides a detailed plan for implementation, described how many children and family served by these initiatives and the number of staff/volunteers and needed for successful implementation. The district provided a comprehensive and realistic plan for the implementation of project 1.

- Project 2 focuses on initiatives dealing with differentiated instruction aimed at meeting the needs of all students. In this section the applicant offers a detailed account of the ways in which it intends to use RTTD funding to purchase technology tools and curriculum materials. The applicant offers a credible rationale for the use of differentiated instruction but does not provide sufficient evidence to justify the purchase of technology equipment and how the incorporation of technology will help in meeting the needs of all students over than support the use of existing programs (Reading street, Envision Math). However, the other initiatives in this section including in the areas of supplementary human resources to meet the needs of students receiving services through a RTI

(response to intervention approach) and non native English speakers is well documented and supports the district's needs. The other initiatives described by the applicant include The Arts in the Classroom (AIC) and the integration of this program with Common Core Standards is interesting and promising based on the evidence presented. The last two initiatives under Project 2 include NSL cohort training for administrators, the program as described in the application makes sense and is appropriate to provide campus administrators in TPSD with up to date information and professional training to meet the needs of students. Lastly, the initiative to offer Chinese as a foreign language to students in partnership with the University of Mississippi is innovative and promising.

- Project 3 emphasizes College and career readiness, the applicant indicated that it has gradually adopted the Common Core Standards following its adoption by the state of Mississippi in 2010. The TPSD intends to increase the graduation rates of economically disadvantaged students (currently graduating at a rate below the state average) through the hiring of graduation coaches, the offering of dual enrollment courses through partnership with Itawamba Community College, the expansion of the GED (general Education Expansion), the acquisition of ACT prep curricula and Common assessments as well as college campus visits starting at the middle school level. The plan developed in project 3 is convincing and detailed.

- Project 4 focuses on Evaluation systems aimed at providing teachers with quality professional development through PD360. Next Network assisting teachers in aligning state curriculum and assessments to Common Core standards across grade levels and subject areas. The hiring of data coordinators is also justified and appropriate to support district goals detailed in this section under projects 3 and 4.

Overall, the TPSD has presented a strong case for LEA-wide reform & change.

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

**10**

**7**

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

The district appears to have set ambitious, yet mostly achievable academic growth on summative assessments (Mississippi Curriculum Test - Second Edition (MCT2) Language and Math assessments for grades 3-8; Mississippi Science Test (MST) for Grades 5,8; Subject Area Testing Program (SATP) End of Course (EOC) assessments in Algebra I, Biology, English II, and U.S. History for grades 9-12. The district projects a steady growth for all subgroups White, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, students in Special Education, students with Limited English proficiency (LEP) and economically disadvantaged students. However the applicant does not provide a narrative detailing specific goals by subgroups. The growth for economically disadvantaged students, students receiving Special education services and studentst with Limited English proficiency appears to be unrealistic to achieve in 5 years. The district has set ambitious yet mostly achievable goals in its attempt to close the achievement gap, increase high school graduation rate and college enrollment rate. Overall, the district has set mostly achievable LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes; a narrative detailing goals for specific subgroups would have strengthened this section.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>

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

The district presented evidence of reform in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement. The district has seen gains in student achievement as measured by standardized tests on all campuses in the past four years. The district reports improvement in graduation rates over the past four years, more students are also enrolled in post secondary education following graduation from Tupelo high School. Gains in student achievement have also been demonstrated can also be found at the elementary level and middle school level through initiatives in Art integration into the curriculum and partnership with the Mississippi department of education to engage students in projects related to math, science and technology. The TPSD reports that such programs have resulted in gains in student achievement in Math and science. The district credits the early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) for major gains in language Arts and Mathematics on the MCT 2 (Mississippi Curriculum test 2). The district also presented a compelling case regarding the hiring, mentoring and retention of highly qualified teachers in TPSD. The applicant also presented a strong case when explaining how it makes student performance available to all stakeholders.

