



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0146TX-2 for United Independent School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

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

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

The district provided details to describe a reform vision that demonstrated support for the core educational assurance areas, the use of an instructional information system to help personalize learning through an attempt to address the digital divide that is present among the students as well as providing accelerated English language learning for the lowest ELL students through the use of electronic devices and professional development for the district's students, parents, and teachers in the use of the digital devices.

The weakness of the reform vision was found in the lack of a clear description of the classroom experiences for teachers and students as they engage in a learning environment immersed in personalized learning. Furthermore, the district provided limited evidence of how student's individual interests would be incorporated into the learning environment.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
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#### (A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided a clear list of the schools that would participate in the project as well as the total number of students, the number of economically disadvantaged students, high need students, and the number of educators. This information was presented in both a table and narrative format, making it a detailed description of the student and educator participation.

The district provided a limited description of the selection process for the schools to participate in the project. The district described only one criterion. The schools were selected based on the percentage of economically disadvantaged students. This resulted in 39 out of 40 schools being selected to participate. It was unclear if the addition of the one remaining school would have changed the collective percentage of economically disadvantaged students significantly and thereby disqualifying the district from the application process.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
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#### (A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district has presented some of the indicators of a high quality plan. The district clearly identified the goals and activities implement reforms; however, the application presented did not fully develop the reasoning for the selected activities. The plan also lacked evidence of a timeline, the persons responsible for successful implementation of the reform, and the deliverables as indicated in this criterion.

Overall, the limited plan presented in the narrative does have a reasonable chance for successful implementation. The limited information found in the narrative makes it difficult to determine how successful the implementation could be.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
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#### (A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided tables to demonstrate ambitious and achievable goals. The tables would have been greatly supported

by a narrative that would have been able to explain why such small increases in the annual goals would be considered ambitious. Many of the annual increases ranged from 0.2% to 4%. The lack of detail made it difficult to determine if this would be an ambitious goal. Ambitious goals would be expected to have annual increases near 10%, especially for the lowest performing subgroups and in the early elementary grades where these goals have the greatest possibility of successful achievement. Additionally, there was contradictory information presented in the Graduation Rate table where White students were shown to decrease by 0.2% from the baseline to Year 1 of implementation. Furthermore, there was no baseline data for African American and American Indian college enrollment.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	15	3
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>  The district provided evidence of improving student achievement by indicating the percentage of schools meeting AYP status increased from 68.3% in 2008 to 90.5% in 2010. While this information was provided, it did not help establish a convincing record of success. The district also did not provide evidence or data to demonstrate its success in closing the achievement gaps, improving graduation rates, the effectiveness of its past reform efforts or how the district makes student data available to all stakeholders, including parents, to inform instruction, participation, and community services.		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	5	5
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>  The district offered strong evidence to demonstrate it has high levels of transparency in their processes, practices and expenditures. The evidence included the details regarding how salary schedules can be clearly identified to individual schools and teachers as well as non-instructional personnel. The application also described methods of reporting non-personnel expenditures at the school level. There were no weaknesses found in this section of the application.		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	10	10
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>  The district provided reasonable evidence to support the required autonomy to successfully implement the grant. Under Federal regulations, Texas Education Code, and local school board authority, the school district has sufficient authority and autonomy to implement the reform project presented in this application. There were no weaknesses found in this section of the application.		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	15	7
<b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>  The district provided evidence of a process to engage all stakeholders in the development of this project. The district also supported their claims of support from the local college and university as well as demonstrated support for the project by members of the US Congress and State legislators.  However, the district did not demonstrate any evidence of participation in the development of the project by student organizations. Additionally, the claim by the district that "almost all teachers" supported the project was not supported by any evidence. As an LEA without collective bargaining, the minimum threshold for convincing support by the teachers was evidence of support by at least 70% of the teachers from the participating schools. The reform project relied heavily on teacher support and the application would have been strengthened by the inclusion of evidence for the teachers' support.		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	20	5

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

The district provided a strong description of the personalized learning environment along with details of their graduation planning process involving the students, parents, and educators that begins in Grade 8 and is reviewed each year as students get closer to graduation. As the district utilized the graduation planning process, students learned to utilize skills such as goal setting, perseverance, communication, and problem solving. The narrative also described how the students would lead the planning process meetings, how some of the high quality instructional practices would incorporate the use of project based learning and digital learning methodology. Some of the technology described the use of learning language programs on electronic devices in order to accelerate the English acquisition of the lowest performing ELL students. Additionally, the narrative described how parents would be able to receive and use data that was sent in various ways.

The application did not provide clear details regarding how this plan would address deep learning opportunities in areas of academic interest. There was also limited evidence of how students would be exposed to diverse learning cultures, contexts and perspectives. The narrative also lacked sufficient information regarding the language program that was meant to accelerate English language learning. Furthermore, the application lacked a clear description of how students would be trained to use the digital devices and who would be conducting the training. The project would have been strengthened by the inclusion of clear, operationally defined descriptions of this training. Finally, the project did not address the need to implement a transition program for elementary school students entering middle school like it did with middle school students entering high school.

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

The district provided reasonable evidence to demonstrate the use of data to make instructional decisions as the role of the teacher changes from being a presenter of information to a facilitator of learning. The evidence in the narrative also stated teachers are grouped by either grade level, in cross-curricular teams by grade level, or departments in the elementary, middle, and high schools. The elements of a high quality plan that were presented to address the district's improvement of learning and teaching included the specific goals addressed in the narrative and the activities that would help the district reach those goals.

The other elements of a high quality plan were not fully developed. There was no evidence of a clear timeline, limited evidence of the deliverables and no identification of the parties responsible for the improvement of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the district stated the transfer to a single sign in system would be a challenge and the plan to develop the IIS is meant to overcome that challenge. Unfortunately, the lack of clear operationally defined processes does not allow an adequate assessment of this goal. Additionally, the resources identified to meet the high quality learning resources criterion were not fully developed. The leadership team training was also lacking clear operationally defined explanation. There was limited information about the data, the analysis process, and the reporting frequency other than to state it would be a monthly analysis of key performance indicators which were also not operationally defined.

Finally, the application also provided confusing information regarding the "consortium's educators" when the project was designed for a single school district. Another confusing aspect of the application was the information regarding the statement "by way of professional teams or communities, or professional development." This statement was confusing and did not have a clear indication of what was being offered by way of professional communities or professional development. Furthermore, the application makes a single vague reference to having Personalized Graduation Plans for students in grades 6-8 but this plan was not explained anywhere else in the application.

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
The district provided clear evidence of the governance structure for the LEA central office. The application provided a clear chart detailing the structure. The application also demonstrated clear evidence and support of the autonomy of the		

school district as the State supports local, site based decision making processes. Furthermore, the district has policies to ensure students can earn credit based on demonstrated mastery of content and not the amount of seat time. These policies are supported by the Texas Educational Code and Texas educational policy that credit for a course can be earned when a student can demonstrate 70% mastery regardless of the amount of time spent in instruction. Additionally, the application provided evidence of the use of differentiated instruction to meet the personalized needs of all students. The use of the instructional framework of Universal Design for Learning also allows the project to adapt to individual needs, the use of multi-media resources, computer based assessments, instruction that is age appropriate and offered parallel instructional methods to meet the needs of all learners.

