



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0547MO-1 for Blue Springs R-IV School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant adequately laid out the fundamental principles that guide the Learning Alliance Consortium (comprised of four school districts) serving 20,000 students). The LAC's approach intends to transform learning by implementing "a personalized model of learning" that is more student-centered and customized in order to better engage, motivate, and prepare students to be career and college ready. In addition to being focused on improving student performance, the LAC's approach represents a fundamental, holistic shift in the way learning occurs. Their vision builds on its work in the core educational assurance areas, but does not provide a clear approach to increasing equity across sub-groups and schools. Improved evaluation systems are envisioned for for teachers, but there was no mention of improving the practices of principals and superintendents. The response to this selective criterion was very brief, but fortunately, the vision of comprehensive reform was communicated throughout the proposal which helped the score for this section.</p> <p>Overall, this response scores in the high end of the middle range.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant acknowledged and provided evidence that all the schools selected for this grant collectively meet the eligibility requirements and provided a tables showing percentages at each school. There was a slight omission on page 4 where the intent was to tell the reviewer where to see this information was missing, but the tables were labeled and easy to find beginning page 12. It appears that one school district, Blue Hills, did not have at least 40% of students from low income families when the data was collected. it would have been helpful, (but not required) to show the final calculation averaging across school meets the 40% threshold eligibility.</p> <p>This criterion was scored very high.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant reported more details about what makes their plan a high quality plan and processes and structures that will encourage all participating LAC schools to benefit from this grant. There was no mention in this section as to how the LAC would support scale up of the proposed reforms to support change beyond the participating schools to influence student learning outcomes within each district. The applicant receives a lower score for not addressing thow the grant will translate beyond the participating schools to LEA-wide reform and change in each of the four districts.</p> <p>The applicant receives a poor score for this criterion.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant lays out in detail their goals, activities, timeline, and responsible parties to achieve improved student outcomes in this section. Ambitious, but achievable goals by year in each district are displayed in tables in all five areas. Performance deficits are identified for each subgroup, along with a incremental increase in achievement or incremental deduction in achievement gap targets from the initial baseline score through one year past the grant. The applicant proposes a standardized growth rate for all subgroups and content areas in every school with no explanation of how this will close the achevement gap which reduced the score..</p>		

An overview of LAC’s “Pyramid of Personalization framework to achieve the goals was a strength, along with acknowledgement that a big challenge in this process will be meshing attributes of distinct programs into a coherent, coordinated, manageable system of support that results in personalized learning.

The applicant scores in the high range for this criterion.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LAC identified initiatives that have records of success as well as reform efforts currently underway that look promising. Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue Springs has been honored by the state for its embedded professional development model and their reading program has been visited by over 500 educators. Significant record of success in the past 12 years in advancing student learning and increasing equity. • Center H.S., with a high percentage of low income student has improved steadily in meeting standards for accreditation and achieved 14/14 in 2012. Center was named a Missouri Gold Star School in Spring 2012. They have instituted 8th grade Algebra for all students the past five years and scored 78% last year. They have also been honored by the State for an upward trend in Communications and Math the past 5 years. • Grandview has a robust instructional management system. They have seen significant increases in math in 2011-2012 at several grade levels. • Hickman Mills SD is provisionally accredited and is implementing a transformational reform model that has promising indicators such as increased parent attendance by 76% and a data team process for determining intervention strategies used by 95% of the content area teams in its first year. <p>The applicant appears to be on a trajectory of improvement in persistently low schools during the past year, but there is no clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning across all of the schools. Applicant notes that the different districts working together will be able to draw from and share their successes. They have previously worked together on collaborative projects, suggesting they will be able to successfully do this again.</p> <p>It is not clear how student performance data will be made available to students and parents in ways that not only inform, but also improve participation, instruction, and services.</p> <p>Overall, this selection criteria receive a low end of the high range score.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It was reported that the Learning Alliance School Districts all follow the same processes, practices, and investment. Budget documents are reviewed in open meetings with the Board of Education.</p> <p>The three categories of personnel salaries as well as non personnel expenditures were presented for each district. They were arrived by compiling salary expenditures by school building and following the exclusions per the US census F33 survey. School Finance Data will be publicly posted on the Learning Alliance website.</p> <p>This criterion was successfully met.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All districts in The Learning Alliance have successfully met conditions and shown sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized environment proposed. Evidence was provided to show ways in which the state of Missouri provides and supports district flexibility in personalization. For example, the Learning Alliance districts work under the same regulations for state subsidized “A+ School Programs” which requires that the LEAs have the capability to personalize all students’</p>		

learning.

Criterion was met.

