



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1311PA-1 for Archway Charter School of Chester, Inc.

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The credibility of the approach is strengthened by the description of six inter-related topics. This is strong evidence to an organized, focused approach to implementation and development of strategies to address student need. Each topic is aimed squarely at improving opportunities for students to engage in personalized environments. Specific programs are described for student support and professional development for teachers. These include support projects in technology infrastructure, college and career path experiences, literacy enhancement, STEM program development, and an intervention project for socio-emotional supports as examples to address the core assurances. Ongoing assessment processes are described through programs specified in the literacy component. The management includes strengthening the current data systems through implementing specific software programs for tracking student data.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal intends to serve all students and teachers through technology expansion, individual reviews, and professional development to support increased services to personalize environments for students. The strategies and plan described are intended to comprehensively address the needs of all charter students in the provision of a timeline with reasonable goals and implementation steps for the first of the five identified projects.</p> <p>High needs identification process is limited to the description that all students are considered to be of high needs, however, data is provided that supports this logic in that the district is higher than the state level of participation in serving high poverty, disabled, ELL, and students from single parent families.</p> <p>The timeline does not provide sufficient data for project six, the management component which affects the approaches capacity to support high quality reform.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The quality of the plan is strengthened through extensive professional development and enhanced technology systems. The district specifies appropriate ground laying strategies for reform such as ongoing coaching for teachers that includes guiding teachers to become fluent in new technologies and in selecting appropriate resources for students. A process is described for sharing results that would strengthen the efforts to scale up current data systems in providing substantial review opportunities.</p> <p>The applicant's theory of change is lacking details specific to personalization of instruction, frequency of monitoring, involvement of community and parents, and specific methods and plans for sharing results which limits the overall quality of the plan to be scaled up into meaningful reform.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Summative assessment data is presented with an explanation of growth determination. Reasonable goals are established. Graduation rates and college enrollment data is presented. Specific programs are outlined to define supports for students that are justified in promoting growth and decreasing gaps. These examples strengthen the likelihood that the student outcomes will be met.</p> <p>Ongoing involvement of principals in the professional development activities for teachers is a strength in developing leadership capacity to</p>		

implement the programs and enhance the collaborative meetings that are currently in existence.

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	13
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal includes extensive evidence to support a record of success in reform efforts. Data presented for the charter district indicate that students have made significant gains over the past 11 years. Sub group data indicates that similar progress is noted in trend lines provided for subgroups. Through this evidence, the charter demonstrates a clear record of success in improving student achievement. Evidence is also provided that indicates the successful implementation of the charter's services to reform educational opportunities and address alternatives to the local district's programs.</p> <p>The population of the charter school has greatly expanded since its inception indicating that the number of parents involved in the charter process has expanded. The district provides evidence of parent involvement through providing parents with an annual report card that includes feedback on the role of the parent in participating in the child's success.</p> <p>Further detailing the process of using parent feedback to modify services could strengthen the evidence of past success.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Annual reports for the district and monthly reports of personnel employment is a limited approach to describing evidence of transparency in budget expenditures and the connection to school policy. The extent is limited to an annual report provided to the state. An annual report meets a minimum level of transparency but does not indicate a high level through any specific examples.</p> <p>Although presentation of these reports is noted, it is not clear what steps are taken to make the budget more available and transparent to parents and guardians other than annual financial reports and web-based reports.</p> <p>An appendix does include detailed expenditures at the school level.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Reform opportunities are present in the charter school model evidencing successful conditions for implementation of reform initiatives. The evidence is presented that the school has integrated resources from a variety of grant funding sources to engage students in digital learning as an example of their work toward developing personalized environments. The autonomy is created in the charter development through support of state school laws that specifies six conditions required for charter support. The continued renewal of the school's charter is evidence that they are meeting the state described conditions that are closely tied to the core reform areas.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The charter proposal indicates that a variety of methods were used to obtain input including parent surveys and student participation in discussion. Substantial examples provide support in the modification of original proposal strategies from input by the stakeholders. The proposal states that 90% of the teachers support the proposal. This is evidence that meaningful input was obtained in program development.</p> <p>Although parent input is indicated through the use of surveys, it is not clear to what extent the surveys were returned and what type of input from parents was received and analyzed to inform the development of the project and limits the extent of the evidence.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The proposal specifies that principals and administrators are included in the effectiveness plan. Involving data indicative of leadership effectiveness in the analysis of the current needs and gaps is an essential element to the reform model. The proposal also specifies that parent and other stakeholder input will be gathered through surveys and focus group meetings to address needs and gaps as identified by the stakeholders within the community. Details are included on 6 specific programs within the project to indicate logic, needs, and gaps in the development of the plan. These examples strengthen the extent to which a careful analysis of gaps and needs were identified.

Examples of a student's current personalized plan are not presented for analysis to determine how those current plans may be used to evaluate the current status. It is difficult to visualize student engagement by classroom teachers to impact the learning environment directly and is therefore limited in quality.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal's ability to present a high quality plan is strengthened by the evidence that students have already been involved in goal setting, portfolio review and development of plans to address their needs. Student engagement in defining their personal goals and personal career development plans is a strategy currently in place that supports student empowerment. Examples are provided to demonstrate how the proposed activities might increase exposure to various cultures and historic experiences and increase equitable access to online learning tools.

Educational leadership is identified as being involved in professional development in personalized learning. This is an essential and sound strategy for increasing the leadership involvement vital to reform efforts.

Technology integration specialist's support and the addition of two science advisors are justified and reasonable approaches to supporting the proposed digital activities in classrooms.

The proposal describes the sharing of data with parents however, it is not clear how often parents are kept informed and involved in a meaningful way to address their child's individual plan and be involved in the process of college and career ready experiences.

The proposal speaks to personalizing learning for IEP and ELL students through the use of new technology and specifies programs that will individualize their instruction. In addition, the engagement of students in peer tutoring and classroom presentations strengthens the impact of the activities squarely upon the classroom environment and not solely upon engagement between students and computers.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	17
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides a high quality plan by presenting evidence of current professional development through collaboration to support the implementation of a new reform. Guidelines for evaluation of instructional staff are presented as evidence of monitoring of teacher skill development. A strong example is in the use of walk-through instruments to inform staff practices and describe technology use. The monthly meetings also demonstrate evidence of a high quality plan with principals to collaborate on achievement goals. The proposal intends to strengthen teacher and administrator support through increased professional development. The availability of student data will be expanded under the proposal's intentions, which also increases the quality of resources to support reform. A school wide enrichment model for increasing literacy skills is described that includes a range of learning options to meet student needs. This strengthens the proposal's intent to personalize learning to a higher degree.

It is a strength that master teachers are currently meeting and principals discuss student data and strategies with a district administrator. The proposal states that the master teachers and principals are meeting with parents to share data. There is evidence that the district uses a team approach to selecting new staff that are likely to be successful in their reform projects.

The plan to support students in being ready for college and exploration of career opportunities includes in the personnel a college access coordinator and a workforce coordinator which supports the efforts to address college and career needs and gaps of students.

