



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0796GA-1 for Board of Education for the City of Thomasville

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 applicant met the criteria in this section. The vision statements are supported by goals and objectives which are aligned to the four core educational assurances. For each of the four core educational assurances, the application includes 1) the Georgia RTT goal or goals aligned to the core assurance area, 2) the Thomasville City Schools Career Advancement Program (TCAP) goals aligned to the Georgia RTT goal, and 3) Resources to carry out the goals. It is clear throughout that the goals of the TCS project tightly align with the goals of the Georgia RTT project goals.</p> <p>However some of the goals had measures that were ranges rather than absolutes. This took away from the clarity of the expected outcome. For example, "TCAP GOAL 2: 80-90% class of 2016 graduates completing a TCAP CTAE pathway, or career-related Work-Based Learning Program, or career related Capstone Project." This leaves the reader wondering if the goal is 80% or 90%? This ambiguity weakened the vision statements overall. Thus the section scored at the low-range of the higher level.</p> <p>.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not provide complete information in this section as described below. Thus the score for this section is in the lower level of the medium range level.</p> <p>The description of the project provided in this section is unclear. For example, it appears that the proposed program will phase-in student participation over time, but how that phase-in is planned for each year is not clearly explained, it is unclear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What students, at what grade levels will be participating in the project for which years • Whether the program will address 4-9 grade students only, grades 4-12, or if K-3 students are ever involved • Whether all five schools will participate in all years • The degree of participation, if any, of students from the two Scholars' Academies <p>Free and reduced lunch data was provided for each school and for the students who will be participating, but it appears that the numbers reported may be full phase-in numbers rather than poverty percentages by student participation each year. Without more clear labeling or description it is not possible to determine if these data are accurate, and thus whether the eligibility requirements were met.</p> <p>There is no description of the process used to select the schools, their involvement in that decision or the process and criteria used, other than a statement that all schools in the district are participating.</p> <p>The application packet includes letters of support from a variety of teachers, administrators, and department heads.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS did not sufficiently address the criteria in this section. Thus the score for the section is at the lower-level of the medium range.</p> <p>Missing from the high quality plan required of this section is a description of how the proposal will be scaled- up (or phased-in) each year, and how that phase-in will help the applicant reach its outcome goals.</p>		

Also missing from the plan are the specific activities, timeline, deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

The TCS theory of change is also unclear. It cites as its change theory that TCS students will achieve at higher rates because, "Connecting students' personal interest for learning real world skills to their learning day unlocks the synergy portal to important skill-sets that drive student's individual and personal achievement desires." This statement, while it presents a vision, does not provide enough detail to provide insight into the applicant's theory of change.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district did not fully address the extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance, and increased equity. The district did not provide the methodology it used to set its performance targets, nor did it explain the uneven growth projected among subgroups. Because college enrollment data was not provided, it was not possible to evaluate the "ambitiousness" of the growth in college enrollment over the term of the grant. The section scored at the higher level of the medium range.

Achievement data was provided by TCS for summative assessment overall and by each sub-group for mathematics, reading, ELA, science and social studies. Projected proficiency levels for 2012-16 in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies for grades 6-8 were provided. The district also provided graduation rates for 2011-12 and projected rates from 2013-14 through 2016-17.

However, the district did not provide an explanation of the methodology it used to determine its goals. This created unanswerable questions as the projections were reviewed. For example at the 6TH grade in social studies, in the baseline year 32% of African American males were proficient, growing to 70% in 2015-16. In the baseline year, 38% of females were proficient, increasing to 85% in 2015-16. Unanswered is why with a starting proficiency rate just 6 percentage points, the ending proficiency rates are 15 percentage points apart. Similarly, in 6TH grade science, 48% of African-American males were proficient in the baseline year, increasing to 80% in 2015-16. For African American females, 49% were proficient at the baseline year, increasing to 85% in 2015-16. Here the baseline proficiency rates were just 1 percentage point apart while the ending proficiency rates are 5 percentage points apart.

College enrollment data was reported as not available. TCS states that this data will be provided following the grant award. However, without this data, whether college enrollment goals are ambitious but achievable could not be determined.

Optional A(4)(e) not included but this was not considered in the scoring.

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	3

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

TCS did not address subsections (b) and (c) of this section, and only partially addressed (a) as it omitted high school graduation rate and college enrollment data. Thus the score for this section is at the high-range of the lower level.

TCS reports a number of partnerships with community organizations as well its success in garnering state and federal grants to assist its schools in preparing students to succeed in college and the workplace. The application also cites a number of examples of the use of technology in TCS classrooms. However, the description provided does not include measurable data showing increases in student learning or decreases in achievement gaps.

Charts provided show summative assessment results for 2010-11 and 2011- 12 by overall and each subgroup in math, reading, ELA, science and social studies show:

Overall, student proficiency at grade 6 and 7 shows substantial growth between the baseline year and 2011-12. At grade 8 however, the proficiency rates drop substantially between the baseline year and 2011-12.

At grade 6, growth was attained overall and by every subgroup in math, reading. In reading growth was attained by all subgroups except SWD. In science, growth was attained by every subgroup except SWD. In social studies, growth was attained in every subgroup except African-American males, white males and SWD.

At grade 7, growth was attained overall and by every subgroup in math and reading. In ELA, growth was attained in every

sub-group except SWD. Growth was attained by every sub-group in science and social studies.

At grade 8, the picture was very different. Growth was not attained overall or by any sub-group in math or reading (except white females who remained at 100% over both years in both subjects), by SWD in ELA, by white males in science, and by SWD in social studies.

TCS did not address the subsections (b) and (c)

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

The narrative did not adequately respond to the criteria. Thus the score for this section is at the lower level of the medium range.

TCS states that it produces its school-by-school expenditures for K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration public at monthly school board meetings as well as through annual expenditure reports that are made public to the community. Additionally, this information is shared an annual Title I parent meetings. However the applicant did not demonstrate that these reports met the criteria described in subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d).

TCS has identified that it needs to work on engaging stakeholders in its efforts to increase the transparency of resource allocation.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

TCS did not adequately address existing conditions that would interfere with the district's authority to carry out some of the reforms proposed. While in this section TCS asserts that "the state of Georgia has provided policy, and infrastructure for districts to be successful in education reform," this is not the criteria in this section. For example, it appears from later sections of the proposal that not all regulatory requirements are in place to implement the personalized learning environment described in this proposal. The section scored at the mid-level of the medium range.