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

10

9

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates stakeholder engagement and support for the proposal, entitled the “Personalized Learning Initiative.” Teachers, instructional coaches, building administrators, and central office administrators from the four participating school districts met together as the Leadership Committee to propose, plan, and submit this grant application. At the district level, discussions were held with School Improvement Program stakeholder committees and teacher representatives to discuss the potential benefits and challenges if implementing personalized learning environments and how staff could be impacted and discuss instructional supports, and the data management system. All districts received approval from their respective Boards of education and cabinet level leadership teams. Letters from support from key stakeholders are provided from all of the districts. There was no evidence of feedback from student groups. If the grant is awarded, more informational presentations and planning meetings with stakeholder groups are planned. Signatures were provided by the local Teachers’ Union.

Criterion scored highly.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant expresses clear recognition of the significant shift this work signifies in overcoming unaffordable resource limitations that have inhibited truly personalized learning from being deliverable at scale. The applicant suggests that the participating school districts have some significant gaps related to meeting the ambitious goals for all students proposed and that funding will support the closure of the some of these gaps. Specific gaps and solutions identified here include:

- Expanding the range of learning and data management options available to schools. Compatible student management systems will allow the districts to pool information and establish shared expertise to capture and warehouse pedagogical talent such as effective lessons and assessments.
- Data pooling will also enable districts to increase accountability via expanded monitoring, better understanding of performance trends, subsequently, provide more directed targeting of areas in need of improvement.
- To effectively improve the personalized learning process data tracking must be improved and highly qualified staff, including Instructional Technology coaches at each school to work with teachers and a Data Analyst Coordinator to support each district in their purchase and use of a new robust data system must be made available. This section addressed a few needs and gaps that the proposed grant will support, but more needs and gaps, particularly across different schools and populations could have been presented.

The criterion was scored in the middle range

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant carefully presented this criterion to address its multiple components, labeling each sub criteria (e.g., (C”(1)(a)(iii)) and referencing the page number for the budget to support the work. Thank you! It is evident that the applicant has a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements. Each aspect specified in this criterion was addressed, included a detail budget, and an implementation plan with timelines. A few highlights from this section include:

- Each student in the LAC will develop a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) and set goals. Both students and teachers will be trained to implement this from grades K-12. PLPs. Will include three components, each described in detail: Career Awareness with examples how careers will be introduced in a variety of ways, Goal setting at least once a semester through a shared electronic platform, Responsibility for their own learning using a gradual release of teacher responsibility model and alternative delivery approaches.

Teachers and students will be taught to work in ongoing and regular feedback loops based upon instructional evidence so students can monitor their growth and performance.

The applicant receives the full score for this criterion.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	19
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an approach to help educators improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress by enabling full implementation of personalized learning and teaching for all students in the four LEAs. The applicant carefully presented this criterion to address its multiple components, labeling each sub criteria (e.g., (C)(2)(a)(iii)) and referencing the page number for the budget to support the work. Each aspect specified in this criterion was addressed, included a detail budget, and an implementation plan with timelines. A few highlights from this section include:

- A belief across the four LAC districts that personalized learning offers the possibility to address present educational challenges and goals and ensure equity for all students and stronger engagement so they can achieve at higher levels to be college and career ready exists. All the districts offer comprehensive professional development to improve instruction through vertically-aligned teacher teams facilitated by instructional coaches, and teacher cadres that work across disciplines and grade levels.
- Acknowledgement that the changing role of the teacher is critical to achieving the authentic, student-centered approach required for personalized learning and will require ongoing and sustainable professional development. LAC performance-based teacher evaluation systems are structured so continual and frequent feedback on instructional practice will be provided. Teachers who need improvement will receive support from resources such as instructional coaches.
- The revised Missouri Educator Evaluation System is built on tenets that include an evaluation system that focuses on the formative development of teachers and leaders and includes a professional continuum that articulates how educator knowledge and skills develop and mature.

The applicant did an excellent job of addressing this criterion. The reviewer could only find one item that might be slightly improved. The narrative response to C(3)(d) did not specifically address how hard to staff schools, subjects and specialty areas would be addressed. The narrative suggests that all teachers in the four participating districts will receive individualized support as needed and the budget notes that there is a summer STEM Institute.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has organized a consortium governance structure to provide support and services to the participating schools. Each participating school will have a Leadership Team whose decisions (which could affect schedule adjustments, educator's assignments, assemblies, school level budgets, etc.) will impact the implementation of the grant.