The application did not offer an operationally defined process on how to adapt materials effectively for all learners, including the lowest performing students or those with the highest needs.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The district provided strong support detailing how the infrastructure would support access to high quality content, tools and other resources. The district also provided evidence of a plan to build technological capacity at the schools and a desire to develop a single sign in system through the district's RFP process. The single system would ensure interoperability.

The concerns with the application concerned the ability of current IT staff at the district and school level to be able to support the increased technology demands. The plan to support all stakeholders in the implementation of the electronic devices was not clearly operationally defined and the limited information may overwhelm the IT staff without additional support. Furthermore, the application was not clear in the evidence to demonstrate the needed infrastructure and support is already in place as the development of the single system progresses.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>

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

The district presents some components of a high quality plan to implement a rigorous continuous improvement process. The application provided clearly identified goals and specific activities that seemed to align with the goals. However, the timeline, deliverables, and responsible parties were vague and lacked clear, operationally defined details. Overall, the plan to engage in a continuous improvement process may be good but the limited evidence and lack of operationally defined aspects of the plan made it difficult to determine the quality.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The district did not provide evidence of a high quality plan. The narrative only provided goals and activities and did not address the timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible. Additionally, the plan to engage in ongoing communication may overwhelm the two Spanish language translators. With a high Hispanic population where Spanish is the primary language, the district may need more than two translators. The overall quality of the plan seems inadequate to meet the communication needs as a part of this project.

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

The district provided tables detailing the annual targets; however, these targets were not very ambitious. There was no evidence or narrative to provide evidence or justification regarding why these goals could be considered ambitious. The district also provided limited information about the rationale for selecting the measure, how the measure would meet the need for timely leading information to allow the continuous improvement process to make adjustments to the implementation, and how it would review and improve the measure if necessary.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
The district provided a vague plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The timeline was vague and the lack of operationally defined aspects of the evaluation review related to the performance monitoring meetings and summative data collection such as the survey frequency made it difficult to evaluate the overall quality of the plan. Furthermore, the narrative lacked a job description and details regarding the performance qualities of the external evaluator.		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
The district identified most of the funds that will be used to support the project. The district provided a well thought out rationale for the budget that seems reasonable for the project.		
The aspects of the budget that were insufficiently explained related to the reference of an additional funding source that was labeled as "tbd." Additionally, the project management team's technology costs are \$0 after year one which brought concerns about technology upgrades or repair being non-existent. Furthermore, the application did not identify any additional personnel other than in management positions. The budget narrative also did not clearly identify which expenses would be a one-time expense or ongoing expenses.		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
The district provided a vague plan to sustain the project but no budget projection was found. There was evidence of a succession plan but it was not operationally defined and not fully developed to include the process of implementing the succession 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>		
The application did not address the competitive preference priority.		

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Not Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
Overall, the district did not meet the requirements. There was minimal evidence of improvements in instruction, leadership capacity and quality, as well as student learning as measured by a variety of methods ranging from the integration of technology to support English language learning to other classroom methods such as the use of differentiated instruction and the Universal Design of Learning. The project provided evidence that it could meet the needs to decrease the learning gap, increase student graduation rates, and increase the effectiveness of its teachers.		

The application's lack of clearly operationally defined aspects of the project's plans to engage in the reform process, improve student learning, improve teaching and learning by educators, engage in the continuous improvement model and communication of results were clear weaknesses. Additional concerns were found in regard to how the project would effectively connect student performance data to instruction and did not convincingly provide evidence of personalized learning that would result in the reform vision being successful. The lacking information, significantly detracted from the district's ability to implement the project and meet the requirements of Absolute Priority 1.

Total

210

107



## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

**Application #0146TX-3 for United Independent School District**

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

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2

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

The applicant builds on all four of the core assurance areas; however, the applicant only addresses each of the areas in a cursory manner. The applicant describes several state assessments, even specific assessments for English Language Learners, that their district participates in. It is not clear if these are effective assessments or if these assessments are fully aligned with the applicant's vision or the goal of preparing students to succeed. The applicant does not clearly define what the current data systems are like in the district, but the creation of data dashboard is a major component of the applicant's plan for RTTD funds. The applicant described a stipend and supplemental pay schedule to attract and retain teachers and school leaders. Again, the description of this program is vague; it is not clear what factors determine whether or not staff members receive extra pay. The applicant describes targeted support for English Language Learners in the district, and the applicant lists the state and local interventions in some of their schools. There is not evidence of the effectiveness of these programs to turn around the performance of the lowest performing schools.

The applicant does not articulate a clear and credible approach to accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity. The applicant presents "Project Bridge-It," which includes ipads, software for English language learners for home, and police support to improve school safety. A clear and credible approach to personalizing student learning is not present. The applicant's vision is to improve their district and work on some of the initiatives already in place, but it does not comprehensively address a way to personalize student learning. One of the components that is missing is student support; the applicant's vision does not include new support personnel.

The applicant is not clear what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments.

For A1, the applicant received a low-range score of 2. The applicant somewhat addresses the four core educational assurance areas, but the applicant does not articulate a clear and credible approach to personalizing learning.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	4
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##### (A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not prove that their approach to implementation will support high-quality LEA-level or school-level implementation. The applicant proposes to include 39 out of 40 schools in the district because they meet the 40% free and reduced lunch requirement. The applicant says that a "demographic review" led to this decision, but the applicant does not provide any further discussion why the team thought this would be the best approach.

The applicant did include a list of the schools that will participate in grant activities.

The applicant provided all of the required numbers; however, some of the applicant's data was unclear. The applicant's data showed 100% of all students, in all schools, as being from low-income families. The applicant's introduction says 30.9% is the overall poverty rate for the district, and the applicant's numbers on the table of participating students also do not match with 100% from low-income families.

For A2, the applicant received a mid-range score of 4. The applicant did not sufficiently explain the rationale for 39 out of 40 schools being chosen to participate or that including this many schools will lead to high-quality implementation. The applicant had some inaccuracies in the data regarding participating students.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant did not present a high-quality plan to scale the reform proposal.

Only 1 school in the district is not included in the applicant's plan; however, the applicant does not sufficiently prove how the plan will be scaled to the 39 included schools.

For A3, the applicant received a low-range score of 1. The applicant does not include a high-quality plan, and the applicant does not prove the ability to reach its outcome goals district-wide.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

While many of the applicant's annual goals exceed ESEA, they are not all ambitious yet achievable.

The applicant does not present ambitious goals in the areas of performance on summative assessments. For example, TELPAS, k-2 (overall) is projected to increase from 65% to 72.5% over four years. Another example is TELPAS, 3-12, Economically disadvantaged, increases from 89.3% to 92.3% over three years.