There appear to remain areas in which the district does not have sufficient authority to implement the personalized learning environments proposed in the application. For example one of the proposals included in TCS's project is in the granting of course credit via mastery rather than seat time. Later in the proposal, the applicant states that in Georgia a state board policy currently requires course credit be granted only through seat-time, except for credit recovery type and virtual classes. The applicant did not discuss how these challenges would be addressed by the district, other than to state that the conflict would be solved.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

TCS does not address all criteria in this section. There was no evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposal from teachers in participating schools nor was there evidence provided that at least 70% of teachers from participating schools support the proposal

TCS does not address how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal or how the input of these groups was sought and used to revise the proposal. Instead, TCS describes its proposed plan to engage stakeholders in the future. While TCS makes a brief reference to surveys taken at community engagement meetings, no data is presented nor are the questions asked provided.

TCS also points to existing strengths including community partnerships. TCS has included letters of support from diverse groups including the Boys and Girls Club, City of Thomasville, Thomas University and West GA. Technical College in its application. As further evidence of community support for its technology initiatives, TCS points to Thomas County's recently passed sales tax measure to provide additional funds to sustain e-textbook and notebook programs and support. Additionally, the bargaining unit has joined in this proposal as evidenced by the signature of its representative on the cover page of the application.

This section scored at the mid-range of the medium level.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The response to this section partially meets the requirements of the criteria for this section. This section is scored at the higher level of the medium range.

TCS proposes using existing data to determine the current status in implementing personalized learning environments. In its application, TCS provides a series of questions it will use in this analysis.

However, TCS's plan for this analysis lacks key goals, the precise activities to be undertaken and rationale for those activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties for each activity.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	6

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

As detailed below, the narrative in this section does not adequately address the criteria in sufficient detail to conclude that the components proposed, together, form an approach to learning that will engage and empower all learners, particularly high needs students in a personalized learning environment that will provide all students with the support they need to graduate college and career ready. Additionally, the responses in this section lacked key elements of a high quality implementation plan. Overall, the plan lacked specificity and was overly vague. This section scored in the lower level of the medium range.

The district's response to (C)(1)(a)(i) does not sufficiently address the criterion. While it contains a list of 18 proposed strategies, these are not described in sufficient detail to determine exactly what is being proposed, nor how those proposals will address the criterion. For example, the first five of these 18 strategies in their entirety are:

- “1) Promote, recognize and celebrate the positive development of students (TCAP Student Motivation).
- 2) Utilizing resources made available to the LEA by the state through RT3 in a fashion that aligns with the state's plan to turn around Georgia's lowest achieving schools.
- 3) Maintain highly-effective teachers and principals at low-performing schools
- 4) Implement state's common evaluation system for teachers and leaders that will include a qualitative, observation based component and a significant quantitative student achievement-based component (Teacher Keys Effectiveness System, TKES and Leader Effectiveness System, LKES)
- 5) Establishing more common planning time for teachers, and teacher teams.”

Additionally the response in this section does not include key elements of the required high quality plan for implementation, including timelines, deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the plan.

The district's response to (C)(1)(a)(ii-v) include goals which address the criteria. However, how these goals would be implemented remains largely unexplained, thus limiting the credibility of the plan. For example, section (C1)(a)(iv) states in its entirety:

“Exposure to Diverse Cultures Context and Prospective. Approach: Ultimately through TCAP students come to understand other perspectives and cultures. Students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different from their own.

Additionally, the responses to subsections (ii-v) do not include the required high quality implementation plan, missing key

elements including timelines, deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the plan.

TCS's responses to (C)(1)(b)(i-iv) are so vague as to, overall, lack credibility. For example, in response to subsection (v), TCS's response in its entirety is:

“Accommodations and highly-effective strategies for high-need students. Approach: A common approach used by TCS for highly effective learning and teaching strategy is response to intervention (RTI), a method of tiered academic interventions designed to provide early, effective assistance to children who are having difficulty learning. RTI relies heavily on effective data use to identify those students who are struggling.”

While not all sections of (b)(1)(iv) are that brief, they all share in lacking the required elements of a high quality implementation plan including strategies, timelines, deliverables and the parties responsible for implementing the plan.

In its response to Section (C)(1)(c), TCS's response makes clear that the mechanisms, such as those required in this criterion, to provide training and support to students to ensure they know how to use the tools and resources provided are not yet in place. Nor does it provide a high quality plan describing how such mechanisms would be put into place. TCS states as its response to this criterion, in its entirety,

“In addition to designing highly-effective coordination of teacher and school leader preparation and training programs to successfully implement TCAP and improve college readiness for underserved, high-need, and all students, the transition team will also provide highly-effective training coordination and support to students and parents. Empowering TCS parents and students to become actively involved in self-assessment, and learning to evaluate their own work and educational progress is an invaluable strategy for creating personalized learning environments.”

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	4
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As described in more detail below, TCS does not present a credible plan for teaching and learning that will help educators improve instruction to support student progress toward meeting college and career ready graduation by enabling the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching. Instead, it repeatedly points to the planning and leadership of the Georgia Department of Education and its 26 partner districts (TCS does not appear to be one of those partner districts) in implementing its RTT plan. The district does not provide any evidence of how these initiatives and activities will be implemented in TCS other than to say they will implement them. TCS does not include key elements of the high quality plan required of this section. This section is scored at the upper level of the lower range. This coupled with the lack of evidence of faculty and administrator support for this proposal, does not present a credible plan. This section is scored at the upper level of the lower range.

The district's response to (C)(2)(a)(i-iv) directly addresses the work of the Georgia Department of Education's RTT work in developing and implementing a new teacher and leader evaluation and support system in its 26 RTT partner districts, however it appears that TCS is not one of those districts. This section while addressing what Georgia is doing as an RTT state, does not describe how these programs will be coordinated with TCS, other than to state that TCS states that it will implement the program as part of its RTT-D activities. This section lacks any evidence of planning for implementing the state systems described including strategies, timelines, deliverables, or the parties responsible for implementing those goals. This coupled with the lack of evidence of faculty and administrator support for this proposal, does not present a credible plan.

This pattern continues in subsections (b, c, and d). When the activities of the Georgia Department of Education in its RTT activities are discussed, the responses address the criteria. It appears that the state of Georgia has a strong plan, while TCS does not. When TCS describes its own activities, or activities it proposes to implement in support of the Georgia system, the response does not provide the specificity to determine if the district has a credible plan. For example, (C)(2)(b)(ii) in describing its district plan for providing access to high quality learning resources aligned with college and career readiness standards and graduation requirements, TCS states, in its entirety,

“Thomasville City Schools have access to highly effective learning resources, and technology tools through and because of the state's leadership and profound accomplishments through state RTT. Those highly effective learning resources, including digital were all created over the past five or more years for educators throughout the state to be able to further help our students access an education for a better quality of life. TCAP will allow TCS to proceed with reform in-step with our state who has done an outstanding job of laying the reform RTT foundation.”