- One LEA, Blue Springs will be the Lead LEA and the budget includes a Project Coordinator.
- A project Leadership Committee across schools, composed of principals, CFO's, superintendents, board members, the data technology coordinator, and an outside evaluator, and coaches and HR will meet monthly.
- An Advisory team, with additional stakeholders such as students, parents, and businesses will meet three times a year.
- As already explained, students will be given the opportunity to progress and earn credit on demonstrated mastery of standards at multiple times and multiple ways and all learning resources and instructional practices will be fully accessible to all students, including those with disabilities and English learners.

Letters of support and a table showing what tasks will be done each month, which person or team will be involved, and a benchmark for completion is included.

The applicant receives a high score for this criterion

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

The school infrastructures at each LEA will ensure that all participating students, parents, educators and other stakeholders have access to necessary content, tools and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal.

- Several strategies to ensure that students, parents, and educators have access to technical support will be provided. These include Honors Society students providing one-on-one help and a converted school bus, with wireless computers and handicap access, making stops in the community.
- Information technology will allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and for students to retrieve their history of performance as well as their college and career portfolios. Multiple data retrieval systems will enable all data areas to be compared.

The applicant receives a high score for this criterion

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has designed a thorough strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. In order to monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of investments funded by the grant, the LAC will contract with an independent outside evaluation organization (at \$100,000 per year) to conduct both a formative/process and summative/outcome review throughout and after the term of the grant. The selected contractor will serve as a partner member and meet with LAC grant supervisors on a monthly basis. The contractor will foster communication among partner districts, facilitate data decision making, and support the use of data for continuous program improvement. As part of the formative evaluation, the contractor will work with staff to provide timely feedback based on a discrepancy model, which compares the expected progress of project activities against the timeline presented in the proposal. Fidelity of implementation and the degree of growth and progress attained by students to the stated LAC goals will be assessed annually.</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates that a continuous improvement process is planned and receives the full score.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant will be in monthly communication with the LAC grant supervisors and an annual evaluation report conducted during each school year and subsequent school term will be used to communicate progress and make adjustments. Upon award and on an ongoing basis, LAC districts will seek input from project stakeholders and partners to refine the scope and identify details related to the formative and summative evaluation plan. Data information will be used by stakeholders to monitor, interpret, report, and disseminate details related to annual performance and for planning a course of action to drive necessary improvement initiatives.</p> <p>The criterion for ongoing communication and engagement was met.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal presents ambitious, yet achievable performance measures by subgroup with annual targets for performance. The five standards and twelve indicators required by the Missouri DESE and MSIP are set forth with baseline as well as target performance for each year and one year post-grant. Data will be reviewed continuously by the four LAC districts in comparison to the goals targeted for implementation through this grant proposal. An incremental increase of 3%, 5%, 7%, and 10% respectively from the initial baseline score is to be achieved over four years in relation to the four identified goals. Target performance measures were not presented for Blue Springs or Hickman Hills School Districts, and performance for d and e were missing from some districts.</p> <p>This criterion was rated mid range for being incomplete.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The summative/outcome evaluation provided by the contracted organization will annually and longitudinally analyze data that demonstrates the extent to which the LAC is meeting its stated goals. A thorough investigation of outcome measures will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTT-D funding. For example:

- The direct and indirect impacts of professional development will be estimated for their effects on changes in teachers' pedagogy and for their effects on student achievement.
- Changes in district-level standards and curriculum, professional development practices (particularly coaching and mentoring), and the formation of a cadre of teacher leaders and a collaborative professional community will be examined as an outcome.
- Analysis will include assessment of student progress by district, school, grade level and content area.
- Student achievement will be measured from a variety of perspectives including a value-added design to estimate project impacts on instructional practices by controlling statistically for baseline scores and other background characteristics.

The applicant met the selection criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of investments.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's budget, including budget narrative and tables, identifies funds that will support the RTT project, and seems reasonable and sufficient to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. It is clear which funds are for one-time investments and those that will be used for ongoing operational costs during the grant period. The budget identifies the criteria associated with each broad budget category (i. e., personnel, fringe benefits, supplies).

- The budget narrative supports a thoughtful rationale for the purchases. E.g.: Software purchases and the cart. "Software to be purchased provides for rigor, differentiated instruction, practice and progress at students' own rates, and supports remediation and enrichment that aligns with the common core....Computer table sync cart - Will enable software/apps to be loaded at the district level, maintain charge, and increase security....Stylus for tablets - Required for State Common Core assessments."
- Only significant problem found was that the budget showing revenue from local funds, state funds, and federal programs reported for only the Blue Springs School District which is the Lead LEA providing the Project Director. The narrative does not show funds coming from the other participating Districts and from Foundations. If follow-up is done, this should be requested.

The budget was scored in the high range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The budget narrative does not address what strategies will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments. The criteria received one point because the narrative notes that the grant will have some Blue Springs District funds committed to sustain the work, but it is not specific.