The achievement gap for Hispanic students, which are 98% of the population, is often still large. One example of this is STAAR for 3rd grade: over four years, the white students increase by 4% to 99%, while the Hispanic students increase by 10% to 76%. This is still a 23% gap. There are similar gaps at other grade levels. However, some grade levels (i.e. 5th and 6th grade STAAR) propose eliminating the gap. The applicant is not clear about the logic behind this--how it would be easier to achieve this at the higher grade levels.

The applicant presents graduation rates that are already high. The increases do not seem ambitious: 93.7% to 96.9 overall (at the end of four years).

The college enrollment projections were also not ambitious: 73% to 77.5% overall; white students 68% to 73%. Most of the goals were increases of only 5% over the course of four years.

For A4, the applicant received a low mid-range score of 3. The applicant presents some ambitious yet achievable goals, but many of the goal miss one or both requirements.

## 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>2</b>

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

The applicant provides very limited data; the applicant does not show a clear record of success in the past four years. The applicant provides a narrative rather than data to illustrate success over four years.

The applicant primarily cites dual credit opportunities as a means to improve students learning outcomes; the applicant also states that the district improved adequate yearly progress from 2007-2010, but it is not clear what has happened in the last two years. These two things alone are not evidence of improved student learning outcomes. The applicant does not address an ability to close achievement gaps. The applicant only provides a diagram regarding graduation rate; while the rate is impressive it is not clear what years the diagram includes or if the rate has increased or decreased. The applicant does not address improving college enrollment rates.

The applicant describes great things going on in the district; however, ambitious and significant reforms in lowest performing schools is not addressed. The lowest performing schools are not even identified.

The applicant explains, in a limited way, the data that is available to students, educators and parents. It is not clear if this data informs and improves participation, instruction, and services.

For B1, the applicant received a low-range score of 2. The applicant provides very limited data regarding improvement over the past four years.

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

The applicant states that there are multiple websites with school level information available including: personnel salaries, instructional staff, teacher, and non-personnel expenditures.

The applicant discusses state financial requirements; these are sound practices with a high level of accountability.

The applicant also states that a stipend list is available. It is not clear if the applicant publishes a list that show which stipends individual teachers get, or if the list just shows the available stipends.

For B2, the applicant received a high-range score of 4. The applicant provides a thorough response to the transparency in the district; however, they do not show evidence of availability (i.e. examples of websites, newsletters, etc.).

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant describes many successful conditions and aspects of autonomy through a table; details in each area of the table are helpful to understand the conditions and autonomy granted by the state.

The state established site-based decision making teams, which are one piece of evidence for sufficient autonomy.

The applicant does not explicitly say what freedom the district has over graduation requirements or performance based credit recovery or credit accrual. The district states they have freedom over these, but it is not clear how much latitude has been granted.

For B3, the applicant received a mid-range score of 7. The applicant described many successful conditions and aspects of autonomy, but not all areas were fully addressed (i.e. graduation requirements, credit accrual).

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not evidence parents' and students' engagement in the process of developing the proposal.

The applicant provides 5 letters of support from state and local representatives. The applicant does not provide letters from teachers, parents, students, or principals. The applicant does not provide evidence that at least 70% of teachers from participating schools support the proposal.

For B4, the applicant received a low range score of 3. The applicant shows limited stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and only five letter of support for 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>5</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b> The applicant's plan has few initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• data system/dashboard for progress monitoring</li></ul>		

- technology (ipads and touch screens)
- police radios/towers
- some professional development to support use of data system and technology

The applicant does not provide sufficient support in the way of designated personnel to help students understand that what they are learning is key to their success or to identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards. The applicant states that they have one counselor at each elementary school and more than one at each secondary school, but they never designate who will guide students through the process of goal identification and staying on track for their goal. The district already has graduation plans in place, but their vision includes expanding these to 6th-8th grade students.

The applicant presents an innovative means to set goals at the end of 8th grade through Individual Graduation Plans (IGP). The applicant's vision is to have student, parents, and school personnel meet annually to update the plan, similar to a special education IEP process. The applicant never explains how their district will be able to accomplish this without more support personnel. Students on an IEP have an IEP case manager who tracks their progress and schedules meetings and ensures they are meeting their goals. The applicant does not provide the appropriate supports to efficiently carry IGPs out.

For areas of academic interest, the applicant does not identify how this will happen; dual enrollment is the only component mentioned.

The applicant does not demonstrate evidence of providing students with access and exposure to diverse, culture, contexts, and perspectives. The applicant states that students will be able to master critical academic content and develop skills such as goal-setting, teamwork, etc., but there is no support for how this will be accomplished.

The plan does not develop the personalized sequence of instructional content that students will receive. A team will work to create the IGP, but it is not clear what opportunities students will be provided based on their IGP. The applicant mentions ipads for English learners are dual credit as high-quality content, but the applicant does not demonstrate a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments.

The applicant is not clear how pervasive the electronic devices will be. The budget does not even include a specific number of devices to be purchased. The applicant also talks about touchscreens, but it is not clear how they will be deployed are used in supporting instruction.

The applicant's plan does include a data system that will provide ongoing and regular feedback. What is not evident is how personalized learning recommendations will be determined and share with students and parents.

The applicant mentions accommodations and high-quality strategies for English learners, but it is not clear what the applicant will do to provide for other high-needs learners.

The applicant says training will be provided, but it is not clear who or how.

For C1, the applicant received a low mid-range score of 5. The applicant has an innovative strategy with IGPs, but the details and support of IGPs are not evident in order to personalize learning.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant's high-quality plan includes training for the data system. The plan lacks on-going support for personalizing learning based on the data system. The plan also lacks professional development about how to change instruction. Most of the training, even when it is labeled as aimed at improving instructions, is primarily about the data system and reports, etc.

The applicant says that measures will be in place for student progress toward meeting college- and career-readiness, but it is not clear how often they will be monitored or by whom.

The applicant's evaluation model is not discussed. The applicant states that the state has provided guidance on the evaluation model and that the district will be tracking longitudinal effectiveness. It is not clear what the evaluation entails or how the evaluation informs/improves instruction.

The applicant proves that data is available and will be a major focus of their reform efforts; however, it is not clear how data helps identify optimal learning approaches.

There is not evident of high-quality learning resources or processes and tools to match students needs with specific resources.

The applicant does not present a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. The applicant did not even include these as performance measures in E3.

For C2, the applicant received a low range score of 3. The applicant lays out a professional development plan focusing on the data system, but does not explicitly detail the link between that and high-quality resources to personalize and improve student learning.

## 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:

The applicant presents a diagram for organizing the LEA central office to provide support and services. In the diagram (which represents the power structure), there is only one icon representing all 39 schools. It is not clear how the existing structure will be able to provide sufficient support and services to all participating schools.

The applicant shows evidence that the state established school leadership teams, and they follow these guidelines. The applicant states that with the exception of school calendars, the school leadership teams have sufficient flexibility and autonomy.