The list of achievements, former and current partnerships and initiatives are impressive; overall, the applicant demonstrates a clear track record of success.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
---	----------	----------

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

The TPSD explained that it is fully accredited by the Mississippi department of Education and subject to periodic monitoring from the state to ensure compliance in the ways in which money is spent. The applicant indicated that it is also accountable to the board of trustees and to the community through meetings open to the public. The TPSD also indicated that the district makes available to the public a district-wide expense profile detailing expenses by function (instructional, general administration, school administration, business services, operational services, transportation services, central support services, no instructional services, facilities construction services and debt services) for a total separated by salaries and fringe benefits, then by other expenses. The applicant also indicated that financial statements are also made available on a monthly basis to the board of trustees. The district also complies with Federal regulations providing financial and student data to the National Center for Education Statistics and to the department of Education. Overall, the TPSD has demonstrated evidence of high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
--	-----------	-----------

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

The district indicated that over the past three years the state of Mississippi has worked diligently to enact measures to encourage educational reform. The state has adopted Common Core Standards in mathematics and English Language Arts/literacy. The TPSD indicated that it has autonomy under the state's requirements in its development and implementation of personalized learning environments. It also indicated that it has autonomy to design its curriculum and pacing guides under the framework developed by the state's Department of Education Accountability Standards. Overall, the district has demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under state, legal statutory and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in its proposal.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
--	-----------	-----------

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

The applicant has demonstrated strong stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal. The TPSD indicated that the proposal was discussed with all stakeholders (teacher advisory council, parent forum, principal's team). The application was also discussed with community college officials who will be involved in grant activities upon receiving RTTD funding. The district indicated that students were surveyed while the district was drafting its application (students' responses were positive and support the main components of *The Race is On*). Teachers were also surveyed and responded favorably to initiatives to be funded by RTTD in the TPSD. It appears that parents were not directly surveyed however the district indicated that the application was discussed in the parent forum. The district also received the support of several public and community partners as evidenced by letters of support included in the application for funds (Mississippi Department of Education, Tupelo's Mayor Jason Shelton, Senator Thad Cochran, CREATE Foundation, as well as Parents for Public Schools). Overall, the district presented strong evidence to demonstrate that stakeholders were involved in the development of the proposal.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>

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

The TPSD has an ambitious plan to prepare students for College and career. It is the applicant's belief that students must be connected on a personal level for learning and understanding to take place, the personalized learning environment created by TPSD through a differentiated instruction approach is evidence that students, educators and parents understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goal. TPSD's approach makes sense in its efforts

to meet the needs of all students.

The district will, upon receiving RTTD funding continue its ongoing initiatives Reading Street, Classworks and *Envision Math* to prepare students starting in the early grades for College and Career. Based on the evidence provided by the applicant it appears that Reading Street and Classworks and *Envision Math* will be valuable tools in achieving college and career readiness. These tools will allow students to experience a quality personalized sequence of learning tailored to their needs. These interactive tools also allow students to work in group and continue developing problem solving skills. Based on the evidence provided by the applicant these tools will also allow for all stakeholders to get frequent feedback on student work and progress. TPSD presented ample evidence that the data systems to be used will allow teachers, administrators and parents to get quality data about student progress toward mastery of college and career standards. Lastly, the partnership with the University will provide students with access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that will certainly motivate and deepen their learning.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
--	-----------	-----------

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The TPSD presented a coherent plan for preparing students for college and careers through teaching and leading.

The district indicated that it recently experienced turnover in leadership at the district level and that these changes have led to gains in student achievement as measured by test scores. The TPSD stated that it plans to use personalized learning to integrate data-driven student achievement and educator effectiveness through several online tools (PD 360) and the new statewide educator evaluation system (M-STAR). School leaders will also be trained to meet the needs of teachers and students through evaluations conducted using the Mississippi Principal evaluation system (MPES). Another tool to be used by the district is Next Network allowing TPSD teachers to align Mississippi Curriculum framework with the CCSS. TPSD also indicated that teachers will have quality curriculum and resources at their disposal to meet the needs of all students. The applicant also indicated that RTTD funding would be used to hire more interventionists to serve in the district-wide RTI program. Lastly, TPSD presented strong case of its abilities to fully transition to Common Core Standards leading to acceleration in student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation.