The selection criterion was scored very low.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

There is minimal evidence in the proposal of integrating public or private resources in a partnership to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to support the special needs of high-need students. The only evidence that may qualify is as follows. There was no description of data being collected to understand the results for students and how to improve them.

- Center School District entered into a partnership with a non-profit organization in the 2011-12 school year called College For Every Student, CFES, that raises the academic aspirations and performance of low-income youth so that they can prepare for, gain access to, and succeed in college. Targeted students, known as CFES Scholars, are low-income youth, most of whom would be first in their family to pursue higher education. Center currently implements the CFES program in all secondary schools.

The competitive preference priority was not achieved.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant successfully addressed Absolute Priority 1 in its responses to the selection criteria. It coherently and comprehensively addressed how the four districts in the Learning Alliance Consortium would try to create more personalized learning environments designed to significantly improve student learning aligned with college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements.

Total	210	167
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0547MO-2 for Blue Springs R-IV School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant presents a clear vision of a comprehensive and coherent reform summarized in 2 guiding principles.

- All students can succeed if the educational path, curriculum, instruction, and schedule are personalized to their needs.
- Achievement for all students requires focused support and an assortment of resources and strategies.

Weaknesses:

Application needs more examples about how these principles would accelerate or deepen student learning as well as increase equity among various populations of students.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Applicant provides a clear statement that the project will consist of a consortium of 4 school districts all of whom meet the 40% free or reduced lunch subsidy threshold.</p> <p>Applicant provides complete tables listing specific school demographic information at the end of the narrative responses.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>The application is missing a discussion of the process that the applicant used to identify consortium members. A list of the schools from each district that will participate in the project is needed to allow clarity for the table data presented.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>The applicant provided a high quality plan for meaningful reform, cited clear and specific theories of change and provided logic models which will serve as the basis for the reform model. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fullan's 4 phases of the change process: initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome. • 7 Themes of successful practice: change is learning; change is a journey, not a blueprint; problems are our friends; change is resource hungry, change requires the power to manage it; change is systematic; all large-scale change is implemented locally. • Theorists used: DuFour's PLCs; Marzano's classroom instruction and management strategies; Culham, Keene and Tovani on literacy; Tomlinson and McTige's differentiated instruction and Fiend's co-teaching model. • Three tiered Pyramid of personalization • Modifications of existing evaluation systems, professional development, coaching and meaningful supervision. <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>The application is missing a detailed discussion on how the plan will be scaled up over the course of the project.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>The applicant provided specific goals for improved student performance but provided the same goals for each member school. Although the specific baseline data for each goal was provided on accompanying charts, the same performance goals of 3%, 5%, 67% and 10% annual growth were identified for all categories of student growth both for subgroups and for various schools irrespective of baseline starting points. The application would have been strengthened by considering the specific baseline data and establishing improvement targets that were more aligned to the baseline data for each school and subpopulation.</p> <p>Applicant has identified an ambitious vision which is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increase equity within the populations served by consortium member schools. Applicant has included timelines, responsible parties and a clear list of project deliverables.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>Applicant did not address student achievement gaps by population and how gaps between subgroups will be reduced or eliminated.</p> <p>Baseline performance of subgroups varied between subpopulations by as much as by as much as 60 percentage points. A single growth expectation of 3% or 5% may or may not be a reasonable target. Some groups may need higher targets to close clearly existing achievement gaps.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>The applicant has provided clear and specific evidence that the member LEA's have a record of improving student performance, increasing college and career services to students and enabling students to attend college classes while still in high school. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting state accreditation standards or making significant progress in so doing • Partnerships with outside organizations that provide support services • Honors received by member districts for programming • Receipt of other federal grants which have been successfully implemented. • Increased student achievement on state assessments • Recognition of member schools as Department of Education Blue Ribbon Schools <p>The applicant provides evidence such as the closing schools and/or consolidation of low performing schools that member districts have taken significant steps to reform their lower performing schools.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence of the member district's success in specifically targeting or closing gaps between subpopulations within each district</p> <p>Applicant does not provide consistent evidence of performance or a "track record" over a 4 year time frame with charts, graphs or raw data.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide a clear discussion about how the graduation rates have may have changed in participating districts over time.</p> <p>While some information is provided for some member districts, the applicant does not provide a consistent discussion of how student performance data is made available to students, educators or parents in all member school districts.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>Applicant provides strong evidence of public transparency with expenditures for instruction, instructional support, pupil support and administration by school level. Evidence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budget documents reviewed in open meetings with the Board of Education • expenditures tracked by function level • public hearings held on tax levies • annually submits an Annual Secretary of the Board Report to the Missouri Dept. of Elem and Secondary Ed (state posts online for public viewing) • annual audits conducted by outside CPA firms • school Finance data provided for personnel salary information compiled by school building per US Census F33 survey • copies of budget information included in appendix <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>No weaknesses noted in this section.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths:</p>		

