



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0051NC-1 for Wake County Public School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative provides adequate evidence that it is building on its work in the four core educational assurance areas to build a vision for reform. Evidence of this commitment to the core educational assurance areas includes a commitment to standards and assessment that has aligned WCPSS with Common Core and NC Essential Standards. An example of WCPSS's ambitious commitment to standards and assessments is a Common Core certification program that provides teachers the resources needed to evaluate and improve their instruction. The district is participating in the NCDPI data system (Home Base). Home Base is an interoperable comprehensive data system that includes such components as: Learner Profiles, Standards and Curriculum, Practice and resources; assessment; Data Analysis and Reporting, and PD and Educator evaluation. The narrative clearly describes a system that allows educators and administrators the ability to measure student success and challenges, through individual and aggregate reports on students' growth and teachers effectiveness. The district is in the process of developing a comprehensive human capital management plan. They point to their previous successes in the area of recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals. The narrative explicates such innovative strategies as performance-based compensation, reduced class size, and technology enhanced classrooms. The narrative generally describes a credible approach to accelerating student achievement. The narrative makes a general statement that Personalized Learning Environments (PLE) will provide both "high tech and high touch" strategies. The plan generally revolves around teachers being trained to personalize strategies. The second focus is on students being "ready" to learn in kindergarten. The plan clearly lists ambitious activities such as: mobile kindergarten registration; additional Early Start Programs, and home visits. The narrative provides a general description of a typical day in a K-2 classroom. The narrative makes general statements that the environment will be highly personalized, but insufficient detail is provide to allow the reader to see the day to day classroom environment.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative provides a detailed "research design" as the process for selecting schools to participate. All participating schools meet the competition's eligibility rate. While the research design is clearly articulated, it is not clear that this research approach will support high quality school level implementation of the plan. A total number of participating students is listed in the narrative as well as a list of participating schools. A percentage of students receiving FRL are also listed. However an overall percentage of FRL students or number of FRL is not provided. No information is provided regarding high needs students participating or teachers participating. Overall, while the narrative gave a comprehensive picture of the research design, little information is provided regarding the exact make-up of the schools. This focus on the research design and not the participants is a weakness. The narrative provides more information related to a research design rather than a plan for implementing reform proposal.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative does not specifically address how it will scale up the reform proposal to be translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change. A general logic model was presented in the appendices. A table is presented (in appendices) that lists for the entire proposal: a rational for three goals; strategies to achieve goal, and an implementation timeline for strategies. Though the narrative states persons responsible for key tasks, the plan does not list people or organizations that are responsible. There is a general statement that "Cornerstone" is intended to accelerate district efforts by leveraging a high-capacity partnership of key stakeholders. However, insufficient detail is provided regarding the</p>		

leveraging to other schools to receive full points. The lack of detail related to the scaling of the proposal weakened the narrative.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The goals across the district are achievable. However, it is not clear that they are always ambitious as no information is provided regarding state data. As state targets are not provided, it is impossible to ascertain how they compare to state goals. Across the grant there is less than a 2% gain across some measures. These goals would seem to be achievable but not ambitious. However, there are ambitious goals to decrease the achievement gap and establish equity among different sub-groups. For example LEP and Hispanic goals for summative assessments are set at an increase of about 6% per year. The district is commended for these ambitious goals to establish equity. Though, it is not clear that these goals will be achievable. Goals for high school graduation and college enrollment are not ambitious as they are only 1% a year for the duration of the grant. The narrative explains that this is because it is not expected that the impact of this grant will be felt at the secondary level until several years after the grant. This being acknowledged there appears to be no real attempt to impact these two areas.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>WCPSS has a clear record of success overall in improving students' outcomes across the district. The narrative annotates that the district has consistently scored above grade level on EOG and EOC assessments. This is also true of graduation rates (except for 2012-2013) which generally exceeded the state rates. Accurate college enrollment rates are not available at this time. Only one school in the district was designated as lowest achieving. It is an alternative school. There have not yet been discernible results. However, WCPSS notes that in their "Renaissance" schools there has been positive impact with students in some grade level in these schools after two years. Specific data were not provided regarding these schools. This lack of data weakens the narrative since there is not sufficient evidence to show a clear record of success with low-performing schools.</p> <p>The narrative provides ample evidence of a comprehensive data system that is available to parents, students and educators to inform and improve participation, instruction and services. This will be accomplished through the use of three systems: Home Base, EVAAS and NC FALCON. Home Base is an integrated system that has components (leaner profile & student information; Standards & Curriculum; Instructional Design, Practice and Resources: Assessment; Data Analysis and Reporting, and PD and Educator Evaluator. This combined with EVAAS --another comprehensive reporting system-- and NC FALCON--a formative assessment learning community online network-- presents a comprehensive system capable of informing and empowering all stakeholders in seeking to meet individual learning goals.</p> <p>The narrative presents a mixed picture of results which include a comprehensive data decision making system, success generally in the majority of schools, but less conclusive documentation of its ability to achieve significant reforms on its low-achieving schools.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative annotates that the district's budget is disseminated in a comprehensive array of strategies including public meetings and their website. The narrative notes that all personnel salaries are published as well as non-personnel expenditures. However, the narrative does not note whether these data are presented at the school level in the manner noted in sections b-d. There was no mention of how the salaries are grouped. This lack of clarity made it difficult to ascertain the transparency of LEA processes.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		

The district points to the fact that as a fully authorized LEA, gives them authority to maintain administrative control of their public schools. The state of NC therefore gives them the autonomy and conditions necessary to implement personalized learning environments. The narrative also states that there are two state drivers which contribute to a "hospitable environment" for personalized learning. They point to NC's RTTT which led to the implementation of Home Base which enables stakeholders to have access to an interoperable data system that enables stakeholders to ensure that the individual needs of all students are met. The narrative notes that the state of NC has shifted attention from proficiency to growth. It is noted that students are expected to be reading on grade level by the end of third grade, but that there are no restrictions on the process to get there. The narrative notes that there are four (4) possible alternative actions for students who do not meet this proficiency. This critical milestone would seem to limit some of the autonomy of the district, but not in a significant way. The narrative provides adequate evidence that the district will have autonomy under the state's authority.

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

15

15

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative describes a comprehensive process where meaningful stakeholder engagement was sort. Input was sort from teachers, principals, NCWAE, parents, district leadership and the community at large. These data were used to design the proposal. The district provides letters of support from both the leadership of the school district, mayors and leaders of the community, community organizations, Shaw University and the NC WEA. The narrative explicates a process where stakeholders from school board members through students were asked for input. An example of their comprehensive effort to involve all stakeholders was a survey that was sent to all 6000 families involved in the project. These surveys were in both English and Spanish, and available in electronic and non-electronic mediums. These data were used to confirm that the district was meeting stakeholders' needs. Only schools with 70% of teachers supporting the proposal were included in the proposal. The district is to be congratulated on providing evidence that a comprehensive effort was made to include all stakeholders.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district's narrative presents a general plan so that students have access to and master critical academic content. Scant information is provided regarding indicators a.i, a.ii, a.iii, and a.iv. This may be due to the fact that students are in k-2 and these students may not be perceived as having a capacity to participate in understanding that what they are learning is a key to accomplishing their goals or identifying and pursuing these goals.

A table in the appendices list context, strategies, and implementations/student impact outcomes for the districts four (4) goals. Within this table and the narrative in this section, some evidence is provided that a personalized sequence of skill development will be provided through programs such as the *Ready School* program. . The Digging Deeper program seems to provide an avenue to provide ongoing feedback. The Digging Deeper assessments will be used to identify individual student needs and then create an individual plan (based on the data) for the student. The proposal lists several appropriate pedagogical strategies to personalize the learning environment. These appropriate strategies include the use of peer groups game based literacy activities, and project based learning activities. These are all indicators of high quality instruction. The adoption of CCSS would provide evidence of high quality instruction. An ambitious and innovative activity that would seem to encourage individualization is home visits by kindergarten teachers. While there is general information in the narrative, most of the information relates to research that supports their general plan. Scant information is provided in either the narrative or table, on ongoing feedback. For example, one long term indicator in appendix table is that K-2 staff is observed and/or report using personalization strategies regularly. However this not tied directly to some feedback loop involving student data. No information is provided regarding mechanisms that in place to provide training and support to ensure that students know how to use tools and resources.

The details provided in this section did not provide insight into the "nuts and bolts" of a high quality plan. There are several commendable activities planned, but an overall high-quality plan addressing the specifics of this indicator is not provided. Missing from the narrative in this section are the timeline and persons responsible.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	15
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provides a high-quality plan for professional development in this section. The plan includes key goals, activities to be undertaken, timeline deliverables and parties responsible for implementing the activities. The district proposes a <i>Personalization Institute</i> to enable educators and administrators to be able to: personalize instruction; differentiate instruction; use technology; monitor progress and formative instruction; help students self-regulate, use high quality resources aligned to CCSS; enhance parent engagement; increase attendance, and to mitigate learning loss. The personalization institute will be delivered in a one week format with three days of follow-up throughout the school year. If the Personalization Institute is successful in facilitating teachers' growth in these areas, there is reason to believe that teachers will be able to personalize instruction to address indicators a.i-a.iii. This <i>Personalization Institute</i> will be augmented with PLTs that are held on a weekly basis. The purpose of the PLTs is to use actionable data to develop plans to adjust instruction to meet individual needs. The combination of the Personalization Institute with PLTs gives evidence of a high quality PD plan that should facilitate teachers not only having access to high quality instruction, but also the ability to use them.</p> <p>The participating school leaders have access through <i>Home Base</i> to a teacher's evaluation system that helps them to evaluate and take steps to improve individual and collective effectiveness. The narrative points to the PLTs as the vehicle that allows a school culture of collaboration to be formed. The district plans to "build" on the skills of the teachers they have, rather than hire new ones. This will be accomplished through an online portal which will facilitate teachers' individual PD needs. A full implementation of their "Effective Teacher Framework" is expected in the 2014-2015 school year. Inadequate information is provided regarding the use of teacher evaluations for continuous school improvement. While there is a high-quality plan presented for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective teachers and principals, no specifics are addressed regarding the staffing of hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas.</p> <p>The narrative presents a moderately ambitious plan to improve teaching and learning.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS's narrative describes a central office that will work closely with the school based leadership teams of the participating schools. This is a large school district with several layers of administrators to oversee the running of the district. It is not clear from the narrative where the RTT-D program will gain specific support. Details such as person or unit responsible for actions are missing. All of the schools have a "School Improvement Team (SIP)". The SIP is charged with developing a school improvement plan. While the plan is to be based on data driven decision making, there is limited information related to the autonomy of the team regarding such items as schedules, calendars, budgets, etc. The district has a mastery learning model. The proposal notes that the students are able to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways and at multiple times. Methods for this include such devices as self-paced computer learning and potential to advance in grade level through appropriate assessment. Personalized Education plans are provided for students not performing at grade level and there is an acceleration and academic advancement protocol. Less is said about the opportunity for more "average" students to personalize their learning opportunities. The narrative notes that the district is in full compliance with ADA and IDEA. However, no details are provided in the narrative as to how this might be operationalized.</p> <p>More detail is provided regarding ELL and LEP students. This includes the use of Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, the Center for International Enrollment, and the hiring of a Director of Language Assistance. While the narrative provided pieces of a strategy and plan that supports individualized learning, not enough detail was provided for it to be considered a high-quality plan. Timeline and persons responsible were missing from the narrative for this section. A general timeline for the entire proposal is provided earlier in the narrative.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district describes two central office teams who will provide support to the Cornerstone Project. The district has implemented a unique Parents Academy aimed at helping parents to positively engage in their students' education. The district is to be commended for this ambitious approach. As a part of this initiative to involve parents, "Parents Academy" will offer workshops on using Home Base. The district plans on using Home Base to allow parents and students to have</p>		

access to information in an open format situation. The narrative notes that Home Base is a "machine readable" format and in a web based format that extends accessibility to handheld "smart "devices. Another device that will be used to ensure equal access is their 1:1 technology initiative. This should help disadvantaged students to clear the hurdle of the digital divide. Funding is included in the budget to provide technical support throughout both the initial start-up and ongoing in subsequent years of the grant. However, it is not clear from the narrative if this funding will extend to supporting parents.

Home Base is an interoperable Data System that is both an instructional improvement system and a student information system that connects instructional improvement, student information, and human resources together. It is not clear from the narrative that budget data is included. The narrative in this section does not provide a timeline and persons responsible for activities. The district has presented a reasonable plan (but not high quality) to support project implementation.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative only provides a general description of a continuous improvement plan. It is noted that a process of "Plan, Do, Act, Reflect" will be implemented. It is noted that an advisory council will be formed. This council will meet periodically to analyze and problem solve. However, there is no details provided related to this process. An evaluation specialist will be hired to be a part of the team. The data will be summarized in an annual report. The table in the appendix provides some of the detail of the implementation plan. However, there was not enough detail to consider this a high quality plan. Specific dates, strategies, data sources and persons responsible are missing from the plan.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative only presents a generic communication plan with few details. The narrative describes a process where stakeholders will be invited to some of the advisory council meetings. The district suggests that the evaluation process will be designed to ensure feedback and continuous improvement, but there are no details such as key activities, deliverables, and persons responsible etc. to support this claim. The Grant Coordinator is described as the point of contact, but other than a statement that some form of a newsletter will be developed, details are sparse. There are no details about the timing of the newsletter, or different ways of communicating with internal versus external stakeholder. The lack of details negates the possibility of this being a high-quality plan.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative provides clear rationales for selecting an appropriate number (12) of performance measures. The rational for most of these goals are tied to their primary literacy initiatives. Another justification revolves around the need for students to have good attendance record in order to be in place to learn. Less information is provided regarding how these data will be used to review and improve the measure over time if it is an insufficient gage to implementation progress. This is a weakness. The data tables do have annual targets for improvement. The goals of about 1 % growth for high school graduation are achievable but not ambitious. The goals for some minority groups and closing the gap to establish equity (6% a year) are more ambitious and the district is to be commended for these goals. A weakness is that the performance measures are assessed on a yearly level. It is not clear that a yearly performance measure would be timely or formative. The district plans on using EVAAS. It is noted that performance measures will be objective. More information regarding review and improvement of measures would improve the plan. Without these details a high quality plan is not presented.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative portrays a high-quality evaluation plan to evaluate the effectiveness of RTTT-D activities. The narrative and chart clearly delineate the person's responsible (Senior Director of Program Accountability and Evaluation Specialist) activities such as reporting schedule, and data sources. One weakness is no explicit verbiage related to how the</p>		