Overall, the district's plan is thorough and demonstrates strong evidence of a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college and career ready.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

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

The district provided ample evidence that the school district's leadership team is organized to provide support and services to the 12 participating schools in the project. The applicant explained that principals and assistant principals have autonomy and operational flexibility to meet the needs of all students on their respective campuses. The applicant indicated that it will give students ample opportunities to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery through resources such as Classworks, accelerated courses, Pre-AP courses, and AP course. TPSD also indicated that students would be able to demonstrate mastery of content through the use of technology, the applicant did not provide additional information on how it plans to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. However, the applicant presented a strong case for its ability to serve the needs of English Language Learners using the sheltered instruction model and English as a second language classes in grades 7-12 in small classes. The district also indicated that students with disabilities will receive an adequate and free appropriate public education and that it is committed to on-going formal activities, to identify, locate and evaluate all children who are suspected of having a disability or who may be entitled to receiving special education related services. However, the district did not provide sufficient information about specific programs and facilities to meet the needs of students receiving special education services in TPSD.

TPSD provided evidence that an appropriate plan is in place to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator (as defined in this notice), and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
---	-----------	----------

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

The applicant provided some evidence that through its school infrastructures it supports personalized learning. The district indicated provides many of its resources to all stakeholders digitally, since the student population is 61 % economically disadvantaged the district has in recent years instituted a 1:1 laptop initiative in grades 6-12 enabling students to use laptops for homework. Students are also engaged with technology on a daily basis in the early grades. Based on the narrative provided by the applicant its technology department appears to be well positioned to continue providing support and expertise to all stakeholders and community members served by the TPSD. The district provided strong evidence that the Haiku learning management system is an effective tool when communicating with parents about student homework, progress, grades and attendance. According to the evidence presented in the narrative, the school website appears to also be an appropriate way to communicate with all stakeholders, each page on the website can be automatically in multiple languages, the phone system utilized by the district is also another effective tool when communicating with parents and community members. The School Interoperability Initiative launched a decade ago appears to be helping the district in the area of product functionality. The applicant indicated that it is still working on moving more district applications within the SIF. However, the applicant does not provide specific information about timeline, deliverables and parties responsible for facilitating and support personalized learning through its school infrastructures.

Overall, the TPSD has an appropriate plan in place to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The TPSD has provided a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. The district states that it practices a clear process for continuous improvement known as PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act), this comprehensive approach involves the entire school at three levels (district level, school level and classroom level, and student level). However, the applicant did not specifically address how it intends to publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff comprehensive. Overall, the TPSD has presented a good plan.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The TPSD has an appropriate plan in place to ensure ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The applicant indicated that it conducts periodic surveys to the internal and external communities, holds open houses throughout the year, parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences and data meetings, and presentations from the Superintendent to the community. The applicant indicated that the local newspaper also features stories about the school district on a regular basis. In its application the district also explained that it has established at Tupelo High School the council of excellence a committee of community members who will be communicating with stakeholders about initiatives and events taking place at the school, the district is planning to open similar committees at other schools. However the TPSD does not provide specific information about timeline, deliverables and all parties responsible for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The TPSD has selected ambitious yet achievable performance measures. The rationale provided for selecting each measure makes sense, the district selected measures starting in the early grades to high school. The applicant also indicated precisely how these measures provide rigorous, timely, and formative information tailored to the overall <i>The Race is On</i> proposal. The applicant also offered a compelling case about how it will review its plan overtime. Overall, the applicant presented a strong plan.</p>		

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
--	----------	----------

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The district indicates that it will use multiple measures in evaluating the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities. First the district indicated that *The Race is On* will be administered on a day-to-day basis by a grant project manager who will work closely with the finance and technology departments. These entities will then work closely with district level administrators and principals to determine how resources are used, what information can be gathered from data and if the goals are met. However, TPSD did not provide specific information regarding a timeline for evaluating the outcomes, resources and activities associated with The Race is On.