Applicant has provided detailed evidence to support the claim of successful conditions being present for the establishment of personalized learning environments within the Learning Alliance Consortium and that the applicant has legal autonomy under state legal, statutory and regulatory requirements to implement such a plan. Evidence includes:

- Missouri State accreditation and review is undertaken for all member districts.
- monitoring by the state Improvement Unit of student achievement, attendance, graduation rates, ACT score, Armed Service AP, Vocational Battery and proficiency scores and technical skills assessments for all vocational programs.
- state grants credit for personalized learning through virtual instruction CSR--20-100.220.
- Learning Alliance organization meets requirements for state A+ funding programs to enable students to have the first 2 years of college tuition paid by the A+ grant.
- state allows districts to grant credit and create alternative schedules for personalized learning when needed.

Weaknesses:

None noted in this section.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

Applicant states that the project was designed with the involvement of key personnel including teachers, coaches, building level administrators, superintendents and central office administrators from the 4 participating school districts.

Applicant has submitted a large number of letters of support from key stakeholders such as parent organizations, business leaders, government organizations, colleges, parent organizations, teacher leadership groups and content experts.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not state whether the participating LEA's have or do not have collective bargaining representation.

Applicant has included only one letter from a teacher organization from Blue Springs School District. Therefore, it is unclear whether the consortium has the support from the other member district teachers to implement this project.

The applicant does not discuss how the application was reviewed or revised after it was written as a result of review by the wider stakeholder group.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

Applicant provides a thorough discussion of the changes and learning management support plan needed by the organization to successfully implement personalized learning environments within the consortium. Evidence provided includes the need for:

- compatible student management systems to allow for the pooling and tracking of data.
- an instructional technology coach to train teachers to use the system.
- a data analyst coordinator to help teachers use the student performance data to maximize and customize student learning

Weaknesses:

None noted in this section.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provides a high quality plan for improving teaching and learning through a personalized learning environment. Evidence of quality includes:

- e-portfolios beginning in kindergarten
- personalized Learning plans (PLP) for all students
- college and career readiness coaches who provide opportunities to connect to career choices
- career awareness activities that include exposure to specific career paths
- goal setting sessions with participation by students, parents and teachers,
- a shared electronic platform to discuss goal related activities, steps and results
- student responsibility for their own learning
- teacher consideration of the best ways that students learn, process and store knowledge
- high quality content to meet diverse student needs (English language, gifted, Special Ed, etc.)

Weaknesses:

The application lacks a comprehensive discussion about how teachers would use frequently updated assessment data and student goal attainment to plan instructional experiences and engage students in deeper learning.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant has a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching and provides a clear description of how educators will increase their capacity to support student progress on meeting college and career ready standards. Evidence includes:

- comprehensive teacher pd that improves instruction in core/essential skills, helps teachers differentiate instruction for various types of students and their needs
- understand how to work collaboratively both horizontally within the team and vertically across the grades
- provides wide variety of ways for students to work both individually as well as collaboratively within and outside of the regular school day
- identify career interests and help students identify appropriate paths to their career goals
- outlines a clear plan for how data will be used to inform teachers and parents about student progress and practice.
- supports teachers who need improvement with instructional coaches or specialists
- actionable information such as the usage of pre and post assessments as well as ongoing benchmarking assessment to identify optimal learning to match individual student academic needs and interests.
- system controls to ensure that teachers can monitor and have control over the content students receive
- ongoing teacher coaching, mentoring, collaboration and peer support to develop and capture model of excellence.

Weaknesses:

None noted in this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant identifies policies that show strong input and leadership from educators and stakeholders into the oversight of the proposed project.

- project is organized with an oversight committee and a project director

- LEA leadership teams will be in place at each site
- project has an advisory team of key stakeholders who review data and provide feedback on a regular basis.
- well organized plan.

Weaknesses:

None noted in this section.

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

10

8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant identifies policies and infrastructure as part of their high quality plan that supports personalized learning.

Evidence provided includes:

- innovations in place such as a converted, handicapped accessible school bus with technology and wireless connectivity to take learning to the learner
- flexibility provided to site leadership teams to organize their buildings for success
- well defined roles and responsibilities for all aspects of the project
- inclusion of both formative as well as summative data
- progress based on mastery rather than time
- multiple ways to demonstrate mastery of standards with various approaches to meet diverse student needs
- access to appropriate technical support such as tutoring, peer tutors, online support, and personalization of software to learning styles.
- frequent feedback and progress monitoring of the project with 6 week progress reports provided to superintendents and governing boards.