data would be used to inform decisions. The narrative lists both formative and summative goals and data sources. Less information is provided regarding the use of data to improve instruction. A specific timeline is missing, but the narrative notes that the evaluation plan will be finalized after funding is received and the evaluator is hired. More information about the use of data would have strengthened this section. The process as stated are rigorous in as much as they are using non-participating schools as a control group to confirm that the treatments are having an effect.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative and budget tables present a convincing fiscal picture that suggests that the funds will support the project are reasonable and sufficient. According to the narrative, budgetary allocations were based on: 1) extent of the significance of the activity to the absolute priority; 2) traditional versus full year calendar; 3) number of students served; 4) complexity of the proposed activity, and resources required for successful implementation. These all provide evidence that the budget was well thought out. The narrative does not explicitly document one-time expenses versus those that will be used for ongoing costs. However, the narrative does note in talking about sustainability of the project that the project seeks "to build capacity of staff and district as a whole." The narrative notes that schools should only have replacement costs for new resources such as technology. The budget addresses overall grant costs reasonably. The budget is weakened by inadequate detail related to sustainability.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>WCPSS presents a general narrative that suggests that they have three key strategies to sustain the project. These are: building capacity of staff and the district; limiting types and number of positions directly related to grant, and to focus on one-time, non-recurring expenditures and build capacity within project schools. However, the actual numbers from the budget related to one-time non-recurring expensed do not support this statement. Only 31% of the budget is designated for these expenses. General information is provided that the program will be evaluated by the Department of Data & Accountability. The narrative notes that a business case would be built in the fall of 2017 to sustain those activities demonstrating impact. This appears to be late in the process to truly address sustainability. The narrative presents an inadequate "Three-Year Sustainability Plan" that only lists costs. It does not include budget assumptions or sources of funds. Additionally, the funds appear to be primarily focused on tech facilitators (57%), with no data about funds for educators. WCPSS has not provided convincing evidence that the project will be sustainable at the end of the grant. In particular, it only vaguely addresses where funds will be acquired. Since there are no specifics related to timeline, and persons responsible, this is not a high quality plan.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative provides an adequate description of a partnership, WAKE Up and Read, that is a community based initiative that was formed to improve childhood literacy. The narrative provides a description of a robust collaborative with a governance structure that should ensure that the partnership is sustainable. Over twenty community organizations are involved. The WAKE Up and Read collaborative is made up of a Steering Committee that includes five Action Teams focused on individual elements of the collaborative work(Coordination of Resources, Development of Subject Matter Content, Data, Parent Awareness and Volunteers), a Leadership Team comprised of Action Team chairs, and members of the general public. Each Action Team has two co-chairs representing the broad spectrum of coalition members (e.g., Marbles Kids Museum, Mother Read, Smart Start, Wake County Public School System and Wake Education Partnership). This structure would seem to foster the maintenance efficacy of the partnership. Letters of support are provided as evidence of WAKE Up and Reads support of WCPSS's grant proposal. The narrative explicitly identifies five performance</p>		

measures (academic and non-academic) that are aligned with the Cornerstone Project. Less explicit information is made available related to family and community supports. Inadequate information is provided regarding indicator three (3). The only verbiage provided indicates that annual review outcomes data will guide strategic outreach to project schools demonstrating the most need. No information is provided regarding the operationalization of these outcomes. General information is provided that the Wake-Up & Read Partnership has agreed to work on all areas, but inadequate specifics are provided regarding the "who, what, when, and where" of this support. It is not clear from the narrative how the LEA and the Wake Up & Read partnership will specifically address any of the sub-indicators of indicator five.

There is a list of performance measures provided in the narrative, but it is not clear exactly how the community partnership and LEA will build the capacity of staff of participating schools. Two of the indicators are directly related to community support, and it is possible to extrapolate that the community partnership will provide key support for these two results. More explicit information related to the integration of community partnership would have strengthened this section.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS make a coherent case that it meets the core educational assurances. WCPSS has adopted standards (CCSS) that should lead to college and career readiness. This particular project focuses on the goal of all students reading by the end of 3rd grade as a gatekeeper goal for future success including ability to graduate from high school. WCPSS has access through the state of NC to a very robust interoperable data system (Home Base) that is designed to measure student, and teacher success. It has the built in capacity to inform all teachers and principals of how instruction can be improved, as well as making suggestions for PD. WCPSS plans on ensuring all students have effective teachers by improving the capabilities of all teachers employed by WCPSS. This plan includes in-depth PD and job embedded PD. WCPSS has shown its capacity to improve low-performing schools using its renaissance model schools as an example. They are in the process of developing strategies to turn-around their alternative school. This process is based on the successful process they used with their Renaissance schools. The narrative provided evidence that the district proposal is seeking to close the achievement gaps among subgroups through individualized learning plans. The narrative presented a credible plan to meet the four assurances through effective PD for teachers and individual learning plans for each student.

Total	210	145
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0051NC-2 for Wake County Public School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) adequately addressed the requirements of (A)(1).

They position their proposal, Cornerstone, as one that serves the greater goals of the district and the state, that is, they see themselves as contributing to the overall effort of improvement. Cornerstone is envisioned as a discrete project addressing a specific need within a larger plan. This is in

keeping with the RTTTD grant. WCPSS also asserted that they developed their RTTTD proposal in light of evaluations of their past efforts and provided details of numerous, and impressive, initiatives at the state level and evidence of how they as a district also participated in the move at the state level, which effectively established their record and commitment to meeting the four core educational areas.

For example, highlighting that their state is a RTT state, WCPSS argued that since 2010 the state has been implementing changes in the READY initiative that addresses the four core educational areas; WCPSS argued that they extended work in this regard by developing a detailed scope of work that is aligned with NC's READY initiative. For example, WCPSS schools completed intensive training in the Common Core and NC Essential Standards, with further opportunities for training throughout 2011-12 via principal, department chair, and professional learning team (PLT) meetings, and the implementation of a Common Core Certification process. With respect to data systems, the state has set up an interoperable system, Home Base, which is a statewide instructional improvement system (IIS) and student information system (SIS) for teachers, students, parents and administrators. WCPSS also discussed associated developments around measuring and reporting on student/school performance and achievement. They explained for example that, they will report the number of Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) targets and the number/percentage of those targets met. In addition, they have obtained an ESEA waiver, which allows them to focus on reducing the percentage of non-proficient students by one-half within six years. They described an integrated approach, fore grounding their Renaissance model, used to recruit, develop, reward and retain teachers. As an intervention, it addresses the lowest achieving schools in their district and, along with a TAP initiative also target teachers. As a result, '[i]n 2012 [targeted teachers] were significantly more likely to indicate they would continue to work at their respective school than in 2010 (78% versus 61%).' It is noted that this strategy targets a small group of teachers; so this occasions some challenges as WCPSS' overall strategy for teachers. It should also be noted that WCPSS stated that there is one school that qualifies as lowest achieving school as per RTT. The lowest performing schools in their Renaissance model were amongst the lowest in their district, not according to RTT. They reported that intervention targeted at the one lowest performing schools in WCPSS, does not as yet show the anticipated progress; nevertheless, with the Renaissance model they demonstrated their past efforts in turning around *their* lowest achieving schools.

They explained that to accelerate student achievement and deepen learning, and increase equity, they propose their Cornerstone project. Cornerstone will focus on third grade literacy within 20 elementary schools. This will incorporate "high tech and high touch" approaches, namely, the use of technology and added personal support in classrooms provided by teaching assistants and volunteers. WCPSS also highlighted that they will mount interventions in three areas to significantly impact early grade literacy: school readiness, school attendance, and summer/track-out learning. Their narrative did not clearly establish to what extent the three interventions listed would incorporate all schools in the district. In addition, the link between high school graduation and college and career readiness and their strategy was stated in a brief clause; it was not argued. The link needed to have been strongly made here, as they are proposing to address third grade literacy. However, they included, but did not reference here, a detailed plan of Cornerstone in the Appendices. It, too, would have benefited from organization which explicitly grouped initiatives aimed at Cornerstone schools, and those which were also intended to serve the wider population. Nevertheless, the plan in the appendix helps to establish that overall, Cornerstone sounds like a good strategy and goes some way to meeting (A)(1)(b).

WCPSS also described a typical classroom using the Cornerstone model. Their description provides an adequate insight into what the classroom experience will be like for the children in the 20 elementary schools. There is a brief paragraph, each, for students and teachers. For example, WCPSS revealed that students will have personal reading time, reading from either hardcopy or personal electronic learning according to their interests; check their learning individually and also with the teacher, and together develop personal learning plans for future sessions. Students will also have opportunity for collaborative project-based learning with other students. Teachers will monitor students face-to-face and also by using technology; the latter will also help teachers to explore areas where they need additional professional development at times that fit their schedule, create assessments and assess student progress, and easily share progress reports and tools with parents and caregivers.

WCPSS effectively established their commitment to the four educational areas. They provided an adequate account of the classroom experience and indicated that they had a good vision for reform.

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

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6

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS' approach to implementation arguably will effectively support school-level implementation of their proposal, but not LEA-level implementation, at least not during the time span of this grant.

They highlighted that 47 WCPSS elementary schools met the RTTTD criterion for selection, ie, elementary schools with aggregate free or reduced lunch (FRL) percentages of at least 40%. They explained that they decided to choose 20 of these. Their rationale was that,

While initially district leadership considered setting up a randomized control trial (RCT) within the entire group of 47 schools, a more strategically targeted and data-rich approach was elected. All elementary schools with FRL populations equal to or greater than 60% receive the treatment and the remaining schools greater than 40% but less than 60% were randomly assigned to the treatment or control conditions.

They argued that this was a 'mixed-methods design [which] incorporates a RCT and a quasi-experimental method (regression discontinuity)' and their narrative essentially went on to describe and discuss the associated study they are interested in conducting and how they went about choosing participants for this study. They presented statistical arguments to indicate how this led to the actual number of schools that would constitute the study going forward.

Notwithstanding evidence of the thought put into ensuring that they had the correct number of schools as was appropriate for their research design, the study raises questions about students who would not receive the treatment. Further, while the actual schools chosen may meet the competition's eligibility requirements and also satisfy the needs of their research design, there appears to be some questions around LEA-level implementation. More focusedly, by using the methodology for choosing research participants for a study they wish to pursue, as the means by which they also chose schools for inclusion in their reform efforts, WCPSS limited and reduced the impact of their efforts for the greater number of schools and students in the district. Their approach, that is their research, and its focus, restricted them to addressing the needs of fewer schools and fewer students. This raises a general question of equity, and a more focused question of how WCPSS would ensure equity by subgroups such as gender and race; 40% of students were discussed in (A)(1) as Black/African American and/or Latino/Hispanic.

WCPSS did not include the standard form for this section here. Therefore it was difficult to ascertain the required information as per (A)(2)(b).

The response at (A)(2) met some of RTTTD expressed requirements.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS included a high-quality plan that effectively described how Cornerstone would be translated into meaningful reform to serve non-participating students and to support districtwide change. They did not necessarily establish how the Cornerstone project itself would be scaled up.

Here they provided an overall rationale for their model of change, that is, how their focus on third grade literacy is necessary for college and career readiness. They quoted research to this effect, claiming: 'One in 6 children who cannot read proficiently by grade 3 do not graduate high school on-time and low-income children who are not reading on grade level in grade 3 are three times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate high school (Hernandez, 2012)'. This evidence provides good support for their argument; they could have developed it by highlighting how this was borne out within their district.

They also provided a detailed document that laid out the plan over the lifespan of the RTTTD grant. This included individual rationale for each strategy proposed, timelines, and deliverables. They did not explicitly name responsible parties.

They did not argue this in their narrative, but from the details of the plan submitted in the Appendix, it would seem that, essentially, they have two foci running alongside each other during the span of the grant. There is a focus on interventions for participating students and schools; they also plan to implement general strategies that build capacity at the community, resources and teacher levels, which benefit all students - although students within Cornerstone schools have additional advantage with also receiving focused interventions. This observation also draws attention to the finding that while their *vision* may lead to meaningful LEA-wide impact, they did not effectively demonstrate how *Cornerstone schools* would be scaled up to serve other students within participating schools and other nonparticipating schools.

The following is a sample of outcomes, which seem to serve all students, as the grant is being implemented; it is a sample of their anticipated outcomes for 2016-17.

95% of K2 staff have been trained and 90% are observed

Demonstrate increased capacity for summer literacy experiences by continuing reading clubs at each WCPSS grant school and increasing the number of summer/track-out opportunities in the community by 20% over the 2014 baseline

K-2 students receive 12 free books each year; 80% of students receive incentives for meeting summer/track-out reading goals annually

Therefore, WCPSS propose to focus on a specific group, while also providing general intervention at the community and the staff level. This is a clever approach to spreading their reform efforts beyond Cornerstone schools in the near future. Nevertheless, they did not explicitly address how they would scale up reform efforts within Cornerstone schools to students in other grade bands within those schools and to nonparticipating schools in the LEA.

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

10

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity.

They explained that End of Grade (EOG) benchmark is a key assessment for the state; however, they do not have Grade 3 End of Year assessments in Reading currently as the state has implemented a new system of assessment; measures are yet to be determined. They expect that the methodology for calculating goals will be consistent with other summative assessments in their proposal. Further, they explained that data for economically disadvantaged groups are not available because the state 'has advised that this data may only be used for required Federal reporting.' They do not report these figures for proficiency and achievement gap, but do for graduation. They identify precisely how they go about making calculations, and suggest that the same formulae are applied to all groups, and to (A)(4)(a-b); the formulae are varied for (A)(4)(c). They do not explain why they use the formulae they chose. With respect to achievement gaps, they explained that they compare groups according to NCLB classifications; in addition, the performance of subgroups are compared against the performance of White students. Their figures reveal that Asians are the highest achieving group in the district.

Notwithstanding their explanations and evidence in the alternative offered (see below), it is noted that they do not report on EOG proficiency for Grade 3. It is also not clear that the figures for targets and growth WCPSS presented, meet or exceed state standards.

WCPSS sought to show how they went about taking RTTTD requirements in consideration by highlighting their procedures in their Strategic Plan for WCPSS. A review of the summative assessment of the current Strategic Plan showed that they observe goals for literacy at Grade 2. They maintained that the specific methodology they follow for the projections in their proposal rely on DIBELS baseline data; Beginning of Grade (BOG) along with the fall DIBELS assessment serve as a post measure for the treatments in the grant. Through their screening and monitoring assessments they identify which students are low, medium or high risk on RtI. In their RTTTD proposal, WCPSS projections report on the percentage of students at benchmark goals for low-risk (RtI Tier 1) on a number of literacy classifications, across various grade levels, using end-of-year DIBELS Spring 2013 assessment baseline data. This is linked to performance measures determined at the state level.

An examination of their figures for the percentage of students at RtI Tier 1 for Grade 2 in one literacy category (Oral Reading Fluency, ORF) reveals that overall there is progress (11.3) over the life of the grant from 2012-13 to post-grant. There is variation in the pattern of growth amongst all groups, ranging, for example, from the strongest performing racial subgroup showing a 0.2 increase to the weakest showing a rate of increase of 6.5 an average. Subgroups are projected to make significant gains over time: American Indians (32.3), Black (27.1), Hispanic (29.3), LEP (25.8) and SWD (40.7); Overall (11.3). A similar pattern is expected at Grade 3. These projections reveal that all students are expected to make gains. In addition, lower performing subgroups make progress against the White subgroup. So WCPSS are seen to be decreasing achievement gaps; their projections seem both achievable and ambitious.

Projections for graduation rates show small growth over the same time frame: American Indians (6.1), Black (6.2), Hispanic (6.8), LEP (12) and SWD (8.1); Overall (3.8). Incremental increases range from 0.3 for the strongest performing groups to 2.6 for the weakest. It is seen that gains in outcomes, for proficiency results and graduation rates, between lower achieving subgroups against Whites, are also less marked by the end of the time frame. In other words, WCPSS make significantly more gains in proficiency projections than they do for graduation rates amongst their lower performing subgroups. Therefore, it is arguable that the growth in performance for summative assessments is not strongly reflected in growth for graduation rates.