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

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

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The applicant's budget clearly identifies all all funds that will support the project. The applicants indicates all funds that will support the project (Race to the Top, contracted vs local funds). Based on the evidence provided it appears that the budget is sufficient to support and implement the applicants' proposal. The budget is broken down into categories (personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual). However, the applicant did not provide a narrative indicating clearly wich funds will be used for ongoing operationnal costs during and after the grant period. Based on the information provided the applicant has submitted an acceptable budget plan.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
---	-----------	----------

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The TPSD provided a limited plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The district indicated that it plans to communicate regularly with community members to inform all stakeholders about RTTD funded activities and how it will directly impact families in Tupelo. The district will seek support from Tupelo's mayor as well as state legislative leadership, members of the Mississippi board of education. It appears that the TPSD was able only able to secure the support of two entities (the CREATE Foundation and the community development foundation) to find the support it will need to fund its initiatives beyond the 4 years of RTTD funding. The district also explained that it would attempt to repurpose other funding while funded through RTTD. Overall, TPSD has presented a limited plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant.

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

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

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**  
 The applicant did not provide this information.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**  
 The Tupelo Public School District (TPSD) has set an ambitious vision aimed at allowing the district to earn broad recognition for the excellent education it will offer its students. This vision of the applicant is to build on current successes while using RTTD funds to achieve success in the four core educational assurance areas. The TPSD has focused its efforts

on what happens in the classroom for students enrolled in the district from birth to graduation. The TPSD's application is articulated around a set of principles summarized in the motto "The Race is On" for "Raising Achievement-Committing equity is On". Overall, the district's plan offers students enrolled in TPSD and opportunity to learn using personalized strategies aligned with CCSS standards and tied to College and career readiness; while also providing these same students with effective teachers who will be able to meet their needs. Based on the information provided in this application the TPSD has met absolute priority 1.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>164</b>
--------------	------------	------------



## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

#### Application #0011MS-3 for Tupelo Public School District

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

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

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

(a) Overall, the application presents an exceptionally coherent, thoughtfully developed vision that meets the threshold of high quality as defined by this competition. Several statements illuminate Tupelo Public School District's (TPSD) commitment to the spirit of this competition and bear mentioning: teachers will no longer work as lecturers imparting factual information that students can easily find on the internet but will shift to leverage higher-order questioning techniques to inspire learning and the view that Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are "what" educators are teaching with arts integration serving as the "how." Further, the collaborative theme throughout in partnering with local community colleges and universities to strengthen the student experience is impressive and appears to indicate an existing, developed relationship instead of an aspirational one. TPSD's vision, supported by five rigorous, complementary and scalable initiatives, fully addresses three of the core educational assurance areas as required by the criterion with the emphasis on standards and assessments, strong data systems, and professional support and training for effective teachers and principals. However, the narrative is silent with regard to specific plans for turning around the district's lowest achieving schools resulting in a reduction in points. The narrative offers a brief description of the Evaluations Systems project and indicates use of PD360 and Next Network to support goals herein without describing what these elements are.

(b) Though the narrative articulates an excellent, research-driven set of initiatives that will likely have a positive and substantial impact on accelerating student achievement, it is never stated specifically as being designed for this purpose as required by the criterion. The plan presents clear, credible goals aligned with deepening student learning through a variety of common and individual tasks based on student academic interests.

(c) The narrative presents a complete description of the envisioned personalized learning environments for students and teachers as required by the criterion both from the student and teacher perspective.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
--	-----------	-----------

##### (A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TPSD indicates that all district schools and students as participating in the reform proposal, including the Early Childhood Education Center that serves 262 pre-K students, and demonstrating that all grade bands are included. Further, the application indicates appropriate grade level subject areas are included in their plan, as required by the criterion, and supporting effective implementation of the proposal.

(a) TPSD has indicated that all schools, students, teachers, and principals in the district will participate in the four-year grant objectives and that all are compliant with the competition's eligibility requirements.

- (b) As required by the criterion, the application includes a complete list of participating schools.
- (c) The application presents a thorough demographic picture as required by the criterion including sub-groups.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
--	-----------	-----------