Additionally, subsections (b-d) lack any evidence of planning for implementing the state systems described, including strategies, timelines, deliverables, or the parties responsible for implementing those goals. This coupled with the lack of evidence of faculty and administrator support for this proposal, does not present a credible plan

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district did not meet the criteria in this section. It scored in the upper end of the lower range.</p> <p>TCS proposes organizing its central office to support the activities proposed in the application including creating a new position for a Director of Curriculum and Instruction to lead the efforts in establishing personalized learning environments for all students. In following sections additional positions are mentioned including a 1) RTT-D Implementation Manager who will coordinate performance management, timelines and scopes of work, align curriculum, budget and accountability, 2) Grants Management Support position, responsible for establishing grant procedures and processes and ensuring compliance with federal rules and regulations, 3) Project Manager, whose duties are not clear, and 4) several teams including a Communication, Strategy and Outreach team. Additionally, the applicant described a number of positions and the overall responsibilities of those positions in its narrative in the (D)(2).</p> <p>The district did not provide a description or plan describing how existing school leadership teams in participating schools currently have, or how these teams will be provided with, sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school-level budgets. Rather the application reinforced that such authority rested with the superintendent and board.</p> <p>TCS states that current state policy requires credit be granted based on “seat time” but does provide “some flexibility for special cases such as credit recovery” and some “virtual” courses. The application also states that “Under TCAP TCS students will have opportunity for more choices of blended learning with on-line course work depending on the TCAP pathway they select.” However, how that will be possible is not described in the application.</p> <p>The response to (D)(1)(d) refers to a number of tests taken by students at TCS, there was no discussion as to whether these tests provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.</p> <p>The response to (D)(1)(e) did not fully respond to the question, particularly as it applied to English Learners.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS did not provide a comprehensive plan to meet the criteria of this section as described more fully below. This section scored at the lower level of the medium range.</p> <p>Addressing subsection (a), TCS points to five on-going projects to demonstrate its commitment ensuring parents, educators, and other stakeholders, regardless of income, have access to the necessary content, tools and resources to support implementation of the project. These include 1) The TCS e-textbook program in which every student is assigned a personal digital notebook with internet access, 2) The partnership with the Boys and Girls Club for after school tutoring, 3) the partnership with the Thomasville Center for the Arts providing during and after-school arts classes, 4) Smart boards in every classroom, and 5) the Scholars’ Academies. The district also to these on-going programs, the district describes a variety of roles and responsibilities that will would be. Additionally, TCS also cites a number of actions that it will take to implement its action plan. This section lacked key elements of the high quality plan required in this section including timelines and strategies.</p> <p>In addressing subsection (b), the TCS narrative did not include any reference to its own district plans, including only “Georgia’s vision for its data system” presumably under RTT. The plan provided in this section lacks key goals, strategies, timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible for implementing the plan.</p> <p>In its response to subsection (c), the district sufficiently met the criteria. However it did not include key elements of the high quality plan required in this section, including goals, strategies, timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible for implementing the plan.</p>		

In its response to subsection (d), does not adequately respond to the criteria, stating in its entirety:

“TCS plans to utilize their LEA-access to the states’ integrated GaDOE system. The states’ longitudinal system is ready now and other systems components are being worked on to complete the RTT3 instructional improvement systems goal.”

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS described a continuous improvement model and process, however it did not address the requirements of this section that the applicant address how it will monitor, measure and publicly share information of the quality of its RTT-D investments. This section scored at the lower level of the medium range.</p> <p>TCS provides a well thought out continuous improvement model and process, identifying who will have primary responsibility for leading, coordinating and monitoring each of the continuous improvement processes. However, the response does not sufficiently address other requirements in this section. For example, the response does not sufficiently address that “the strategy must address <i>how</i> the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by RTT-D, such as its investments in professional development, technology and staff. “ Just one brief reference is made to monitoring and measuring RTT-D investments and it does not sufficiently address the requirements of the criteria. It appears in its entirety below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “The data collected during the monitoring phase should align with the data included in the TCS profile. Monthly meetings will be held by IPT members to determine effectiveness of TCAP program- i.e. interventions, timelines, resources, trainings, etc.” <p>Additionally, TCS did not describe ‘how’ it will publicly share information on the quality of its investments, instead including only that it “will” development these procedures. This wording from the “Communications Strategy” included in this section, is shown in its entirety below: improvement process application is shown in its entirety below:</p> <p>“Communications Strategy: Communications Strategy & Outreach (CSO) will develop activities, procedure, timelines for reporting achievement, and publicly share information on RTT-D TCAP quality of investment.”</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not adequately address the criteria. While a number of communications strategies are listed such as “email, meetings, reports, Share-Point website, and community gatherings, none are adequately described to understand what is being proposed. The final sentence of the section is illustrative of this point, stating in full, “Strategies for internal and external communications needs and deliverables will be assessed during planning to improve process.” This section scored at the lower level of the lower range.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Overall, the applicant did not provide evidence of a high quality plan to meet and implement the criteria in this section. This section scored at the upper level of the lower range.</p> <p>The applicant did not respond to sections (E)(3)(a) and (b). Required information such as the methodology used to calculate growth measures were not included. The data charts referred to by the applicant in the narrative were missing information necessary to evaluate their quality. For example the method used to calculate the measures is not described. There appears to be missing data from some of the charts, (e.g. chart b). Additionally the methodology for calculating performance</p>		

measures in grade 4-8 is also missing. Additionally the goals for the percentage of students whose teacher of record is highly effects and whose principal is highly effective did not portray ambitious but achievable goals.

The goals for "(a) Highly Effective Teachers and Principals" while ambitious, moving from a baseline of 63% for both principals and teachers in 2011-12 to 100% for both by 2015-16 do not represent a realistic growth trajectory. The trajectory provided requires no growth for teachers for two years, followed by a 7 percentage point increase in 2014-15 and a 14 percentage point increase to 100% in 2015-16. The trajectory provided for principals requires no growth for three years followed by a 21 percentage point increase to 100% in 2015-16.

The goals for "(b) Effective Teachers and Principals" contained in the chart provided are confusing. For teachers in this chart, goals are set at a baseline of 67%, decreasing to 21% for the next two years, decreasing to 14% in 2015-16 and increasing to 100% in 2016-17. Principals have a similar path, beginning at 67%, decreasing to 21% in the following three years and increased to 100% in 2015-16.

(E)(3)(c): TCS reports that it is unable to track career and readiness standards or performance index at this time as it transitions to a new system. Data will be loaded by the "start of 2013." TCS commits to reviewing the measures in these databases monthly at the district and teacher leadership levels.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district's response does not adequately and fully address the requirements of the criteria in this section. It scored at the higher level of the low range.