With respect to projections for college enrollment, WCPSS explained that they had not, at the time of preparing this proposal, generated figures for their district. Instead, they presented figures, which it appears the state collected for the LEA. They highlighted that college enrollment rates, for high school graduates who enroll in four a year state college within their state, increases at the same rate for all subgroups by .5% per year for a total of 2.5 percentage points over 5 years. Projections for students who go on to two and four-year postsecondary college or university, community/technical college, junior college, and trade, business or nursing school: American Indians (0.04), Black (0.3), Hispanic (0.11), LEP (2.5) and SWD (3.75); Overall (1.35). Incremental increases range from 0.13 for the strongest performing groups to 0.01 for the weakest. Projection for increases in college enrollment are negligible.

They did not present figures for (A)(4)(e).

Given the discussion above, it does not seem possible to state, categorically, the extent to which WCPSS' vision will result in improvement in student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals. From the evidence presented it seems they will achieve variable results. They make ambitious and achievable projections for proficiency, which if realized will decrease achievement gaps. The gains projected for proficiency are arguably not reflected in graduation rates and college enrollment.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS maintained that they have strong record of academic achievement over the past four years. They presented evidence in categories besides those required by RTTTD to highlight that they have maintained steady progress, and/or perform better than the state. Their figures on drop out rates, for example strongly support a clear record of achievement, with dropout rates steadily declining over the past four years. Further, dropout rates reflect increased equity especially for Hispanic and Black/African American, SWD and economically disadvantaged subgroups, who have made steady gains over the past four years. Figures on college readiness show them comparing favorably with state and national averages. However, they could not present a record of college enrollment over the last four years. In lieu of college enrollment figures, which they currently do not have, they reported figures for 2012-13 on graduates' intention to pursue further education. 88.8% of graduates gave positive indications. Their figures for graduation rates maintained the evidence of increased equity amongst the subgroups identified above, but there was a marginal dip over the past four years; figures can be said to show stability over the last three years at least.</p> <p>Evidence for categories required by RTTTD supported some record for success, but the evidence was not altogether unchallenged. WCPSS asserted that 'most recently reported data from 2011-12 rated WCPSS student performance on EOG and EOC testing higher than the statewide average in all subjects across all grade levels'. Nevertheless, they did not demonstrate a clear record for success across the last four years against AYP targets. Their performance fell significantly in 2009 (from 62.8 to 38.4) and 2010 (13.5). They highlighted that a substantial increase in state targets had a knock on effect. Their performance was seen to increase when the state changed from AYP to Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for measuring achievement. In the 2011-12 assessment, 85 of 164 schools (51.8%) met all of their AMOs and an additional 41 schools missed out on 100% of their objectives by one or two target subgroups. It seems plausible that instability around definitions and measurements of success adversely affected their ability to demonstrate a clear record in proficiency, as they argued.</p> <p>They did not demonstrate a clear record of success in their efforts to turnaround the school in their district that met RTTTD stipulation for the lowest achieving school. They pointed to the successes in their efforts to turnaround their four lowest performing schools; it did not appear that these met RTTTD stipulation either. The results presented for two years are positive, when measured against performance within the district. One school is reported to have received recognition as a 'High Progress' school by the state. The results seem to be particularly positive for increased teacher capacity and effectiveness.</p> <p>WCPSS reported three systems in relation to (B)(1)(c). One in particular seems likely to effectively allow student performance data to be available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction and services. This is an interoperable system, HOMEBASE, which they expect all RTTTD groups mentioned will be able to use in different focused ways, to achieve RTTTD goals. This system is just being introduced. As such, they did not demonstrate a clear record of success in the last four years.</p> <p>The foregoing discussion highlights that WCPSS has a mixed record of success in the past four years. They do not consistently provide the required evidence as per RTTTD, but they provide other evidence that gives some indication of their performance on related activities, although these also do not consistently meet the four year stipulation.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS take efforts to ensure transparency in their processes, practices and investments.</p> <p>The evidence they presented highlighted that they present annual budget documents that include both personnel and non-personnel budgeted expenditures in the Operating Budget. Proceedings and products, such as the Board of Education budgets and their Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, are presented to open audiences, are televised and aired live, and streamed on the web. In addition, the salary schedule for all WCPSS positions are also posted on the WCPSS website. This includes certified and non-certified positions, instructional and support staff, school and district level administrative positions.</p> <p>They did not clearly establish that they met the criteria at the school level for all schools within the district. They also did not provide supporting documents to establish a sense of how they operate.</p> <p>Consequently, they met some of the requirements of (B)(2).</p>		

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS propose to personalize learning in third grade literacy classes. They anticipate using technology and increased adult participation in children's learning environments, to help them achieve their results.</p> <p>The evidence they presented in support of the state context for implementation of these goals is convincing. They highlighted that the state is a RTT state, thereby setting in place the context within which they have firmly positioned their Cornerstone project. The state has already introduced the interoperable system which WCPSS intends to use and which also seems likely to support their local efforts. WCPSS also highlighted that there is a Read to Achieve program at the state level, which advances their specific focus, namely, NC House Bill 950/S.L. 2012-142 Section 7A, as part of the Excellent Public School Act. They discuss provision within the state that 'has set in place the necessary conditions and autonomy necessary to implement personalized learning environments.'</p> <p>They did not specifically address how the state context supported their use of additional adults in the classroom, and their intention to extend working relationships in the community.</p> <p>They did, however, meet most of the stipulations at (B)(3)</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS took efforts to ensure stakeholder engagement and support. They showed clear evidence of trying to involve all stakeholders as required by RTTTD. Their results were variable.</p> <p>They provided a description of how students, families, teachers, and principals were contacted. They used age-appropriate strategies for engaging children, via their Wake Up and Read campaign. This is seen as sufficient to meet the requirement for meaningful engagement and support from students. For teachers and families, they primarily used surveys to solicit engagement. Further, principals were used to discuss the project with teachers. Actual figures for the number/percentage of teachers who participated were not clear. Of the 6000 families contacted, approximately 500 responded. Teachers' comments were used to revise parts of the proposal; parents responses were seen as confirming the proposal. Surveys fundamentally allow access to greater numbers of people; however, it was not clear how many teachers actually participated, and the numbers for families are low. The use of surveys may also have inhibited participation where another method of engagement may have encouraged, at least another way of participating. The questionnaire was not referenced for review. All of this puts some limitations on the extent to which WCPSS can be said to have encouraged meaningful engagement of these two stakeholders; they did provide evidence to suggest that at least 70% of teachers in the participating schools supported the Cornerstone project. It seems principals were effectively engaged through participation in meetings, which discussed the proposal; the proposal was also revised in light of discussions. Actual numbers for principal attendance at the meetings were not presented; however, of the 29 letters of support referenced in the Appendix, 20 were from individual principals expressing their support; this represents the full complement for the participating schools.</p> <p>NC does not have collective bargaining representation. However, WCPSS felt it critical to seek feedback from a partner, Wake NCAE, which represents many of the district's over 7,000 teachers. As a follow-up to the initial principal's meeting, the Wake NCAE president shared the revised proposal details with the board of directors who voted unanimously in support of the Cornerstone RTT-D proposal.</p> <p>They made a strong argument that they obtained meaningful engagement and support in the community. This was illustrated, for example, by evidencing that they already have a working system for engaging the community: it is a collaborative of over 20 community organizations, nonprofit agencies, governmental units, postsecondary institutions, and businesses, that are reported as being passionate about helping every student read on grade level by the end of third grade. They meet monthly. The Race to the Top for Districts Request for Proposals was published; the "WAKE Up and Read" collaborative convened and discussed it. Seven letters of support, besides the two from superintendents, were provided in the Appendix of the proposal.</p> <p>WCPSS effectively demonstrated evidence of taking steps to engage all stakeholders and secure their support for the Cornerstone project. The evidence presented on their strategies suggest more meaningful engagement and support amongst students, principals and the community. Their narrative suggests that there was engagement and support amongst families and teachers, but the extent to which these were meaningful was not fully established.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
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(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS did not reference this, but earlier in their application they referred the reader to a detailed plan for Cornerstone in the Appendix. It is not clear that this plan was developed specifically for this section or another; however, it included rationales, detailed timelines, and deliverables that address selection criteria here. It did not explicitly address responsible parties. The information in the Appendix supports the view that WCPSS had a high quality plan.</p> <p>At this section, they firmly established that they have a clear and well grounded understanding of the issues they wish to address and the reasons for their Cornerstone approach. Through Cornerstone they will focus on third grade literacy proficiency because they have assessed both academic literature and their own context: third grade literacy is linked to college graduation standards and enrollment; and the case is borne out within their district.</p> <p>They effectively explain how their approach to personalization will work. They argue that personalization is individualization and differentiation. They present the use of technology as an effective strategy to achieve both. They highlight the interoperable nature of HOMEBASE, which will serve different audiences in different ways. At the classroom level, students will each have personal learning devices which enables information gathering on students' proficiency and interest, and which in turn allows personalized recommendations for students to follow. They provided well developed detail, which give insight into how they use RtI to meet the needs of all their students. This also supported their arguments for strategies used for high need and students with disability. The delivery of instruction will make use of the mastery learning model, which requires teachers to identify the specific content standards in terms of what students should know, understand, and be able to do as a result of learning. Student skills are assessed and needs identified. A plan is developed and high quality small group based instruction occurs. Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery. WCPSS provide detail of a typical day in which technology is used to achieve these ends, and maintain that the mastery learning model of instruction compliments and supports personalized classrooms. Further, Cornerstone students will learn how to use the tools provided to personalize their learning environment as well as how to participate in their learning as a component of the mastery learning continuum; this will involve them learning, amongst other things, how to set goals, use critical thinking and collaborate. Teachers will work with students to document progress and help students to see how their school work is moving them forward to accomplishing personal goals. Parents will be asked to ensure children read and/or read to daily, and asked to maintain reading logs. There are good focused strategies for working with parents, especially those who may economically disadvantaged. For example, providing incentives for the whole family, such as a free family day pass at a local children's museum and deploying social workers as necessary to address other specific needs. WCPSS' argument for meeting college and career readiness rests on the state's adoption of the Common Core State Standards for College and Career Readiness; teachers will follow the Common Core Curriculum. With this they aim to enable children to become independent and proficient readers. This is the contribution of their Grade 3 literacy campaign to college and career readiness.</p> <p>Educators can be seen to be effectively achieving personalized learning environments for teaching and learning. They effectively demonstrate that high needs students are considered within the overall approach. For example, students are seen to be able to be involved in learning experiences in areas of academic interest; they have access and exposure to diverse cultures and contexts and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning, and strategies will be put in place to enable them to master academic content and develop problem solving and other skills. Similarly, for the most part, the evidence presented show how they address the stipulations of (C)(1)(b).</p> <p>WCPSS do not provide sufficient evidence to effectively demonstrate that students will understand that what they are learning is key to their success. They also failed to address the extent to which students will identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college and career ready standards or college and career graduation requirements. There is also little pointed evidence demonstrating a practice of frequently updated individual student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of college and career standards and graduation requirements.</p> <p>Although WCPSS highlight that students will learn how to use technology for their personalized learning, they failed to effectively demonstrate that mechanisms will be in place to provide training and support that will ensure that students understand how to use the tools and resources to track and manage their learning.</p> <p>Overall, this is a good plan that adequately addresses the requirements of (C)(1).</p>		

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	13
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS does an adequate job of addressing all the requirements at (C)(2).</p> <p>Their plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment to provide all students the support to graduate college and career ready is served by three related initiatives: five-day training at their Personalization Institute; 3-day follow-up training sessions in each year of the grant; and Professional Learning Teams (PLT).</p>		

They provided a very good rationale for their work, which covered the rationale for the instructional strategies they would implement according to RTTTD expectations. Their work is informed by research and scholarship, evidence from application within their practice, and their experience.

They provided adequate timelines and identified responsible parties, highlighting that they saw the deliver of their project in the broad categories of: pre-award; staffing; personalized classrooms; professional development; community awareness. They claimed that they would follow the same process of implementation each year to ensure consistency and that all initiatives are implemented. With this they presented an overview, including many of the annual key milestones and responsible individuals. This was information on top level activities running more or less from January to December 2014, with the expectation of repeats to the end of grant. It seems more detail and/or variation to the plan would be needed to better assist the evaluation of their timeline.

Deliverables were seen throughout their answer at this section; they were not seen to have fully addressed all the requirements for (C)(2). For example,

The training identified at the Personalization Institute along with the PLTs, and their HOMEBASE interoperable system, provide training, systems and practices to continuously improve school progress. They also indicate capacity building for educators, teachers in particular. Teachers can be seen to have individual and collective opportunity to develop professionally to design, develop and deliver personalize learning environments. Providing a stipend for teachers to participate in training seems a very good idea to reward and provide incentive; it is noted, nonetheless that WCPSS did not develop in their narrative how they would provide sufficient time and support for teachers; the training suggested does not seem sufficient for the long term learning needed in the effective use of the new technologies that will be bedrock of Cornerstone. This is of further note, as a backup/day-to-day tech support for teachers was not discussed.

WCPSS did highlight that they have teacher and principal evaluations, that are consistent with state standards and form the basis for performance goals and professional growth plans. They reported evidence which supported the investment and value WCPSS place on professional growth and development, for example they doubled staff who perform these roles, spent \$3.2m last on professional development and provided over 13,000 educators with training in 2013. Further, the Effectiveness framework (discussed below) is linked to these evaluation rubrics and all teachers and principals will receive training on the framework. However, WCPSS did not effectively establish in their narrative how they would use feedback from these evaluations to improve teachers and principals' practice as required at (C)(2)(iv).

Activity around the frequent measure of student progress needed to be developed more fully to give a better insight into their practice.

They did establish that educators would have access to, and some knowledge to use, actionable information, high quality resources and processes and tools that match student needs. For example, they highlighted HOMEBASE, that teachers will learn formative assessments items available within it. They also mentioned mCLASS, a research-based online K-3 literacy assessment; this includes DIBELS, which entails three assessment checkpoints annually.

WCPSS reported that the vast majority of their teachers are 'hardworking and effective'; however, there remained some ambiguity around the extent to which WCPSS teachers and principals meet the RTTTD definition of effective and highly effective. WCPSS argued that they have 'highly qualified' educators, who are well-distributed across the district, including, it seems, in hard-to-staff schools, subjects and specialty areas. They also have a system in place that monitors the distribution of 'fully licensed and highly qualified teachers ... to determine if high needs students are disproportionately taught by unqualified, non-graduate degree, or inexperienced teachers'. They argue that '[s]teps to address any issues are implemented based upon review of this data'.

To this they have added plans to develop the workforce towards becoming effective and highly effective educators through their Effective Teacher Framework Professional Development model. WCPSS provided a rationale for the framework, presenting research and scholarship in the field. They also indicated that it recently became operational, and shared an extended timeline for its continued roll-out to 2015. There were indications of what WCPSS expected as deliverables. Generally that it would help them deliver more effective and highly effective teachers and principals across the district; and therefore by extension, more students will have access to effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

More specifically, it seemed WCPSS will have developed an online portal, which they anticipate will serve as the hub for on-going professional development. For example, it will house professional development tools, including videos demonstrating effective teaching in each of the essential elements, literary resources, and current listings of opportunities for face-to-face professional development. WCPSS expect that all staff in the district will use it as they engage in conversations regarding effective teaching, for example conversations between principal and teacher, and that every department in the district working on the development of teacher effectiveness will house their resources within this portal.

The plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals may have been subsumed to some degree, within the larger plan at (C)(2); perhaps, as a consequence some of its details and impact did not come through clearly. Therefore, while the framework sounds like a good idea in principle, and notwithstanding the mention of the committee to review the resources for inclusion on the site, the framework did not seem to have someone in charge manning it, thinking through its use and development, and ensuring it had the specific desired impact. There needed to be more detail to reassure that this would not just remain a portal on a website, that may or not be used, and/or used well. This undermines the logic of their plan, and therefore the extent to which their strategy can be seen to result in increasing the

number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

In light of all the foregoing discussion of evidence presented at (C)(2), WCPSS' plan did not have the full ring of a high quality plan.

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:

WCPSS plans to use Central Office departments alongside their site-based leadership to implement the Cornerstone plan. It appears that this makes a strong pool of resources available. It does not appear that they will reorganize existing practices, per se; rather, it seems they expect that the Cornerstone project will fall within established management of, for example, school improvement initiatives. They did not establish that a discrete unit or person would manage the project overall. Participating schools, and the Cornerstone project itself, may lose out on the benefits of a strong center.

It seems that they do have policies and practices that would ensure that school leadership teams in participating schools would have sufficient flexibility and autonomy to facilitate the implementation of personalized learning. It is a state requirement that all schools operate a school improvement plan, with the goal of assessing the current program and needs at the school, design strategies for improving student performance, and continually evaluate the results of its decisions and the effectiveness of the plan. They highlight that work of school improvement teams are data driven, using available systems such as Home Base and Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) to analyze student data to identify potential reasons for problems and to determine actions to address them. This system seems likely to support Cornerstone.

There is a policy in place that 'allows students to proceed more rapidly through the usual progression of required skills and objectives for a given grade level or course of study, to work above the assigned grade level, and/or to complete studies at an earlier age.' They argue that this policy encourages differentiation and allows for early entrance to kindergarten, whole grade advancement, curriculum compacting, subject area acceleration, cross grade grouping, advanced placement, dual enrollment and early high school graduation. This seems to effectively address (D)(1)(c); perhaps details demonstrating how this works in practice would have been useful to show how it also effectively addressed (d).

With respect to (D)(1)(e) they effectively established that they are aware of the requirements to provide for students with disabilities and English learners. For example, eligible students receive a 504 Plan or IEP, which details accommodations that are designed to help the student fully access their environment and/or meet unique learning needs. It would have been useful to learn about the details in the plans; that is, what instructional practices were used and how they were adaptable for the students. They provided some of this information when they discussed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol.

In general, WCPSS will rely on the existing structures in place in their district. These in fact provide a good context for their project. While they identified suitable policies and practices, there was an absence of a focused articulated plan of action on how they would use what was in place to support the Cornerstone project - as per RTTDD expectations. Consequently, this could not be fully regarded as a high quality plan.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

LEA and school infrastructure are in place in the district to assist WCPSS' plans to implement personalized learning.

They will improve access of economically disadvantaged students and families, who they argue are less likely to have computers at home, by providing each student in the Cornerstone project with hand-held devices. This does effectively address the matter of access.

Generally, Cornerstone schools will receive technology support from two teams within WCPSS' Central Office. These teams are not dedicated to the service of Cornerstone schools alone. However, they maintain a Help Desk for staff and will develop and online training material for parents. Initiatives are planned through their Parent Academy to provide training on HOMEBASE to parents; this strategy, as discussed, seems likely to go some way to sensitizing parents; however, it does not have the feel yet of systematic training that will achieve long term proficiency. More focused help for schools and educators comes from part time Technology Facilitators at each project school and training at the Personalization Institute. There is less indication of how students will access technology support and WCPSS did not explicitly address access by other stakeholders as appropriate. These strategies together will go some way to ensure that parents, educators and other stakeholders will have appropriate levels of technical support.

HOMEBASE, their information technology system which was introduced at the state level, seems to effectively address requirements at (D)(2)(c). For example they highlighted that HOMEBASE will deliver end-of-course and end-of-grade assessments to end users through web portals via all major HTML5-compatible web browsers. In addition, it will include a mobile web page platform that extends to handheld devices such as iPhone, iPad and android phones.

HOMEBASE is an interoperable system with the capability to house expected information.

WCPSS provided good evidence for this section. It would have been useful if they had addressed the RTTTD expectations for a high quality plan directly. All requirements as per RTTTD were not explicitly and consistently addressed.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS adumbrated their plan for continuous improvement. Taken on its own, it does not provide all the details that are later found in other section answers to (E) and does not explicitly and fully address all RTTTD requirements for a high quality plan.

However, there are indications that they address some of the requirements. For example, Their plan for continuous improvement relies on a model that is seen in academic literature to be used in education and business to facilitate continuous improvement. This indicates something of their rationale, although this is not explicitly identified as such. They explained that,

The model involves developing a plan for a change and for evaluating the change (Plan), carrying out the plan (Do), collecting, analyzing, and reviewing the results (Study), and using the results to determine and changes to enact to the program (Act).

They maintained that the cycle will be repeated annually, and that key staff will form an Advisory Committee, including an Evaluation Specialist, that will meet 'at regular intervals' during the year to assess and address issues as they arise. The specialist's work will focus on data collection and analysis, with recommendations presented annually in a report, which is discussed by the committee and used to make adjustments presented in a subsequent revised plan. Reports will meet federal reporting requirements.

A study, executed by the specialist, is an excellent way to monitor and measure implementation. Further, later at (E)(4) they provide extensive detail on formative, process and summative exercises which they will use to monitor and measure their work.

However, they did not effectively establish at (E)(1) that their plan would result in timely and regular feedback, and concomittant adjustments.

They also did not address how they would share information beyond their group at this section.

WCPSS had an adequate plan for continuous improvement.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS did not write their response to RTTTD expectations of a high quality plan directly. As consequence, for example, they did not explicitly and consistently and/or fully address a rationale, timeline and deliverables.

Nevertheless, some things were implied in what they shared. Their plans for ongoing communication and engagement, generally, will involve: the Advisory Committee convening and using meetings as a means of getting together to discuss the program and address issues; there will be 'regular meetings' amongst administrators and other educators directly involved with the grant; a body which comprises a range of community groups, will be invited to 'periodic meetings for higher level status reports and to discuss issues of interest'; there will also be 'an annual summit with community stakeholders to focus on training for how to build literacy into their ongoing efforts'; a grant coordinator will disseminate reports by various means, particularly on the web to internal and external stakeholders.

The information presented supported the finding that there was a greater sense of opportunity for engagement amongst administrators and other educators, than there was for parents and the community; there was no pointed discussion for students. There also seemed a greater

sense of information going out than there was a sense of engagement in their plan here.

The evidence presented at (E)(2) shows WCPSS meeting some of the requirements of a high quality plan.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS provided required information of targets at the population and subgroup levels. They did not clearly and coherently identify and describe 12-14 performance measures which were directly related to Cornerstone achievements; Cornerstone is focused on activities in Grade Two classes within 20 schools; however, they presented information from K-5. It is understood that they also have an interest in district wide impact outside the 20 schools; however, it was not clear how all the information they presented helped to establish the requirements at (E)(3).

7 measures were clearly discernible. They provided brief but appropriate rationale for their selection. For example, they will use

DIBELS NEXT early literacy measures, including: Letter Naming Fluency, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency (across each of three annual benchmark periods). These measures were selected because DIBELS Next is research-based and provides standards to assess students' status on key developmental variables three times a year. We will examine patterns in results annually for sufficiency and make adjustments if needed.

This approach also seems likely to provide rigorous, timely and formative information to guide information. It appears that they will follow the state's lead to require students who do not pass related assessment at End of Grade 3, to attend a 6-8 week Read to Achieve summer camp or be retained. This seems one way of making adjustments to their plan, although WCPSS did not argue this. Further, as their focus is on Grade 2, there was not an obvious indication of how they would make adjustments here. There was not a strong feel of revision and adjustment coming through the narrative.

Other features of a high quality plan were also not explicitly addressed. For example, they did not identify specific parties responsible for the different activities to be followed. The lack of a discussion on clearly identifiable measures and targets, as per the requirements of this section, also challenges the extent to which it can be said to be credible.

WCPSS' narrative did not demonstrate that their plan was of a high quality.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS did not write their response to RTTTD expectations of a high quality plan directly. As consequence, for example, they did not explicitly and consistently and/or fully address a rationale, timeline, deliverables and responsible parties.

They did nevertheless, provide a credible plan, in which for example, timelines were implied, and which seems likely to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of RTTTD funded activities. They broke down their approach to evaluation into three phases: formative; process and summative. Each of these phases are set to be interrogated by a set of key questions, with identified indicators and data sources. At the process stage for example, a guiding question is: Have project strategies around personalization led to teachers, administrators, and schools being more effective in promoting student learning? To answer this, they plan to examine grade by grade achievement analyses based on DIBELS Next fall to spring results each year; and educator effectiveness measures for teachers and administrators.

Further, they will be conducting a longitudinal study, which will also be used developmentally.

WCPSS argue that they have a comprehensive evaluation plan that will provide evidence of the success of various components as well as of the overall project. This may be the implied rationale for their approach. They presented good evidence in support of their assertion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score

(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
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(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS' budget seems likely to achieve the implementation of the proposal they present; there may be some challenges to sustainability, especially as this relates to scaling up their reform proposal to the rest of the district..

As requested, they presented tables and narrative with evidence for this section.

They seek full funding from RTTTD. As such they did not identify further sources of funding.

To establish the reasonableness and sufficiency of their budget WCPSS argued that,

only a small portion (9%) of the total project budget is directed toward Central Office coordination and support. Appropriately, most of the budget (56%) is for implementation of personalization with learning loss (15%), school readiness (13%) and school attendance (7%) following.

Looking at the budget in another way, they highlighted that 'the personnel line and associated fringe benefits, which includes stipends and subs for professional development, constitute 59% of the budget' while acquisition of personal learning devices and books account for 28%. Together these amount to 87% of the budget. Their budget therefore reflects the emphasis in their application; in addition, it seems reasonable and sufficient as per their proposal.

They also evidenced a thoughtful rationale for their budget. For example, they argued that the budget is based on the realities that schools with more students, staff and on year-round calendars are more costly to implement the same project elements and project activities which include technology require more much financial resources than activities without. Further, they highlighted their efforts to reflect reasonable distribution across project activities, as aligned with

- 1) the extent of the significance of the activity to the absolute priority for the RTT-D grant
- 2) whether the school is on a traditional or year-round calendar
- 3) the number of students served
- 4) the complexity of proposed activity
- 5) personnel, training, and equipment requirements to ensure successful implementation of the project activities.

They did not state their one-time investment versus ongoing operational costs explicitly.

Following on from this, they did not establish which of the purchases in Supplies would remain in the schools/district; this clarification was necessary as the proposal is premised, for example, on each student being given a device. If new cohorts are to be given devices this seems to threaten sustainability - if WCPSS do not have a ready source of similar funding. This issue is compounded if the project is to be scaled up to other schools and cohorts across the district. The issue of costs, both financial and otherwise, arising from lost devices was also not addressed.

In light of the foregoing, WCPSS adequately addressed the requirements at (F)(1).

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS did not write explicitly to RTTTD's expectations for a high quality plan in presenting their plans for sustainability of Cornerstone's goals.

However, their narrative evidenced their thinking to safeguard sustainability after the grant; the following illustrates.

Essentially, they argued that they generated the Cornerstone project within existing structures, with the blessing and support of leaders. This has resulted in specific links between the state, the district and the project. This strengthens their confidence to benefit from the atmosphere and history at the state and local level to support grants, including financial support postgrant. They identified examples to demonstrate this assertion. Accordingly WCPSS expects to receive funding after the grant from local funds distributed by the Board of Education. It is noted, nonetheless, that they did not receive a contribution towards this grant from the other sources. The full amount is being requested from RTTTD.

They highlighted the presence and operation of a Program Accountability team, which WCPSS senior leadership relies upon to evaluate the effectiveness of grant-funded initiatives and to inform decision-making in regards to future investments. They shared that the team has been recognized often by the American Education Research Association (AERA) for their program and policy evaluations, as well as innovative research design. Further, the district leadership is said to be 'committed to a thorough evaluation of the RTT-D grant-funded activities and

will work with the Cornerstone grant management team to prepare a business case in fall 20176 to sustain those activities demonstrating impact.'

They argued their decision to build capacity of educators, who they expect to remain within the district.

They also maintained that they were prudent over positions that were created and would remain after the grant - to keep these costs low, hence sustainable.

A three-year budget forecast for after the grant was provided. This detailed expenses for five groups of educators and other support workers, namely a half-time Coordinator Teacher, Instructional Support Technician; Social Workers, Tech Facilitators; Translation/Interpretation Service. This totaled \$782,098 each of the three years after the grant. Further details, it was argued would be developed after the grant evaluation. This provided some indication of their thinking and strategy for maintaining the personalization learning environments they would have created during the grant.

They did not fully develop how they would use their evaluations to inform future investments. They maintained that 'it would be premature for the Cornerstone grant writing team to project the district's future investment in select initiatives without benefit of evaluation results'. However, they asserted that they were committed to pursuing funding through the Board of Education for Cornerstone activities with a proven impact on student achievement or teacher/principal effectiveness to sustain efforts three years beyond the grant.

They also did not establish why they expected trained personnel would remain in the district, and/or how they would help ensure that they would remain. Of note, a training stipend for teachers who participated in training days mentioned at (C)(2) was not reflected in the budget.

In light of the foregoing, WCPSS did an adequate job of responding to (F)(2).

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

WCPSS effectively demonstrated that they have a strong partnership with community partners in their efforts to impact childhood literacy. This partnership, Wake and Read, was first convened in 2012, and comprises 20 entities from the various parts of the community, who sit on the Steering Committee, namely

the Hispanic Family Center (El Centro Para Familias), Literacy Council of Wake County, Marbles Kids Museum, Meredith College, MetaMetrics, Motherhead, NC State University College of Education, NC State University Women's Center, News & Observer News in Education, Reach Out & Read, Shaw University, Telamon Head Start, Wake County Human Services, Wake County Public Libraries, Wake County Public School System, Wake Education Partnership, Wake Med, Wake Parent Teacher Association, Wake County Smart Start, Wake Technical College and YMCA of the Greater Triangle.

They have an operating structure and meet regularly. Their work seems to be aimed, in particular, at meeting the needs of students and families who are economically disadvantaged. The collaborative have been meeting, identifying and developing processes, initiatives and/or infrastructure to this end.

They identified seven population-level results that are aligned to their Cornerstone proposal; these addressed both educational/education and family and community supports outcomes.

They referenced their approach to Plan-Do-Study-Reflect-Act previously mentioned in their application as the means by which they will track indicators and use the data to target resources. They needed to provide more information on what precisely would happen and who would do it, given that this is the work of the collaborative. With respect to scaling up, it is evident that those strategies that will be shared by all teachers and those that will be focused on the wider community will have a district wide impact. These activities seem to be the focus of the collaborative's work; WCPSS did not explicitly argue this. Their argument suggested that they were interested in reaching a larger audience, which constitutes the collaborative's focus; they did not provide a discussion of how they would scale their efforts to reach them. The study of and evaluation of the collaborative's performance measures along with their intention to follow the continuous improvement model were suggested as the means by which they will improve results over time. This needed further development, again, providing specific details to reflect the goals of the collaborative more precisely.