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

Given that all schools within the district are included in the reform proposal, an approach to scalability is not necessary. The narrative does present a coherent, high-quality and ambitious plan with multi-layered approaches, including timelines and deliverables, that are thoroughly described within the district's theory of reform as stated in five project initiatives. The plan gives clear definitions of responsibility, specific timeframes, and stated goals throughout. Among the plans strengths are the thoughtful approach for leveraging existing technology to strengthen personalized student learning, plans for sustained professional development and training for teachers, integration of a variety of curriculum -- Classworks, EnVision Math, Reading Street, and a solid emphasis for targeting funds to increase the number of interventionists that better align TPSD with national Response to Intervention standards. An even more innovative strategy is presented in the district's plans to leverage arts in learning. This reflects a deep understanding of the many dimensions in student learning and serves as a strength in defining meaningful reform as required by the criterion. The plan for professional development, including all principals and assistant principals, leveraging a collaboration with the National Institute for School Leadership Executive Development Program at the University of Mississippi is well developed and offers strong support aligned with one of the competitions's core educational assurance areas. The plan also acknowledges the real problems facing TPSD, specifically with regard to student dropout data, while presenting a high-quality approach to address these issues.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
--	-----------	----------

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

TPSD presents a detailed set of goals for student learning and performance in each of the four areas required in this criterion but does not address the postsecondary degree attainment option.

- (a) The performance goals indicated for summative assessments are reasonable, attainable but not overly ambitious. Average growth among subgroups with the lowest baseline scores is 2% per year that if attained with result in solid gains overall. However, the post-grant results for several subgroups remains relatively low therefore not achieving the definition of ambitious. For example, post-grant scores for Grade 3 MCT2 Language is 70% for Black and Hispanic subgroups and for Grade 3 MCT3 Math is 74% for Black and 72% for Hispanic subgroups. This pattern is reflected across each subject and grade.
- (b) Goals for decreasing achievement gaps are reasonable, steady and reflect generally ambitious targets across each subject and grade. Post-grant results, if attained, will still indicate substantial gaps. For instance, the post-grant Black/Asian achievement gap will have decreased from a baseline of 44% to 34%. That would remain an unacceptably high gap, though somewhat improved. Additional instances similar to the one cited exist in the data. Overall, the goals are acceptable but not particularly ambitious.
- (c) Targets for graduation rates, similar to those defined for achievement gaps, are reasonable yet not uniformly ambitious for all subgroups. The plan indicates a post-grant graduation rate of 73% for the Black subgroup, yet White, Asian and Hispanic all have post-grant graduation targets of over 90%. This does not reflect an ambitious outcome for all subgroups.
- (d) Post-grant college enrollment rates are reasonable, achievable but, once again, not particularly ambitious. With a post-grant college enrollment goal of 56% for Hispanic students yet near or over 80% for White, Asian and Black subgroups, high expectations and goals are not uniform for all subgroups and do not reflect increased equity as required by the criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

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

The application presents a very detailed explanation of the TPSD's record of progress in advancing student learning and achievement as well as increasing equity in learning and teaching over the previous four years, as required by the criterion.

The narrative is fulsome in providing a number of charts, raw data and demonstrable evidence to support the gains attained in each of the three areas required by the criterion. However, in the chart on page 29 indicating student subgroup performance on the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2) from 2010-2013, there was a universal decrease in performance in the 2011 testing period, except for the Asian, SPED and LEP subgroups. The narrative fails to offer any explanation or analysis of this point. Further, the narrative indicates a district goal to have a majority of students scoring proficient or higher in 3rd -8th grade but does not present a targeted timeframe for attaining this objective. The narrative offers a high-quality explanation of student performance for all grade levels with evidence supporting gains in the previous four years regarding graduation rates, percentage of graduates entering college as well as citing several examples that support the district's capacity to manage successful projects that result in improved student achievement, specifically the arts project through Whole Schools Initiative at Pierce Elementary and the STEM project at Tupelo Middle School through the Mississippi Department of Transportation. The data presented also provide evidence that ambitious and significant reforms have been deployed in persistently lowest-achieving schools, though the narrative does not specifically identify those schools that are lowest-achieving in the narrative, they can be inferred from the charts. The application specifically provides the required evidence that student performance data is made available to students, educators and parents in reasonable, thoughtful ways that inform and improve participation, instruction and services as required by the criterion.