Applicant has provided a well-defined and detailed timeline which includes dates, tasks to be accomplished, responsible party for completion of the task and benchmark data to be monitored for project success.

Weaknesses:

The applicant's did not address how the multiple data systems used across the 4 school districts would be interoperable to include human resources data, student information data, budget data and instructional improvement data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant outlines a rigorous, continuous and thorough process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward meeting project goals both during and at the conclusion of the project.

The applicant addresses how they will monitor, and measure information on the project. Evidence provided includes:

- contracting with the independent outside evaluation organization
- establishing formative/process and summative/outcome evaluation measures
- inclusion of indicators, data sources, timelines of data collection
- input from partners and key personnel to refine the scope and details of the formative and summative evaluation
- advisory board meetings on a monthly basis
- inclusion of observations, interviews, surveys, teacher evaluations of PD, participation counts, student testing and assessment data, student graduation rates, and post secondary education and rates
- preparation of annual reports to guide continues efforts final evaluation reports
- formative and summative outcome evaluations
- a focus on continuous improvement

- disaggregation of data by district, school, grade level, content area, demographics, racial/ethnic group, ELL populations, special education populations and low income status

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not include a discussion of how the organization will share results and data with a wider stakeholder group beyond the consortium members and the outside evaluator.

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

Strengths:

Applicant has outlined a strong plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal stakeholders. Evidence includes:

- advisory board meetings on a monthly basis
- contractor facilitation of communication among partnering districts
- preparation of annual evaluation reports and progress monitoring reports for internal stakeholders
- value added design to determine project impact on student learning for communication to district sites

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address how the organization will share results and data with external stakeholders.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

Applicant has outlined appropriate performance measures for all groups as specified. Evidence of performance measures include graphs and data on:

- number and percent of students whose teachers and principals are rated highly effective
- number and percent of students whose teachers and principals are rated effective
- increases in student achievement growth by grade bands or subject
- growth of 150 or more lexile points within a school year in reading as highly effective teaching
- growth of 50-149 lexile points within a school year in reading as effective teaching
- assessment data including Terra Nova and SRI lexile scores
- SAP student assistance program data
- number and percentage of students, by subgroup, who are on track to college and career readiness as determined by lexile SRI scores
- Students who did not receive counseling referrals for grades, attendance and discipline issues
- high school credits earned
- completion of college FAFSA forms
- ACT scores in English, math and science
- number and percentage of students, by subgroup, who are on track to college and career readiness.
- students who received individual counseling for college/career readiness and credit reviews

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide complete data for all schools such as Hickman Mills School District and Grandview School District in this section. No subgroup data on counseling referrals provided for Hickman Mills School District.

The applicant did not describe rationale for selecting measures, detail information on how measures will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan or theory of action.

The applicant did not describe how the consortium will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant has an adequate plan to measure the impact of professional development on participating teachers with regard to increasing instructional effectiveness. The project uses both formative as well as summative data to determine effectiveness.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address measures to improve use of technology, how it will determine more productive use of time, staff, money, or other resources.

The applicant did not address measures to improve working with community partners, or how it might address issues such as compensation reform, and modification of school schedules, structures, service delivery or operation of site leadership teams.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant budget identifies both single use as well as ongoing expenses and appears reasonable and sufficient to carry out the project proposed.

The applicant provides a detailed and comprehensive narrative of the funding needs of the project.

The applicant details plans for support of the operational costs of the project including data specialists for managing data, infrastructure including band width, servers, interventionists and instruction technology coaches after the conclusion of funding period.

Weaknesses:

The application does not provide a discussion about how the project will be sustained after the grant period is completed.

The application lacks sufficient details about how funds in various categories would be used.

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

10

1

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant states that the Blue Springs School District has fiscal capacity and willingness to support the elements of the grant after the funding period ends.