The plan provided in this section is insufficient. The response is a list of vague and disparate sentences that do not address the criteria. For example:

- "Data collection i.e. surveys and feedback interviews from educators on professional development will be collected at the end of sessions. These may be electronic and or hard copies."
- "Use of technology will also be evaluated."
- "Project Manager will evaluate the use of funding/review budgets as they fluctuate over the grant period, track time and productivity spent by employees on TCAP RTT-D grant activities"

This section scored at the lower end of the low range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant met the criteria for subsections (a). However two expenditures do not fully meet the criteria of subsections (b) and (c) requiring that the expenses be reasonable and sufficient to support proposal, and that the narrative contain a thoughtful rationale for the investments. This section scored at the high-level of the medium range.

In addressing subsection (a), the district clearly identified in its budget documentation all funds that would be used to support the project including federal funds, LEA, and state funds.

In its response to subsection (b), the funding requested by the district was reasonable and sufficient (except as noted in (c) below) to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal.

In its response to subsection (c), the district provided a rationale for its investments and priorities with two exceptions. The budget request includes "\$200,000 for a flight simulator as part of the district's new aeronautics career and technical pathway." The budget narrative states that TCS will "develop a new TCAP pathway in aeronautics adding a flight simulator program with certification option," but does not provide a thoughtful rationale for why a flight simulator would be necessary to implementing the proposal. Nor does it adequately explain how the flight simulator will be maintained and upgraded over time.

Additionally the district did not fully explain its expenditures relating to Project 3: Next Generation Technology. TCS requests

\$4,239,600 to “add more access to technology systems at lower level grade bands to prepare them for next generation (level) education at the middle school-level.” The request states,

“F(1)(c)(ii) Funds for one-time investments: Cost of Tablets. Funding needed for on-going operations: Personnel cost, some replacement cost of supplies (about 50%) for maintenance, software updates accordingly to changing technology, and e-text books are reoccurring during and after the grant based on the adoption schedule. Focus Strategy: Long-term sustainability of the TCAP personalized learning environments are ensured by TCAP sustainability initiative included in the TCAP plan (See F2 pg. 51-52).

However, the explanation of the cost breakdown is insufficient. For example it is unclear whether the 50% is for “the replacement cost of supplies,” “maintenance” or “software updates” or for some or all of those expenses.

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

The response in this section does not adequately address the criteria in this section. This section scored at the upper lever of the lower range.

The applicant has not provided a high quality plan for the sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the project. The narrative sets out a two pronged approach to planing. The first is a strategic financing plan process, the second is to build organization capacity and community support. However, neither of these components is sufficiently described, nor do they contain the elements of a high quality plan as they lack goals, timelines, deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Not attempted.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

While this proposal addresses all four of the core assurance areas, it does not meet the requirement of this priority that it do so in a coherent and comprehensive manner. The following examples illustrate this point:

- At no point in the application is there evidence of a high quality plan to implement the many goals and activities proposed.
- It is unclear what students at what grade levels will be participating in the project for which years.
- The district did not provide evidence of the methodology it used to set its performance goals
- TCS did not address how it would achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools

The application did not provide evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposal from teachers in participating schools nor was there evidence provided that at least 70% of teachers from participating schools support the proposal

- Letters of support at the school level were received from 2 principals, 1 assistant principal, and 4 staff members
- The district did not provide a methodology for how it set its performance targets
- TCS did not provide any evidence regarding its high school graduation rates
- The district did not address how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of this application, or how input of these groups was sought and used to revise the proposal
- There is no credible plan to communicate with external stakeholders and the public regarding RTT-D activities, progress, and investments
- The plan for evaluating the effectiveness of RTT-D investments was insufficient
- The sustainability plan was vague and did not adequately address the requirements of the criteria.

Total	210	71
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Technical Review Form

Application #0796GA-2 for Board of Education for the City of Thomasville

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Thomasville City Schools (TCS) proposes to develop a career advancement program called Thomasville City Schools Career Advancement Program (TCAP). The program will engage students by having them identify their own career goals beginning in elementary school and aligning those choices to pathway programs in secondary schools.

This rural Georgia school district serves 3,105 students in 3 elementary, one middle, and one high school. Georgia is a RTT state that adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010. However, other sections of the plan showed numbers other than those just cited causing confusion and deeply reducing TCS' credibility in achieving success.

TCS proposes a plan that incorporates the four core educational assurance areas and aligns with the state RTT Goals. TCS plans to:

- Adopt and Implement State CCR Standards
- have all students--at all levels--receive an individualized student plan connecting them to college and career
- all grade bands will assess their performance against the new state college and career readiness indices (CCRPI)
- expand CCRPI proficiency with access to personalized learning environments
- expand college access with new student scholarship portfolios (including FAFSA application)
- Build Data Systems and PD
- collect data measuring CCR indicators, including social and emotional behavior
- improve CCR readiness
- monitor students on-track to complete CCRPI standards
- expand data analysis capacity at all district levels
- share data with CCR partners
- Recruit Retain Reward Effective Teachers and Principals
- Hire Curriculum and Instruction Director (CID)
- Improve quality of, and conditions and pipeline for effective educators

- strengthen data training
- Turn Around Lowest Achieving Schools
- transform culture through addition of TCAP pathways, partnerships and experienced, certified teachers

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

10

8

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TCS proposes a plan to begin implementation in its 3rd, 5th, and 6th to 9th grades. TCS used a selection process to choose the selected schools that focused on choosing the lowest achieving schools; named all schools; and identified all subgroups and participating teachers. During the course of the grant the program will be rolled out to 75% of students on all campuses and all grades (K-12). Of the 2,338 participating students, 81% are low income; 266 teachers are participating.

The plan proposes five TCAP projects:

- AVID (customized early AVID program for elementary; AVID middle and high school programs)
- Curriculum and Instruction systemwide coordination plan
- Next generation technology
- Expansion of CTAE certification completion
- TCAP student motivation

Based on Georgia RTT best practices, 8 types of teams will be involved in planning and implementation:

- RTT-D Implementation and Performance team
- Communication Strategy and Outreach team
- Stakeholders Action team
- Training and Transition team
- Data Management team
- school-level Teacher teams
- site leadership teams
- AVID team

However, a major drawback of the plan as proposed is the inability to measure within the context of the grant time period whether these changes will have improved the college and career readiness outcomes of TCS' high school graduates. The 9th grade class affected in the first year may not receive any other interventions to continue growth toward the grant's intended outcomes.

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

10

5

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

TCS proposes its TCAP plan will implement CCR standards and best practices that have been already developed by Georgia during the state's RTT experience. That said, many objectives of the TCS proposal should be realized without this grant. The plan is not a high-quality plan because: it does not include a timeline, it does not include feedback loops, and it does not include information about why certain elements are mentioned (like aerospace pathway) without supporting evidence for their inclusion.