The applicant states that digital resources will help with giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery, and the state has guidelines for this. The applicant provides some criteria by which this will be determined.

The applicant does not provide specific ways that students can demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The applicant talks about digital resources, but it is not well described.

The applicant does describe several learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable; throughout the application, the applicant focuses on resources to make learning fully accessible to English learners.

For D1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 10. The applicant has practices, policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning. Some of those need further development to fully personalize learning.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
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### (D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not ensure that all participating students, parents, educators and other stakeholders will have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of schools. The applicant describes colonias, and says that students in colonias will have ipads for language instruction. The applicant does not mention Internet access. The applicant also does not address educators or students/other stakeholders outside of the colonias. It is also not clear what content, tools and other learning resources will be available in the classroom.

The applicant did not demonstrate appropriate levels of technical support. The applicant proposes using existing staff with some peer support training. Most of the applicant's technical support is status quo, and the applicant did not demonstrate that status quo is a sufficient level to implement the proposal.

The applicant was not clear about the current data that is available. A major part of the applicant's plan is a new data system, which will allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format.

The applicant also plans to develop interoperable data systems.

For D2, the applicant received a mid-range score of 5. The applicant has plans to provide some technology to the students that they state have the most needs. The applicant has planned some technical support, and the applicant plans to develop interoperable data systems that allow export in an open data format.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	15	3
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant does not have a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. The applicant presents a few strategies for assessing improvement needs; however, the applicant does not always state who is responsible for monitoring the continuous improvement. The project manager and project management team have a lot of responsibilities that do not seem to be shared.</p> <p>The applicant states that continuous improvement begins in the classroom--moves to professional learning communities--move school wide--and then, moves to the district level. The applicant's statement is true, but it is not indicative of a well-developed plan for rigorous continuous improvement.</p> <p>For E1, the applicant received a low-range score of 3. The applicant provides insufficient evidence that they have a plan to implement rigorous continuous improvement.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	5	3
<b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>For E2, the applicant received a mid-range score of 3. The applicant describes normal means for communicating with internal and external stakeholders (i.e. newsletters, websites, meetings, etc.). The applicant's response is mid-range because they go above normal means of communication by addressing the language barrier in the district and acknowledge that they will need help from translators to reach many of their stakeholders.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	5	1
<b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant failed to provide ambitious yet achievable performance measures in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant does not provide rationales for the selected measures.</li> <li>• The applicant does not provide information regarding how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan.</li> <li>• The applicant does not provide a description or evidence of a review process to refine the measure over time.</li> <li>• The applicant does not provide a goal to increase the number of student who submit the FAFSA.</li> <li>• The applicant does not provide a goal to increase the number of students served by effective or highly effective teachers and principals.</li> <li>• The applicant's goal for percentage of students graduating with their cohort was 98% at the end of four years; the applicant included a diagram in the B! that indicates a 98% graduation rate with cohort currently.</li> <li>• The applicant does not provide ambitious increase in attendance rates (95.45% to 96% over four years, overall).</li> </ul> <p>For E3, the applicant received a low-range score of 1. The applicant did present some performance measures but did not include all of the required performance measures. The applicant did not present ambitious yet achievable performance measures that are in line with their proposal and the criteria of the grant.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	5	2
<b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant does not present a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the RTTD funded activities.</p> <p>The applicant does provide some useful strategies and questions for evaluation. The applicant demonstrates that they have thought through some of the goals and have formulated questions and some processes to solicit information about those goals (i.e. data from the system regarding student assessment and teacher retention).</p> <p>For E4, the applicant received a mid-range score of 2. The applicant does not detail a specific plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness; however, the applicant demonstrates some strategies and effective questioning techniques.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
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<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant does not identify all funds that will support the project. In the budget table, the applicant labels other funds "tbd." The applicant does present a table of possible funds for sustainability, but these funds are not placed into the budget table under specific initiatives. The applicant does also not provide evidence that these sources are guaranteed and/or sufficient (no amounts from any of the possible sources are listed).</p> <p>The applicant's budget is not reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant only includes personnel costs under "project management team." The projected cost each year is around \$98,000, which would only fund one to two full time personnel. The budget is also very generic. For example, under the technology initiative, the applicant does not break down the costs of different devices and how much on-going maintenance and replacement costs will be.</p> <p>The applicant does provide rationale for each of the five projects included in the budget, but the applicant does not describe all of the funds they will use to support the implementation of the proposal. Also, the applicant does not identify one-time and on-going investments.</p> <p>For F1, the applicant received a low score of 1. The applicant includes a budget narrative and table; however, the budget narrative and table are not reasonable and sufficient to support the applicant's proposal.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>		
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant does not present a high-quality plan for sustainability. The applicant includes a high-quality plan under the budget section, but the plan addresses teaching and learning, rather than budgeting for or sustaining the project. The plan does not speak about how the applicant will identify on-going costs and secure funds to sustain those on-going costs.</p> <p>The applicant presents a table that is labeled sustainability, but is not sufficient to address sustainability. The table includes; year, assumption, potential funds, use of funds, and a category labeled "cost estimates" that says cost estimates will be determined. The applicant does not demonstrate that they have thought through the process of sustainability and what will be required to provide on-going access to the data system, or on-going training or on-going support for students with their Individual Graduation Plans. The applicant's "assumptions" about what will be required to sustain the plan do not tie directly into the goals of personalized learning that are part of their vision.</p> <p>The applicant does have a few letters from State and local government leaders, but the letters do not indicate financial support.</p> <p>For F2, the applicant received a low-range score of 1. The applicant does not demonstrate sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The applicant does not demonstrate that they have thought through what will be required in the way of finances after the life of the grant.</p>		

## 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>		
<p>The applicant did not demonstrate evidence of an effective partnership in the application. The applicant did not submit any of the Competitive Preference Priority requirements; therefore, the score for this section is 0.</p>		

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Not Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		

The applicant does not present a coherent and comprehensive plan to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports.

The applicant has four main areas of focus in their plan:

- a data system to provide information to educators, school leaders, parents and students
- some training for teachers and school leaders (primarily in how to use the data system, but some strategies for learning are included)
- some devices for students (the number of devices or the impact of these devices was never clear)
- radios/towers for better police communication through the district (for school safety)

These four areas do not address the need for support to sustain personalized learning. The budget does not include many personnel costs (the main personnel costs are for a project management team), so it is not clear who will monitor and assist students, parents, educators, and school leaders in implementing and maintaining a personalized learning plan.

The applicant presents a compelling need for on-going work in their district, and the applicant illustrates through its graduation rates and provisions for students who are high-needs that the district understands the strengths and weaknesses of their population and is working to address the areas of need.

The applicant's vision includes a plan to accelerate students achievement through an analysis of data and the creation of Individual Graduation Plans (IGP). However, it was never clear who would support the IGPs to ensure that students' academic needs are being met and all students are graduating college and career-ready. The IGP is a great start to personalized learning developments, but it is not sufficient, in and of itself, to meet the academic needs of each student.

