



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0412NC-1 for Burke County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The vision of Burke County Public Schools speaks to the spirit of the Race to the Top-District in that it recognizes the need to expand opportunities for all participating students to acquire the education needed to succeed. One way it does this by implying that it needs to grow from a one-size-fits-all model to one that provides options to meet the needs of all students.</p> <p>It then goes on to propose what it would do and when and how it would do it in order to achieve that goal. These proposed expansions or enhancements include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs and materials designed to encourage and inform the exploration of higher education and career interests (e.g. the Renzulli learning System described, differentiated instruction through tiered assignment, and the “Future for Kids/Career Cruising” Middle school program).</li> <li>• Recognition of the shortcomings as well as strengths of the community that can impact the district’s plans for reform. For example, since the workforce does not have sufficient training for available jobs in the community and a student survey indicates an interest, the LEA plans to expand its offerings of career areas listed in the federal clusters,</li> <li>• The LEA’s intent is to address and build on North Carolina’s Ready, Set, Go! RttT funded project’s goal that every high school graduate is prepared for career or college success.</li> <li>• BCPS has made innovative arrangements to collaborate with other educational institutions (e.g., the North Carolina School for the Deaf) and develop new venues (e.g., Morganton NCSSM Learning Center) that appear to offer a wider arena of learning options to its students (letters of support are included in the Appendix)</li> <li>• BCPS’s intention to build upon the core educational assurance areas 1, 2 and 4 appears to be comprehensive and coherent as outlined below except for Area 3.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BCPS intends to fully implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as well as the Essential Standards for Science and Social Studies standards in SY 2012–2013. Tests will measure students’ attainment of the standards in grades 3–8 and 11.</li> <li>2. BCPS will use the state developed CEDARS data system to match an individual teacher identifier with a teacher-student match. Although CEDARS is in place, there will be a delay as new achievement tests are developed for use to assess the new Common Core and Essential Standards. The LEA will also use the state’s P-20W longitudinal data system under development.</li> <li>3. Other than participating in educational job fairs, no plan is provided to recruit or to retain effective teachers and principals. Professional development is, however, planned for teachers in such new programs as the Renzulli system and to provide instructional coaches for other initiatives. (The PD for the teacher evaluation process is more informational than instructional).</li> <li>4. Hallyburton Academy is the district’s only “lowest achieving school.” Laudably, its graduation rate has increased from 40.8% in 2009 to 88.8 in 2012.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>The plan’s strengths lie in its attention to the exploration of higher education and career interests, attending to diverse student interests through such strategies as tiering, collaboration with other educational institutions, providing instructional coaches to followup on training, and planning for the acquisition and application of data. Its weakness is reflected in its lack of effort to attract and retain excellent teachers, although it does propose to place teachers where they would be most effective, and failure to budget for maintenance of equipment purchased for this program.</p> <p>Overall, this is a powerful vision geared to the realities and aspirations of the district.</p>		

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Although not required, the optional introduction to Selection Criteria (A)(2) that outlines several paths by which BCPS intends to expand educational opportunities for middle and high school is appreciated. This material describes some ambitious projects that involves the approval and collaboration of the North Carolina School for the Deaf, the state's Career and College Promise Program, Burke Middle College, the Career and Technical Education campus, the proposed Morganton STEM School, Hallyburton Academy and the North Carolina School of Science and Math. Students may enroll in online, hybrid, or videoconferenced courses.</p> <p>All of the educators and students enrolled in the district's 5 Middle Schools and 4 High schools will participate in this project. For example, all middle school students will participate in Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a STEM focused curriculum with opportunities for career exploration. RttT will expand PLTW to the LEA's three middle schools not currently participating.</p> <p>Over 50% of participating students in each participating school are classified as from low-income families.therefore meeting the RttT-D poverty requirement. In the School Demographics chart,</p> <p>In summary, except for a minor issue in a table and some uncertainty as to whether or how elementary students will transition into the program, this meets the criterion very well.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA's goal to extend personalized learning concepts down to two of the district's elementary schools through professional development of elementary teachers and access to tools and programs such as Renzulli Learning, although laudable, will require a degree of restructuring, teacher participation and curriculum revision – deliverables and activities that are not clearly specified in this proposal. Other initiatives such as field trips to universities to create interest in college and careers, and the creation of a Saturday and Summer STEM club are more feasible initiatives.</p> <p>A noteworthy plan for scaling up elements of the project beyond RttT-D's funding period is the use of the proposed Morganton NCSSM Learning Center to other districts in the western region of the state. In addition, through an agreement with the North Carolina School for the Deaf (NCSD), the NCSD campus which has been underutilized will provide hearing impaired students to have access to Career and Technical Education (TCE) courses for the first time.</p> <p>The proposal's goals are ambitious in that they incorporate elements of all the program's criteria. Those most likely to be attained include the expansion of educational opportunities (e.g., the 5th period in the High Schools) and options for students to identify and pursue their personal academic and career interests (e.g. the Renzulli Learning system). The processes of identifying and rewarding (and thus hopefully retaining) highly effective teachers are noteworthy, although less likely to succeed to the extent proposed because strategies to do so for the recruitment and retention of new teachers are not in place.</p> <p>The BCPS's response to this section, although showing some noteworthy strengths, does not address the full criteria for a high-quality plan.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Two factors stand out in the (A)(4)(a) presentation chart that suggest that the estimates of rates of growth are unrealistic.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade goals for the four years of the grant period plus the post-grant year show a degree of growth in student achievement that even if attained, cannot be attributed to the RttT-District project since these grades are not part of the plan.</li> <li>2. The rate of improvement projected from base-line to post-grant is formalistic. That is, throughout the chart under each category, it projects improvement at consistent intervals indicating arbitrary increments rather than rates determined by any reasonable methodology. For example, the 10th grade white subgroup increases in math proficiency from a baseline of 90.0, to annual upticks of 91.0, 92.0, 93.0, 94.0 and 95.0 - regular increases of one degree throughout. One might expect increases to vary, perhaps slow growth early on and increasing later on as new instructional strategies kick in.</li> </ol>		