The proposal does not provide sufficient details to explain current support systems (Search and Selection) for college and career ready goals to be built upon. The number of students identified in the baseline data as enrolled in college following graduation is a low percentage (20%). The proposal's plan to address these needs in an accelerated model is not described in sufficient detail to acknowledge this rate.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Policies of the local LEA are described to support the plan of the charter to operate with these additional resources and maintain the charter's autonomy in providing a choice to students. The autonomy is evidenced by the description of current services to children that demonstrate increasing growth in comparison to district averages. The support of the local LEA is described through the description of program positions that present evidence of continued collaboration with the charter.</p> <p>Description is lacking regarding the frequency of meetings between charter staff and LEA staff with the exception of the monthly principals' meeting. This information would clarify the district's involvement of monitoring services and ensuring that resources are provided as needed.</p> <p>Placement tests and on-going assessments of students are presented as examples of alternative methods of assessments beyond summative but it is not clear if these options are currently in place to support a high quality plan and/or if they are in place across the LEA to ensure further resources are directed towards the assessment of mastery.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Home and teacher access to data is described through the implementation of the LEA's data system. The proposal addresses the need of 20% of the parents for access to the Internet by expanding current partnerships. The quality of the plan is limited in describing the options that will be explored to support parent access. The plan does not identify time for teachers to participate in the Teacher Access Center within the school day. The quality of the plan would be strengthened by providing information to the number of parents participating in online access to data currently and by describing the amount of time available to teachers to access the information. Information access during collaborative meetings would strengthen the quality of the plan to determine and obtain support and resources as needed.</p> <p>Programs are identified that will provide students with immediate and ongoing feedback of their mastery which adds to the quality of the project by involving students in reviewing continual feedback.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal does an effective job of presenting the six sub projects and their specific goals and activities, to be managed by a project director. Surveys, observations, and assessment are specified as measurement tools to modify the approach and share successful strategies as noted. Monthly tracking for social and emotional needs will include attendance reports. Principals are included in responsibilities for monitoring through classroom observations. These examples increase the quality of the plan to inform continuous improvement.</p> <p>The proposal states that benchmark data is analyzed three times a year at an administrative meeting. This is inconsistent with the weekly collaborative times where data may be reviewed. It is not clear if the collaborative time is for professional development or for building professional learning communities through shared data and strategies. Continuous feedback requires the leadership of principals in working with staff during collaborative efforts. It is not clear how leadership will monitor and inform the program services to directly impact student learning.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is a limited plan for increasing input of stakeholders through describing project director responsibility to collaborate and inform the district and connected agencies as to the project's implementation on a regular basis.</p> <p>Although the proposal indicates that increased collaboration with local agencies (social workers) will expand parent access to technology, the project does not give specific examples of the strategies that the social workers would use to identify those families and specifically how the collaboration would provide the access described.</p>		

It is also unclear how the external stakeholders (library, foundations, community centers) will be engaged to provide meaningful input to inform the plan in a continuous model.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district cannot present current data on principal/teacher effectiveness and therefore sets no goals for achieving this measure. The goal to be set at 5% increase in teacher effectiveness for the first two years is not ambitious. The goal for principal effectiveness is ambiguous as the proposal does not include a goal for their effectiveness until year four of the activities.

Reasonable goals for most students are presented, however, the goals for ELL students are not ambitious or challenging. Accelerated personalized learning offers the opportunity to help students succeed at increased rates and should be demonstrated in the targets. The rates presented are reasonable without the implementation and assistance of the program presented.

The quality is strengthened by tying principal effectiveness to student achievement.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district identifies and describes a continual review and improvement program that provides opportunities in each of their sub-focus areas for ongoing review of data from specific student levels, evaluating programs in place to support students and teachers, and in reviewing the management plan. Each measure is matched with an evaluation question to obtain information to inform the project's goals.

Although it is evident that a timeline is in place for evaluating the components of the proposal, it is not clear how the data obtained through the evaluative questions will be used to modify approaches in each sub-project area. The selection of evidence is clear but the use of the information to directly impact program services to children in the classroom is not detailed.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal provides clear evidence that the request for funding is appropriately developed for the described services and indicates the support role that the LEA will assume during and after project implementation. The proposal identifies each of its sub projects with a specific budget to target the intended outcomes. This indicates a thoughtful approach to implementation through allocation of funds to support each component identified as a priority.</p> <p>One- time investments are described in narrative format. Support from the LEA is included in the budgets and strengthens the evidence of the support of the LEA in providing resources and leadership staffing.</p> <p>It is not clear why funds for training stipends, teacher release time, principal training, etc. are not detailed. Although job embedded teacher training is appropriate, the budget does not provide for extensive time for teacher collaboration time or additional time outside of the classroom instructional day for training needs.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Funding is included to Integrate services with local agencies and provides staff development opportunities as viable strategies to strengthen and sustain the project goals after the term of the grant. Local funding revenues are cited to support project activities post federal funding. A sustainability budget is included that presents evidence that the charter is willing to assume the costs of personnel, technology support, and supplies.</p> <p>No training stipends are included in the three-year sustainability budget. There is no evidence that ongoing staff development will be maintained following the term of the grant.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Socio-emotional strategies and staff supports are described to meet student needs through integrated services with community partners. The proposal is limited in describing extensive partnerships although a partnership with the College Access Center and the Chester Youth Collaborative is included as well as a letter from the library that refers to 'shared goals'. The proposal would be strengthened with more detailed descriptions of current social services connections, community agency support or other systems currently in place or planned for further development of sustainable partnerships.

Ongoing assessment and review are planned for in order to inform the activities of the program to better meet the needs of students both academically and socially, however, the format of meeting to share data with all stakeholders, including social support services and the career partners, is vague.

The description of the increase of the charter population from 97 students to over 3,000 students indicates increased involvement at all levels of the community and support for school choice for students and parents. There is an acknowledgement that parent involvement in decision-making is crucial to the population to be served. Parenting education classes are presented. Surveys are described that will collect parent input.

Needs of immigrant children and ELL children are not addressed specifically except through personalized technology programs. It is not clear how the surveys would be delivered and distributed to parents from first languages other than English or how other socio-emotional needs of this population will be served with integrated community support.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides strong evidence that assessments are in place for benchmarking and that these assessments are modified as appropriate to grade level. The data system in place provides staff with support to analyze current information and build upon it to further develop personalized programs for students. The nature of the charter school is designed to provide education choice to parents and students.

The charter demonstrates proven success in increasing the achievement of their high- risk population and is well supported through the resources of the LEA.

There is a coherent description of six sub projects that indicates the commitment of the district to maintain a focus on improving academic achievement and provide social supports through ongoing monitoring of the sub-projects.

Total	210	159
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1311PA-2 for Archway Charter School of Chester, Inc.