They reported that their approach to integrate education and other services is to provide outreach centers throughout the community, in places where

parents/guardians normally congregate and so could readily access the services being provided by means of the Wake and Read initiative. The narrative also provided some top level evidence of how the collaborative would work, for example, by enlisting faith-based organizations, regional health department sites, and pediatrician offices to share information with parents about school readiness, school attendance and the importance of reading. It would have been useful to have more information on how they would ensure this happened and happened consistently. They were more effective in discussing their ideas on volunteering and coordinating volunteers to work in project schools; they have some very good and achievable ideas, for example, to reach hard-to-reach families in rural parts by means of volunteers, and also to help ensure that every child is read to every day.

WCPSS expects to draw on the diverse resources within its collaborative to serve the needs of project; they also asserted that many partners are interested in and/or willing to develop the foci of the Cornerstone program. They evidence this with for example, the claim that 'faculty from NC State University, Shaw University and Wake Technical Community College have shared their expertise with the collaborative and helped to develop a community solutions action plan grounded in research-based best practices.'

Beyond this, they did not explicitly address how they would build the capacity of staff to accomplish the various things listed at 5. However, their narrative evidenced that some things are already in place that will help them achieve some of the requirements. For example, they are already an operating collaborative, which has generated an inventory of assets within the collaborative. This could be useful to school staff.

They repeated their population measures but did not identify and describe them in sufficient detail here that allowed assessment as annual ambitious and achievable measures.

The collaborative in place at WCPSS holds much promise to assist their efforts in Cornerstone. Their discussion of how this would happen met some of the requirements for the Competitive Preference Priority.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>WCPSS met Absolute Priority 1.</p> <p>They presented a coherent and comprehensive plan which clearly built on the four core educational assurances to create personalized learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college-and-career standards.</p> <p>Through Cornerstone they propose to improve third grade literacy. They presented an argument, supported by research and scholarship, identifying the link and importance of third grade literacy to high school graduation, and college-and-career graduation requirements. They established why this was important within their district's context.</p> <p>Cornerstone will use and enable the interoperable system that has recently been introduced within the state. It is aligned to the Common Core Curriculum and takes account of college and career readiness standards. The project houses a range of instructional approaches, strategies and tools that seem likely to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student.</p> <p>WCPSS will build the capacity of a range of educators to use a range of technology and to design and maintain personalized learning environments through an integrated program of training. They will also rely on existing structures and practices, alongside the use of their interoperable system, to focus on building the effectiveness of all teachers; in this way, they intend to expand student access to the most effective teachers.</p> <p>All students, importantly including those who otherwise would not have access to technology will be given an electronic device; this seems likely increase access to the developments being pursued within Cornerstone. Further, assistance will be provided to students by added personnel within their classrooms to help safeguard the technological and instructional developments to personalize learning for each student being pursued by teachers and principals. Together with the aforementioned strategies, this focus on each student can impact learning and decrease achievement gaps across student groups. Their efforts need to be monitored and tweaked, nevertheless, to ensure that they do in fact address discrepancies associated with subgroups.</p> <p>WCPSS successfully presented the argument that their efforts can positively impact the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.</p>		

Total	210	134
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0051NC-3 for Wake County Public School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(1) The applicant presented a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that (a) builds on the work in the four core educational assurance areas. Specifically, for the four core assurance area #1, adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy, the applicant has listed an impressive array of efforts to re-align their district standards via the state's common core initiative, READY. It is aptly noted that the state has been a leader in the development and adoption of common core standards through their RTTT designation and participation in the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practice Common Core efforts. In addition, it is compelling that the district has gone above state efforts by implementing the written standards using Bloom's Taxonomy and implementation of a Common Core Certification process designed to provide teachers the resources they need to evaluate and improve lesson plans and create new lessons aligned with the standards.

As for core educational assurance area #2, building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction, the applicant uses the state-provided Home Base, a statewide instructional improvement system and student information system. This digital data tool, rolled out in the summer of 2013, is for teachers, students, parents and administrators to improve instruction and make performance and instructional data readily available to each audience. Students can access their schoolwork, grades, and learning activities. Parents can view their child's attendance and progress. Teachers and administrators are able to access not only student data, but teaching and learning resources through this system. Teachers see diagnostic data on each student's performance including knowledge and skill areas that require extra attention. In addition to modules related to state standards, the data system provides professional development to teachers to support their efforts to address individual student needs within Home Base. Administrators will have access to aggregate and individual student performance reports, as well as aggregate and individual teacher effectiveness reports. More information is needed to determine the applicant's specific plans to use this data system to improve instruction in this project.

Concerning core assurance area #3, recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most, the applicant articulates a district vision that is centered on the use of

highly effective teachers and principals as one of its core beliefs. The applicant states that they are developing a comprehensive human capital plan based on their experience in recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals. Informing this effort are two school-based projects, the Renaissance model at four elementary schools with overall school performance of less than 60%, and a Teacher Incentive Grant to support the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) at one of the district's Title I elementary schools. TAP is a comprehensive school reform initiative designed to attract, retain, and motivate quality teachers. Preliminary findings show promising results for these two projects. It is unclear how this will impact the new comprehensive human capital plan and what final components it will include.

For core assurance area #4, turning around lowest-achieving schools, the district has been involved in efforts to turn around a state-designated lowest-performing alternative school and the district's lowest performing four elementary schools using their school improvement model, Renaissance, mentioned above. Positive results school improvement is slowly evolving in these schools.

(b) The applicant articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student supports grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests through an initiative known as Cornerstone. Focused on twenty (20) elementary schools with greater than 40% economically disadvantaged students, the goal of this initiative is to personalize literacy instruction for K-2 students so that every student reads on grade level by the end of third grade. Cornerstone will also support interventions in three areas which significantly impact early grade literacy: school readiness, school attendance, and summer/track-out learning. Personalizing support in each of these areas will promote student grade level literacy, ultimately leading to college and career ready graduates. Personalized learning environments will incorporate both "high tech and high touch" strategies that promote student academic learning and interests. Teachers will be trained on personalization strategies to increase their ability to tailor instruction to meet each child's unique needs and interests. Instruction will be designed to allow students to work at their own pace, read at increasingly vigorous levels, and deepen their learning experiences with the assistance of personal learning devices. Teachers will be able to provide parents with detailed information about their child's progress, and offer tips and suggestions for how parents can engage to support their child's progress at home. Equity is increased as the program is designed school improvement in the district's elementary schools with greater than 40% economically disadvantaged students.

(c) The applicant describes a personalized learning environment in a typical elementary classroom to include personalized reading time, with an individualized assessment to gauge progress. Specifically, students will participate in development of a personalized learning plan with their teacher that charts a student's developmental milestones in their learning. Literacy teacher assistants and literacy volunteers provide one-to-one support to students. In addition to personal reading time, students will also use devices to collaborate on project-based learning with their peers. Teachers will assign students to projects based on interests. Groups of students will work on common tasks but their individual project will focus on a topic area of interest to each student. Teachers monitor their students' progress through personal time with students and by using their own personal learning device to check student progress. The online tools available to teachers will allow them to explore areas where they need additional professional development at times that fit their schedule, create assessments and assess student progress, and share progress reports and tools with parents and caregivers. While there will be times of group instruction, the classroom environment will be highly personalized and designed to meet each child's needs and interests.

The applicant presented a comprehensive and coherent reform vision in this section by appropriately addressing the three sub-criteria. Their vision build solidly on the four core assurance areas, articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests through their grant initiative, Cornerstone, focused on reading improvement for grades K-2. In addition, the applicant successfully allows the reader to envision a primary elementary classroom focused on personalized learning of reading with one-on-one support and monitoring as necessary. The only question remaining concerns

core assurance area #3 and the specifics of the human capital plan components when it is completed. Because the applicant substantially met the selection sub-criteria, they receive a high score on this selection criterion.

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

10

7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(2) (a) The applicant describes the process used to select schools to participate. All elementary schools with Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) populations equal to or greater than 60% receive the treatment (application of school improvement grant activities) and the remaining schools greater than 40% but less than 60% were randomly assigned to the treatment or control. This process ensured that the participating schools collectively met the competition's eligibility requirements.

(b) The applicant listed the elementary schools that will participate in the grant activities. Fourteen schools qualified based on the 60% or greater FRL criteria, while through a randomized control treatment method, an additional six elementary schools were listed to be classified as randomized control design schools receiving treatment.

(c) The applicant lists the total number of participating students as 6,180. This number includes the students in school with 60% or over in FRL status participating in grant activities (4,229 students), and students (1,951) in randomized control design schools receiving treatment (grant activities).

As the applicant did not specify the number of participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, and participating educators, they receive a high mid-range score.

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

10

7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(3) The applicant reports that the Cornerstone plan was designed to support current district and state efforts rather than to implement a single project for a new initiative. Specifically, Cornerstone is intended to accelerate district efforts by leveraging a high-capacity partnership of teachers, principals, students, parents, community agencies and district administrators. Aligning with state and district goals, the conclusive outcome is that students are college and career ready. One of the critical intervals along that path is to ensure that students are reading on grade level by grade 3. The Cornerstone plan focuses district efforts early in grades K-2 across 20 elementary schools with at least 40% or higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students. For example, K-2 teachers at these schools will receive training and their classrooms will be equipped with the technology needed to create a personalized learning environment. Training will focus on both educational (e.g., Response to Intervention, differentiation) and technological methods to promote

personalization that considers each student's learning needs, preferences, and interests.

The applicant refers to a detailed logic model in the appendix as evidence of their high-quality plan. The logic model details the project's goals, activities (strategies) and rationale (context), timeline, and persons responsible (implementation and student impacts or outcomes). However, the provided logic model and narrative did not specifically state how the Cornerstone program will be used to scale up to district wide reform to improve student learning outcomes for all students. An example of such would be a projection of increasing number of schools that will receive the treatment (strategies and reforms of the grant activities) after or during the grant period. As this information is not detailed, the applicant receives a high mid-range score on this selection criterion.

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

10

10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(4) The applicant has articulated a compelling vision that high school graduation is a K-12 issue (accountability for learning grade-level standards begins in kindergarten and continues each year until graduation) and indicates there is district evidence that there is a strong correlation between third grade students scoring below grade level on reading and graduation from high school. As such, the applicant focuses the intent of this grant proposal on providing intensive school improvement and personalization strategies for students K-2 to ensure that they are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. The applicant logically shows intent of increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup.

(a) The applicant sufficiently reports that results of summative assessments will be based on, and equal or exceed, targets set on statewide assessments. For example, at grade K-3, DIBELS Next measures and performance targets are utilized statewide. At grade 3, a statewide measure is being developed for the beginning of the year (BOG) which will be analyzed in relation to spring results on the End of Grade (EOG) results using targets set by the state. The BOG, along with the fall DIBELS assessment, can serve as a post measure for the treatments in the grant. In addition, grade 3 results will be looked at as a measure of the long-term evidence of effectiveness. Because grade 3 proficiency is correlated with graduation rates, the goal statewide, and for the district, is for all students to be proficient at the end of this grade; those who are not will be retained or attend a six to eight week summer school. Performance and growth rates will be determined overall and by subgroup as well as by grade level and student cohort over time. Ambitious yet achievable target goals have been set for each grade and subgroups with the goal of having students scoring proficient (target) on the state EOG in 3rd grade; thereby significantly reducing achievement gaps as well.

A safety net is provided to catch those students who do not met target at the 3rd grade EOG. These students will be required to attend a 6-8 week Read to Achieve summer camp or be retained. Review of the anticipated performance measure targets over the four years of the grade reveals steady and persistent growth overall and significant improvement in subgroups. The applicant uses DIBELS NEXT for the consistent assessment measure from grade K-5. Using the Oral Reading Fluency performance measures, we see an overall increase in scores (almost 10%) from 80.0% overall in 2012-2013 to 88.3% overall in 2017-2018 in first grade. For third grade this is 77.4% in 2012-2013 to 86.8% in 2017-2018.

(b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups (White subgroup was chosen as the comparison group) are well established to include target goals for the baseline year (2012-2013) through post-grant (2017-2018), thereby increasing equity. It is laudable that the applicant detailed a substantial number of subgroups for comparisons including American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Economically Disadvantaged, Two or More Languages, Limited English Proficiency, and Students with Disabilities. It is particularly significant that very large increases are expected in subgroups. For example, the black subgroup is expected to rise from 53.2% in 2012-2013 to 82.5% in 2017-2018 in third grade Oral Reading Fluency compared to the white subgroup (80.7% to 92.8). Some of the most dramatic decreases in subgroups are students with disabilities rising from 32.2% in 2012-2013 in third grade in oral reading fluency to 74.6% in 2017-2018. It should be noted that data for the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup cannot be currently obtained per state restrictions.

(c-d) Information on sub-criteria (c-d) could not be obtained as the grant population is grades K-2 and information on high school graduation and college enrollment rates will not be available for this student population at the end of the grant period. The applicant does note that they anticipate a positive impact on these outcomes. It is praiseworthy that the applicant did provide information on projected graduation and college enrollment rates representing the 4-year cohort for the 2009-2010 entering 9TH graders. Solid increases each year are projected.

It is also important to point out that the applicant includes goals for student non-cognitive indicators of growth for kindergartners, using the Kindergarten Initial Assessment for social and physical measures.

Overall, the applicant has articulated a compelling vision that high school graduation is a K-12 issue and indicates there is district evidence that there is a strong correlation between third grade students scoring below grade level on reading and

graduation from high school. As such, the applicant focuses the intent of this grant proposal on providing intensive school improvement and personalization strategies for students K-2 to ensure that they are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. In particular, the decrease in gaps in the subgroups over the course of the grant is an area of intense focus with highly significant academic increases noted in oral reading fluency, a prime indicator of reading efficacy. Such scores demonstrate intent of increased equity through ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup. These goals are ambitious by the nature of the percentage of improvement to be noted, and are achievable as intensive instruction such as that provided by the applicant, and assessed by DIBELS NEXT's benchmark assessments, can keep the target on track making a great deal of progress in a short amount of time.

As the applicant sufficiently addressed all sub-criteria that was possible with the grant K-2 student population, they receive a high rating on this selection criterion.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	11

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(1) The applicant reports that the district's track record on increasing student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps shows steady gains in recent years, and exceeds state averages on most measures as evidenced by the district's ABC (state) rankings, grades 3-8 End of Grade (EOG) and high school End of Course (EOC) test results, dropout rates, and graduation rates.

- a. Review of state data from 2008-09 to present show results have been positive. Specifically, 88.5% or more of the district's schools met Expected or High Growth standards each year. In addition, the percentage of schools meeting growth standards increased from 88.5% to 94.5 % in 2010-11. In 2011-12, the State named 23 of the district's schools as Honor Schools of Excellence or Schools of Excellence, the highest recognition possible under the state accountability plan, an increase from 17 the previous year. The applicant reports that the four-year and five-year cohort graduation rates have remained steady or increased over the last four years. Rates were recently released for the 2012-13 school year and, for the first time in many years, the district's rate (81%) was less than the state overall (82.5%). With the exception of 2012-13, district rates (2011-12 80.6%, 2010-11 80.9%, 2009-10 78.2%, and 2008-09 78.4%) typically exceeded both the state and other large districts across the state. Concerning equity, the applicant reports significant progress has been made with African American, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged and Students with Disabilities subgroups since 2007-08 (specific figures not provided). Data collection of college enrollment rates has just begun. Preliminary data is currently being analyzed with results to be presented to the applicant's Board in late fall 2013.