The applicant's vision does not include strategies to increase the effectiveness of educators. The district states that they have a stipend program to reward educators, but the effectiveness of this program is never established. The applicant's vision includes some training, but the training is not well-detailed, and it is not evident that the training is on-going.

The applicant does not provide evidence that they will succeed in decreasing achievement gaps across student groups or increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

The applicant does not meet Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments because the applicant does not provide a comprehensive vision that includes enough support to ensure that student learning is personalized in 39 schools totaling 42,391 students.

Total	210	60
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## Race to the Top - District Technical Review Form

**Application #0146TX-1 for United Independent School District**

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

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	10	3

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

United ISD proposes to build on current improvement efforts with this grant project called "Project build-it." They expect results in increased learning, better student achievement and higher graduation rates that support college and career readiness. They cite several Texas state standards which are aligned with their curriculum including CCRS. Student growth and achievement are measured through benchmark and standardized assessments, and classroom performance grades.

They have a student information system including a parent portal component where parents can log in and find information on student personal details, class schedule, assignments, attendance, health, class progress, and e-mail notifications. They propose, through the grant project to add an integrated student data dashboard that will allow teachers, principals and administrators to see all relevant student data at a glance, and to use this information to inform, improve and personalize instruction.

The district uses a professional development system that is an ongoing effort for teachers aides, assistant principals and principals attending in house and external opportunities. They also have continuing education credits that are tracked with an online register. In addition, they use a supplemental pay schedule on top of salaries to reward and retain teachers and principals and to recruit and retain them in hard to staff schools.

United ISD has a Campus Intervention Department to serve as a liaison to campuses in the school improvement process, to monitor, analyze and support the performance of ELL students, to provide resources to administrators and campuses involved in the state accountability system, to support classroom teachers by providing professional development in the implementation of English Language Proficiency Strategies, to conduct classroom observations and provide feedback, and to work collaboratively to accelerate student achievement especially for targeted students. They show a chart of their schools including AYP stage for math and reading and the current intervention.

The grant project will accelerate the efforts begun so far with a particular focus on at-risk and disadvantaged students. In particular, it provides a more robust instructional information system, builds capacity among educators, addresses the digital divide in their very large district. All of this will enrich the efforts already in place in the district. The project claims rigorous and relevant instruction based on professional development as its foundation. Related to this is an increase in the use of digital tools, particularly ipads, and interoperability with police, to increase school safety.

All of these efforts and proposals are a good start, but they have not addressed the classroom experience except to say that it will be guided by the data dashboard. The district is focusing on the infoirmation dashboard and professional development as is major reforms. Therefore this is not a clear and credible approach to accelerating and deepening student learning and achievement while trying to close achievement gaps. Therefore the score for this section is in the low range.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

After a study of the district's school demographics, they found that of the 40 schools in the district, 39 are eligible for inclusion in the project with a poverty rate of at least 40% at each school. Based on this, better than 97% of the total student population will participate. Low income students account for 77% of those participating and 63% are considered high needs as based on the chart, although in the narrative they state that all 97% of the participating students are high needs. They do not define "high needs" in the district. All staff and administration in those 39 schools will participate as well.

The district included a chart of the participating schools' demographic data. The data in the chart did not agree with the data in the narrative. The chart indicates that 100% of the students are from low income families. This discrepancy in information causes the score to be in the mid range.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The United project plan includes the following features:

- Examine those practices and efforts in the district that appear to be effective and show improvements, then build and expand on these services to more populations buidling a continuum of student services.
- Target 2.5-10% overall improvement rates in student assessments thereby improving graduation rates especially for ELLs or low income students.
- Implement personalized Learning Environments through the use of a personalized dashboard on the student data system that allows for information for easy use, provides support for learners to set their pown learning goals, manage their learning, and communicate with others in the process, thereby achieving goals.

The plan will be scaled up to include any new learning centers created during the grant period that meets the criteria. After the grant period, the school or schools who were not eligible will be included in all improvements. They do not specifically say how it will be scaled up, only that it will. During the grant program, schools not participating will be supported with local and state funds.

There was no actual logic model included in this section. However in section (C)(2) a table is included that describes supporting goals for the project and activities for each. The narrative for this section is concise. The target of 2.5-10% does not seem ambitious as an overall goal. They also do not address the target populations mentioned in (A)(1). Therefore, this section is scored in the mid range.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The district used state assessment data, either the English or Spanish version, to identify areas of weakness in prereading skills and to compare data of students who attended pre-school to those who did not for K-2. Some data was not available due to not having an adequate integrated data system, something they hope the grant will help them to correct. For older students, they used other state tests that indicated the performance of students by one or more performance levels per year.

The charts included show baseline data from 2012-13 in all subgroups for each school. While their projected goal years show improvements for all groups, there does not seem to be a projection of narrowing achievement gaps among groups in all participating schools. Their high school graduation rate is currently at an overall 93.7% and they project it to be 96.9% post grant. For economically disadvantaged, they expect it to grow from 92.5% to 93.4% and for ELL, from 85.7% to 87.5%. Again this does not show a narrowing of achievement gaps for their targeted groups. The rate of those enrolling in college seems to close the gaps a little better. Overall 73% of graduates enroll in college and they project this to improve to 77.5%. For ED the improvement is expected to be from 71% to 76%. Hispanic students from 73% to 78%. They do not include college degree attainment rates.

While the data shows projected improvements for all student groups, it does not show a closing of the achievement gap for the subgroups targeted by the district. Their graduation rate, overall, is currently quite good and the college enrollment rate is good. Therefore the score for this section is in the upper mid range due to criteria (b) not being met.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>

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

United ISD lists many fine accomplishments in the narrative for this section. Of note for purposes of this project are:

- being the first school district in Texas to allow students to speak their native language on school campuses and developing a bi-lingual education program.
- having a magnet school program whereby three of their four high schools are dedicated to a specific field of study each: health & science, engineering & technology, global business and advanced technology. At the fourth high school, they have a Career Path Academy with five themes.
- having established partnerships with the local college and the local university to develop dual enrollment courses. Professors travel to the district to teach on site at the high schools.
- having career technology and programs to prepare students for the 21st century workplace.
- teaching volunteer students to become federally certified to legally complete Internal Revenue Service tax forms on behalf of the elderly or needy individuals and families. This teaches both useful skills, and compassion and service to others.
- having evidence of success in meeting adequate yearly progress from 68.3% of the campuses in 2007-8 to 90.5% in 2009-10.

These are all fine accomplishments in the district. However, there was no evidence of student achievement improvements over the past four years as would have been shown by assessment results over a four year period of time. The district includes in the index, the Texas state performance index for the last year. This defines features of the index, but there is no information comparing student subgroups. The narrative describes the reforms well, but does not give evidence. Parent and student access to information was described briefly in the previous section, but was not described here. In section (C)(1) they discuss making student information available to students, parents and teachers as part of goal-setting and personalizing instruction. Overall, the lack of data to support a clear record of success in this district is missing even though there are good programs available and several fine accomplishments over the years. Therefore the score for this section is in the low average range.