Weaknesses:

The application does not include a high quality plan for sustainability beyond the grant period. There is neither discussion of support from state and local government leaders nor discussion of possible financial support from other potential sources that

could help maintain and possibly expand the project after the conclusion of the project funding period.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: None provided.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>The applicant has presented a coherent and comprehensive plan to build on the core educational assurance areas to create productive learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools and supports for students and teachers. Evidence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a well coordinated plan to oversee the activities of 4 consortium school districts • prior history of success in the member districts • plans include elements to address growth of students, professional development for teachers and system technological capacity • plans include strong elements of support for students, teachers and project staff • project goals and objectives align with absolute priorities • reasonable timelines and well-defined action steps <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>The application did not provide specific strategies to reduce performance gaps between racial and ethnic groups within the populations of each school district.</p> <p>The application did not include a detailed plan for defining paths to long-term sustainability after the conclusion of grant funding and for long-term communication with stakeholders outside the district.</p> <p>The application does not have clear letters of commitment from teacher organizations in each of the 4 participating school districts.</p>		

Total	210	158
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0547MO-3 for Blue Springs R-IV School District



A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LAC provides both a global philosophy as well as addressing specifics of the overall vision. Recruiting teachers and principals and turning around low-achieving schools are less thoroughly addressed. The vision is comprehensive and articulates the proposal’s approach. However, the LAC fails to justify its standards and assessments that prepare students for college, careers, and global competition; explain specifically how it will build data systems to inform educators about improving instruction; describe how they will recruit and retain effective educators, and the LAC proposal does not fully address turning around low performing schools</p> <p>This lack of specificity detracts from the credibility of the LAC approach, and earns a lower-sided high score for this section.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LAC provides charts for each participating school but does not provide a narrative that fully explains the process that the LAC used to select these schools and the grade level bands upon which they will focus. Eligibility requirements are clearly met, and the total numbers of participants is broken down into all required elements at each participating school. Data for this section is fully met, but the lack of a fully explanatory narrative detracts from the score.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LAC does provide a plan that includes the components of a high quality plan, without clarifying exactly how the plan scales up to address those schools/teachers/students not participating in RttT-D. The components of the LAC plan don’t actually align with each other. For example, the LAC lists activities (although an activity such as “differentiate instruction” is rather global), but the timeline addresses grade levels that will be focused on in differing years of the grant program rather than a timeline associated with the listed activities. This plan will be of moderate helpfulness in assisting the LAC to improve student learning outcomes. This results in a medium score for this section.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LAC shows the same proficiency improvement, 3%, 5%, 7%, and 10%, for all subgroups at each grade level at every school in every measure. These goals will not decrease gaps, but will simply</p>		

maintain the gaps. In some subgroups, this level of improvement will not equal or exceed State targets after four years of RtT-D funding. Variability of subgroup baseline data also shows inconsistencies. Section merits a medium score.

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	6
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: The LAC does not provide charts for prior years. They provide a narrative about school improvement efforts in each of the consortium's four LEAs, and do mention some general areas of improvement. The lack of any charts, graphs, or raw data makes it difficult to determine actual evidence about capacity to improve student learning or close gaps. The LAC proposal does assert improved achievement, graduation, and college enrollment, but fails to provide tangible evidence. There is brief reference to one low performing school, and no specific discussion of lowest-achieving schools. The proposal does discuss improved availability of data, particularly in terms of its use in improving student outcomes. This section merits a low medium score.		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The LAC makes this information available to the public at local libraries plus a state website, and proposes to share it on an LAC website. This information hasn't been as transparent in the past as the LAC now proposes. It is not clear that this improvement in transparency will address each of the four categories of school-level expenditures. This section merits a moderately high score.		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The LAC shows not only sufficient LEA autonomy, it also links the proposed personalized learning environment initiatives to specific areas of and evidence for autonomy. For example, the LAC provides a copy of the MO Schools Improvement Program and describes how their proposed personalized learning environment will fit within that plan. The LAC also describes the statutory authority for the virtual academy that they're proposing. They go on to align their component projects with state regulations, demonstrating the conditions and autonomy that would allow them to implement these proposed projects. This rates a high score.		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: Extensive letters of support, to include teacher and parent groups. Educator groups signed the assurances. It's unclear that students and families provided feedback in revising the proposal. Multiple key stakeholders have provided letters of support. This section merits a high score.		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: The LAC does not address most of the components of a high quality plan for analyzing current status. It does provide a narrative discussion of learning management systems and supports that their proposal includes. This could be considered to globally address the activities component of a high quality plan. This narrative does not address an analysis of needs and gaps in current implementation status, and		