It is noteworthy that the information being gathered and analyzed for future use will also provide data on college persistence indicators. In place of the college enrollment data currently unavailable, the applicant included results of the district's Graduate Intentions Survey. According to this survey, 88.8% of 2012-13 graduates indicated that they planned to pursue further education (college, community college, or trade/vocational school), while the remaining 11.2% indicated plans to enter the military, get a job, or were unsure of their future plans. It is commendable to note that overall, 97.3% of graduating seniors indicated they intended to attend college or begin a career.

(b) The applicant reports one alternative school has been designated as lowest-achieving by the state and is currently a Title I "Priority School" whose turnaround efforts are now being supported through a Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) awarded by the state. Noticeable positive results have been limited so far but the results continue to be used to inform planning as it is expected to yield improved outcomes and further progress towards performance goals. The district's other turnaround effort – the Renaissance Model, has provided more data and evidence of success. The four Renaissance schools were the district's lowest performing schools. The preliminary findings from the first two years of implementation indicate positive impacts for student academic achievement and teacher working conditions. Proficiency rates increased at each school and in one instance over 11 percentage points. As an example, one of the elementary schools was recently recognized as a "High-Progress" school by the state due to the school's achievement with improving student performance across all student groups.

c. The district comprehensively reports that they use a wide variety of data instruments designed to make performance data understandable and accessible to students, parents, teachers and administrators. These instruments include Home Base, EVAAS (Education Value-Added Assessment System), and North Carolina's Formative Assessment Learning Community's Online Network (NC FALCON). Specifically, Home Base is a statewide, instruction improvement and student information

system is designed for students, parents, teachers and administrators, which makes performance and instructional data readily available to each audience. Students can access their schoolwork, grades, and learning activities and parents can look at their child's attendance and progress. Teachers can use Home Base to access student data and teaching and learning resources while administrators can monitor data on students, teachers and schools. In addition, the district uses EVAAS, a comprehensive reporting system that provides K-12 educators with diagnostic information about past practices and reports on students' predicted success probabilities at numerous academic milestones. Teachers can use the data to help students set personal learning goals and/or a Personal Education Plan, complete with data notebooks, benchmark data, and assessments. The system allows for professional development planning for teachers and educational planning for students. The applicant reports that NC FALCON was developed in an effort to provide North Carolina teachers with a basic understanding of formative assessment and illustrate the role it should play in a comprehensive, balanced assessment system. The online professional development modules located in NC FALCON help teachers to learn more about the impact of formative assessment target student learning goals can be achieved. Other various practices the district uses to share data with parents and students to actively encourage participation and engage them include student-led conferences, parent-teacher conferences, and quarterly report cards.

While the district has achieved success and ambitious and significant reforms in four of its lowest performing schools (not technically considered low performing by the state) , the alternative school classified as persistently low achieving by the state continues to reach for this goal (ambitious and significant reforms). This has somewhat lowered the district's success rate with its low performing schools. In addition, the applicant reports significant progress has been made with African American, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged and Students with Disabilities subgroups since 2007-08, but specific information documenting this progress is needed. The applicant receives a high mid-range score on this selection criterion.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(2) In a spirit of enhanced transparency, the district's Finance Department publishes the audited Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) each year. This report is presented to the Board of Education in an open meeting, which is televised and aired live, streamed on the web, and posted online for future viewing. The CAFR, which is posted on the district's website, includes revenues, expenditures and other financial data. In addition, the applicant reports that the salary schedules for all district positions are posted on the district website. This includes certified and non-certified positions, instructional and support staff, school and district-level administrative positions. Many positions are paid on a state-adopted salary schedule based upon licensure, years of experience and degree held.

Documentation was not provided to determine if the financial information provided on the district website, or other locations, is broken out by school and if it shows actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. Also, documentation was not provided for sub-criteria (a-d), Specifically,

- a. Sufficient description or documentation was not present to determine if actual personnel salaries are provided at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff,
- b. Sufficient description or documentation was not present to determine if actual personnel salaries are provided at the school level for instructional staff only ,
- c. Sufficient description or documentation was not present to determine if actual personnel salaries are provided at the school level for teachers only, and
- d. Sufficient description or documentation was not present to determine if actual non-personnel expenditures are provided at the school level.

Due to the lack of documentation for a-d, the applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(3) The applicant cites several pieces of state legislation or initiatives that contribute to successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments as described in this proposal. First, the applicant notes that the state has determined that in North Carolina a public board of education or other public authority maintains administrative control of the public schools in a city or county. Through this authority, the district's Board of Education has set in place the necessary conditions and autonomy necessary to implement personalized learning environments. In addition, there are other contexts which contribute to conditions favoring implementation of personalized learning. At the state level, there are two avenues which contribute to an open environment for personalized learning. The first is the state's Race to the Top grant championing personalized learning

environments. The second is the state's Read to Achieve program which provides autonomy by encouraging K-3 teachers to use effective personalized instruction in the learning environment in order to reach the required milestone, students reading at or above grade level by grade three.

The applicant has demonstrated through the structures and avenues described above, successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments. No weaknesses were noted. The applicant receives a high rating for this criterion.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	12
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(4) (a) Regarding stakeholder engagement and involvement directly related to development of the Cornerstone RTT-D grant proposal, staff sought and received significant input from teachers, students, principals, the Wake NC Association of Educators (NCAE), parents, district leadership and the community at-large. Specifically, after Board approval, the Office of Grants assembled a proposal development team to supply feedback and consultation throughout the development of the proposal from Central Office departments or divisions. Principals from the potential project elementary schools with free or reduced lunch percentages 40% or above were invited to attend a meeting to learn about the grant and provided written feedback about the proposal concept overall and about the proposed strategies to accomplish the goals of the project. As a result of their feedback, the focus of the grant was revised and streamlined. During the review period, schools also assisted with inviting input from over 6,000 families across the Cornerstone project schools. An extensive array of methods were used to gather feedback. For example, Central Office staff developed the survey in both English and Spanish. Families that required translation into other languages were also offered an opportunity to participate. Surveys were available online or in paper format. Schools posted the link on their websites, forwarded the link to families by PTA list serves or blogs, and distributed hard copies via weekly folders or during PTA meetings. It is praiseworthy that, as a result of these efforts, about five hundred families across the project schools contributed feedback and input on the grant. Many of the responses only further reinforced the need for many of the strategies included in the grant proposal. It is unclear if revisions were made based on this survey feedback.

(i) The applicant notes that the district does not have collective bargaining. However, to garner teacher support, the president of the district's teacher association was invited to also attend the principal's meeting. As a follow-up to the initial principal's meeting, the teachers' union board of directors voted unanimously in support of the Cornerstone RTT-D proposal as documented in the Appendix. Next, the principals shared the information with the K-2 teachers and invited their input. An online survey also provided teachers an opportunity to share their feedback. As a result of this effort, the applicant reports that approximately 100 teachers from across 20 schools responded. The feedback provided included overall support for the proposed project plan and included additional activities related to proposed strategies that helped inform the final project planning. However, documentation was not clearly provided to show that this represents a minimum of at least 70% of teachers from participating schools.

(b) A great deal of documentation from numerous entities was presented in the appendix to show support of the project, including mayor of cities representing the participating schools. In addition, many community agencies representing the local reading literacy collaborative, Wake Up and Read provided letters of support. It is noteworthy that this collaborative, established in 2011, has grown to over 20 community organizations, nonprofit agencies, governmental units, postsecondary institutions, and businesses all avid about helping students read on grade level by the end of third grade.

As documentation of the support of at least 70% of the teachers in participating schools was unclear, the applicant receives a score within the lower end of the high range on this selection criterion.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(c)(1) The applicant articulates a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. This plan includes an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that focuses the targeted intervention on K-2 students with the goal of having them reading on grade level by the end of the third grade. The applicant supports their logic model by citing several research references and their own experience. For example, the applicant compellingly reported that in their own district, the on-time high school graduation rates for students who were proficient in reading at

the end of third grade was 89.6%, as compared to an on-time graduation rate of 59.4% for students who were not proficient. Their approach in this proposal is to build a solid foundation for students by serving twenty (20) elementary schools with greater than 40% economically disadvantaged students, the elementary schools in the district most in need. Through this grant, the district will create personalized K-2 classrooms so that every student will be reading on grade level by the end of third grade. Prevention and interventions will also be focused on three key areas that are correlated to third grade reading level: school readiness, school attendance, and learning loss. Personalizing the learning environment for K-2 students will support grade level literacy, as well as lead to college and career ready graduates as the applicant depicts in their easy-to-understand logic model detailed in the appendix. The logic model provided particulars on the project's goals, activities (strategies) and rationale (context), timeline, and persons responsible (implementation and student impacts or outcomes), all components required in a high-quality plan.

(C)(1)(a)(i-iii) The applicant notes that it is the intent that K-2 Cornerstone school students will not only learn how to use the tools provided to personalize their learning environment such as 1:1 devices and differentiated online programs, but they will also learn how to participate in their own learning as a component of the mastery learning continuum and learn how to use their own assessment to guide their personal instruction. In addition, the applicant reports that students will understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals. More information is needed to understand how this will occur. In the mastery learning continuum, students will learn how to goal set as their teacher or the grant-funded Literacy Teacher Assistant advises or coaches on how to do this in ways that are developmentally appropriate for K-2 students. They will have opportunities to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest which is fostered by having the students select their own material for reading to meet their individual interests and needs.

In addition, (iv-v) students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning through digital collaboration and communication tools will bring the world into their classroom, enabling them to explore areas of interest in depth with relevant, real-world applications of what they are learning. Through the mastery learning model used in this proposal, students will master critical standards-based which is dependent upon strong curriculum design, curriculum delivery, and multiple measures of student assessment. Also through the mastery learning continuum, students learn skills and traits such as goal-setting. Goal setting requires the student to use critical thinking, collaboration and communication before even beginning their personalized learning plan. A flexible process, personalized learning plans will be adjusted regularly as needed based upon assessment results, and students will be engaged as active participants in the process.

C)(1)(b) (i) The applicant succinctly reports that the foundation for the Cornerstone plan is a personalized learning environment. K-2 students will have opportunities to work independently and receive differentiated instruction from their teacher(s) and grant-funded Literacy Teacher Assistants specifically hired to work directly with K-2 students. The students will be exposed to a variety of high- quality instructional approaches and environments.

(ii) All students will be appropriately assessed at the beginning of the school year to establish baseline skills through the mCLASS Reading 3D assessments. For students that demonstrate high risk on the early literacy measures, the teacher will administer diagnostic reading assessments that district refers to as "Digging Deeper" assessments. Specific areas of need will be identified and teachers and Literacy Teacher Assistants will use this data to determine the problem, identify solutions, create a plan, and analyze the effectiveness of the plan. Literacy instruction will then be customized to each student's individual needs using the child's learning style and individual interests. A variety of educational and high-quality instructional tools will be delivered by teachers to personalize the learning environment. For example, a student may work with peer groups, read content (digital or print), create a book, complete a game-based literacy activity, demonstrate what they have learned with a project-based learning activity, take an online formative assessment to monitor their progress, record their goal and their progress toward that goal, and conference with their teacher to discuss their learning plan. All of these learning and teaching strategies are effective tools for high-quality instruction.

(iii) It is commendable that Cornerstone schools will be provided 1:1 personal learning devices for their K-2 student population. This technology will include software or other applications that support literacy personalization. Examples include differentiated online programs that assess a student's Lexile® or reading level and which gathers information on the student's interests to then prescribe instruction and/or content on their instructional level with tools for the student and teacher to monitor and track progress. Students then have access to digital content and/or instructional activities that are based upon individual needs and interests. The use of a learning management system will provide students the opportunity to engage in authentic, personalized online learning environments that motivate and promote reading and writing.

(iv) (A-B) The applicant sufficiently reports that the mastery learning model used in this proposal, as stated earlier, is dependent upon strong curriculum design, curriculum delivery, and multiple measures of student assessment. Student skills are assessed and needs identified at multiple times and in multiple ways. Critical to this process is the use frequently updated individual student data from these assessments that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards. In addition, students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery via progress monitoring through frequent formative assessments. Such assessments are also used to guide and revise

individualized instructional strategies based on student progress.

v) The applicant reports that the use of technology will be an avenue that will be used to support the needs of students with disabilities or English as a Second Language. They will provide programs that include both English and Spanish versions, which is an asset for younger students that may be just learning English. Technological devices provide assistance for students with disabilities and offer a broader array of options for teachers to meet their individual needs.

(c) Sufficient mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. The applicant reports that NC FALCON, NC’s formative assessment training module, emphasizes the importance of frequent assessment and the role in that process for both teachers and students. Specifically, assessments will be used that allow students the opportunity to develop the skills to recognize when they are mastering content. Student digital notebooks will be used to monitor and track progress.

The applicant provided a wealth of detail to support the high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career- ready. The applicant substantially addressed each of the sub-criteria. The applicant receives a high rating on this selection criterion.

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

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(2). The applicant has provided the required elements of a high-quality plan including key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible and the timeline. (a) The applicant has spent a great deal of capital in training of educators. For example, the applicant reports that over 13,000 (unduplicated) school-based administrators, instructional staff and student support personnel participated in over 950 professional development opportunities during 2012-13 alone. In addition, during 2012-13 the district doubled the number of professional development staff to respond to growing demands for professional development. Financially, the district spent \$3.2 million in 2012-13 for school-based staff professional development.

(C)(2)(a)(i-iii) The applicant has spent a considerable amount of time training educators in understanding and how to teach the common core standards. It is reported that K-2 teachers at participating schools will receive training and their classrooms will be equipped with the technology needed to create a personalized learning environment. Training will focus on both educational (e.g., Response to Intervention, differentiation) and technological methods to promote personalization that considers each student’s learning needs, preferences and interests. NC FALCON, the state’s formative assessment training module, emphasizes the importance of frequent assessment and the role in that process for both teachers and students. It is reported that staff at Cornerstone schools will receive training to support their ability to create personalized learning environments and the associated elements of school readiness, school attendance and learning loss. Professional development will occur across schools so teachers have an opportunity to collaborate with Cornerstone colleagues at other schools. Training will occur in both extended, intensive week-long sessions as well as follow-up throughout the school year. Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) will play a significant role in the implementation of Cornerstone. PLTs primarily focus on student learning, ensuring that all students are achieving to their potential, and 100% of teachers participate in one or more PLTs. Per district Board Policy, all school staff are required to meet regularly in PLTs. In most elementary schools, grade level PLT meetings are held on a weekly basis. The purpose of PTL meetings within the district is to analyze student data and to develop plans to adjust individual teacher or grade level practices based upon this data.

Mastery Learning is delivered through Personal Education Plans (PEPs), focused intervention strategies, and accelerated activities are provided for students not performing at grade level. The district policy on mastery learning encourages differentiation and allows for early entrance to kindergarten, whole grade advancement, curriculum compacting, subject area acceleration, cross grade grouping, advanced placement, dual enrollment and early high school graduation. Eligible students with disabilities receive a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as appropriate. These plans detail accommodations that are designed to help the student fully access their educational environment and/or meet unique learning needs. For English Language Learners, the district uses the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), a framework of instructional best practices that teachers use to develop language as they deliver content. All of these activities provide a wealth of student exposure to high-quality teaching and learning.