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

5

3

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

The district describes the Texas Education Agency requirements for reporting all financial information and says that they are in compliance with this. They say that all expenditures, on a month by month basis are on the district website. Actual personnel salaries for all school level instructional and support staff and central office staff are available on a number of websites or as a public records request. Teacher salaries and stipends are available similarly. Business committee, instruction committee and board meetings are public and compensation is often discussed at these. Teacher salaries at the school level, identifiable to the classroom level, with teacher levels and stipends are available. There is a published stipend list and what those stipends are for. Personnel expenditures at the school level are available upon request and also during open meetings of budget discussions. Non-personnel expenditures are available during open meetings of the budget process and also through direct request. Expenditures on a month by month basis are available on the school websites.

While the district meets all the requirements of the state and the measures they use are not unusual, open meetings, website availability and records requests is transparency, but not at a high level. It is possible they plan to do more with the increased technical availability through this grant, but that was not stated. Therefore the score for this section is in the average range.

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

10

9

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

The district states that they work within the requirements of the state and that this gives them sufficient autonomy to implement the grant project. They say that as a result of the autonomy they enjoy under state guidelines, they have been able to improve in the areas of student achievement, attendance, graduation rates, and providing technology and fine arts programs. They provide a chart that shows each of the state regulatory requirements and the LEA conditions showing sufficient autonomy. This includes site-based decision making, teacher evaluation systems, principal evaluation systems, superintendent evaluation, local board policies for personalized learning, and the legal aspects.

Since the district appears to have sufficient conditions and autonomy to implement this grant, even though the conditions were not described in great detail, the score for this section is in the high range.

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

15

5

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

The district describes how they initially tried to develop a consortium with another district. The other district had changes in leadership and decided not to continue the consortium. United ISD decided then to move forward in developing a plan especially targeting at-risk and economically disadvantaged students. The members of the team who developed the grant project included superintendent, associate and assistant superintendents, executive directors, the Business Committee, the Instruction Committee, the Board of Directors, parents and teachers.

Texas is not a collective bargaining state. However, the two teacher organizations present in the district were invited to provide input in their capacity as representatives of the teachers in planning meetings and in the project development. During beginning of the year in-service and in various other meetings, teachers gave verbal support of this project. The district has a Board of Trustees who are single member representatives of parents, taxpayers, teachers and other stakeholders. This Board has approved the program components of this grant application.

The appendix for this application includes "decline to comment" letters from the Texas Education Agency and the Mayor of the City of Laredo. It also included a letter to invite parents to become involved in their student's education through the grant project in both English and Spanish, letters of support from a US representative, a state senator, and a state representative. Other than representation on the Board of Trustees, there was no evidence of parent support in the planning or revising of this grant proposal. There is also no evidence of teacher support other than what was written in the narrative; no letters from teacher groups or lists of teacher signatures. The district is located partially in the City of Laredo and yet there was no letter of support from its mayor. This lack of evidence of support from key stakeholders causes the score for this section to be in the low mid range.

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

	Available	Score

<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The district plans to expand personalized learning environments by providing a project management team to coordinate the program's professional development, technology procurement, training and functioning thereby building capacity among educators to provide rigorous and relevant instruction based on the district's project goals.

The district has an extensive goal setting process which requires student/parent meetings with school counselors regarding higher education during the 9th grade year and again at 12th grade. This includes a graduation planning process developed individually by students, parents, counselors and school personnel with a focus on connections between academics and life goals. Under the grant, this will be expanded to include personalized graduation plans (PGPs) for students in grades 6-8. These will be designed to ensure that students are not only academically prepared, but also socially and emotionally. At the end of 8th grade, a committee made up of the student, parent and school personnel meet to plan for the transition to high school. They call this a "living document" since it is updated regularly with student data, assessments and learning achievement and grades. The plan may also include flexible scheduling for accelerated students or interventions for those who need remediation. There are also parent participation opportunities included and some of these appear to be being provided with information (Spanish or English) through individual meetings, parent/teacher conferences, counselor sessions, parent/teacher organizational meetings, college financial aid nights, and senior parent night. Reviews of the plans ensure the student is on track to achieve their goals. Dual enrollment courses, credit recovery course and even attending college courses in their senior year can all be part of the plan. While all of this addresses learning in middle and high school, nothing was said about elementary school even though their data was included and the it was said to be a K-12 effort in section (A).

A key component of the PGP is student input into creating their goals and pathways. They will reach their goals and develop college and career ready skills through project based learning, independent research projects, peer-to-peer mentoring programs, a new writing program currently being implemented, and concept-based curriculum and instruction. They will also be given ongoing and regular feedback as teachers and students monitor progress toward goals. The district cites some research articles to support implementing these practices, they do not give specific processes for how these practices will be implemented.

The district plans to meet ELL student needs by building English language through accelerated use of language learning software on digital devices for use at home and school. High need students will be provided "with the training and support necessary for successful implementation." These are the only references to the two groups that the district says they are going to target. The assumption is that the personalization that these groups need above and beyond their peers will take place in the PGP process that all students employ.

Students are trained to monitor and understand grading policies and procedures, assessment results and reports, and are provided feedback through online instruction, remediation, or the software itself. Counselors and teachers will also provide feedback. Parents will be given information through parent nights, "meet the teacher events", United Council of Parents sessions, Title I meetings and print or video information.

The district strength appears to be the goal setting process described in great detail. This addresses criteria (C)(a). One of the weaknesses is the personalized learning; they only mention the goal setting process. They do not say how the interventions will be chosen or how decisions will be made for each student. They mention that it will be informed by data, but do not give a process, nor how it will look in the classroom. Other weaknesses are the lack of high quality strategies, interventions and accommodations to be made for various student groups and not including elementary school in specific processes or strategies. The two targeted groups are addressed in a three sentence paragraph. Only a little more information was given to the digital tools. Basically, the rest of the criteria in this section was not described well. It may be that the processes and procedures are in place, but they were not explained. This section allows the district to thoroughly explain its personalized learning environment and show that it is a high quality plan for engaging students, and closing achievement gaps. Unfortunately this was not done, so the score for this section is in the low range.

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

The foundational piece of the district's proposal is professional development. Even though 90% of the teachers and leaders are indigenous to the area and they know the challenges students face, they still need professional development to personalize the environment for all students. The professional development includes the following topics:

- align the curriculum to college and career ready standards
- ABYDOS writing
- concept based curriculum and instruction

- use of ipads and touch screens for instruction
- implement personalized learning strategies
- adapt content and instruction in response to their academic needs, interests and optimal learning approaches
- measure student progress toward CCRS goals
- accelerate learning
- use feedback provided by the evaluation systems
- IIS Dashboard training
- expand the current graduation plan program

There is a chart included that lists the professional development for each year, and who will be trained. The narrative lists the persons responsible for the training and they mention that some of it will be done in professional learning teams at all grade levels. They include that some professional development may be done for specific reasons with specific teachers.