TCS' plan includes a two-pronged approach includes the launch of the TCAP program districtwide and the development of meaningful partnerships with local and regional parties to aid communication and research and development. Its theory of change is based on the belief that connecting students' personal interests with clear CCR goals unlocks critical academic behaviors and competencies (initiative, responsibility, adaptability and productivity). It does not state how students will assess their interests.

TCS proposes to conduct research on state and regional growth industries to align its students' CCR work with potential careers, but it does not incorporate any of this concept into its plan.

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

10

5

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The targets TCS set for this grant that appear achievable based on the data provided are:

(A)(4)(a) performance on summative assessments

-

There were significant areas of missing data and information:

- TCS did not describe the methodology used to determine the achievement gap on (A)(4)(b)
- It did not know the graduation rates for its 2012 graduates by October (there are 733 high school students and likely fewer than 200 graduates each year), although it did provide rates for other years
- It did not have any historical information on its students' postsecondary enrollment, although the state will supply the information for the class of 2012 later this year

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	4
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this section's narrative, tables, and appendix materials, TCS did not provide four years of student achievement data to demonstrate its ability to successfully implement reform efforts. Due to this serious lack of information, it is not possible for TCS to demonstrate its ability to (a) improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps; (b) achieve ambitious and significant reforms; or (c) effectively communicate regarding that data to students, parents or educators during this period.</p> <p>Given its size, rural TCS has a number of community partnerships that support student achievement. They include: Thomas University gear Up and EXCEL programs, Southwest Georgia Technical College Career Prep counseling programs, CTE Perkins grant, Thomasville Cultural Center community youth program, Boys and Girls Club and a local Department of Juvenile Justice collaboration. ARRA highlighted achievements of data improvements (e-textbooks, SMART boards, gizmos, and simulations) made under the state RTT grant.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS reports detailed budget information through board meetings and its website. It did not provide information that it reports (b), (c), and (d).</p> <p>TCS did supply a communications matrix in the appendix and outlined new communication vehicles it would implement under this grant. It also proposed using a SharePoint as a project management tool.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is very strong congruence between TCS' proposed TCAP plan and state plans which establishes an environment which allows sufficient autonomy and successful conditions for implementation. Georgia has: been engaged in the American Diploma Project Network since 2005; adopted CCSS in 2010; participates in NGSS; is a governing member of PARCC; has developed and piloted a new teacher/leader evaluation system (TLKES); is setting CCR performance indicators.</p> <p>Additionally, the state learned lessons in its RTT grant that support integration of project and performance management, communications, oversight, needs assessment, and contracting expertise. TCS plans to use these emerging best practices during implementation of this grant.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	6
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS did receive letters of support from various education and community organizations. It included in the appendix a chart showing methods of stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>However, it did not provide evidence for (a) in this section to explain how key stakeholders, including teachers (i) or (ii), were engaged in the planning process for this grant and are supportive of the grant.</p>		

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS articulated an aligned plan to implement its TCAP program. It plans to build upon its current analysis of individual student needs to place them in appropriate levels to maximize learning and deliver interventions. Teachers meet weekly to discuss and plan responses to intervention. While it currently has an improvement plan, TCS plans to complete a district strategic plan including a SWOT analysis and thorough needs gap assessment process.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	9
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS created a vision, and it outlined possible programs to achieve that vision in this section. TCS conducted a CCR Asset Audit to determine which programs best suit its vision. The TCAP is designed to provide three stages of evolution for its students: "Dreamers" develops CCR awareness in elementary grades; "Believers" allows middle schoolers CCR exploratory experiences; and "Achievers" is a high school CCR management program. This addresses (C)(1)(a)(i), (ii) and (v). (C)(1)(a)(iii) and (iv) are not adequately addressed in this proposal.</p> <p>The programs outlined incorporate rigorous standards, best practices, and programs to satisfy (C)(1)(b)(i),(ii) and (iii) like: AVID; Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS); Learning Focus Strategies; PARCC and state assessments; Georgia's Teacher and Leader Keys Effectiveness systems; a creative literature-based program to expose students to diverse cultures; improved and new (aeronautics) CTAE programs; new partnerships with higher education institutions; and others. (C)(1)(b)(v) is not addressed.</p> <p>For (b)(iv) and (c), TCS addresses its future use of a new Georgia data warehouse and analytic program called the Instructional Improvement System (IIS). To date, according to appendix materials, only longitudinal data is available. The online assessment system may or may not be launched which would undermine the ability of TCS to fulfill (C)(1)(b)(iv) and (C)(1)(c).</p> <p>Additionally, this grant requires a high quality plan and there is no TCS analysis of past trends to set program enrollment goals (e.g., Scholars Academy and CTAE programs) or graduation or college/postsecondary training goals (the ultimate end of the program). TCS does not provide a timeline (with scope and sequence) or decision milestones.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	9
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS outlined programs in this section that will be implemented under the state's RTT grant and did not make a coherent argument for why additional funds need to be allocated to ensure compliance with state standards.</p> <p>TCS outlined a comprehensive set of programs to be implemented to gauge and improve instruction and school leadership to support student achievement, many of which were developed under the state's RTT grant. To satisfy (C)(2)(a)(iv) and (c) (i) and (ii), TCS plans to implement Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LEKS). The state has a variety of professional development programs delivered in several formats that will be accessed by TCS administrators and educators. Additionally, AVID programs and access to its national and regional training programs will be provided to teachers and leaders. However, (C)(2)(a)(ii) and (iii) were not adequately addressed.</p> <p>To satisfy (C)(2)(a)(i) and (b)(i), student progress will be monitored with new formative (PARCC) and state assessments. State assessments are based on Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) and the resulting College Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Plans call for these assessments to be combined with other student measures, including attendance, grades, and disciplinary issues. Data analytic reports emanating from the state's new Instructional Improvement System (IIS) will guide educators as they prepare personalized learning plans for students. However, plans to satisfy (C)(2)(b)(ii) and (iii) were not provided.</p> <p>TCS has identified TCAP's Five Key Power Indicators as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of students completing CCR studies 		

- Percent of students proficient on state assessments
- Percent of students completing college (including technical and community) and/or certification programs
- Four year cohort graduation rate
- Percent of college freshman enrolled in remedial/developmental courses

However, no timeline with planned scope and sequence or milestones were provided in order to examine the feasibility of TCS to implement the TCAP proposed and satisfy (C)(2)(d).