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Chester Community Charter School has grown rapidly and steadily since its founding in 1998. When the school was tiny, it was relatively easy to envision a personalized learning environment. At its new, apparently stable size of more than 3,000 students, CCCD sets forth in this proposal a clear and comprehensive vision to implement personalized learning at a much larger scale. The school's plan relies heavily on success in dramatically changing the level of technology used by students and teachers. The plan is divided into six parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technology infrastructure 2. College and Careers 3. Literacy enhancement 4. STEM achievement 5. Social and Emotional supports 6. Project administration <p>These projects are bold in their aims but credible in their specificity. They add up to a comprehensive and coherent vision for reform.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes an approach to implementation that is rooted in practicality. It begins in the grades that are most ready (3-8), and gradually expands to the rest. The implementation of professional development investments is slated to parallel the rollout of hardware and software.</p> <p>The proposal scores at the top for this criterion.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As a standalone charter school, Archway cannot "scale up" unless it expands or others replicate its approach. The school's proposal does not appear to include growth in enrollment, but it does include some commitments to share what it learns. Specifically, the schools proposal promises to "share results through presentations at professional conferences as well as through the Simple K-12 Teacher Learning Community" as well as other approaches.</p> <p>This is a response of high quality and suitable modesty.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>CCCS presents a strong set of well-considered targets for improved student outcomes for the years during which it serves its students. For example, it forecasts student proficiency rates to grow faster once personalization systems are in place than prior to their effective rollout. Perhaps understandably, the school appears less able to provide specific insights about what happens to its students beyond 8th grade. For example, of 73 who completed 8th grade in 2008, the school is only able to describe that 34 students completed high school and 7 enrolled in college. This is either a terrible outcome or a deeply flawed tracking system for outcomes, or both. The proposal does not appear to include a plan to improve the usefulness of these metrics.</p> <p>But the main criterion at stake here is whether the CCCS vision is likely to result in student learning and equity. It is.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) CCCS improved test scores and closed tested achievement gaps in the years 2008 -2011, strongly outscoring Pennsylvania score growth. The school also has a growing record of placing students in private high schools as part of its strategy to improve long-term outcomes for its</p>		

students. The school does not, however, have a high-quality system for tracking outcomes beyond 8th grade, such as high school graduation and college enrollment. The school's tested proficiency rate, despite outscoring Pennsylvania, includes a sobering detail in table (A)(4)(a); as of 2011-12, there was little or no proficiency improvement trend from grade to grade. At each grade level, about a third of students sustain proficiency at each grade level through grade 6, then 45% reach it for grades 7 and 8.

(b) CCCS has implemented significant changes and experimented with approaches such as the Renzulli model. This history of experimentation increases the chances that the school's plans will be met with open minds.

(c) CCCS goes beyond transparency, which is usually a fairly passive concept, in an intriguing and innovative way. CCCS not only makes student report cards available to parents: it actively grades parents on their participation. The applicant does not, however, present performance metrics on this form of parent participation.

This track record places the CCCS application in the high range.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: CCCS appears to provide moderate transparency of its processes, practices and investments. The application states that the school complies by filing form PDE-2057, which it says includes the four measures required. In Appendix 8 of its application, the school includes a detailed budget statement that is presumably made available to the public. The applicant scores in the medium range for this element.		
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(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The school appears to have the freedom it requires under state policy to implement its plan.		
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(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: The application appears to have been crafted with a thoughtful input process that made it clear to students, teachers and other stakeholders that the school is planning significant changes, and spelling out what those changes might entail. This process identified strong support and two specific challenges: a significant fraction of students (20%) lack access to internet-enabled computing at home; and 41% of teachers did not agree with the plan to provide students with "email accounts with teacher monitoring." The latter is likely to amount to a bump on the path; student email accounts are a necessity to implement personalized electronic learning solutions, and teachers will inevitably want the capacity to monitor them. The issue of patchy home access to internet service is a more difficult matter, but it is a challenge of implementation and not one of support.		
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(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: The school's analysis of needs and gaps is clear, and connects logically with its plans for action in each of its six projects.		
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C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: (a)(i) The school's plan for an Individual Career Plan (ICP) portfolio is a suitable strategy to make learning goals clear and to document achievements in a way that students will value and that they can connect with those goals. (a)(ii) The plan is sound. The fact that many CCCS students apply to private schools will tend to add concreteness and urgency to the development of the envisioned portfolios. (a)(iii) The plan calls for breaking away from traditional assignments in a way that should create new opportunities for deeper learning, with the support of teachers equipped with new technologies to differentiate instruction.		
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(a)(iv) The online learning systems that the school plans to acquire should equip the school with new opportunities to provide students with increased academic exposure to diverse cultures and contexts.

(a)(v) The applicant's plan will increase opportunities for students to collaborate in flexible teams. This will tend to increase students' mastery of "soft" skills described in this criterion. There appears to be no plan for measurement of results in this area.

(b i-v) CCCS describes an exemplary plan for personalizing instruction through carefully selected investments in software, systems, and the training required to make use of them. The plan calls for student usage of computer-based and online learning solutions on a daily basis, supported by weekly action plans that invite and enable students to express autonomy of interest while leaving room for teacher redirection. The school has made informed selections of software and systems that it intends to use for reading and math, and appears close to making selections for science instruction. The contemplated system includes elements for accommodating high-need students in a personalized manner.

(c) The plan does not appear to include specific actions for training students in the use of digital learning tools and resources. This is of little concern, as the plan includes significant budgeted time for training of teachers.

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

(a) The school has demonstrated a strong commitment to ongoing collaboration and professional development, including its weekly commitment of Wednesdays to staff development work and the commitment of additional staff days to training and planning. This structure for collaborative work will be of critical value in the school's efforts to personalize instruction. The new availability of a wide variety of online learning resources will provide opportunities for a flowering of personalized approaches, including flexible approaches to assist students that need extra help or accommodations. The use of these online tools will equip teachers with ongoing formative information about student learning; the school has plans for occasional assessments to mitigate the risk that the online tools produce undetected learning gaps.

(b) The school proposes investing in a variety of technology-based tools and systems that will help them identify and address student learning needs in a very actionable way. There will be a learning curve, but as these systems and lessons become familiar to educators, the school can expect to advance student learning.

(c) The school is building a strong system of evaluative and constructive feedback for teachers, focused on student learning, through its participation in Pennsylvania's teacher evaluation system based on the Danielson framework. Additionally, its use of the LoTi framework is likely to help the school draw value out of its investments in teacher observations.

(d) As an individual school, the quality of faculty has a great deal to do with decisions about individual candidates and the development of the skills of individual educators. The school's processes for honest feedback, reflection, and action seem appropriate and practical, and should serve to provide students with steadily-improving educational leadership.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The proposed organization of the school is appropriate to accomplish the objectives of this grant. There would be clear leadership of grant-related investments within the context of the school organization.

(b) As one school with a single leader and charter authority, the applicant is in a strong position to make flexible use of resources to realize its vision for personalization of teaching and learning.

(c) The plan is unclear with regard to flexible formal advancement of students based on mastery in a formal sense, such as skipping a grade. However, the plan to personalize lesson sequence and pacing according to student readiness is quite clear, and this is of greater importance.

(d) The school asserts that the addition of digital tools to personalize advancement would enable the school to provide better accommodations for students to demonstrate mastery in alternative ways. The plan does not give examples of how it would accomplish this, which weakens its credibility.

(e) The school proposes metrics of success that will require particularly large gains in test scores for its special needs students. The school's move toward personalized learning seems generally like it could pay dividends in learning progress for students with disabilities and English

learners, though the plan does not express a particularly clear plan for addressing the needs of these students.