This is demonstrated by the fact teachers review student performance data on a monthly basis with principals, principals discuss the data with the Superintendent every 9 weeks, and evidence of multiple data systems that make student performance data accessible and available to all stakeholders.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
---	----------	----------

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

The application presents a complete narrative explanation of the budgeting process, with a high degree of transparency, that offers specific evidence in support of the criterion. Further, the application includes a chart presenting the required salaries, by category, as required, at the school level. The narrative demonstrates a high level of transparency through periodic monitoring by the State, significant district internal controls, a thorough annual budgeting process including a well-promoted public hearing. This rigor is also substantiated by the presentation of monthly financial statements in public meetings and an annual audit. These elements indicate a high standard of financial practice and a very focused, ongoing evaluation of district investments.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
--	-----------	-----------

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

The application presents evidence that the state has a law in place mandating differentiated and targeted interventions for struggling student along with the autonomy at the district level to adopt or create the best instructional model. Further, the narrative describes the district's autonomy to design its curriculum and pacing guides for instructional practice as well as providing district autonomy to extend required programming for intellectually gifted students, fully complying with the criteria. These flexibility guidelines are contained within a State framework through the Department of Education Accountability Standards. In addition, Mississippi requires differentiation and targeted interventions for struggling students, with specific autonomy to determine the best course of action, through the State's Three Tier Intervention Model.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
--	-----------	-----------

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

While the narrative does provide a description of how students were engaged in a limited survey, only addressing two broad questions, the application does not indicate how many students participated, from what schools, nor how their input was or was not utilized to inform the content of the application. The narrative does offer evidence that parents were engaged, though at a limited level with only 192 respondents, and more compelling evidence that broad teacher input was solicited. The district does not have collective bargaining representation. Out of a total of 542 teachers, 437 responded indicating a response rate of 81% in excess of the requirements for this criteria. The plan falls short, however, in describing how this input was integrated into the creation of the district's application. Only five stakeholder letters accompany the application. Two of these, one from Senator Thad Cochran and one from the Mississippi Department of Education do not reflect any specific knowledge of the plan's contents. The remaining three, from a parent organization, community foundation and the Mayor's office are detailed and provide strong support. Overall, the letters fail to meet a high-quality level of demonstrated stakeholder engagement and support for the application resulting in a reduction in points.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The narrative is initially choppy, contains distractions of incomplete sentences (page 41), repetitive use of words and evidence that proof-reading was not properly performed which diminishes the overall quality of the plan. However, the complete plan suggests a reasonably high-quality, innovative approach to develop individual learning plans for all participating students, including personalized learning sequences, aligned with college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements, as required by the criterion. The narrative does not fulfill the requirement for adequately describing how parents and educators are deploying strategies to ensure that students fully understand the link to learning and the fulfillment of student goals and ambition nor does the plan include any reference to access and exposure to diverse cultures. The plan's current and proposed use of a wide variety of data, including administrative support to assist teachers, parents and students to interpret the information, is solid. An additional strength are the college and career ready alternatives through varied diploma tracks which is impressive and innovative. Also, the broad mix of available courses indicates a rich possibility of content from which to build robust individual learning plans.</p> <p>A deficiency in the plan is the almost exclusive focus on the tactical aspects of the required elements for effective individual learning plans without fully articulating the existing or proposed strategies to ensure student, parent and educator awareness of these tools. The Haiku portal for parents and students is a strength in the plan but there is no description for how training or even the awareness of Haiku is made available nor any data supporting the broad use of this platform. The narrative also fails to adequately address accommodations and high-quality strategies for high- need students. The plan simply asserts that the district adheres to a rigorous Response to Intervention model, consistent with national standards, but does not substantiate this with evidence of specific strategies aligned to high-need students. Moreover, the plan lacks any evidence for mechanisms to provide training and support to students with regard to the wide array of tools being offered by the district, as required by the criterion.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The narrative fails to provide the evidence required in the comprehensive criteria and lacks coherence. Instead of systematically offering evidence consistent with the format and requirements of the criterion, the plan describes the use of purchased tools to support various elements for professional development, evaluations and interventions for teachers and principals or, in some cases, re-describes what has already been presented in earlier sections, and briefly discusses strategies for RTI, Next Network and transition to Common Core State Standards. Further weakening the plan, the narrative makes a number of vague statements without incorporating evidence to support the assertion. For example, "teachers are finding a tremendous amount of new support in the classrooms-instructional administration with a passion for performance" without then providing details about what might be new in terms of support either as already being in place or envisioned as part of this reform plan. The narrative does not provide a coherent rationale for the tools or assessments described nor how they might be integrated to ensure that all learners are empowered and engaged. A description is presented for PD360, M-STAR, and MPES without linking any of the features specifically to the requirements of the criterion. In sum, the narrative does not present a high-quality plan for implementing a personalized learning environment for all students nor does the plan describe how student learning will be accelerated through the specific support within this plan of his or her needs. While the narrative offers considerable discussion about the district's commitment to standards, the plan does not explain how information will be developed into actionable items nor how information will be obtained and utilized to help school leaders and school leadership teams assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness. The plan states that "TPSD students along with their advisors and parents develop personalized education plans" but then fails to articulate what is included in these plans, how parents are engaged in the process and what is included in the resulting plan making the narrative vague in meeting the requirements of the criterion.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>