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal did not provide evidence of all requirements for a high quality plan, including the basics of a timeline and deliverables. No evidence to support (D)(1)(c),(d) and (e) was provided.</p> <p>Due to the small size of the TCS system its professional team has the ability to be very flexible and responsive as it receives data and information to guide its process of implementing its TCAP. The structure and programs outlined provide evidence that (D)(1)(a) and (b) are satisfied.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>TCS addressed how it would ensure resources would be delivered to students through a variety of college and career readiness programs (D)(2)(a) and (b).</p> <p>TCS does not describe how it will provide (D)(2)(c) open data format learning systems or use interoperable data systems as a district or in its schools to integrate its financial, and student information systems (D)(2)(d).</p> <p>One other note: TCS proposed the collection of workforce indicators to use in assessing which CCR program on which to focus, yet it did not mention during sections B, C, and D how it would collect, incorporate and use that information. That part of the vision made this plan potentially very innovative, but this lack of evidence makes it impossible to judge whether this is possible.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan presented is not a high-quality plan and lacked several elements, including feedback loops, organizational charts, rationale for choices.</p> <p>The TCS Project Manager, Grants Administrative Support team, and Implementation and Performance Team (IPT) have primary responsibility for leading the continuous improvement process. It is not clear to whom the Project Manager reports as no organizational chart was included. If the PM reports to a lower level employee it will be difficult to build a continuous improvement system that will deliver feedback to all levels of the organization.</p> <p>The plan did include:</p> <p>TCS laid out a six step continuous improvement process which reflect best practices for performance management, but did not describe whether this was in place or how it would be incorporated.</p> <p>The IPT will hold monthly meetings and assess the project's progress.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The TCS Community Strategy and Outreach (CSO) will oversee this function. Based on the extensive reports and matrices supplied in the appendix, it appears that TCS understands appropriate communication strategies. It plans to use a wide variety of communication vehicles to reach its stakeholders. Its superintendent has been a longstanding and involved member of the community, as have many of the lead team members which would aid communication to stakeholders.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

TCS provided partial data for this section in the appendix. It satisfied All (a) and (b); PreK-3 (a); 4-8 (b); and 9-12 (d).

It did not provide complete information for the majority of its indicators. No explanation was provided about its non-academic indicator to satisfy PreK-3 (b); 4-8 (c) or 9-12 (e). It did not provide any data for 4-8 (a) or 9-12 (a), (b) and (c).

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The TCS Project Manager and Implementation and Performance Team (IPT) are charged with ongoing monitoring of all aspects of the grant project. It does not state how often these evaluations would occur and the lack of information makes it difficult to assess the process.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: TCS did not indicate any funds other than RTT-D funds that would be used for the project which did not fully satisfy (F)(1)(a). However, TCS did provide rationale and explanations of chosen programs and expenses to fully support (F)(1)(b) and (c)(i). It did not clearly identify strategies nor funding to sustain the projects to fully satisfy (F)(1)(c)(ii).		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: TCS did not provide a coherent, strategic plan that either identified future programs, resources or funding sources to sustain the proposed TCAP plan. TCS outlined several conditions in the state that hypothetically could support sustainability of this program, but that did not fully satisfy the criteria.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: TCS did not complete this section.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

TCS proposed management support, team structures, and CCSS-aligned programs and initiatives that addressed the core educational assurance areas. These supports, structures, programs, and initiatives will create personalized learning environments aligned to college and career readiness state requirements, accelerate student achievement, and provide improved teacher and school leader evaluations, professional development, and tools that will create increased successful student achievement..

Total	210	107
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0796GA-3 for Board of Education for the City of Thomasville

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: Thomasville City Schools envisions the development of a Career Advancement Program (TCAP) that envelops the small district of all 2,338 K-12 students, using just under \$10 million dollars to do everything for everybody. It hits every base included in the criteria and centers its response around the requisite four core assurance areas but, in meeting all of these benchmarks, leaves no room for a picture of the district itself and how it really wants to be seen. The view is muddled. The approach the district will take to reach the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support are found within the narrative, generally in objectives that are obscured by a plethora of subgoals when a more broad discussion is appropriate.		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: All of the five schools within the Thomasville District will participate in the TCAP: the full complement of schools within the district. The implementation will serve all levels of students. A listing of these schools is provided, The proposal does not elaborate on the process used to determine why the project would include all district schools rather than a subset of grades, subject areas, or any other group. While the narrative notes that the district enrolls just over twenty-nine hundred students, the A(2) chart provides conflicting figures: a total enrollment across the schools of 3,105 but a total of 2,338 students participating. The number of low-income students participating is listed at 1,907; for the total enrollment of students, the number of low-income students is also 1,907. The narrative does not offer an explanation as to why only 56% of the students in the middle school will participate in TCAP, despite all students coming from low-income families. This level of participation is inconsistent with the budget in which all students in grades 3-12, including all middle school students, will have a tablet computer through the grant.		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: With TCAP already at the district level, the narrative addresses the expansion of the reform proposal through initiatives that coordinate marketing campaigns and, more importantly, develop partnerships at different organizational levels, and conduct outreach and communication, and research and development. The district takes advantage of the lessons learned from their State's successful Race to the Top proposal, using information from the annual report to augment their plan for reform and		

change. This use of state-level resources and earlier Race to the Top material demonstrates an alignment to the tone and commitments of the larger project and to the district's role within that project.

There is, however, step missing between the description provided and the actual individual projects proposed within the application. The reform and change offered through implementation of the AVID program, for example, requires project stability and support for students beyond the period of grant support. Descriptions of the reform do not provide information on long-term viability of key aspects of the plan. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction, as grant supported, is a tenuous element in the long-term picture of the district.

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

The academic goals presented by the applicant are limited to the middle school years (grades 6-8) and to high school graduation. No goals are included for any other grades even though those grades are included with the performance measures, students are involved in program activities, and all students beginning in grade 3 have equipment that supports their personalized learning environment.

The data that is included focuses on end-of-the-year subject matter tests where, for the most part, white students do very well and African American, low-income, and SWD students do less well. Despite this very significant achievement gap, the proposal does not target these subgroups for any interventions or provide details about the preferences with AVID that might address some of these populations. For white students who, as a group, are often performing at the 100% at the current time on some end-of-year tests, this set of goals does not allow evidence of subgroup growth over the period of the grant.

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	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides documentation of district success in educational partnerships that support student success, programs that have increased the level of classroom technology (Smart boards) and digital involvement of students (e-text books), and plans to authorize its International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program. They have worked successfully with Thomas University with both a GEAR-UP Program and an EXCEL Program, the former focusing on college success for students. These opportunities would be expected to increase the environment for academic success. The narrative lacks, however, specific data documenting evidence of student success in the past four years. The proposal presents reasons why student achievement should have increased over the years but no indication that any increase has actually occurred.

In its response, however, the applicant notes that all 8th grade Scholars Academy students and 9th-12th grade Scholars students have school-issued electronic notebooks. As the budget includes new tablets for each of these students (all students in grades 3-12), the need might already been addressed. Similarly, every classroom in the school system is currently equipped with a SMART Board and yet an additional 18 are included in the budget for the new middle school building. As the number of students is not expected to increase, it would be likely that the existing equipment could be used in the new building.