Despite small gaps, the overall strength of the plan in this area merits a high score.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The CCCS plan relies heavily on the effective purchase and deployment of technology infrastructure including hardware, software and supporting systems. The school has identified the core platforms that it wants to use, which puts it far ahead of the daydream stage, and costed out the acquisition of the necessary products at the level of the student platform. It does not appear that the school has completely thought through issues of licensing, leasing, and insurance against loss or damage. The plan is also incomplete in its solution to the difficult question of network access. If the school is to jump with both feet into technology-based solutions for instruction and homework, it must solve for the problem of home internet access. The plan does not appear to include a work item for identifying precedents that other innovative schools and districts have used to address this gap. It is not OK for 20% of students to be stuck with "find a bus to an open library" as the answer for how to get to a place where they can do their homework after school and return home safely, toting a computer. The school will find the answer, but the quality of the plan as it stands must be regarded as incomplete.

(b) The plan indicates a clear understanding that technical support will be vital. It does not appear to involve students for peer support in a structured way. The school's solution to technical support will certainly generate a high volume of support tickets in the early stages; if the number of tickets is too great to be dealt with in a timely way, then frustration with the system may render this metric meaningless.

(c, d) The plan calls for use of SIF-compliant systems built on interoperable data standards. The choice of systems seems to be based on the systems used by the partners that CCCS has selected for critical components, which is a reasonable approach.

Medium points are awarded for the school's positive but incomplete plan.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The school's plan is comprised of six projects. For each, the plan for continuous improvement specifies goals, monitoring tools, processes, and time-bounded standards for success. This puts the school on a very strong footing for success.

A few of the metrics proposed seem mismatched to the stated goal for the monitoring plan, and likely to be rethought in practice. For example, Project #1 (technology infrastructure) is slated to be measured by surveys of teacher and student satisfaction. This would certainly underscore open communication, but in the early running seems a slow and imprecise first priority for monitoring the effectiveness of technology infrastructure. In Project #2, the plan specifies use of the National Student Clearinghouse for high school completion data, but the applicant's response to other portions of this application indicates that NSC data is problematic. These and similar fine-tuning issues seem likely to be addressed by the school when the project director becomes a person in an office rather than a title in a plan.

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

The plan calls for coordination of regular communication with stakeholders to be a primary responsibility of the Project Director, supported by monthly meetings with key leadership. More pointedly, this is a plan for one organization in one site with one main leader and a history of nimbleness and effective communication. The applicant has set up opportunities for faculty collaboration every Wednesday, so communication should be quite fluid.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicable to all:

- The CCCS plan for metrics in areas a and b (effective teaching and school leadership) are adequate; the GRADE assessment system appears to serve the required purpose, and if it falls short the plan includes a fallback, the 4-sight reading test.
- The CCCS plan for all students also emphasizes metrics of attendance and behavior referrals. Because chronic

absence is a strong leading predictor of other problems, this seems a suitable metric.

Applicable to Prek-3

- The CCCS plan to introduce Education City for early math instruction, and to use GRADE vocabulary development assessment to measure each student's growth in reading skill, appears to satisfy the criteria. (The proposal does not include an early-grades learning performance measure for science, but this is not required to satisfy the requirement.)
- The CCCS plan for metrics of health and social-emotional growth in Prek-3 is based on the Career Cruising ccSpark online learning environment, which the applicant describes as a portfolio-based system capable of supporting parent engagement. This is a sophisticated response that extends the more blunt measures of attendance and behavior referrals.

Applicable to Grades 4-8

- To track students' academic trajectory for a college-bound future, the CCCS plan to use PSSA tests seems adequate.

Evaluation: Taken together, the applicant proposes a robust set of metrics that handily exceeds the requirements of this criterion.

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

The plan calls for use of an external evaluator to help the school measure and report on the effectiveness of its investments under RTT-D. With a clear plan under a single leader at a single site with well-defined goals and metrics, CCCS has laid excellent groundwork for the evaluator's task to be uncomplicated.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The CCCS proposal identifies multiple sources of funds for the project, with a total of \$6.1 million on top of the \$10 million requested from RTT-D. The accounting provided by the school satisfies the requirements.

(b) The budget is organized into six projects. Each area has been budgeted at a sufficient level of detail to enable action and to make clear choices.

A major area of expense for the plan, vitally important for all of the projects, is computer hardware and technology infrastructure. In order for the plan to work, each student must have consistent access to a working computing device both in and out of school. The applicant appears to have been very lean-minded in estimating the costs of this hardware, and does not appear to have factored in the costs of insurance to ensure that theft or damage will not render these assets inoperable. Without them, the plan does not work. The school has a strong framework for making decisions, but the plan does not appear to spell out what it will give up in response to cost overruns.

The plan does not appear to budget funds toward provision of home network access that would enable all students to make use of their laptops for homework. This is an important gap in the plan that will cause some teachers to hesitate to move strongly fully toward digital tools. The proposal's draft solution to this problem in equity is for students without home internet access to go to the library. This is an incomplete response.

(c) The plan is well-documented and internally consistent. It provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities, and takes into account both RTT-D funds and other sources. The school makes a distinction between one-time costs (called out item by item as "one time purchase") and ongoing costs.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The school has carefully distinguished one-time expenses from ongoing expenses in the six projects that comprise its plan. Five of the projects extend beyond the period of the grant, and the school has estimated the ongoing costs for each of them:

- Project 1: ~\$120k/year
- Project 2: ~\$128k/year

- Project 3: ~\$24k/year
- Project 4: ~\$254k/year
- Project 5: ~\$122k/year

In each of those cases the applicant asserts that it will find "local funding source revenue" to fill the void. This adds up to about \$650k per year (over \$200 per student) in unfunded ongoing costs to sustain the project goals. This is not an unreasonable level of uncertainty for a budget of this scale. In four years' time it is reasonable to expect hardware costs to drop, and the school will have plenty of notice to round up funders to cover the gap.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

As part of its plan, the applicant proposes an annual investment of \$130,000 to contract with Dr. Fatima Hafiz of TEA in support of an effort to address chronic violence through dialogue among teachers, students, parents and others in the community. An alphabet soup of local organizations is listed as possibly affiliated with this process in partnership with REAL, which appears from its description in the news clipping provided with the application to be a new coalition formed in 2011. The activities proposed for this project (appendix 3, page 126) include six "weekend sessions" as well as weekly group coaching and a "virtual space."

This proposal is directed at addressing an urgent problem, but the plan is of low quality. The proposal is specific about dates and fees for 2013, but is quite vague about who is to be included, what is to be done, or how success will be measured. No performance measures are defined for the project.

Low points are awarded for this weak response.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The CCCS plan aims squarely at the core priority of RTT-D: personalized learning environments. The school articulates a clear vision for using new technologies and new practices to center learning on the individual student. The school presents evidence that its vision is backed up by a plan that is ambitious but achievable, and that the plan has the necessary support to be carried out.

Total	210	185
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1311PA-3 for Archway Charter School of Chester, Inc.