(iv) The district sufficiently reports that they improve teachers’ and principals’ practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEA’s teacher and principal evaluation systems. The revised evaluation system was implemented beginning in 2011-12 and was based upon the Framework for 21st Century Learning and the NC Professional Teaching Standards. The evaluation standards are designed to improve instruction and enhance professional practice. A similar rubric and set of standards was adopted and implemented in 2010-11 for principals/assistant principals. District teacher and principal evaluations are consistent with state standards and are intended to improve student outcomes by identifying areas where teachers and leaders can grow. The evaluation

feedback forms the basis for teacher/principal performance goals and professional growth plans. In addition, the standards for the district's professional development as part of the evaluation system, are aligned to best practices in adult learning theory as well as aligned to research provided the National Staff Development Council. These standards provide direction for the school system to design learning opportunities for collective educator effectiveness that ultimately improve student achievement. The applicant has provided timely information to verify that the teacher and principal evaluation systems are well grounded in effective educator research and practice and provide feedback sufficient for improved individual and collective teaching effectiveness.

(b)(i-iii) The applicant clearly emphasizes that the content area of focus for the Cornerstone project is literacy; therefore, specific professional development that focuses on how to provide effective, research-based instruction is provided to the persistently struggling reader. Through professional development, teachers study the latest brain research, the structure and development of the English language, assessment methods, as well as research and strategies around the five components of comprehensive reading (phonological awareness, word work, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension). This training provides K-2 Cornerstone school staff with the knowledge of how to personalize literacy learning so that all students are successful in their reading ability. In addition, teachers receive training on the 1:1 devices selected for the Cornerstone project. Teachers learn how to best utilize and maximize these tools for the benefit of their teaching and their students. Teachers learn specifically how the device can be used to promote personalization. They learn and use the process of introducing the devices to their students in ways that are developmentally appropriate and in a manageable sequence. Teachers monitor student progress on a daily basis using formative assessments to identify areas of mastery and Common Core State Standards for College and Career Readiness that require additional time. Formative assessment occurs often daily, and is an effective way to gather student performance data. Teachers use tools such as Home Base to access the formative assessment items available.

(c)(i-ii) The applicant aptly reports that effective teachers need support from effective instructional leaders (i.e., principals and assistant principals) that have the data they need to inform decision-making. Within the tool, Home Base, school leaders have access to aggregate and individual student performance reports, as well as aggregate and individual teacher effectiveness reports. In addition, the applicant uses the district teacher evaluation system to increase teacher effectiveness. The applicant reports that district teacher and principal evaluations are consistent with state standards and are intended to improve student outcomes by identifying areas where teachers and leaders can grow. The evaluation forms the basis for performance goals and professional growth plans. In addition, the applicant reports on the use of the Effective Teacher Framework online portal where staff can find professional development tools to use as they engage in conversations regarding effective teaching. More information is needed to understand how this process helps school leaders and school leadership teams assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement.

(C)(2)(d) The applicant efficiently reports that district data from 2012-13 indicate that 99.39% of the district's core subjects are taught by teachers who are fully licensed and highly qualified (HQ). The district Human Resources department monitors each school's number and percentage of teacher who are: 1) highly qualified, 2) hold graduate degrees and 3) have less than four years' experience to determine if high needs students are disproportionately taught by unqualified, non-graduate degree, or inexperienced teachers. Steps to address any issues are implemented based upon review of this data. Although the applicant did not provide all the elements of a high quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, they provide a convincing argument that they are attuned to this issue and monitor it regularly for lapses. They point to the data that of the twenty district schools, out of 169 total, with the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged (ED) students have a collective HQ of 99.96%. Conversely, the twenty schools with the lowest percentage of ED students have an HQ of 99.28%. Similarly, there was not a statistically significant difference between master degreed teachers at schools with greater or lesser percentages of ED students. The applicant effectively argues that these metrics suggest the district does not place a disproportionate number of non-HQ teachers with high-need students. However, the applicant has not address the requirement for evidence of a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas.

Overall, more information is needed to understand how the educator evaluation process helps school leaders and school leadership teams assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement. In addition, the applicant has not address the requirement for evidence of a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(1)(a) The district utilizes a comprehensive, district wide leadership infrastructure with central administrators who provide guidance to overall operations and site-based leadership. There are three chief officers under the superintendent: Business (Buildings, Child Nutrition Services, Finance, Human Resources, and Technology), Family & Public Engagement (Communications), and School Performance (Area Superintendents, Academics, Data & Accountability, and Grants). Seven area superintendents (Central, Eastern, Southeastern, Northern, Southern, Southwestern, and Western regions) are responsible for each supervising the operations of about 25 elementary, middle and high schools divided regionally. Central Office departments will work closely with site-based leadership to implement the Cornerstone plan. All school districts in North Carolina are mandated to ensure each principal establishes a school improvement team. Every district school has a school improvement team comprised of the principal, representatives from the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel and teacher assistants assigned to the school, and parents of children enrolled in the school. Schools encourage parental participation so that parent representatives reflect the diverse composition of the students enrolled in the school.

(b-c) State law grants school principals the authority to determine the appropriate grade level for each pupil. Promotion decisions are based upon multiple criteria including local assessments, standardized test scores, and final progress reports. The applicant did not address whether this level of autonomy would extend to such matters as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets. Use of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), focused intervention strategies, and accelerated activities are provided for students not performing at grade level. In addition, district policy outlines district protocol for Acceleration and Academic Advancement. This policy encourages differentiation and allows for early entrance to kindergarten, whole grade advancement, curriculum compacting, subject area acceleration, cross grade grouping, advanced placement, dual enrollment and early high school graduation.

(d) The applicant uses the mastery learning model to personalized learning. Mastery learning allows students to demonstrate their learning of standards at multiple times and in multiple equivalent ways. Students have many opportunities to demonstrate mastery via progress monitoring through frequent formative and varied assessments.

(e) The applicant clearly states that they fully comply with federal law that dictates the needed learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners through IEPs, 504 Plans, and ESL/LEP services and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). The applicant receives a high score for this selection criterion.

The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator (as defined in this notice), and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. Such a high-quality includes key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline for implementation. These elements were not articulated for this selection criterion. Also, the applicant did not address whether school autonomy would extend to such factors as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets.

The applicant receives a scores within the low end of the high range.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(2)(a) The applicant assures that all project schools will have access to the same content, tools, and learning resources. The district has spent some time identifying potential barriers, and measures are included in the budget to increase access. For example, some low-income families may have difficulty finding transportation to kindergarten registration. To address this, the Cornerstone plan and related budget includes mobile kindergarten registration. The applicant aptly notes that bringing kindergarten registration to neighborhoods increases the likelihood that a low-income student who may benefit from the kindergarten program will be identified.

(b) To provide timely and efficient technological support, the district proactively offers two Central Office teams, Instructional Technology/Media Services (ITS) and the Technology Services Division (TSD). Technology Services functions as the liaison with state regarding Home Base and the associated systems, TSD also addresses hardware/software issues,

administers the district's network operations, and ensures information security. Technology Services maintains a Help Desk and is available to staff to assist with technological related issues, including Home Base. In addition, the state-developed parent specific training materials on Home Base is linked from the district and individual school websites. Funding is included in the budget to provide technical support throughout both the initial start-up and ongoing in following of the grant. The district's Instructional Technology/Media Services team will provide additional support to the Cornerstone project for technology as a tool for personalization. Professional development will be provided to Cornerstone teachers through the Personalization Institute and follow-up Personalization Days. A component of that experience will include modeling for teachers and demonstrating best practices for how to roll-out associated technology to students and parents. Current examples of how the program supports parents is by developing lessons on Internet safety and cyber bullying, as well as by providing links to additional K12 technology resources on the district's main webpage. The district commits to funding one part-time Instructional Technology Facilitator at each project school beginning in 2014-15 and will sustain this beyond the grant term. It is unclear exactly how much technology support will be provided to students and parents and if that support is to be provided by teachers or by ITS.

(c-d) The applicant sufficiently notes that their information technology system, Home Base, is a statewide instructional improvement system (IIS) and student information system (SIS) for teachers, students, parents and administrators. The state and district assures that Home Base will deliver its application functionality, including end-of-course and end-of-grade assessments, to end-users through web portals via all major HTML5-compatible web browsers. The Home Base applications will be highly scalable to support all teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Because the end-user devices and network are key elements to the success of Home Base, the Home Base was developed with minimal technical requirements to ensure end-users experience satisfactory system performance when using Home Base. Home Base is in a machine-readable format, including a mobile web page platform that extends accessibility to handheld devices such as the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad and Android Phones. In addition, Home Base is an interoperable system that connects the instructional improvement, student information and human resources components together. As Home Base is a state-provided instructional improvement system that appears to have great flexibility and functionality for providing the type of information that all stakeholders need with minimal technical requirements. The fact that it is adaptable for use with devices such as the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad and Android Phones make it a high accessible tool for parents and students as well as educators.

The applicant did not organize their response around a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. Such a high-quality plan should include key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline for completion.

Overall, the technology support plan that the applicant articulates includes provisions for providing two technology support teams and significant funding to schools for hard- and software support, support to implement Home Base, and additional support to implement the 1:1 Cornerstone technology for personalization. For example, through professional development during a Personalization Institute, teacher will learn how to roll-out associated technology for students and parents. Funding will be provided for one part-time Instructional Technology Facilitator at each project. This technology plan appears to be effective as several layers of support are provided as noted above, including use of the state school improvement tool, Home Base, district teams devoted to ensuring hard and software capabilities, training in the Cornerstone use of technology for personalization for teachers, students, and parents and sufficient funding to support the use of technology through the life of the grant.

The applicant receives a scores within the lower end of the high range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(1) The applicant suitably reports that they will use the continuous improvement process model of Plan-Do-Study-Reflect/Act. They report that this model is a slightly modified version of the Plan Do Check Act cycle which has been widely

used in business and education to expedite continuous improvement. The well-thought out model involves developing a plan for a change and for evaluating the change (Plan), carrying out the plan (Do), collecting, analyzing, and reviewing the results (Study), and using the results to determine and changes to enact to the program (Act). The initial Plan will be the grant application, with the first six months devoted to operationalizing the plan by hiring key staff, developing staff development, securing needed materials and supplies, collaborating and communicating the plans necessary to start implementation in summer/fall 2014. The cycle will be repeated annually, with continuous monitoring of progress during each year. Key staff and an advisory committee will meet periodically to assess progress and discuss any issues that arise. The Study phase will also include data collection and analysis which will be summarized in an annual report and will inform possible improvements. Based on staff and advisory committee feedback, a revised plan will then be developed and enacted for the next year. These formative and summative continuous improvement steps will be repeated annually.

This is a solid, cyclic continuous improvement plan. What is lacking from this effort is the linkage to the components of a high quality plan for implementing the rigorous continuous improvement process. Such a plan should clearly specify the key goals, activities and rationales, timelines, and persons responsible. In addition, the applicant's description did not contain enough specific information to determine how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff.

The applicant receives a mid-range score for this selection criterion.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(2) It is commendable that the applicant emphasizes the importance for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders and states that the key to the success of this grant is to engage both district staff and the community in support of the district's early literacy initiatives. The applicant reports on several activities that will be organized to support this effort. For example, an advisory committee will be formed of key staff involved in the project. They will engage in regular meetings to ensure ongoing communication and quick attention to any issues that arise. An Advisory Committee will invite external stakeholders such as members of the Wake Up and Read collaborative to periodic meetings for status reports and to discuss issues of common interest. An annual summit with community stakeholders will focus on training for how to build literacy into their ongoing efforts. Annual reports for evaluations will help Cornerstone project staff to plan future improvements and make the necessary adjustments. The Grant Coordinator will design a formal or informal newsletter or webpage to inform internal and external stakeholders of the status of activities, success stories, and needs. Annual reports will also be posted on the district's website as well as being disseminated to key internal and external stakeholders. Presentation materials will be provided for further dissemination by staff in charge of key components of the grant. The Evaluation Specialist will attend or present as appropriate at key dissemination events.

The applicant appropriately discusses methods for ensuring feedback from internal and external stakeholders. What is lacking is discussion or display of how these activities can be organized into a high-quality plan for communication among these stakeholders. While activities/deliverables and persons responsible were discussed and a general time line articulated, the high-quality plan for communication should also address key goals of the communication plan, and clearly link these to the above elements.

The applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(3) The applicant has provided an extensive amount of data by which to assess 12 performance measures, including annual targets, overall and by subgroup. These performance measures are considered to be ambitious yet achievable as discussed in (A)(4). These goals are ambitious by the nature of the percentage of improvement to be noted, and are achievable as intensive instruction such as that provided by the applicant, and assessed by DIBELS NEXT's benchmark assessments, can keep the target on track and making a great deal of progress in a short amount of time.

(a) The rationale for selecting district-chosen measures was clearly articulated for academic growth (reading), the age-appropriate non-cognitive indicators of growth (absenteeism, physical and social/emotional development, and amount of time read to daily). Specifically, the DIBELS NEXT early literacy measures including: Letter Naming Fluency, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency will be used for academic measures for the participating students in this proposal across each of three annual benchmark periods. This assessment (DIBELS NEXT) was selected as it is research-based and provides standards to assess students' status on key developmental variables.

The applicant reports that the results of patterns will be examined annually and adjusted accordingly. For non-cognitive measures, absenteeism was chosen because early search shows a relationship between attending school and academic success, with growth (improvement) during the year as a key goal. Physical and social/emotional development was chosen to be assessed by the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KTEA) because student learning is also related to their ability to complete physical tasks necessary in school; social competence allows students to communicate and learn from each other and their teachers better; appropriate emotional development allows students to be more confident in their ability to learn and to request help as needed. The Early Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) was selected for grades 1 and 2 for a measure of daily reading interaction because research has found a consistent link between attitude toward reading and achievement.

The extent to which students are read to daily is an important predictor of future success in literacy, and an important focus of the grant is readiness activities. As for the performance measures of educator effectiveness, the applicant reports, for all participating K-2 students, a baseline of 28% for SY2011-2012 for highly effective teachers and baseline of 25% for SY2011-2012 for highly effective principals. For the end points (post-grant year SY 2017-2018), the percentage of highly effective teacher is projected to be 33.1% and for highly effective principals 30%. For effective teachers, for the same student population, the baseline year SY 2011-2012 is 46.2% for teachers and 50.9% for principals. For the end point (post-grant year SY 2017-2018), the percentage of effective teachers is 51.2% and for effective principals is 55.9%. An projected increase in highly effective and effective educators from start to end of the project confirms the applicant's goal of increasing students achievement K-2, as the definitions of high effective and effective educators are directly linked to the increase in student achievement as requirements of this grant competition.

(b) The applicant clearly points out that early literacy achievement is the district's primary outcome of interest in this grant application. All subgroups in grades K-5 will be compared to White students in order to calculate achievement gaps, where the gap is equal to the difference between the percentage of White students and subgroups meeting RtI Tier 1 benchmark scores. The applicant reports that the data for the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup is not reported as the NC Department of Public Instruction has advised this data may only be used for required Federal reporting. Legal discussions are underway to discuss access. Although the applicant reports that DIBELS NEXT (academic growth measure) will be administered three times per year, patterns analyzed and treatment (educational activities) adjusted accordingly, the applicant does not specify how it will improve the measure over time. In addition, it is unclear how adjustments will be made to the treatment (educational activities) for the non-cognitive measures.