No information is provided relative to the availability of student performance data to students, educators, and parents.

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

The district's School Board makes key information including actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, available to the public at monthly meetings as well as an annual report of expenditures. Parents attending Title I parent meetings are able to review school plans with school administrators and review site-level expenditures from all fund sources. The TCAP plan will be to accelerate access and increase transparency processes, practices and investments.

The narrative does not provide the level of detail necessary for a full response to the criterion; namely, the extent to which the following categories are available: school-level expenditures of actual personnel salaries at the school level for instruction staff only, actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only, and actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level

(if they are available).

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

10

9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal submitted by Thomasville City Schools demonstrates evidence of a state-wide movement towards college- and career-readiness, personalized learning environments, and high expectations for students. The conditions with the State of Georgia are excellent, with a state-level Race to the Top award, State Department of Education involved in many critical projects, and the lead role the state has taken in national assessments (PARCC). The narrative refers to the proven commitment of the state for leading districts into the 21st century and does not note any impediment to implementing personalized learning environments.

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

10

3

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Included in the Appendix are identical letters of support from six individuals representing two of the five Race-to-the-Top District participant schools. Each letter notes that multiple people are excited about supporting the project, but has only one signature. There is no indication that the sole letter from the one high school is from the principal or from any school administrator. Although two of the letters are from teachers, no evidence is provided showing that 70% of teachers from the five participating schools support the proposal.

The proposal includes letters of support from all five district schools as well as the Boys & Girls Club, Center for the Arts, Thomas University, and SW Georgia Technical College.

The letters are almost identical, however, and none detail if the support is one of good will or one of meaningful partnership. No evidence is provided to suggest that students, families, teachers, or principals at participating schools were engaged in the development of the project.

The proposal refers to formal partnership agreements although no agreements are included in the appendix. Similarly, there is a reference to results from surveys at community engagement meetings that have not been included.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal identifies four instruments that, when combined, have the potential to provide useful data for analysis prior to the implementation of a personalized learning environment within the district. Each instrument (Title IIA Needs Assessment Worksheet, Federal Program Needs Assessment and Equity Plan Survey Instrument, Effective Leadership & Effective Teacher Equity, and the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan) offers its own unique pieces of data that be of value in the final decision making.

The logic of the reform proposal in the proposal remains unclear, along with any specific needs and gaps the plan will address. The questions listed within the narrative can easily be translated into research questions, but they do not represent the needs and gaps as required by a logic model.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The proposal offers the Career Advancement Program as an environment that supports both teacher and learner, laying out opportunities and supports that lead all students, from elementary through high school, to success in college and career. The plan aligns to the state-mandated college and career readiness individual graduation plans for the K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 levels. The design aligns with state-mandated college- and career-ready individual graduation plans and include: K-5 College-Career Awareness, 6-8 College-Career Exploration, and 9-12 College-Career Management. Details are provided on the three stages of evolution of the personalized learning environment, the available Pathways for students at the middle- and high-school</p>		

levels, and instructional strategies that will be used to support learning. This provides a comprehensive, district-wide approach consistent with the overall vision of the project.

The narrative notes that the TCAP creates personalized learning environments but fails to produce any example of personalization. The learning environment described, for example, has three set stages of evolution, each already named and attached to a set of grade levels. Elementary students are required to complete the college awareness "opportunities."

The proposal does provide examples of personalized learning environment characteristics for students, but the listing is more administrative and structural than inviting. The narrative does not address additional or optimal personalized learning environments for students.

The narrative does not fully address the need for an approach to learning where all students understand that what they are learning is key to their success. Many of the methods mentioned are not included elsewhere in the narrative. The TCAP Plan includes the use of at least one full-time graduation coach and one full-time math coach per school; these positions are supported through the district.

The proposal does not provide details on TCAP services or programs available to students to ensure that each has access to a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development to meet their own learning goals and help them graduate on time. The applicant provides strategies with little support, such as: "teach students to prioritize personalized instructional sequence, and motivate them to exceed content and skill development related to their individual learning goals." The proposal does not clarify how these elements would be accomplished.

Thomasville City Schools is able to ensure student access to three opportunities for students: access to a Graduation Coach at the middle- or high-school level, eligibility to apply to participate in an AVID program, and admission into the Scholars Academy that serves as the accelerated college preparatory magnet school for students in grades 6-12. Each of the opportunities represent a high-quality instructional approach and environment.

The proposal offers two source programs of digital-learning content as accessible to students: E-Text Book Program and the Georgia Virtual School. The response is sparse, omitting any details of their alignment with college- and career-ready standards and/or graduation requirements. No information is included as to how students access the sources and take advantage of the products and services.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	11
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The State of Georgia, as part of its Race to the Top Initiative, developed new evaluation systems for teachers (TYES) and leaders (LKES) that are currently being implemented in the 26 partner districts within the state. Although not explicitly stated, the assumption is that Thomasville City Schools is among those partner districts. The overarching goal of the teacher evaluation system, according to the proposal, is "to support continuous growth and development of each teacher." A more student-centered and personalized environment for the benefit of students would add: "...to facilitate the maximum learning conditions and encourage the natural enthusiasm of every student to succeed." The next step is to ensure effective implementation of personalized learning environments and assist each student to graduate on time and college- and career-ready. While the focus is on leading, the leading remains centered on leading for student success.

The approach to teaching and leading presented in the proposal is primarily limited to teachers. Little training and capacity-building is described for other educators such as paraprofessionals, ESL specialists, counselors, and library staff.

Professional development offered through and provided by AVID is expansive and deep. Faculty will develop professional learning communities around their work and increase their individual capacities in leadership and content areas.

The proposal does not fully address how all educators will be able to adapt content and instruction that will allow students to engage in tasks that better suit their academic needs, interests, and learning approaches.

Thomasville is fortunate in that the State of Georgia has made significant advancements in college- and career-readiness standards, providing the ability for the district to measure student success in these areas. The current vehicle is the College Career Ready Performance Index, soon to be joined by the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessment. The use of these measures will be highly beneficial for the TCAP project.

The short discussion on improving teacher and principal effectiveness provides no insight on the use of feedback in teacher and principal evaluation systems to improve practice and effectiveness.

According to the proposal, TCAP educators, stakeholders, partners, students, and parents, will learn how to use the tools data, and resources required for success in meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements through "highly-effective" professional development. No description of the professional development, for any of these constituents, is offered, nor is any

timetable, nor what tools, data, and resources would be included. As "highly effective" suggests a level of evaluation, information might be included as to the effectiveness of the program.