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
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(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information presented will support the applicant's comprehensive and coherent reform vision by empowering s's as learners through the development of a dynamic learning community. The goals include: • engaging parents and s's in a partnership with the school and working together to continuously improve educational programs and services to best meet the wide range of academic needs and aspirations of all s's • the shared vision to help each student develop the necessary academic, social, and emotional skill sets and knowledge so that, upon exiting the eighth grade, s's become successful high school students, committed to a personal goal of being college and career ready • using computerized benchmark tests to monitor each student's progress in achieving state academic standards and working with various vendors to develop data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction • CCCS reform plan includes visionary leadership, a strong lead team, clear measures of accountability, an effective professional infrastructure and on going support of principal and teacher development 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has demonstrated an approach to implementing reform. • The project will include seven classrooms buildings on two campuses, one on the East side and one on the West side for over 3,000 s's. • The project will serve all s's, beginning with 3,033 enrolled as of fall 2012 as well as additional s's who enroll during the next four years; all s's are considered high need based on the fact that 90% live in poverty and 99% are members of racial/ethnic minorities. The student population is 88% African American, 10% Hispanic, 1% Multi Racial and 1% White. High need s's are 94%, Free or Reduced Meals 24%, Special Ed 4.5%, ELL, and Single parent households 79%. 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has somewhat demonstrated a plan to support reform and change. • The plan will combine high quality resources for personalizing the learning environment; a continuous improvement plan that offers multiple assessments to monitor student performance on all Common Core Standards in real time; online learning programs that give s's the opportunity to practice specific skills on their own level and at their own pace and receive instant feedback, as though they have their own personal learning coach; and ongoing, job embedded professional development and coaching for teachers in the new technologies and online resources. • The plan describes how reforms will be scaled up using shared results through presentations at professional conferences, other professional networks, in reports to stakeholders and community partners, and via CCCS website. • Not really sure how ambitious presentations will help reach outcome goals. 		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has demonstrated strategies that will support goals for improved student outcomes. • Performance on summative assessment - the district will use the PA System of School Assessment tests in math, reading and science. The district will determine growth by the change in achievement levels based on a 10% reduction in the number of s's below proficient at the end of years 1 and 2. • Decreasing achievement gaps - the district will use CCCS in reading and math for grades 3-8. The district will determine growth by the change in achievement levels based on a 10% reduction in the number of s's below proficient at the end of years 1 and 2. • Graduation rates - of the 2008 8th grade completers, the CCCS was able to confirm that 34 graduated from high school in 2012. To make AYP in PA, the graduation measure is a goal of 85% or a 10% reduction of the difference between the previous year and 85%. • College enrollment - of the 2012 high school graduates, the CCCS was able to confirm that 7 entered postsecondary education in Fall 2012. The goals were set using the target of a 10% reduction of the difference between the previous year and 73%. 		

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	12
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information presented supports the applicant's record of success. • The charter school accelerates student achievement and prepares s's to attain high academic standards. From 2001-2011, the percentage of s's performing at or above proficient on PSSA tests in math and reading increased significantly. In 2001, 10% scored at or above in reading. In 2011, 66% scored at or above in reading. In 2001, 5% scored at or above in math. In 2011, 73% scored at or above proficient in math. • The local district, Chester Upland School District, for many years has been one of the lowest achieving districts in the state. As a result, Chester Community Charter School was founded in 1998 to provide an alternative to a chronically low achieving local school district. Since opening, the school's charter has been renewed three times based on meeting its academic goals and fiscal managerial standards. As a result of parent and student satisfaction with the quality of the school's academic programs, the safe school climate, and the well kept new facilities, enrollment has grown steadily each year. • Benchmark testing data and report cards are given to parents. Each Fall parents are given their s's PSSA results by the teacher at the first parent teacher conference. Twice a year parents meet face to face with their child's teacher to discuss their progress. The charter school devised a report card that encourages parent involvement and meaningful support of their s's success in school by scoring parents on: (1) student behaviors (completion of homework assignments, attendance and punctuality, adherence to dress code, and behavior of student) and (2) parent attendance at scheduled meetings/ conferences and other school activities. The charter school invites parents to be meaningfully involved in their children's education each school. Parents who participate fully are awarded incentives/thank you prizes at an End of Year dinner celebration. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has demonstrated transparency in processes, practices, and investments. • The charter school instructional staff includes salaries for all teachers, teacher aides, summer school teachers, tutors and specialists, counselors, secretaries, psychologist, business administrator, support service aides, technology support, federal liason support, and grant program coordinator. • The charter school instructional staff includes salaries for all grade tutors, teachers, teacher aides, summer school teachers, tutors and specialists. • The charter school teachers includes salaries for all teachers (reading specialist, special ed, gifted and summer school). • The charter school includes expenditures for fringe benefits, substitute teachers, PD, consultants, professional ed services, external evaluator, printing and binding, travel, student field trips, general supplies, HIV/Pregnancy Prevention, meals and refreshments, books and periodicals, legal expenses, health consultants, equipment repairs and maintenance, uniform rental, advertising, communications-telephone, office expense, Christmas gifts for s's, conference and meetings, payroll services, software admin, food service. 		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has demonstrated evidence to support the successful conditions and sufficient autonomy. • Charter schools in PA are by definition, an opportunity for school reform. This charter school, Chester Community Charter School, CCCS, throughout its 14 year history, has introduced innovations, analyzed its impact, and continuously improved its approaches. CCCS has received many competitive federal and state grants that have supported many of these innovations and fostered excellence through enriched curricular resources and professional capacity. • Some of the effective grant reform initiatives have included a 7 year Reading First grant, two 3 year Elem School Counseling Grant programs, four 1 year Enhancing Education Through Technology Programs, two years of ARRA (not sure what this acronym means) funding for full time professional tutors, before and after school enrichment programs, 		

and a Physical Education Program. CCCS is most proud of the 5 year award of a Javits Gifted Education Program research grant that supported implementation of the proven Renzulli School wide model for the school's most advanced s's. CCCS was hoping to expand the Renzulli model to include all s's; however, the funding was cut.

- It was evident that infusing of technology and digital resources through the Javits grant program had positive effects on achievement in the areas of ability to express ideas orally, in writing, and in presentations; researching, listening and thinking critically and creatively. To this end, s's were engaged and increased their ability to work independently and collaboratively. Additionally, digital resources demonstrated that is s's from low income schools have equitable access to digital and print resources they can achieve on a par with s's from middle class districts.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)