In addition, there is no information provided that speaks to the need for attention to be given to subgroups in terms of assessing or addressing specific instructional or curricular needs or provisions. The only exception, as a result of partnering with the school for the deaf, are the hearing impaired who would be taught by teachers trained to work with them. The creation of a state-of-the-art STEM school by drawing on the expertise of the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) in the fields of math, science, technology and engineering is a strength of this plan.

A low score is awarded for this criterion because the BCPS vision is unlikely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity at the arbitrary rates proposed in the following categories:

- (a) Performance on summative assessments
- (b) Decreasing achievement gaps
- (c) Graduation rates
- (d) College enrollment

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>a. Although every subgroup has closed the achievement gap from 2008-09 to 2010-11, there has been a somewhat disturbing trend in 2011-12 whereby Hispanic, Asian, African American, Limited English Proficiency, and Students with Disabilities achievement rates have regressed while those of White students have increased. Another aspect the closing of achievement gaps data brings to light is that there were relatively large gains from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010, then relatively small ones from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012. There is no indication as to the reason, but an analysis of possible contributing factors might have been instructive. The increase in graduation rates over the past four years is noteworthy as is the exceptional (100%) rate for Burke Middle College, a 11th and 12th grade tech-prep program that earns students high school and college credits.</p> <p>b. The comprehensive approach taken by the LEA to increase the graduation rate of the district's only low-performing school, Hallyburton Academy, has proven to be effective and it is reasonable to assume that it will continue to be. Contributing factors to Hallyburton's success are identified as 1) increased learning time, 2) end of course test preparation help, 3) hiring of a Graduation Coach, and 4) a "reward and Remove Staff" component coupled with a strategic staffing system. At the present time, BCPS has no schools identified as a lowest-achieving.</p> <p>c. Although training is available for the online Parent Assistance Module, given the district's demographics it is likely that parent access to the system is limited. No alternative is offered in this proposal. Although student growth data is available to teachers at the End of Grade and End of Course and these results are reviewed by teachers at the end of the first semester, no mention is made of ongoing formative assessment of student progress by the teacher on a short term basis that would inform day-to-day or week-to-week instruction. However, a digital program does provide data to students on progress in coursework, and this may address the issue. It is noted with favor that the LEA proposes to develop systems for these data to follow students as they progress to the next grade level and to use the data to ensure individuals receive instruction tailored to their learning styles, preferred expression styles, and interests.</p> <p>The mid-point score awarded in this section reflects the combination of some low and uneven success rate history, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant disparity in rates of improvement among subgroups</li> <li>• A sudden drop in the most recent achievement rates</li> <li>• Probability of low access by parents of the online assistance module</li> </ul> <p>and a history of some successes over the past 4 years, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 100% graduation rate at Burke Middle College and an increase in graduation rates overall</li> <li>• Data available to students digitally on their academic progress</li> <li>• Development of personalized longitudinal data system</li> </ul>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5	5	5

points)		
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It is noted that BCPS meets this criteria by listing the information annually in the local newspaper and posting it on it's website. The LEA makes public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. All actual personnel salaries and position descriptions at the school level for instructional and support staff are listed annually including personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff and teachers, and non-personnel expenditures at the school level. BCPS also makes available to the public copies of the annual external audit to include the individual schools' audits. Annual LEA budgets are also posted on the BCPS website.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>BCPS not only has the autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal, it also has the support of the state Board of Education that considers its "goals and planned activities to align strongly with the state's work." (Appendix D)</p> <p>Some existing and proposed conditions that support the implementation of personalized learning environments include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the adoption of the Renzulli Learning system;</li> <li>• the PLAN, a diagnostic assessment that indicates strengths and areas of need; and</li> <li>• Tiered assignment options in order to differentiate instruction for students at different levels. Teachers will receive professional development in tiered instruction. The program will be designed using significant digital content to permit students to work toward mastery at the pace that works for them.</li> </ul> <p>No negative or questionable elements are evident to justify other than a high score for this criterion.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) There are two concerns regarding the chart showing results of the survey:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The data represents the % of respondents, not the total number in the category, thus it is unclear whether 70% of all the teachers in this non-collective bargaining district participated and approved the plan, or that not all participated and 70% of those who did, responded favorably.</li> <li>2. The data is not disaggregated by participating schools, as specified</li> </ol> <p>In addition, there is no indication as to whether any revisions were made to the plan as a result of engagement or feedback. Noted, for example, are two students' comments (Appendix A) "Addition funds for our 'students in need' would be greatly appreciated for basic supplies, back packs, and supplementary clothes." and "We also want the computers upgraded."</p> <p>(b) The application lacks letters of support from parents and parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, and civil rights organizations. There are letters of support from the state DOE, the Mayor, local Chamber of Commerce, and from a state representative.</p> <p>A positive indication of stakeholder involvement, however, is that discussions of adding a collaborative program with the North Carolina School of Science and Math in Morganton has been a topic of discussion at local meetings and have included a variety of sectors of the community. In addition, the new programs described in this proposal have strong support at the Teacher and Principal levels.</p> <p>The low score represents the overall lack of evidence of stakeholder involvement in planning, uncertainty regarding the level of teacher support, the low amount of written support for the program, and attention paid to feedback.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's Curriculum Committee, Workforce Development Committee, and Data Systems and Online Learning Committee</p>		