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

TPSD presents a reasonable plan to support project implementation with ample evidence of flexible policies at the district and school levels to enable effective deployment along with demonstrated support and resources as required by the criterion.

(a) The narrative offers a full description of how the LEA central office is organized to provide meaningful support and services to participating schools, meeting the requirements of the criterion.

(b) The narrative provides a coherent description in support of district policies that support sufficient flexibility and autonomy over schedules, calendars, personnel decisions, staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators and school-level budgets as required by the criterion.

(c) The plan does not provide evidence that student's are given the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic.

(d) The plan states that teachers "routinely assess students' mastery of instructional objectives" and have the flexibility to modify learning plans accordingly but fails to provide sufficient detail for how often "routine" is, what assessments are utilized, or if they meet the criterion of multiple times and in multiple comparable ways therefore not meeting the requirements of the criterion.

(e) The narrative is comprehensive and detailed in its explanation of district ELL programs, policies and strategies that meet the requirements of the criterion in addition to evidence that support is in place for students with disabilities as required.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
---	-----------	----------

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

(a) The plan addresses the availability of technology providing access to necessary content, tools and other learning resources for home and school use for students in grades 6-12 and school availability for participating students in the other grades in a manner consistent with what is appropriate and relevant to student learning. The plan also provides evidence for strong educator support with regard to access as defined by the criterion. The plan does not, however, fully address access for parents. While it is explained that parents have access through the district Haiku Learning Management System as well as the district website, each of which have excellent features, the plan does not address strategies for families without access to computers or devices to utilize these tools resulting in a reduction in points.

(b) The district offers a strong level of technical staff support directly to schools, educators and students as required by the criterion and across a range of different strategies. However, the plan does not address how this support is or is contemplated to be extended to include parents.

(c) The plan does not address how information technology systems would allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format as required by the criterion.

(d) TPSD describes its School Interoperability Framework Initiative as a focused effort to efficiently share data in order to provide administrators, faculty and staff with the resources necessary to make data-driven decisions, consistent with the requirements of the criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

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

The plan fails to reach the level of high-quality as expected in this competition, but does present a reasonable, if not specific, approach for a strategy to implement a rigorous continuous improvement process. The application includes a chart explaining TPSD's Plan-Do-Study-Act cyclical model that includes assertions for how the district will monitor,

measure and publicly share information around annual district goals, measurable indicators, and resulting revisions to the plan. The chart indicates that principals will meet monthly with teachers to examine data yet the narrative states that teams will meet bi-monthly, creating an inconsistency. Further, the plan states that teams, led by principals and teachers, will meet "often and consistently" to coherently communicate the district's vision. But the plan lacks specificity as to how frequently this will be done or under what structure. The plan indicates that way will be identified to provide help to those students most at-risk and inviting community organizations to assist the district in responding but does not provide any examples to support evidence for how this will be done. The statement alone is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the criterion. An additional inconsistency is presented when the narrative states teachers will evaluate an array of information about each student on a daily basis, monitored by weekly principal classroom observations. However, the accompanying chart refers only to teacher monitoring at the 4.5 and 9 week marking periods. Overall, the plan lacks the necessary substance to demonstrate evidence of a rigorous continuous improvement process.