As educators have access to as use resources to assist students towards meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements, they must ensure that those resources match student needs; continuous feedback is needed so that the educator can determine if the resource is appropriate and adequate in meeting student needs. The Five Key Power Indicators provided in the narrative do not provide the educator with the resource needed to assist students, but rather performance measures that will be of little assistance to the student.

The proposal does not adequately address the issue of information, such as that from the teacher evaluation system that can enable school leaders and leadership teams to structure effective learning environments for students. The explanation is confusing.

Race to the Top-District very carefully defines effective- and highly-effective teachers and principals for the purpose of this competition. Effective teachers and principals are those whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g. at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth. To be highly effective requires that students achieve high rates (e.g. at least one and a half grade levels in a academic year) of student growth. The narrative response offers no awareness of these definitions.

TCAP includes plans to increase the number of highly effective teachers in STEM, but t his is due to a state initiative with higher education rather than a dearth of science and mathematics teachers in the city schools.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Thomasville Career Advancement Program (TCAP) will take the opportunity to add a Curriculum and Instruction Director to the district's central office. This is a new position and will move school site-based decision making to the district level. The Budget Narrative includes the cost of a full-time Program Manager to fully implement the program; no information is provided as to how the governance structure will accommodate this position.</p> <p>No information is provided relative to the autonomy of schools and school leadership teams to take ownership for schedules, calendars, personnel decisions, or school-level budgets. The narrative addresses the flexibility of the district itself and the intent to have school leadership teams that are effective in increasing student achievement.</p> <p>The district has little flexibility in providing students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery for credit rather than seat time and to do so at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. Enrollment in some virtual classes can evade the state seat time requirement, but testing schedules are relatively stable. These limitations within the district inhibit the success of personalized learning.</p> <p>The proposal offers no indication that adaptable and accessible learning resources and instructional practices are available to all students. A lengthy analysis is provided on behalf of students with disabilities, but there is no mention of English-language learners or any other students needing additional services.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal documents several examples of key tools, resources, and content that are (or will be) available to all students to support program implementation. These include materials through the E-Textbook Program that can be accessed during or beyond school hours, digital netbooks, and the Smart boards in every classroom. Other content and resources are available from partnerships that would include after-school enrichment with the Boys & Girls Club. The response is less satisfying due to the lack of clarity around the full definition of personalized learning and the picture of a personalized learning environment. The level of independence and autonomy for the student and how the personalization shifts when it becomes digital could be clarified to make more meaning of the responses.</p> <p>The description of the project infrastructure is useful information and shows strong support from positions and teams within the district.</p> <p>The Next Generation Technology program and Data management will work to ensure that data-sharing tools are accessible to both students and parents on- and off-site in an open data format that can be used in other electronic learning systems. The</p>		

narrative response is lacking in details.

As the TCAP will operate in all of the district's five schools, it is a district-wide project. The data systems are interoperable.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal provides a six-step continuous improvement process to maintain the high quality of its plan throughout and beyond grant funding (note: the illustration only includes four of the six steps.) The missing piece, however, is the role for feedback. No program can be improved without it.</p> <p>The Project Manager, Grants Administrative Support, and the Implementation and Performance Team (IPT) will take primary responsibility for leading, coordinating, and monitoring the continuous improvement process. During monthly meetings, the IPT will consider issues gauging improvement relative to targeted populations, interventions and strategies, the time frame, actions, and responsibilities.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative provides basic information regarding strategies for ongoing communications and engagement. Grants Administration Support will create and maintain both a SharePoint and external website for TCAP. Stakeholders are invited to attend community gatherings that are expected to be held throughout the school year to discuss and highlight project activities. Regular communications are generated through e-mail, reports, and meetings. Given the infusion of technology into the schools, both through Race to the Top and the anticipated Race to the Top-District, the movement towards e-books and digital literacy, the methods of communication described are, at best, uninspiring.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The first required performance measure requested information on effective and highly effective teachers and principals. It appears from the two charts that: a) the definition provided in the glossary was not in use, and b) the interpretation of the applicant was that the first chart was requesting highly qualified teachers and principals and the second chart those who were not highly qualified. None of the data in either of these two charts is therefore reliable or useful.</p> <p>Performance measures are not included as required for students in grades 4-8 relative to the number and percentage who are on track to college- and career-readiness based on the applicant's on-track indicator. Thomasville is currently implementing the new "GCIS career information" to track college and career readiness by the start of 2013 and this information will be available at a later date. Similarly, three performance measures for the grade 9-12 population were not included in the proposal for this same reason (students who complete the FAFSA, students on track to college- and career-readiness, and measures of career readiness).</p> <p>Of the twelve required performance measures, six are either unreliable or unavailable.</p> <p>Performance measures in many cases are incorrectly worded to reflect the role of the district rather than the expectation for the student population (i.e. The Thomasville City School system will track math achievement scores on the CRCT for 3rd Grade when the measure is 3rd grade math proficiency on the CRCT).</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Given the investment of human and fiscal resources, evaluation of the effectiveness of those investments would be both logical and an indication of stewardship of public trust. In addition to the areas noted within the proposal, the large influx of hand-held tablets into each of the schools will provide opportunities to observe different programs, strategies, and approaches and evaluate them. Results can provide feedback to the program and inform change. The applicant offers a plan with monitoring throughout the continuous improvement process by the Project Manager. Evaluation will include the effectiveness of</p>		

communication, outreach strategies, performance management and more using a variety of methods.

The narrative provides no information on how this evaluation will be used to improve results, including altering the use of the technologies, changing the role of community partners, revising strategies to better meet program goals, or producing high-quality data to ensure sound decision making.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The Budget Narratives do not provide the level of detail needed to determine costs. Examples include the costs of the two summer institute training trips for AVID and the three college trips each year; no information is provided to determine any of these costs. Within the narrative there are references to resources available to the TCAP from other sources (i.e. Graduation Coach). These resources should be included in the budget as in-kind from other sources in order to provide an accurate view of the overall resources used to support the project. The narratives are clearly written and easily to navigate and understand.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The long-term sustainability plan for TCAP is built around attracting business support, seeking additional grand and foundation funding, and increasing organizational capacity and community support. The plan does not address two major elements within the project: the position of Curriculum and Instruction Director and the relatively high annual cost of an embedded AVID program. The TCAP budget covers not just the AVID teachers, but the cost of three counselors. When federal funding ends, ten positions will be left unfunded.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: No submission for Competitive Preference Priority.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: Thomasville City School's has provided a plan that builds on the four educational assurance areas to create learning environments in all five of its district schools. The vision centered on the Thomasville Career Advancement Program (TCAP) includes four component projects that provide structure and supports for students as they work towards college and career readiness. The application addresses each of the grant goals: accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, increasing educator effectiveness, and decreasing achievement gaps across student groups.		

Total	210	121
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