reviewed a broad array of data on student performance and other measures to clarify what was currently happening as well as to develop new directions to make learning more personalized for all students. They determined that students either already had diverse career or higher education interests or would profit from opportunity to explore options. The plan attempts to address this need by providing or expanding such components as career and technical education (CTE) courses and career exploration opportunities such as Futures for Kids/Career Cruising programs,

An assessment was done as to what jobs are currently available locally and statewide, and surveyed student interest in careers and technical education programs was factored in to proposal planning. It is a strength of the planning process that serious attention was paid to the use of objective data (as opposed to subjective opinion as noted in criterion (B)(4)). It is also noted that the local economy may be strengthened as a result of enlarging a prepared workforce.

No weakness of consequence is evident in the process.

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

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

#### (C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Overall, with a few minor exceptions, the career and college planning process proposed in the BCPS plan to provide and support learning is well structured and comprehensive. Although occasional exploratory activities take place in the elementary grades, in middle school, the process takes on more focus and rigor. It does this through the *Future for Kids Program* that incorporates virtual Career Coaches and local business connections, and *Career Cruising* that uses assessment tools, detailed occupation profiles and comprehensive post-secondary education information. Career Cruising includes a skills component that matches students' skills to careers and provides personalized feedback to help students understand how careers relate to their skills and interests. Additionally, it provides guidance on high school courses needed for careers. Parents have online access to these programs so they can help guide their children in career and college planning process. Although it is indicated in the plan that parents would be trained to do this, no specifics are provided. Neither is there evidence that parents were formally involved in the proposal's planning.

In keeping with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's initiative at the high school level to better prepare students for the path to college or a career, the LEA administers the PLAN test, a diagnostic assessment that offers a mid-point assessment of academic progress toward college and career readiness. With guidance from school personnel, students choose occupational pathways or college/university pathways and establish a 4-year high school plan that is prepared by students and parents and is a roadmap for students of the courses that will be taken in high school.

A strength of the proposal is that calls for the creation of several new initiatives designed to provide a variety of ways for most, if not all students to address both the career and academic aspects of their plan. These new programs are designed, for example, to:

- make more courses such as APEX Learning available through video conferencing and BOLT online courses (21st Century Classroom program)
- provide middle school students with career exploration and preparation for high school STEM courses (Project Lead the Way)
- provide an enhanced STEM curriculum in a newly created facility especially designed and equipped for that purpose (Morganton NCSSM Learning Center)
- increase Career Technical Education (CTE) course offerings and access (NCSD campus and high school facilities)
- enhance the probability that individual students receive instruction tailored to their learning style and interests (Renzulli Learning system)

Other encouraging elements in the BCPS proposal include

- the provision of laptops and iPads to students living in poverty. This will make it possible for them to participate in hybrid learning environments.
- professional development for LEA and NCSSM teachers involving coaching and co-teaching.
- extension of the high school day to add an optional additional period
- tiered assignment options to help differentiate instruction and to accommodate student learning styles and interests
- accommodations and support for a sampling of high-need students (Hallyburton Academy)

Some weaker aspects of the plan that can impact learning are:

- minimal parent involvement in planning
- arbitrary goal setting for improved student outcomes and decreased achievement gaps
- failure to budget for maintenance of equipment
- minimal strategies for recruiting and retaining excellent teachers and principals

The score reflect the overall "strengths of the strengths"

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Noteworthy aspects of the BCPS plan that make it of high-quality and capable of supporting effective teaching and leading stem from its goal to continuously develop the capability and effectiveness of the district's educators as evidenced by:the following activities, timelines, deliverables, structure and responsibilities.