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

**5**

**3**

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

The plan briefly describes the existing communication mechanisms within TPSD for engagement and informing internal and external stakeholders as well as introduces a new Council of Excellence at Tupelo High School. While the narrative indicates that additional councils in other schools are envisioned, this is not presented as a definite plan. Further, the narrative fails to provide sufficient detail as to the coherence of communication, specific frequency or those responsible for the communication therefore preventing the application from meeting the high-quality plan requirement.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The narrative provides a very brief, insufficient description of eleven performance measures without addressing the rationale for why the measure was selected, is completely silent on defining how the measure will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information, nor does the plan address in any way how the measures will be reviewed and improved in order to gage implementation progress as required by the criterion.

The plan is not clear with regard to the requirement for including a total of approximately 12-14 performance measures. Eleven bulleted performance measures are described in the narrative. However, there are a number of sub-measures within DIEBELS for participating students in grades pre-k-3 which might be considered as additive to meet the minimum level of required performance measures. But as they do not apply to all participating students, points are deducted for not meeting the required minimum number of performance measures.

The performance measures described only partially address the elements of the required performance measures for pre-k-3, 4-8 and 9-12 participating student populations as required by the criterion. The identified performance measures do not identify an age-appropriate non-cognitive indicator of growth for pre-k-3, an age-appropriate academic leading indicator or health or social-emotional leading indicator demonstrating successful implementation of the TPSD plan for grades 4-8, nor is there a performance indicator for grades 9-12 that meet the requirement for an academic leading indicator nor health or social-emotional leading indicator to provide evidence of successful implementation of the plan.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The plan presents a reasonable approach for evaluating the effectiveness of Race to the Top-District funded activities but falls short of achieving a rigorous, high-quality plan resulting from a lack of detail that specifically links activities and tools to targeted goals and activities within the plan. The plan re-states an approach for utilizing an array of tools, Observation 360, PD360 and PET, to gather information about evaluation but does not specifically address how this information is directly linked to Race to the Top-District funded activities and performance goals.

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

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

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

- (a) The application budget is comprehensively presented and identifies all funds that will support the project both one-time expenditures and ongoing support.
- (b) The plan identifies additional state, federal and local funds that will provide more than half of the required total \$45,000,000 budget with Race to the Top-District supplying \$20,000,000. This indicates an impressive investment on the district's part to rely on other precious dollars that when combined with Race to the Top-District funds will be sufficient to fully support development and implementation of the proposal. The budget and identified sources is reasonable, sufficient, and aligned with all of the elements required by the plan's stated projects.
- (c) The budget narrative described across each project and by each year of the grant period is quite detailed and demonstrates considerable, careful thought for how funds will be utilized. It is one of the strongest aspects of the entire application.

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

**10**

**10**

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

The plan offers a high-quality, comprehensive approach to ensure active, sustained participation of State and local government leaders, and business and non-profit leaders. Further the plan describes a targeted expectation to re-purpose local, state and other funds, within each of the four years, from current programs that are not achieving intended results, after effective evaluation, and that these funds will be saved to be re-allocated to support ongoing work beyond the grant period. This is indicated as a substantial savings amount and, when combined with efforts to secure additional financial support from partnerships and foundations, will create the capacity for future sustainability beyond the grant period.

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

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

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

Though the application refers to an intent to establish new partnerships through the implementation of the Race is On initiative, or enhance existing relationships, the narrative does not specifically articulate the design or innovative partnerships consistent with the requirements and spirit of the Competitive Preference Priority. There is simply not any sufficient evidence in any aspect of the application to justify increased points.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The Tupelo Public School District presents an inchoate application that fails to fulfill the overall potential that is glimpsed in various parts of the narrative. The goals, purpose and adherence to building upon the core educational assurance areas consistent with the priorities of the Race to the Top-District competition are adequately addressed to meet this Absolute Priority. However, the plan falls short of meeting the threshold of high-quality in the absence of substantial detail to substantiate how the district will accelerate student achievement and deepening student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student. There is quite a rich description of how the district intends to support teachers through professional development which is encouraging. But when this is aligned with post-grant performance targets that would allow for only marginal overall academic achievement for several subgroups, the plan's credibility is diminished. It is not enough to imply success. The high quality plan will make that statement then support it with ample detail for fulfilling the district's vision and aspiration. Often, the plan re-states what the criterion expects with simple narrative. This distracts greatly from other sections where the narrative is detailed, fulsome and strives to illuminate real capacity for achieving success.



Total	210	145
-------	-----	-----