10

10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has demonstrated evidence to support stakeholder engagement and support.
- The proposal design is the outcome of a series of meeting with a full range of stakeholders, several focus meetings and three surveys in which all groups were given a voice. A grant team of teachers, parents, administrators, and representatives from the community met to develop the goals and activities of the grant proposal. Input was sought in various ways: (1) the grants administrator led group meetings of reps from all across the areas of the school including STEM teachers from K-8, classroom teachers, principals, a tech specialist, KtO director (not sure what acronym means), senior director of student services, deputy superintendent, literacy teachers, buidling directors, reading specialists, counselor, special ed teacher, director of ELL, technology teachers and an IT specialist. (2) the grants administrator also met with the superintendent, deputy superintendent and other chief administrators who lent their support throughout the drafting and completion of proposal. (3) discussions at these meetings centered on participants' responses to a survey regarding their vision for providing personalization education. (4) parents were surveyed regarding topics related to RTTT-D project. (5) these finding were reported to the grant team with time for feedback on the goals and activities of the grant. (5) a draft of the plan was shared with teachers at their building meetings.
- Collaboration from key stakeholders will reinforce program success from the following: (1) PTA president which will help the school engage parents as partners in their children's education (2) Chester Education Foundation can provide CCCS parents access to computers and internet so they can access grant activities (3) Chester Youth Collaborative would oversee training, technical assistance and data management (4) College Access Center of Delaware County (5) Crozer Library will lend support to parents to use 10 computers and (6) Transformative Education Associates will provide training in REAL Change.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has demonstrated a high quality plan to support an analysis of needs and gaps.
- (1) Technology Infrastructure - Needs: 125 SMART Boards, projectors and accessories, iPads, PD, more bandwidth, student computers and internet access. Gaps: only 24% of classrooms have SMART Boards, only 382 computers capable of accessing full range of instructional programs and materials, enough for only 12% s's to use at any given time.
- (2) College and Career Development - Needs: career guidance and carer exploration softward programs; partnerships with college access and workforce development centers. Gaps: no formal college and career planning program in place.
- (3) Literacy Enhancement - Needs: personalized software and PD in personalized instruction methodologies. Gaps: CCCS has limited research based literacy resources that support personalized literacy learning environments.
- (4) STEM Achievement - Needs: s's need personalized practice in computational skills as well as problem solving via software and online resources to practice math skills with instant feedback and develop problem solving strategies at their own pace and science instruction with multiple approaches including videos and hands on experiences for learning the vocab and concepts to master grade level content in science. PD for teachers to effectively implement math and science programs and utilize the strategies for personalized learning. Gaps: s's lack foundational knowledge and vocab for grade level science. Math and science teachers are not familiar with strategies to teach Connected Math2, Science Fusion, Foss kits, Skills tutor, and Study Island for personalization.
- (5) Social and Emotional Supports - Needs: social work support for s's and families; PD in conflict resolution for school staff; service learning opportunities for s's. Gaps: lack of sufficient social services staff at CCCS; lack of training for all staff in how to deal effectively with challenges s's face in community; lack of opportunities for s's to collaborate in applying curriculum topics to problems in their own neighborhoods.
- (6) Effective Project Administration - Needs: a fulltime project director with a strong background in ed leadership to ensure the program is implemented with fidelity and in compliance with all federal grant regulations and grant expectations; admin staff and software to track s's through high school and college; consultants to evaluate projects and

create reports of project findings to distribute to all stakeholders as well as a broader base of educators nation wide.
 Gaps: CCCS has limited experience in integrating multiple data elements and tracking elements longitudinally.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has demonstrated a high quality plan to support learning.
- With the support of parents and educators, all s's: (i) understand what they are learning is key to success in accomplishing their goals - all year s's engage in activities that tie what they are learning to real world contexts and careers. The charter school curricula focus on knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for academic achievement, career development, and personal/social growth. (ii) identify and pursue learning and development goals to college and career ready standards - the school parent partnership is designed to engage parents as well as s's in college and career ready planning. Teachers begin every lesson with goals and objectives of the lesson; and s's state their goals; and make connections to how the skill/content relates to real world connections and to personal/career goals. (iii) are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest - all administrators and teachers were trained in concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and began to design learning experiences to provide s's with multiple means of engagement, representation and expression. All charter school curricula are aligned with Common Core State Standards and as such are platforms for incorporating deeper learning at all grade levels. Essential Questions drive instruction and require s's to construct knowledge and to express their learning in original ways. (iv) have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning - classroom libraries, textbooks, chapter books, news magazines, and online resources expose s's to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives on a daily basis. (v) master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem solving: the charter school curricula are aligned to PA and Common Core State Standards and include skills and content needed to success in high school and go on to college. Instructional strategies and objectives are scaffold through the grades to develop skills and traits. Personalized learning offers multiple ways to work towards mastery and flexible thinking with the understanding that the changing workplace requires lifelong learning and acquiring new skills.
- With the support of parents and educators, there is a strategy to ensure that each student has access to: (i) a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable s's to achieve learning goals and ensure they can graduate on time and college and career ready. PD for teachers and administrators to effectively personalize instructional sequences for s's and to promote student engagement; personalized support systems to help every student succeed by removing barriers that get in the way of learning and blended learning so s's have options for learning after school, on field trips, and/or in community programs. The infusion of technology will enable teachers to provide a wide variety of personalized instructional sequences based on s's interest, learning style, classroom assessment data and embedded assessment and feedback loops in some programs. The proposed new strategy involves finding new ways to support and engage s's and to provide all s's with academic assistance they need to achieve their dreams and be prepared for college and careers. (ii) a variety of high quality instructional approaches and environments - (1) define more clearly the skills that lead to college readiness and teach for mastery of the Common Core Standards; (2) provide resources and strategies that help s's master these skills; (3) evaluate progress along the way; (4) differentiate instruction based on the Universal Design for Instruction. (iii) high quality content, including digital learning content aligned with college and career ready standards - the charter school's CLP is designed so that every student will receive literacy instruction which reflects best teaching practices including personalization; be assessed regularly to provide feedback and data for setting goals; receive appropriate interventions and remediation services as needed; learn strategies for reading and communicating complex content area texts and resources; improve performance in reading and math on district and state mandated tests; solve real world math applications at grade level or higher; and develop technology skills. (iv) ongoing and regular feedback - the school is committed to track progress based on interim outcomes, share what is learned with all stakeholders, and adjust tactics based on that knowledge. Results are used to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and measure growth and placement for computer programs and or tutoring groups. The action plans are discussed with principals for their follow up. (v) accommodations and high quality strategies for high need students - pre and post tests will be embedded in computer programs to reteach or advance s's and provide results to teachers, s's and parents online.
- Mechanisms in place to provide training to support s's: s's will produce artifacts that are evaluated for understanding of content knowledge and student proficiency in 21st century skills. S's works that are placed in portfolios or structured e-portfolios provide rich evidence for increasing competence and achievement over time.