(c) The applicant does not report how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

Due to the missing elements in (b-c), the applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(4) The applicant has presented a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities. The plan is rigorous as it includes both formative and summative design components, implementation strategies, and strong provisions for professional development based on the outcomes. The components represent a high-quality plan as they include key goals (questions to be asked), activities and rationale (indicator and data source), deliverables (successful performance indicators), personnel responsible, and timelines. In addition, rigor includes an evaluation design involving both experimental and quasi-experimental methods with a variety of quantitative and qualitative data sources to measure formative, process, and summative outcomes of each component. The overall impact of the grant activities for students, teachers, and schools will also be measured as well as the non-cognitive measures of attendance and student personal views of themselves as learners.

As the applicant presented a well-designed, high-quality plan for rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, the applicant receives a high score on this selection criterion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(F)(1)(a) The applicant includes a well-organized and transparent budget. All monies reported to be allocated for this

project will be from RTT-D funding.

(b-c)(i) The budget's rationale is thoughtfully constructed and easily understood as it is broken down into five major categories by investments and priorities by: central office expenditures (9%), personalization (56%), school attendance (7%), learning loss (15%), and school readiness (7%). To further analyze the expenditures, the applicant notes that across these categories, personnel takes up 59% and 1:1 technology (personal learning devices) takes up 28%. Since personalization is the key focus of the proposal, it is reasonable that the majority of funds are spent on personnel and technology-supported learning. Each category of expenditures has its own detailed budget. Total expenditures over the four years is budgeted sufficiently at \$16, 609,868 for 6,180 K-2 students over twenty schools. This equates to a range of \$643-\$701 per student per year. The only funding source reported in the provided budget is RTT-D funding from this grant. However, the budget narrative on personalization indicates that the applicant is writing a business case to fund with local dollars a half-time instructional technology facilitator at each school.

(ii) The grant budget sufficiently indicates one-time (year one) expenditures for central office supplies and equipment, personal learning devices and supports for students, and technical support to learn to use the devices. These devices are part of the 1:1 student/use of technology to enhance student personalization of learning, the key foundation of the project. All other on-going expenses are budgeted to occur throughout the four years of the grant. Provisions for on-going professional development throughout the grant years for will ensure that effective teaching and learning practices are established and institutionalized so that sustainability of these effective practices can be maintained after funding ends.

The applicant presented a well-planned, reasonable budget per student costs for extensive and intensive educational services to support successful outcomes of participating schools. The applicant receives a high score for this selection criterion.

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

10

8

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant admits that the activities for the grant proposal will initially be costly, but does set forth several reasonable strategies that speak to the forethought provided to the sustainability of the initiative at the end of the grant period. The applicant clearly divides these strategies into three categories: training/professional development, limiting positions needed, and high one-time, non-recurring expenditures that build capacity. The district rationally believes that investing in high-quality educator training and professional development is a cost well-spent, the results of which will continue to be felt in effective teaching after the end of the grant. As for personnel, some positions needed during the grant period such as school-based literacy teacher assistants, coordinating teacher of professional development, and instructional support technician will be sustained with other funds. Some positions, mainly for administration of the grant such as grant coordinator, grant evaluator, budget analyst, will be eliminated. The third strategy, is use of one-time funds to increase capacity (technology-related devices and supports). As educators, students, and parents become more proficient in accessing the technology provided during the first year, they will become more comfortable in regularly using such technology and more willingly will try new techniques of use.

In addition, it is commendable that the district has a Department of Data & Accountability which looks at the efficacy of program expenditures/program results and upon which many financial and programmatic decision are based. The applicant notes that the results of such a study of the proposal activities/results and the proposal evaluation will be leading factors in deciding program components worthy of sustaining. With that in mind, the district has developed a proposed three-year sustainability budget for the project which will enable grant activities to continue after the grant ends. This budget will be adjusted according to the findings of the grant evaluation and accountability study.

The applicant has spent considerable time and effort into the development of a proposed project that includes the reasonable sustainability features discussed above, including a proposed sustainability budget for three years after the end of the grant. Only lacking from this discussion is the linkage of these sustainability efforts to the components of a high-quality plan (key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and timeline).

The applicant included letters of support from local mayors, community partners, the local teacher's union president, and the North Carolina State Department of Education. None of the above letters of support included support funding and the applicant did not indicate any other sources of funds other than district funds.

The applicant receives a score on the lower end of the high-range for this selection criteria.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has embarked upon an effective and powerful endeavor to unite schools, local community agencies, partners, and other concerned stakeholders in an effort to ensure that all children are reading at grade level by grade three. Called WAKE Up and Read, this collaborative is made up of twenty committed community groups working together toward the common goal of improving childhood literacy. As the applicant was in a leadership role from the beginning of the organizational effort, they were able to unite the districts resources, RTT-D performance measures, and community supports by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, health, emotional/ or behavioral needs of students. It is commendable that the collaborative is focused county-wide; however, with the leadership of the district, this ensures that the participating schools and students in the grant proposal are well represented. Also, the collaborative has agreed that the economically disadvantaged, high-need students will be the priority.

(1) The applicant provided an excellent description of the coherent and sustainable partnership developed to support its plan. The WAKE Up and Read collaborative is a admirable effort offering wide-reaching opportunities for sustainability and capacity-building as noted later in this review. It is comprised of a Steering Committee that includes five Action Teams focused on individual elements of the collaborative work (Coordination of Resources, Development of Subject Matter Content, Data, Parent Awareness and Volunteers), a Leadership Team comprised of Action Team chairs, and members of the general public. Each Action Team has two co-chairs representing the broad spectrum of coalition members (e.g., Marbles Kids Museum, Motherhead, Smart Start, Wake County Public School System and Wake Education Partnership). One co-chair of each Action Team is a district Central Office staff member. The Leadership Team, in consultation with the larger Steering Committee, is charged with decision making and guides the work of each Action Team. The Steering Committee includes individuals representing the following organizations: the Hispanic Family Center (El Centro Para Familias), Literacy Council of Wake County, Marbles Kids Museum, Meredith College, MetaMetrics, Motherhead, NC State University College of Education, NC State University Women’s Center, News & Observer News in Education, Reach Out & Read, Shaw University, Telamon Head Start, Wake County Human Services, Wake County Public Libraries, Wake County Public School System, Wake Education Partnership, Wake Med, Wake Parent Teacher Association, Wake County Smart Start, Wake Technical College and YMCA of the Greater Triangle.

WAKE Up and Read has been leveraging in-kind resources that already exist in the county to work in a united manner. For example, the collaborative has relied upon the district’s Data & Accountability division to provide data on literacy measures for K-3 students to include community awareness activities regarding the importance of reading on grade level by the end of third grade. In addition, individuals representing collaborating partner agencies have committed their time and expertise to WAKE Up and Read. Faculty from North Carolina State University, Shaw University and Wake Technical Community College have shared their expertise with the collaborative and helped to develop a community solutions action plan grounded in research-based best practices.

(2) As a leader in the organizational development of the collaborative, the district has been able to share their foundational work on the RTT-D with the members of WAKE Up and Read. Through discussions of the common needs of the county and district population, the collaborative agreed to support the vision and performance measures listed in the RTT-D grant as sound measures for all county students. These performance measure were then integrated into a collaborative vision and resources. Support and feedback from collaborative members, including parents, enabled the group to broaden the supports to participating students and the larger community. With these additions, the collaborative has agreed up on the following seven population desired results. Educational desired results include school readiness (increased numbers of students attending kindergarten), K-2 school attendance (decrease in percentage of students absent more than 10 days), learning loss (less learning loss over summer months), reading on grade level by grade three, and self-efficacy. Community desired results include increased number and hours of volunteers and increased community awareness about importance of school readiness, school attendance, and college- and career-readiness.

(3) (a-b) The applicant has described in depth the manner of tracking for outcomes for the five educational/non-cognitive indicators in Section E of this proposal. It is unclear how the two community desired results indicators will be tracked. It is reported that annual review of outcomes data will guide strategic outreach of the WAKE Up and Read collaborative to communities and neighborhoods surrounding Cornerstone project schools that demonstrate greatest need and/or least progress per the indicators. With this data guiding the collaborative work, coalition members will network with community organizations based in these areas. It is also reported that the collaborative has relied upon district Data & Accountability to provide data on literacy measure for K-3 students to include in community awareness activities regarding the importance of reading on grade level by the end of third grade with particular emphasis focused on students who are economically disadvantaged. This is an excellent source of information and additional data to guide the work of the collaborative.

(c-d) Concerning scalability, WAKE Up and Read will focus initial efforts on high-need students and communities within

Wake County. Using the same Plan – Do – Study – Reflect and Act continuous improvement model described in Section E, the applicant reports that WAKE Up and Read will be able to refine their outreach efforts and strategies while preparing to scale district and county-wide. Using the performance measures referenced previously, WAKE Up and Read will have four years of data to examine results over time to improve scalability. This is a general strategy for scaling up, more specifics are needed to understand scalability activities to incorporate other high need students and communities and improve results over time.

(4) In describing how the partnership would integrate education and other services within participating schools, the applicant provides several excellent examples. These include: 1) incorporating literacy-rich activities into existing afterschool activities, track-out and teacher workday childcare programs that serve Cornerstone schools, 2) reinforcing messages about the issue of school attendance in afterschool, track-out and teacher workday childcare programs, 3) enlisting faith-based organizations, regional health department sites, and pediatrician offices share information with parents about school readiness, school attendance and the importance of reading, 4) providing incentives for children and families that meet attendance and/or reading goals, 5) coordinating volunteers to work in project schools, and 6) involvement in a national day of service called *Make a Difference Day* to be held annually to raising awareness of the importance of early childhood literacy throughout Wake County.

(5) The applicant has thoroughly described methods in which they intend to increase the capacity of staff in the participating schools to meet the goals of the applicant and the collaborative community partnerships. The applicant has numerous community partners who volunteer in schools each day serving as tutors, mentors, and business partners. Members of the community will continue to be urged to get involved to help the community to better serve all of students. In addition, the applicant will institute a reading volunteer training process at the Cornerstone project schools. WAKE Up and Read will assist with putting together a team of volunteers to build the capacity of Cornerstone schools to connect with volunteer and other community resources for future areas of need.

(5)(a-b) It is not clear how the applicant intends to assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with the partnership, school and community's goals for improving the education and family and community support identified by the partnership and the applicant for the two community desired results. For example, the establishment of baseline data and number of volunteer hours per unit (month, year, etc.) or how to measure increased community awareness through surveys. Education and non-cognitive factors will be assessed as established earlier in the proposal. (c) The applicant did not provide information to understand how they intend to create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results. (d) The Wake Parent Teacher (PTA) Council is a collaborative partner of WAKE Up and Read. integrate education and other services within participating schools. (e) The applicant did not discuss the method it would use to routinely assess the progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.

(6) The applicant has presented a thorough, resource-rich plan for involving community support to reach ambitious yet achievable educational desired results. Performance measures include school readiness (increased numbers of students attending kindergarten) as measured by the Kindergarten Initial Assessment(KIA) and the /Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), K-2 school attendance (decrease in percentage of students absent more than 10 days) as measured by the days absent (excused and unexcused), Learning loss (less learning loss over summer months) as measured by mClass assessment data, reading on grade level by grade three as measured by third grade End-of-Grade (EOG) summative reading assessments, and self-efficacy as measured by the Early Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). Community desired results include increased number and hours of volunteers as measured by the numbers of students read to daily in K-2 classrooms, and increased community awareness about importance of school readiness, school attendance, and ready daily as measured by surveys and familiarity with WAKE Up and Read.

The applicant has presented an impressive, well-orchestrated effort that involves partnerships through a collaborative in the community, which now shares the common vision of all students reading at grade level by third grade. The reach of this vision goes beyond in the participating schools to district and county-wide efforts. The applicant has effectively met criterion (1) through a well-designed and impressive array of partnerships, criterion (2) through well-developed educational and community type desired results, criterion (3)(b) focus on students who are economically disadvantaged, (4) excellent vision and examples of how to integrate education and other services within participating schools,(5) a high level of support from the Wake Parent Teacher (PTA) Council for WAKE Up and Read, and (6) ambitious yet achievable performance measures.

Some of the sub-criteria of this Competitive Preference Priority need additional explanation. Specifically, for (3)(a), it is unclear how the two community desired results indicators will be tracked. More information is needed 93)(c) to understand the scalability activities to incorporate other high need students and communities and improve results over time. It is not clear how the applicant (5)(a-b) intends to assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with

partnership goals, specifically the two community desired results. The applicant did not provide information to understand (5)(c) how they intend to create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results. In addition, the applicant did not discuss (5)(e) the method it would use to routinely assess the progress in implementing its partnership plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.

Overall, the applicant has presented a substantial plan for broad-based community partnerships that will increase the capacity of the district to meet its proposed project goals. Sustaining and improving such resources through the WAKE Up and Read collaborative will enable the applicant to help move such goals into a district and county-wide effort.

The applicant receives a score within the high mid-range on this competitive preference priority.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presented a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on the work in the four core educational assurance areas. Specifically, for core educational assurance area #1, adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy, the applicant discussed an impressive array of efforts to re-align their district standards via the state's common core initiative, READY. For example, it is indicative of their quest for high teaching/learning standards that the district has gone above state efforts by implementing the written standards using Bloom's Taxonomy and implementing a Common Core Certification designed to help teachers create, evaluate, and improve lesson plans aligned with the standards.

For core educational assurance area #2, building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction, the applicant uses the state-provided, highly regarded Home Base. This digital data tool is for teachers, students, parents and administrators to improve instruction and make performance and instructional data readily available to each audience.

Concerning core educational assurance area #3, recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most, the applicant's vision is centered on the use of highly effective teachers and principals as one of its fundamental principles. The applicant is in the process of developing a comprehensive human capital plan based on their experience in recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals based on their experiences with their own school projects, the Renaissance school improvement model and a Teacher Incentive Grant to support the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) at one of the district's Title I elementary schools. It is unclear how the results of these projects will impact the new comprehensive human capital plan and what final components it will include.

For core educational assurance area #4, turning around lowest-achieving schools, the district has been involved in slowly improving efforts to turn around a state-designated lowest-performing alternative school and the district's lowest performing four elementary schools using their school improvement model, Renaissance.

The applicant articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student supports grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests through an ambitious initiative known as Cornerstone. Focused on twenty (20) elementary schools with greater than 40% economically disadvantaged students, the goal of this initiative is to personalize literacy instruction for K-2 students so that every student reads on grade level by the end of third grade. Their reasonable belief is that personalizing support will promote student grade level literacy, ultimately leading to college and career ready graduates. Teachers will be trained on personalization strategies to increase their ability to mold instruction to meet each child's unique needs and interests. Instruction will be designed to allow students to work at their own pace, read at increasingly vigorous levels, and deepen their learning experiences with the assistance of personal learning devices.

The applicant's proposal contains extensive provisions for professional development for teachers and principals through training, mentoring, and evaluation designed to increase teacher effectiveness and thereby increase student access to effective educators. Through personalized learning, students will be exposed to learning strategies and effective instruction that will be customized to their learning styles, experiences, and core knowledge. This process, together with a focus on improving performance rates of at-risk subgroups, should result in decreased achievement gaps across student groups.

In developing this proposal, the applicant relied on a core educational belief: One of the strongest predictors successful

high school graduation is reading on grade level by grade three. The district cites their own local statistics to confirm this belief: On-time high school graduation rates for students who were proficient in reading at the end of third grade was 89.6%, as compared to an on-time graduation rate of 59.4% for students who, were not proficient. This belief became the foundation for the purpose of this grant, to ensure that students the participating elementary schools are reading on grade level by grade three as a precursor to college- and-career readiness.

Total	210	168
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