- Professional development is provided teachers to support teaching the proposed new programs: Professional Learning Communities PLC), and tiered and differentiated instruction. This is vital if teachers are to effectively apply new curriculum and incorporate new technology.
- PLC is a positive component to enhance teaching and leading in that has the potential to make data-based decisions/recommendations and develop common assessments. PLC provides a structure for collaboration and the development of teacher-leaders and can create renewed interest in and enthusiasm for teaching.
- Teaching decisions will be supported by a system (Study Island) to assess and track student personal education goals at grade level that provides information about learning that helps students keep track of their own learning. The teacher can use this data to create individual assignments for small groups. One objective of the RttT-D project is to develop the process for Study Island summaries to follow students from year to year and to archive data from year to year specific to academic objectives. Use of SI should encourage personalized instruction.
- efforts to place highly-effective teachers in areas of highest need will be supported by the results of the state's teacher evaluation tool (McRel) and analysis of student assessment data. This increases the potential to lessen achievement gaps among diverse subgroups.

Although there is indication that either instructional coaching (in participating schools) or peer-coaching (at NCSD) takes place or will take place, except in the case of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), it is mostly provided by peers. It is not clear whether instructional coaches are trained, which is critical to their effectiveness.

Recruitment of highly-effective teachers and leaders is limited to job fairs. Retention efforts, however, are a bit more evident through financial incentives for Hallburton Academy teachers and opportunities for these teachers to interact professionally with colleagues and exercise some teacher-leadership through team teaching and PLCs. What is not addressed is retention of new teachers. This is a weakness in the plan since national data shows that 20% to 50% of new hires leave within 2 to 5 years.

All in all, with the glaring exception of little effort being made to recruit, mentor and retain new teachers (reason for deducted points), a comprehensive process of giving attention to teaching and leading is a strong component of this plan and is recognized by the high score it is awarded.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The BCPS central office has the experience of providing support to schools as they implement federal grants and begin new programs including a U.S. Department of Education Safe Schools Healthy Students grant. The Personnel, Finance, and Purchasing Departments are experienced at supporting federal grants implemented at the school level. Based on the nature of its activities, deliverables and timelines, the goal of this effort seems to be to maintain the integrity and professionalism of their efforts.

The proposal calls for new positions to support the project's implementation at the district and school levels. These positions are needed to carry out the leadership and oversight required.

- A Project Director (.25 FTE) to oversee the implementation of the grant, support schools and administration in the implementation of personalized education. and maintain communication with school administration, NCSSM, NCSD and other external partners.
- A full time Grant Coordinator to support participating schools with the day to day management of the RttT-D project, and support the implementation of the project's new programs.
- A Data Manager .50 FTE) to track performance measures as they relate to college and career readiness.
- Instructional coaches to provide support to teachers.
- Social workers (2.0 FTE) to assist at risk students and their families.

No evidence of the makeup of any school leadership team per se is provided. Rather, "Principals, school leadership teams, and professional learning communities ... will have been given sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules, school personnel decisions and staffing models, and roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators."

Student mastery will be determined through standardized end-of-grade summative assessments. Subject specific formative assessments are administered periodically but such tests do not usually measure mastery.

In summary, no specific authority (other than general flexibility in order to manage and support school-based aspects of the plan) is allocated to school administration, thus leaving the administrative onus primarily to the central office, is a weakness of its day-to-day operations. Most other structural aspects, however, are appropriate and can be considered necessary, at least for the duration of the plan's funded period.

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

10

9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA supports the provision of personalized learning with the following infrastructure:

- a Director, Grant Coordinator and Data Manager to oversee and inform the program.
- social workers to address nonacademic concerns that can interfere with learning.
- access to laptops and iPads by all participating students to support instruction
- online tools and programs such as Renzulli and Study Island to provide assistance and information to parents. Both Renzulli Learning and Study Island provide access to students, parents, and educators of the content, tools and learning resources in and out of school to support personalized instruction. Having access, however, does not guarantee use. Because teachers receive technical support in the use of the Rensulli system, for example, they will most likely use it as will students because it is interactive and individualized. There is little or no indication that parents are shown how or encouraged not only to interact with the program, but to interpret and use the information to interact with their child, although a social worker may suggest its use in some instances.

Students who take courses at the Morganton NCSSM Learning Center will receive technical support from the NCSSM personnel. Students taking videoconferenced courses and hybrid courses will have face time with teachers to provide technical support which should increase study time, especially on courses related to personal interests. Whether technical support is available to students not at Morganton is not clear, therefore. Teachers will receive technical support from instructional coaches and peer support through their grade level professional learning communities, which should encourage the effectiveness of their use.

Although the LEA plan's operational policy and infrastructure appear to be capable of providing access, support and data, it is not clear whether or to what extent it is being utilized. The adequacy of infrastructure and application of technology to personalized learning are strengths of the program while uncertainty exists about the extent of its use.

### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

Available

Score

(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>BCPS appears to have a solid strategy and appropriate staffing to implement a rigorous continuous improvement process. The proposal supports this assessment with the following details of its plan.</p> <p>From the rationale behind the need for and duties of a project director, that person will provide oversight for the project's continuous improvement in keeping with specifics of the application and within its timeline and budget. A Grant Coordinator will provide support to middle and high schools, communicate with collaborating organizations, order supplies and materials, and organize professional development activities. A Data Manager, Director of Testing and the IT Director will also assist in these efforts. A Continuous Improvement Team consisting of the Project Director, Grant Coordinator, Data Manager, NCSSM Distance Learning Coordinator, Director of NCSD, Director of CTE Programs, middle and high school principals and teachers, and parent and student representatives will govern the continuous improvement process on the district level. The Grant Coordinator will be charged with publicly sharing information, at BCPS school board meetings, principal and instructional staff meetings, through newspaper articles and other means.</p> <p>The recognition that close monitoring and continuous improvement will be critical as new programs are being developed is expanded upon by the insightful statement, "we expect changes will be needed as we encounter challenges and obstacles." To uncover the need for and prepare for such modifications, an external evaluation firm will be contracted to conduct focus groups and analyze data.</p> <p>Data on goals and performance measures will be reviewed on a biannual basis to assess whether targets are being met for each performance measure. For performance measures that are not met, a plan of action will be developed. The continuous improvement process on the school level will occur at each middle and high school through each School Improvement Team, or other methods that are determined by each individual school. Professional Learning Communities at each school will provide another venue for continuous improvement on grade level for each school.</p> <p>All in all, this criterion is well met.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The existence of adequate strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders are evidenced by the assignment of a part time Distance Learning Coordinator to facilitate ongoing communication between the Morganton project with the Project Director and Grant Coordinator is wise. However, internal communication within the NCSD, especially during its development period, is critical. Although recognized as a need, and that there is a general statement that internal communication will occur through the Continuous Improvement Team, School Improvement Teams, during principal and instructional staff meetings, and professional learning communities at each school, it is unclear who has the responsibility to facilitate it and other interactive aspects of the project.</p> <p>The score awarded reflects both the attention given to external communication and to the little given to the internal shareholders.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Several indicators support the criterion that BCPS has a clear approach to continuously improve its plan. Especially noteworthy are the rationales that accompany each approach. Another strength is that BCPS collects and analyzes data from the measures and makes modifications based on that analysis. The following list highlights the 6 particular performance measures in the plan to which the above comment refers. What is planned is of high quality, but because this criterion (E)(3) requires a total of approximately 12 to 14 performance measures, the full point allotment cannot be awarded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The LEA selected the "Explorer" Test 8th grade students because it measures college and career readiness for high school and college success.</li> <li>• The WorkKeys exam is administered to 12th grade students who have completed the Career and Technical Education sequence. WorkKeys was chosen because it provides a gauge of career readiness and is widely recognized as an industry credential.</li> <li>• BCPS's measure of performance, the percentage of students grades 3 -12 who are proficient at or above grade level, was chosen as it is an overarching gauge of whether students will be ready to graduate high school on time. This will provide timely, formative information as it is an on-going measure of success.</li> <li>• For grades 4 – 8, the indicator of successful implementation will be the percent of 6th, 7th , and 8th grade students that successfully complete Project Lead.</li> </ul>		

- Grades 9 – 12 performance measure will be the percentage of 10th grade students who have an after high school plan to attend a 2-year college, a 4-year college, graduate study, receive job training, or get a job. This was chosen as it is BCPS' plan for get students to make plans for after graduation early in their high school career so they can work towards this goal during high school.
- The social-emotional leading indicator for grades 6- 8 as well as 9 -12 is the number of students whose families are in need of case management services that actually receive these services. This was chosen as the indicator due to the large number of families in Burke County who face daily struggles as a result of poverty.

Although the plan laudably calls for review of data collected by these measures in order to modify instruction, it does not, as required, indicate that BCPS will review and if needed, improve the measures themselves. The points awarded for this criterion reflect the strengths and weaknesses described above.

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

BCPS plans to use a variety of creative ways to evaluate the effectiveness of RttT-D funded activities in terms of productive use of resources that have the potential to identify areas that might benefit from modification. One such planned method that has the potential to provide information not otherwise accessible is through stakeholder focus groups and surveys conducted by an external evaluation firm rather than by BCPS employees. Outside facilitators are more likely to elicit unbiased opinions, suggestions and criticisms.

Other evaluations for effectiveness that are meritorious include:

- Tracking student enrollment and grades in new courses using labs and other technology for the purpose of deciding whether to modify or even continuing to offer them.
- The evaluation of the STEM curriculum delivered through interactive video conferencing in order to understand how clear, accessible, and usable this expensive system is and thereby inform the course development (and, although not mentioned in the proposal, the instructional) process.
- The effectiveness of the STEM professional development model by direct observation of its application in the classroom. This is exemplary because it is much more objective than the typical PD evaluation model of a satisfaction check list administered immediately after the session.

Also worth noting is the proposed establishment of a continuous improvement team to design and administer such evaluations and the designation of leadership-level individuals to oversee its implementation and followup activities. The exemplary evaluation effectiveness of investments is a strong component of this proposal.

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

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The line items in the budget displays appear to support the development and implementation of the plan's five projects as those projects are described in the application. The phrase, 'as those projects are described' is emphasized because the scarcity (or in most cases, absence) of funding in the Contractual and Training Stipends line items along with absence of any material in the Cost Assumption narration highlight two glaring shortcomings in each of the projects.