merits a low medium score for this section.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LAC provides extensive narrative outlining its intent and rationale for Personalized Learning Plans and an ePortfolio for every participating student, along with the professional development and digital tools to support instruction and assessment related to each child’s plan. The plan for the individualized ePortfolios is particularly noteworthy, as is the plan for moving the responsibility for learning to the students themselves, incorporating high quality PD for educators as well as age-appropriate, technology-assisted transitions for students. The extended learning opportunities such as Scholar Saturdays and Summer STEM Camps help account for differentiated student needs. The plan in the Appendix addresses activities, timeline, deliverables, & responsible parties. It fully addresses student responsibility for and appreciation of learning goals along with aligned learning opportunities and tailored continuous improvement. Parent and instructional support involvement is clearly outlined. The plan for the individualized ePortfolios is particularly noteworthy, as is the plan for moving the responsibility for learning to the students themselves, incorporating high quality PD for educators as well as age-appropriate, technology-assisted transitions for students. The timeline is very ambitious and only accounts for year 1 activities. This merits a medium high score.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LAC again provides a substantial narrative for its rationale for staff development to ensure faculty capacity to facilitate development of PLPs as well as tailor instruction to each student’s PLP. Instructional strategies are addressed in a “Pyramid of Personalization.” The plan in the Appendix addresses activities, timeline, deliverables, & responsible parties. Most of the focus on staff development is on spring and summer, 2013. The Management Plan, also in thje Appendix, provides few additional details on staff development, but does show plans for regular team-level faculty reviews and collaboration. Plans for educators seem less clear than those for students; no clarity around personalized plans for faculty, particularly in adapting learning opportunities for struggling learners. No mention of use of performance evaluation as a feedback tool in the plan, but it is discussed at length in the narrative. Unclear about strategies for improving educator effectiveness, especially principals. Significant opportunities to align deeper learning with career interests, enhanced with multiple digital learning tools.</p> <p>The comprehensive narrative but skeletal plan merit a low-end high score in this section.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Consortium governance is clearly aligned with support of all schools while also closely monitoring Implementation. Grant-related school leadership teams have adequate autonomy and significant impact on grant implementation. Focus on PLPs within the Pyramid of Personalization ensures focus on mastery, multiple appropriate strategies, and adaption for disabled students and English learners. This</p>		

thorough explanation merits a high score in this section.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The LAC has plans, in concert with partners, for helping all families have access to digital tools and resources developed in this proposal, to include a mobile wireless lab (already developed). Significant out-of-school time learning opportunities are planned. All participants have access to online resources as well as both expert and peer support. Families and students can export their learning plans and progress for multiple uses. The LAC proposal does not address use of interoperable data systems. The LAC does not address all components of a high-quality plan in the section, most notably omitting key goals and supporting rationales. This results in a medium score in the higher end of that range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The LAC provides multiple strategies for feedback and corrections, including school level teams, grant leadership teams, and an external evaluator. All information will be publicly shared at open meetings. The process includes an improvement feedback loop with multiple correction points. The strategies rely on annual review for both formative and summative evaluation, even though there are plans for regular monthly Advisory Board meetings that would include the participation of the contracted external evaluator. The LAC does not fully address how this information will be publicly shared, particularly in terms of the quality of its RttT-D investments. The plan for continuous improvement globally addresses the LAC's implementation plan, but does not fully demonstrate a clear approach to monitoring progress toward project goals. This merits a low-end high score.

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

5

4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The LAC posits an annual evaluation report by the external evaluator. This is somewhat less than ongoing in terms of continuous improvement. However, the LAC has addressed ongoing communication with educator teams, students, parents, and community members in other sections of the proposal, to include monthly meetings, meriting a high score.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

No clear rationale is provided for the selection of improvements of 3%, 5%, 7%, & 10% on ALL measures for ALL subgroups in ALL grades and ALL schools. For the applicant-proposed measures, there is no explanation of rationale for selection, how that measure will inform implementation, or how the measure will be reviewed over time. Because numerous measures are provided, yet no explanation accompanies them, this section merits a low score.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The LAC provides a thorough narrative and management plan that shows a multi-faceted plan for evaluating effectiveness of RttT-D funded initiatives, to include grassroots school-based teams, grant leadership teams, program leadership and monitoring, and the external evaluator performing multiple

data analysis strategies from multiple data sources. This very thorough and many-layered approach, both formative and summative, merits a high score.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The proposed budget identifies \$29,927,144 – nearly \$30M – for 21,217 participating students. It identified NO other funds from any other sources. It appears to be more than sufficient, but somewhat unreasonable, particularly in the unit costs for servers, computers, laptops, and tablets. The rationale for the computers, etc, is not provided, and was not referred to during the proposal narrative. The one-time use funds versus continuing costs were identified, without discussion of costs after the grant period or any focus on sustainability strategies. This merits a medium score.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The LAC does not provide a sustainability plan, which merits a zero for a missing element.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The LAC does not address this competitive priority, which merits a zero for a missing element.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The LAC does an excellent job of threading the concept of a student-centered personalized learning environment throughout the plan, with significant focus on personal connections with career/college readiness. All proposed staff development is aligned with using data to increase the effectiveness of educators, while connecting this within the “Pyramid of Personalization.”		

Total	210	142
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