Overall, the high quality plan supports learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has a high quality plan for improving leading and teaching that encompasses all participating educators to (a) engage in training, (b) have access to and know how to use tools, data and resources to accelerated student progress toward meeting college and career ready graduation requirements, (c) have training, policies, tools, data and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets student academic needs and accelerates student progress and (d) increase the number of s's who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, and hard to find staff.
- All participating educators engage in training, and in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity to - (i) personalize learning, increase student engagement, student achievement, including: differentiated instruction, project based learning, and strategies for understanding and teaching ELL and IEP s's. (ii) teachers collaborate with other instructional and non instructional staff to adapt content and instruction to provide opportunities for s's to engage in common and individual tasks connected to their academic needs, interests, and optimal learning approaches. (iii) the charter school uses a feedback system that directs teacher instruction, provides goal setting opportunities for s's and informs parents of student performance. Teachers include weekly assessments in plans, create personalized plans 4 times per year to improve each s's performance and discuss it with principals and s's. Administrators provide guidance in analyzing and using data to plan literacy strategies to personalize instruction. S's actively participate in reviewing their performance and setting goals for themselves. (iv) the charter school is using two evaluation systems for teacher effectiveness: Danielson Frameworks and LoTi observations. The systems involve lesson planning, pre conferencing with principals, classroom observation occurs, principals write up evaluation and conference with teacher. If teachers do poorly, steps are taken to support the teacher and remediate the areas of concern. Some teachers are put on a Professional Instructional Plan with the possibility of termination if they do not improve.
- All educators have access to and know how to use tools, data and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college and career ready graduation requirements. (i) all educators attend PD on administering and analyzing results of testing data and can create action plans for reteaching, remediating and accelerating their s's. (ii) the charter school has high quality learning resources including digital resources that are aligned with college and career ready standards. The charter school has textbooks in the content areas, math manipulatives, science labs, and online activities that address a variety of learning styles. Technology has been expanded to accommodate wireless computers. (iii) data from tests, quizzes, observation, student products and parent and student comments enable teachers to match needs to effective resources and approaches.
- School leaders and lead teams have training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs and accelerates student progress through common and individual tasks toward meeting college and career ready standards. (i) the charter school initiated two new teacher evaluation systems that help school leaders and school lead teams assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement. (ii) the charter school training, systems and practices are designed to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps. PD sessions include implementation of higher order thinking and student engagement.
- A high quality plan for increasing the number of s's who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals including hard to staff schools - the selection process is based on standards of No Child Left Behind and the interview process to determine whether the candidate is a good "fit" for the charter school.
- Overall, the applicant has a high quality plan to improve teaching and leading by personalizing the learning environment.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)

Available

Score

15

12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has demonstrated a plan to support practices, policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning.
- The plan will integrate grant funded projects into school and ensuring compliance of all federal guidelines and

expectations.

- It will develop the school schedules and calendars each school year, as well as for school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non educators, and school level budget.
- The plan will implement several practices that give s's the opportunity to progress based on mastery rather than the amount of time spent on a topic, including periodic placement tests, benchmark tests and other formative measures. Some plans include reteaching and advanced work.
- The plan will give standard testing, videos, essays, oral and physical presentations.
- The plan will provide the use of the Universal Design for Learning to s's with disabilities and language barriers.

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

- The applicant has a plan to somewhat support school infrastructure to support personalized learning.
- The plan will ensure all s's, parents, educators and other stakeholders have access to content, tools and other learning resources in and out of school - the charter will institute a new system SunGard E School Plus (student info system) and E-Finance Plus (financial and human resources), Home Access Center and a Teacher Access Center to ensure all s's, parents and educators and other stakeholders, regardless of income, have access to student data both in and out of school.
- The plan will ensure that all s's, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have levels of technical support - the charter school will implement an IT ticket to which everyone will have 24/7 access.
- The plan will use info technology systems that allow parents and s's to export their info in an open data format and make recommendations for additional supports - the charter school's IT systems will allow data to be exported in an open data format that can be used in other electronic learning systems without any required manipulation.
- The plan will ensure the use of an interoperable data system - the charter school will use a data system that meets SIF (Schools Interoperability Framework) criteria. Seamless intergration of a broad spectrum of instructional, administrative and communication tools is essential to effectively address the needs of all stakeholders.
- Overall, the plan will somewhat support the applicant's policy and infrastructure for personalized learning.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has a plan to somewhat support implementing a continuous improvement process. However, It does not provide much rigor.
- The plan states how the project director will monitor all aspects of each project and ensure completion of all project tasks on time and within budget; fidelity of implementation of pedagogy and instructional interventions; and achieve all project goals and performance measures.
- The plan also states that the project director will oversee the monitoring tasks specified in the detailed plan to ensure achievement of all project goals and performance measures. Successfull principles that will be applied to each project include management by objective, whereby each project staff person will be evaluated on quarterly process objectives related to their position; continuous collaboration among project staff the charter school depts under which each project falls; targeted and job embedded PD for all project funded interventions; use of formative assessments - including benchmark tests, surveys, and structured teacher observations - to inform modifications and or interventions as needed; data based decision marking; and communicating and reporting to all stakeholders.
- Overall, the strategy for implementing this continuous improvement plan does not seem to be rigorous enough. It only details what one person, the project director, will do and this process does not necessarily appear to be well thought out or detailed.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has provided strategies for ongoing communication and engagement.
- The project director will be responsible for ongoing communication and engagement of internal and external

stakeholders. This person will meet with central office and building leads at monthly meetings and will provide data to external evaluators to ensure that formative measures are tracked and feedback is used to improve project implementation. The project director will collaborate with all project partners. The social workers will work with the PTA to engage parents in the grant parent activities and ensure that they have access to computers and internet, it not at home, then at the library, the Chester Education Foundation or at other community centers throughout the city.

- The project information will be available to the public via the school's website; and the project director and staff will make presentations at state and national conferences to promote dissemination of best practices.
- The plan does not represent a high quality approach for ongoing communication. It only describes two strategies, one for what the project director will do and two only gives the school website as a resource for information.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has demonstrated evidence to somewhat support the performance measures.
- Performance Measures 1 and 2 (all applicants - a,b) - it provides a baseline and end of year post test grade equivalency score in the vitally important subject of reading comprehension. Teacher and principal effectiveness levels can be measured through their s's growth rates on reading comprehension grade equivalency scores after one year of instruction. GRADE (norm referenced, reseach based reading assessment) assessments also help teachers and principals inform and differentiate reading sub skill instruction, and determine flexible student grouping arrangements based on individual instructional need. It appears that other assessments be given here.
- Performance Measures 3, 4, 5 (all applicants -c) - it provides a baseline and end of year post test grade equivalency score in the virtually important subject of reading sub skills acquisition. Teacher and principal effectiveness levels can be measured through their s's growth rates on reading comprehension grade equivalency scores after one year of instruction. The GRADE assessment also help teachers to inform and differentiate reading sub skills instruction, and help to determine flexible student grouping arrangements based on individual need.
- Performance Measures 6, 7, 8 (PreK - 3) - were selected to monitor student learning and the successful implementation of the plan to personalize learning and performance levels of s's in grades PreK - 3. Education City, online math benchmarks assessments are tied to state standards for each grade level. Education City does not seem to be ambitious enough to use as a benchmark assessment.
- Performance Measure 9 (4-8) - The number and percentage of participating s's, by subgroup, who are on track to college and career readiness based on PSSA in Reading.
- Performance Measure 10 (4-8) - The number and percentage of participating s's, by subgroup, who are on track to college and career readiness based on PSSA in Math.
- Performance Measures 11, 12, 13 (4-8 -b,c) PSSA in Science, Writing and Career Cruising
- Overall, some of the benchmark assessments that are used in the plan do not seem to be ambitious enough.