In section (F)(1) they indicate that professional development will take place in the form of face-to-face interactions, coaching, modeling, job-embedded, online videos, Skype and peer mentoring. None of these venues is explained further, nor do they indicate times that training will take place, only that it will.

One of the main pieces in the project that allows teachers and leaders to personalize instruction and monitor student progress is the IIS Dashboard. This toolkit allows teachers to plan lessons, assess students, review personalized learning plans, locate interventions based on the student's current knowledge and skills, demographic information and find high quality resources including audio and visual resources. For students, it provides information on their progress toward goals according to their Personalized Graduation Plans mentioned in the last section and digital resources. It is unclear how it ensures that all students receive core reading and math instruction aligned with Texas CCRS as listed in the narrative. Administrators and school leaders too can use this dashboard to view critical performance indicators and status for the district and school. Monthly reviews of this data will help them to answer key questions in this project including the closing of the achievement gaps that are the target of the project. This phenomenal digital tool will help the district keep track of all activities and data in the project.

In order to ensure that all students are taught by highly effective teachers, the district will use the IIS dashboard to access current and past observations of data allowing for the identification of trends in the instructional performance, patterns of professional growth and areas needing improvement. Administrators can create differentiated professional development plans for each teacher. They will use embedded rubrics and student assessment results to assign professional development directly to the teacher creating a personalized learning environment for teachers as well as students. No mention was made of using an evaluation tool along with the IIS dashboard. In previous sections, the district noted that stipends would be used to reward and retain teachers in hard to place areas.

The two strengths of this section of the plan are first, the professional development with its wide range of topics to address all areas of the project. They indicate the deliverables planned and who is responsible. They do not indicate how the professional development will be delivered. The second strength is the IIS dashboard. On this hinges all the personalization based on student and teacher data. They plan to begin with professional development on how to use this system and continuing it throughout the grant years and beyond. Other than professional development and the IIS dashboard, no other explanations are given as to how teachers will identify optimal learning approaches, how to structure the learning environment, how to work with high needs, ELL or special education students in this environment. The district's teacher evaluation system was not explained and it seems the district is more in favor of using the IIS dashboard to determine teachers' learning needs than an evaluation tool. They do not mention any professional development for school leaders. They also do not mention how they will recruit and retain teachers other than the stipend information from previous sections. Therefore the score for this section is in the mid range.

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	9

### (D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district includes a table to show the governance structure of the district. It is a complex structure and the district explains at some length how various parts of the grant will be handled by different bodies. They include a chart with roles and responsibilities of each committee and position. The Curriculum and Instruction committee will provide the professional development described in section (C)(2) and the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance and the Executive Director of Technology will be responsible for teaching everyone how to use the IIS dashboard.

Each school in the district has site-based management teams who set goals, determine the use of funds, identify how goals

will be met for each student, determine resources needed and identify staff needed to implement the grant project. Without the grant, the teams are still responsible for planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns including personnel decisions and roles and responsibilities, and staff development. Currently the state does not allow school calendars to be modified at the local level. The district may make modifications to provide a flexible day or year program to meet student educational needs. Site teams may request that the district make such a modification. At the school level, principals and teams may arrange daily instructional schedules for academics.

By using technology as described in section (C)(2), it is possible to engage and focus students on the path to a high school graduation and college and career readiness. The digital approach will allow for any time any where access allowing learners to work on a schedule that best suits them. The digital approach also allows some students to move faster through courses and others slower based on their own abilities and needs. Parents and students will be notified of flexible schedule options via the school website, e-mail and the district automated message center.

Students may earn credit for a course by taking a criterion-referenced test before instruction. A 90% or better will earn them credit for the course and will be noted as such in the student's transcript. When students take a course they are assessed multiple times during the course to ensure they are understanding the concepts. The assessments are also done in multiple ways in order to establish comprehension and to learn the mode best used for each student.

Through the use of individualized graduation plans, the IIS dashboard, providing teachers with data to develop personalized learning plans, and diverse instructional tools, all students in the district will be provided the learning resources and instructional practices that best meet their needs. Data on students in the targeted groups: economically disadvantaged, ELL and special education will also be monitored so that gaps in achievement can be addressed. Schools may incorporate the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to support student learning. This process emphasizes that curriculum needs to be flexible and presented in multiple formats in order to be accessible and appropriate for students from diverse backgrounds. The UDL system principles allow for a variety of accommodations and modifications for students with varying needs. The district describes some of these in the narrative.

Each of the criteria for this section has been addressed by the district. The schools in the district appear to have enough support and autonomy to implement the project activities, they have addressed the needs of students who learn faster or slower by saying they could be accommodated, although more information would be helpful to know if this means early graduation and entry into college courses. There was mention made previously of dual credit courses, AP courses and having college courses on campus. These were not explained in this section. The UDL system is one that schools may use for accommodations, but it is a school site choice. If schools do not choose this method, there is no description of how varying needs of subgroups might be met.

Some of the district plan is high quality with attention to technology and support for students and staff. More information on demonstrating mastery would be helpful to determine the full extent of the use of dual credit, AP and other courses as well as alternative graduation plans. Adaptations for some subgroups was partially addressed. For these reasons, this section is scored in the mid range.

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

One feature of this district that is unique is the area of the district referred to as "The Colonias." This area has the largest concentration of people living without basic services in the United States. Providing this area with technological services is to provide them the ability to increase oral language proficiency, improve basic skills, involve parents in the education of their children and give them opportunities to use 21st century devices that have not been available previously. While this is an excellent plan to develop, the district does not explain how technology and internet access will be brought to the Colonias, or other rural areas. They describe in section (A) how big the district is; the size of the state of Delaware, but they have not explained how technology will be available to everyone regardless of income and location.

Technical and instructional support from the district will provide implementation assistance, content integration, training and technical support during the grant years and beyond. The project is designed to build capacity within each school to continue support for the use of technology tools and professional development. There is a technical support staff member on each school site who provide support to all stakeholders through online and face-to-face support. Content integration and IIS dashboard support will be provided to educators and other stakeholders through contracted services. The district includes a table that shows the local, online and peer support to be provided. Capacity will be built especially by a train the trainer model. There is also a parent portal that is useful for parents and students to keep track of progress at any time.

The district will solicit an RFP for the development of interfacing capabilities and the implementation of the data management platform in the first year of the grant. The program must provide the inclusion of exporting data in an open format for use in other electronic systems that parents or students may have. District leaders will also work with the vendor

to ensure that the data that is exported is FERPA compliant and that the devices or software is compatible with district technology policies. Through the IIS data system, the district will increase its transparency by providing quick access to information that can be important to making educational decisions. They include a small chart that shows the interoperability of several departments data under this system.