1. Although over four million dollars is allocated for equipment, not one cent is proposed (contracted for) for maintenance and repair. Certainly over the period of the program such expenses will be necessary.
2. The successful implementation and ongoing refinement of new projects, and care and use of new equipment, require effective training, professional development and instructional coaching for teachers. Yet, the only item listed under training stipends is \$24,000 for credentialing staff to teach electrical trades. Relying mainly on peers to provide PD and coaching without training them how to do so, in the opinion and experience of this reviewer, is almost certain to be non-productive. Funds are, however, allocated under "other", presumably to hire external professional development

providers. However, the time these funds would buy for this purpose is minimal considering the extent of need. A significant exception is the Morganton NCSSM Learning Center project which will contract with North Carolina School of Math and Science faculty to develop and deliver content-area professional development to engineering and science teachers and to develop integrated math units.

There is no clear indication as to which funds will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period. Also, it is noted that although year 1 personnel amounts are indicated in all but one of the project-specific budgets, the corresponding cell in Budget Table 1-1 (Overall Budget Summary) is blank and it is not clear without extensive analysis, if and where the discrepancy is mathematically resolved.

On the positive side, the line items related to personnel are realistic and clearly justified in the narration.

In summary, although the budget describes the funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal as planned, it does so without identification of the funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period, or on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments.

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

Although it is implied because of the investment in implementation, equipment and facilities, that elements of the Morganton NCSSM Learning Center, CTE Campus, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classrooms and Personalized Learning Environments will continue beyond the life of RttT-D support, there is no evidence of a high-quality plan with goals, specific activities, timelines, deliverables or leadership for such sustainability. Nor is there any indication that there would be sufficient funding available to support the program at an effective level or to maintain the equipment purchased through RttT-D. Therefore, a low score is appropriate.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The BCPS is commended for having formed community partnerships with public and private resources that provide support to high risk students and families in order to address social, emotional, and behavioral needs. The LEA is also favorably recognized for having developed a Core Management Team to provide leadership to these efforts. The Core Management Team includes the Executive Director of the Juvenile Court Prevention Council; the Executive Director of the Local Mental Health Authority; the Executive Director of Mental Health Partners; Burke County's Juvenile Court Judge; the Director of Public Safety and the Burke County Sheriff.

Two programs are especially worthy of recognition. They are:

- BATS, a program for high-risk students who have been suspended from school due to discipline issues. The Burke Alternative to Suspension (BATS) Program responds to these situations by engaging suspended students in community service rather than unsupervised suspension time.
- cooperation with the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) to build the groundwork for a satellite campus in Burke County on the campus of the North Carolina School for the Deaf that will expand availability of the Morganton project to hearing impaired students.

Expected population-level results for students that derive from these partnerships and align with the BCPS proposal include

- Families in need of resources and support. They will be provided case management services in order to find the resources and services they need.
- Students referred for mental health services. They receive school based mental health services.
- Suspended students. They will spend out-of-school suspension time engaged in community service. Also, as BATS students, they will receive attendance credit during suspension time and receive support so they can complete homework and coursework during suspension time.

The proposal does not, as required, specify what systems were created to gather data and measure the results of these services. It does state, however, that these data will be tracked by the Data Manager.

Social workers rather than formal data collection will identify needs of families through home visits. Students facing the challenges of mental health issues, with family permission, will be linked with mental health therapists in the schools.

Although the application claims that it will provide services to the LEA as a whole, rather than only to the middle and high schools served by this project, few details are offered other than that BCPS social workers are assigned schools within a feeder pattern (including elementary, middle and high schools) so they can better serve families with more than one child who may be attending different schools. The Social Workers work directly with educators and administrators so that students can meet their educational goals while their families are linked with the services they need.

When students are suspended and parents give permission for student to participate in BATS, they are assigned a work site. Deserving recognition and strengthening this criterion is BATS goal that students do not fall behind academically during their suspension time.

It is laudable that social workers provide teachers with training on recognizing social and emotional needs of students and that Principals and School Counselors are trained on how to use the BATS program.

School-based student support teams assess individual family/student needs and decide upon the best course of action for each family. A strength of these teams is that parents have a large role in the decision making process regarding services for their children.

Data collection and analysis is planned regarding efforts to determine social and emotional effects on performance by Population-Level. It is not indicated by what means, and it would be helpful to the effort if data could be gathered to show those in need who do not receive services.

In summary, the quality of this component is generally on the high side as evidenced by its efforts to form community partnerships with public and private resources with the goal to provide support to high risk students and families; provide activities through BATS and NCSSM to address those goals; and provide leadership to the effort. On the down side is that efforts to involve more at-risk students in the program are unclear as are systems to track the program's results.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

BCPS has proposed a plan that employs five projects to meet Absolute Priority 1, each with different activities and deliverables, but all based on standards and assessments that can be reasonably assumed to prepare all participating students to succeed in college and the workplace. These projects and their strengths are:

- The Morganton NCSSM Learning Center's pre-engineering strands and capacity building professional development model;
- the Career Technical Education Campus featuring exposure to and instruction in career areas where local, regional and state jobs are currently available;
- Lead the Way that offers rigorous and innovative STEM education curricular programs for middle schools that prepare students for the global economy through world-class curriculum;
- Building 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classrooms that expands and create new learning environments for students
- Implementing Personalized Learning Environments that builds the capacity of the district to supply, equip, assess, and otherwise support student interests and enhance teachers' ability and opportunity to effectively help students across the spectrum of subgroups, address and build upon their academic and college/career interests.