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

- The applicant has a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of grant funded activities.
- it describes how project director will work with the external evaluators to design a schedule of assessments needed to conduct a complete evaluation of the effectiveness of all grant funded activities. The plan includes external evaluators conduct semi annual and annual evaluations of all activities in terms of fidelity of implementation and related student outcomes. The project director will administer pre and post surveys before and after PD activities to access the impact of the PD. Principals, building directors and staff will conduct observations to identify each teacher's progress in integrating new skills into the classroom.
- it will utlitize the project director to work with the central office business staff to create measures of productive use of time, staff, money and other resources in order to improve results. The project director will work the the central office director of operations to develop credible assessments of productivity in areas such as working with community partners, compensation reform, and modification of school schedules and structures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has demonstrated evidence to support the budget for the project. The rationale is thoughtful and meticulously describes in detail how the funds will support the project.
- The budget identifies all funds that will support the project - the proposed program to personalize learning environments for the charter school's 3,000 plus s's per year for 4 years totals \$16,131,636 with \$10,000,000 from the RTTT-D grant, and \$6,131,636 from other sources (LEA, state, federal and foundations).
- The proposed program is reasonable in that the costs total \$1,344 per student with \$833 per student from the RTTT-D grant and \$511 from other sources. The total budget is sufficient to fund a comprehensive coherent program of services and activities that effectively personalize learning environments through implementation of five critical projects that would (1) significantly enhance the capacity of the charter school's technology infrastructure to adequately support personalized environments for the school's ever growing student population; (2) increase s's much needed college and career awareness and readiness; (3) personalize literacy instruction and improve s's literacy achievement levels; (4) personalize STEM instruction and improve s's proficiency in science, technology, and math and (5) provide a range of appropriate services to s's/families in extreme need of support with social, behavioral, health and emotional issues.
- The rationale for the grant investments and priorities is based on the pressing needs of the school's high need student population, employability skills, increased literacy levels, improved STEM achievement levels, and greater resilience in face of poverty and violent crime. (i) all funds total \$16,131,636; (ii) one time investments total \$5,899,213; ongoing operational costs total \$10,232,423. Costs to sustain the program in years 5-7 total \$1,999,984.

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

10

10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant has a high quality plan for sustainability of project goals through the use of 6 project goals.
- Project #1 - Technology Infrastructure: The charter school will need to sustain the 2 IT specialist positions after the conclusion of the fourth year of the grant and will need to maintain student laptops, iPads and SMART Boards purchased with grant funds. In order to do so, the school will pay with local funding source revenue.
- Project #2 - College and Career Development: The school will need to sustain two counselors, multi media video licenses and will do so with local funding source revenue.
- Project #3 - Literacy Enhancement: the school will need to sustain the cost for supplies, licenses and assessments and PD and will do so with local funding source revenue.
- Project #4 - STEM Achievement: the school will need to sustain 2 science specialist positions, supplies for the STEM Achievement project and contractual costs for consultants and tutoring and will do so with local funding source revenue.
- Project #5 - Social & Emotional Supports: the school will need to sustain 2 social worker positions and will do so with local funding source revenue.
- Project #6 - Project Administration: the project director position will be assumed by central office academic leadership personnel; data management will be responsibility of director of operations and data analysis will be assigned to senior director assessment and accountability.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

- The information presented will somewhat support integrating public or private resources in a partnership.
- Due to the crisis of youth violence and loss of life in Chester on a continuous basis, the Crozer/Keystone Medical System, Chester Youth Collaborative and Transformative Education Associates designed a social intervention project. This method is used to engage the community in a unique dialogue that moves towards collective transformative actions. These partners proposed a new pre intervention approach to community engagement around the issues of violence. This different approach engaged members of the community at various levels (decision makers, professionals, residents and youth) in a year long dialogue process which shifted participants' perceptions about conflict and violence for a recent newspaper article. The process that evolved, R.E.A.L. (Resolving, Evolving, Affirming, Life) Change uses key elements of the Transformational Social Therapy process to address the issue of chronic violence.
- The charter school's professional development project is an intervention inspired by key principles of the Transformational Social Therapy process. This PD is a process for facilitating the development of people in the

educational and social environment to affect institutional change.

- There are two general aims for the evaluation of this project: (a) to document and evaluate the outcomes of this process in coordination with other school initiatives. (b) use the data to target its resources: to understand how trust is developed across borders of race, class, power and authority in an urban school context. (c) strategy to scale the model beyond the participating s's: this project provides an opportunity to evaluate aspects of the TST process as a facilitation method for school community relations, as well as an opportunity to learn which processes affect student-teacher interactions and achievement outcomes. (d) improve results over time: data from this evaluation will be used to assess processes and outcomes that are beneficial to the school community and other urban public school which could inform bet engagement and assessment strategies for student academic achievement outcomes.
- The proposed professional development program would be provided to teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff. These adults would learn how to better establish an environment of trust, identify indicators of student traumas, foster resilience among s's and adult peers, and identify strategies for teaching their peers to use these methods as well. The goal is for this process to transform the Chester community from one known for violence and trauma to one known for peace and well being.
- The partnership between Transformative Education Associates and the charter school would build the capacity of staff through the Personal Professional Development Plan. The program includes six weekend sessions plus coaching as follow up to the sessions and is designed to provide participants with tools and supports to (a) assess the needs and assets of s's by learning to understand concepts of emotional intelligence and self in the context of diversity in an urban setting; (b) identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community through greater understanding of our personal and professional masks in the context of group process and the social environment; (c) create a decision making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating s's and support improved results through and understanding of education and systems change, and learning to foster resilience and leadership in peers and s's; (d) engage parents and families in both decision making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs through training in how to identify strategies for effective development of groups to facilitate the REAL Change process with peers; and (e) routinely assess the school's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems by providing coaching after each seminar and through ongoing diaglogue over the life of the grant period.
- Annual performance measures would include both qualitative measures to be developed by the groups who take part in the REAL Change process that define the group's understanding of (a) indicators of levels of trust; (b) indicators of trauma; (c) processes for fostering resilience and leadership competency; and (4) strategies for effective development of groups to facilitate proess with peers.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

- The information presented throughout the applicant's plan addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments to improve learning and teaching, accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning, increase effectiveness of educators, expand access to the most effective educators and decrease achievement gaps across student groups and increase rates at which s's graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.
- Chester Community Charter School was founded as an educational reform initiative with the mission of empowering s's as learners through the development of a dynamic learning community. To accomplish this, the school engages parents and s's in a partnership with the schhol and they work together to continuously improve educational programs and services to best meet the wide range of academic needs and aspirations of all s's.
- The shared vision is to help each student develop the necessary academic, social, and emotional skill set and knowledge so that, upon exiting the 8th grade, s's become a successful high school student, committed to a personal goal of being college and career ready when s's graduate from high school.
- The charter school reform plan includes visionary leadership, a strong leadership team, clear measures of accountability, an effective professional infrastructure and ongoing support of principal and teacher development. The foundation for effective reform at the charter school is its strong program of PD built on (a) commitment of time reserved for PD; (b) training in research based programs that accelerate learning for s's with a wide range of abilities and special needs; (c) a personnel infrastructure designed to maximize regular meetings of grade level teams; and (d) ongoing, job embedded coaching.

When the charter school opened in 1998, 90% of s's in the local public schools scored in the bottom quartile on standardized tests in reading and math; and disruptive student behavior was common. Since then, the charter school has significantly improved multiple student learning outcomes for children in Chester, PA, including academic achievement levels, achievement gaps for s's from racial/ethnic minority groups, student behavior, and high school readiness. The charter school has an impressive record of reforms, equity in learning and teaching and a culture of student data sharing.

Total	210	177
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