The district gives clear explanations for criteria b, c, and d of this section. They do not explain how technology will be brought to the Colonias or other rural areas. The score for this section is in the mid range since access for all is a key piece of the grant.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6

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

The district, due to its very large size, has a project that is actually several projects within the larger one. Therefore the evaluation model they will use is "Develop a Plan, Implement the Plan, Assess the Progress, Evaluate the Results, Make Adjustments and cycle back through Development." They begin at the classroom level with a teacher using data to develop instructional plans for her students. They explain how the evaluation model is applied and move on to professional learning communities, to the school level, to the district level and finally to the project level. The cycle is continuous. It involves the data dashboard mentioned several times, state assessments, end of year reports, formal teacher evaluations (which are still not explained), and parent, student, teacher, administrator and community members' comments and concerns. Improvement reviews will be ongoing and shape program implementation. The short term reviews will be used in conjunction with more formal yearly reviews to evaluate the plan for implementation of the grant program across all four years. This is a good general description, but the district does not explain how it works, or who is responsible for each part.

The narrative for this section explains a continuous improvement plan that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward plan goals. It is difficult to ascertain how rigorous the process is since the details of how it works was not included. There are opportunities for adjustments and corrections. The plan addresses how they will monitor and measure especially with the IIS dashboard, but not how they will publicly share information on the quality of its investments in things like professional development, technology and staff. They also do not address how they will continue the evaluation of the project, although they say they will continue after the grant period. Therefore the score for this section is in the low medium range.

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

5	3
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### (E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Communication and engagement, the district says, happens at several levels. Teachers communicate with parents and students through conferences and newsletters. They will engage parents and students in the development, evaluation and modifications of the individualized student plans. Schools will share information through meetings, website postings and school literature. They will engage parents and other community members by inviting them to join school leadership teams. The district will use website postings, community meetings, local news media, public information announcements, and local organizations to share information about project goals and effectiveness. The district will engage stakeholders on district level committees to provide a broad perspective of program effectiveness. The district will make every effort to communicate in stakeholders' native language. The district employs two Spanish language translators full-time for this purpose.

The district has described a good quality plan in this section that communicates via several venues using both one-way and two-way communication methods often used by schools. They do not include a timeline or any indication of who is responsible to do the communication or follow up with the engagement. Therefore the score for this section is in the medium high range.

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

5	2
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### (E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district performance measures include performance measures in math and reading using the state STAAR assessment with varying levels of expected proficiency from grades 3-11. It is assumed that these levels vary based on the baseline

data presented in section (A)(2) of this proposal. At the preK-3 levels they use the state phonological awareness assessment and oral language proficiency. They include measures of attendance, which is already above the 90th percentile. They measure the percent of students who are on-track for college and career readiness, and percent of students who graduate with their cohort.

There is no rationale for these measures, although they seem appropriate to the goals of the project since they include the target populations and all participating students. They do not explain in this section how it will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information. They do this in section (C)(2) through the use of the IIS dashboard. They also do not explain how they will improve any of the measures over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress. This lack of information causes the score for this section to be in the low-medium range.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>In addition to responding to all Federal reporting requirements, the district will conduct formative evaluations annually. This information will help them in developing organizational capacity, sustainability, replication of program activities, and school improvement strategies. The IIS data dashboard will disaggregate and apply the platform to campus level data, student demographic and academic achievement data, performance goals, external evaluation reports and a final report to the Department of Education describing the findings.</p> <p>The evaluation will be closely aligned to the program design, and will include formative and summative evaluation methods including performance monitoring, qualitative and quantitative data analysis, monitoring of personalized information and outcome evaluation. Each of these system evaluations was described in the narrative for this section. They plan to use both an internal auditor and an external evaluator and provide reports on a quarterly basis. They do not indicate how the auditor or the evaluator will be chosen. They explain the types of data collection methods, analysis and reporting for each system. This multiple data study will be presented both annually and at the end of the grant.</p> <p>The district provides a great deal of information about the type of data to be collected, but not how or when it will be collected. The plan involves several measures and data, but no timeline. Therefore the score for this section is in the mid range.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The United ISD describes each part of the plan including goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties in this section. The parts are listed as 5 separate projects.</p> <p>The overall budget summary includes only personnel costs. The budget is also divided by the project names showing a general table for each, but without enough of the necessary dollar amounts to determine if the costs are reasonable and sufficient. As expected, the digital costs proved to be the highest since the IIS dashboard, individual devices, interactive boards and professional development and support were included. However, it does not seem large enough for the many students and staff involved in the project. The district does not indicate what other funds, besides the grant, might be used to support the project. Earlier in the proposal, they indicated that state and local funds would be used to support the school not participating in the grant, but they have not named any other funding sources for schools participating in the grant.</p> <p>The narrative gives a thoughtful rationale for the five projects in the budget plan, but the costs for these are not specifically included. They do not describe any other funding sources for the grant project, nor the direct and indirect costs. Since this budget is not specific enough to determine if the costs are reasonable and sufficient, the score for this section is in the low range.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		

The district plans to implement a succession plan such that the reforms put in place under the grant are not connected to specific leaders, but are sustainable. The succession plan will implement strategies under a service model to recruit, retain and place staff with the skills necessary to increase the value of the plan's instructional vision. They will provide on-going job embedded professional development aligned with the project's instructional vision, use quality data to implement and enhance research-based instructional methods that align with the state's academic standards. They continue to list all the parts of the grant project that they want to integrate into the sustainability plan. They do not explain how this will be done.

The district explains the types of funding they will use to sustain the project including Federal entitlements, IDEA-B, SIP and e-Rate. They also have state funding of various sorts, and local property taxes, bond programs and general fund balance. They list several foundations. It is unclear whether these funds have already been pledged or if they have yet to be solicited.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of past investments was not directly addressed in this section. However, in section (E) the district does include an inside auditor and external evaluator whose work would be applied to sustainability after the grant. A general budget sheet was included, but it listed only some assumptions and potential funds. The use of those funds was very general: payroll, benefits, contracted services, supplies, materials, travel, training and associated costs and capital outlay with no numbers attached.

The district has a vague plan for sustainability in which they include funding sources , some potential donors and a list of activities that mirror those in the grant project. Therfore, the score for this section is in the low average range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	10	0
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b>		
There is no evidence of a competitive preference partnership project in this application.		

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

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		Not Met

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

The United ISD is committed to improving student achievement for most of its 39 schools and nearly 43,000 students. The plan they propose is ambitious in it's sheer scope. It is comprehensive in that it reaches a large number of students, schools and teachers. The project plan addresses some of the core assurance areas of the grant. The personalized learning environments are not well explained and largely dependent on professional development for teachers, an IIS Dashboard data system and individual Graduation Plans for all students in grades 6-12. They do not make connections between these three reforms to show how they will result in personalized learning for all students and a closing of the achievement gaps in their target populations.

They intend to provide digital tools to all students although it is unclear how some students in remote rural areas will gain this access. They have some parts that will help students to learn such as a curriculum aligned with CCRS, and high schools each with a specific focus to help students choose careers based on interest. Overall though, the project is not well articulated, and is unlikely to result in increased student achievement and more effective teachers and school leaders.

<b>Total</b>	210	94
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