Taken together, these projects and their supportive infrastructure address the requirements for meeting Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	148
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0412NC-2 for Burke County Public Schools

### 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 vision of the project is clearly articulated and explained. The applicant provides the following statements within the narrative of this section.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Included students in the development of the grant proposal demonstrates strong commitment to inclusions</li> <li>• Desire to learn within their own interest targeting student interest to encourage learning.</li> <li>• Demonstrated a level of support and alignment with the larger community</li> <li>• Expectations of collaboration approach to incorporate community partners, STEM schools, Chamber of Commerce and School for the Deaf</li> <li>• Partnership with Technical schools, to prep students for immediate workforce training.</li> <li>• Lacked a clear definition or illustration of "Real world Laboratories" Assessment</li> <li>• The Assessment system doesn't explore the individual learning model discussed previously. It assess students using the same testing approach with potentially new standards</li> <li>• Does not demonstrate impact on global economy or overall project</li> </ul> <p>There is a system discussed but limited understanding on how COMPLETE Act clearly fits the model for this program.</p> <p>The idea of a pre and post test is a bit weak to explore the individual development of student growth.</p> <p>The applicant focused more on integrating the available assessment that are convenient in comparison to identifying an approach that fits the new vision of the project as stated.</p> <p>The program has seen previous signs of success but didn't clearly demonstrate how success is measured. The program noted that graduation rates increase to 88% but from what prior rate was not disclosed to the reviewer. The applicant also stated that NO school is currently identified as a lowest achieving school if that is the case, there would be no achievement gap to address.</p> <p>The overall evaluation by the reviewer support the score of a lower high range in this category because there were strengths throughout this section. The overall articulation of the reform vision is described by the applicant in a holistic manner but the weakness noted by the reviewer were in the details resulting in a deduction of points in this section.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is no clear description of the student path for the approach of this project. The applicant identifies and explains the four pathways or tracks for students but doesn't explain how students get assigned or chosen a specific academic/vocational track. This section fails to completely address the process that the applicant will use to participate.</p> <p>The supported and collaborative schools are clearly identified by the applicant; however the role of the partnership is not explained. The applicant states the college tech pathway for students will be bound for a 2 year college program but does not articulate a potential agreement in place with a specific 2 year institution that fits this program. The level of partnership and/or role of said partnership are not described.</p>		

The Governor Purdue's new initiative appears promising but the applicant does not offer enough details to the program or how the program clearly fits with this project or will help the students.

There are some schools that are listed and even suggested participation within some type of collaboration or partnership but it's not clearly explained and the capacity of that partnership is also not clearly identified.

The applicant provides illustrations for a number of participants in the supported chart.

The score given by the reviewer is reflective of the strong comprehensive plan offered by the applicant. The vision described by the applicant clearly describes a plan that will support the participation of all students, and schools. The applicant score was deducted to the vagueness of the required detailed descriptions to meet this standard. The reviewer scored this section in the higher mid range as a result.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The project is designed to target middle and high school students. The expansion plan is to include the elementary schools.

- Strong illustration of a Saturday program will target specific student population of an expanding group and will expand into a Summer session
- Identification of specific students that are normally in that at-risk classifications generally to help increase the growth of the program
- The idea of development of the STEM school with the collaboration is unclear, more details are needed.
- There is a very strong use of technology and exposure for participants in STEM
- The plan lacks details on implementation

The application does not give any illustration of reform or changes that would detail the current state of the district to its future vision if reform. The explanation of growth is not clearly defined for the development of change from previous stage to the future goal. The narrative of this section is not descriptive enough to offer clear understanding of change and reform. There is not a clear explanation of the ideas to improve learning. The applicant failed to offer information about the target group that would address this objective for this section.

The reviewer explored the entire section to accurately determine if the applicant met the standards in this section and determined that points should be deducted for the failure to provide adequate details to demonstrate a meaningful reform plan. The plan didn't include enough description of the stages of growth to completely comprehend the plan, resulting in a higher mid range score by the reviewer.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The explanations of goals are clearly articulated and appear attainable. The goals suggested (4a) offer an increase annually by less than 2 points don't appear to be very aggressive goals. There is no plan to increase equity as the goal for the project.

The plan presented by the applicant is for decreasing the achievement gap offers little narrative explanation of the data present. There is no explanation or justification of the goals set by the applicant. In several areas, the goals decrease from the previous year (3rd Grade Math).

The graduation rate doesn't offer a plan to close the gap between subgroups. The overall baseline and 5 year goal are not aggressive.

The applicant could have offered a stronger response if included a narrative of explanation with more details to explain the plan for improving student outcomes. Each section within this unit was demonstrated through data and clearly identified, however not ambitious. The lack of ambition justifies the reviewer's score of low range of a higher tier score as the applicant address all areas of this section but with limited detail and support.

## 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 applicant stated that they had successfully closed the achievement gap for all students over the past 4 years, yet the data fails to demonstrate the same. The data clearly demonstrates holistic growth by subgroups but does not show an elimination of the achievement gap for the sub groups. It shows increases in scores which is commendable but does not show where all groups assessment scores are the same.</p> <p>The applicant does demonstrate graduation rate success for 4 years and offers data to support this notion.</p> <p>The lowest achieving school was not reported in the data chart presented by the applicant in the high school report. The omitted school is an alternative HS. There is a strong plan and demonstration of support for the alternative school. The early warning system, and after graduation plan appears to offer enough support that the applicant has a clear demonstration of success and improvement in the graduation rates have doubled in 4 years.</p> <p>The applicant states a new initiative is in place that allow real time data access for parents to access student grades. This new plan clearly demonstrates compliance with the transparency of data access to parents.</p> <p>The score is justified as the applicant strongly describes part of the criteria but misses a few key areas as previously noted by the reviewer. That section offers clear description of improvement but nothing to eliminate or address the achievement gap between subgroups.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicants states that transparency exists and also offers support of transparency by citing an annual listing in the local news and the district website. All aspects of this section are discussed within the narrative that would meet the criteria of this section. The applicant notes salaries and other personnel information is transparent and available.</p> <p>The applicant states that all expenditures and salaries are reported annually in an external audit. They also make these reports available to the schools for their individual audits as well.</p> <p>The applicant clearly states and provides evidence of transparency. The score is justified based statements of the applicant but the deduction is due to the lack of evidence presented by the applicant as the reviewer is forced to accept the narrative as fact.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states there is a clear plan of autonomy and support by the state for the implementation of the identified learning communities as stated in this proposal.</p> <p>The applicant discusses several projects that were previously implemented that have now partnered with this application to meet the objectives.</p> <p>The applicant justifies these criteria by the partnership between this program and the Biceps plan that is in line with Career and College initiative. There is a clear explanation of state legal or regulatory guidelines to implements the personalized environment.</p> <p>The Board of education has also offered support for the project. The applicant states evidence in this area and therefore received a high score given by the reviewer.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has offered convincing support from the appropriate stakeholders for this project. The applicant's support was evident from the administered survey responses to potential stakeholders requesting support. The data illustrated very high support from Principals, teachers, students and parents.</p>		

The data presented was not disaggregated by the participating schools. The limited data presented was a weakness of the application.

The level of engagement and feedback was not clearly discussed between the applicant and the stakeholders.

The application received letters of support from various community partners. These letter justify the score given by the reviewer.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's clear articulation of need is supported by the target group's unemployment rate of 12% which is above the national average.

This was discussed earlier to establish the need for this project to support the learning communities that are discussed throughout this proposal.

The partnerships with specific target groups support the need and gaps that this plan will address specifically related to workforce preparation. The evidence presented supports the score offered by the reviewer.

The applicant offers strong evidence of need but doesn't offer any information related to a high quality plan. There is no discussion by the applicant that would address the criteria of implementing personalize learning environments. The score given by the reviewer is low due to lack of plan and failure to meet the standards of a clear high quality plan. There is no discussion of timeline, deliverables, etc. to that would justify a midrange rating by the reviewer.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The overall plan is vague at best. It fails to explain the key point for identification and separation of the students into the track. The applicant discusses identifying breakdown

- learning styles
- then helping students find their own interest,
- then exposure to broaden their educational choices
- Then training them.

There are no details on the plan to achieve any of these ideas or suggestions that would lead to an engaged students.

The applicant discusses an early program for 6,7 and 8 grade students that fit the second stage for exposing students to options of career exploration but leaves to the question of how are students selected for each path breakdown.

The use of the online course does not support individualize learning models. If the applicant believes it does, there needed to be an explanation or justification for the selection of this approach. The implementation of the online model is vague to demonstrate and articulate its benefit or fit to the program.

I am encouraged by the support of technology and acceptance of the technology to encourage learning. The BYOD policy but as noted all student's don't own technology. This technology challenge would be closed because the applicant would supply devices so that the utilization of technology is still achieved.

Another initiative that was strongly illustrated to address criteria for this section was the Project Lead the way. The applicant offers explanation of support for the engagement of students in the area of problem solving.

The project design offers extensive options for learning and student development. But applicant doesn't appear to have a strong plan for identification of students who will participate in the program. Just to state that these options are available is not the same is catering to the needs of students. The strategies for implementation of this program are strong with the

collaboration approach that the applicant has clearly stated throughout this section. The use of current assessments is a good indication that more workload won't be placed on the current and supporting teachers and educators in this project. It offers some continuity for students with still some exciting programs for change.

The reviewer was very impressed with the overall vision of the applicant and the narrative presented offers a clear plan for improving learning, meeting the individualized needs for all student participants and addressing the college and career standards. The reviewer scored this section in the midrange level score as a result of omitted details of several key areas that would have offered more creditability to the plan.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	15
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The utilization of the PLC as a part of the current evaluation system is weak. It's already apart of the school design and it's clear that the current school design does not support individualize learning.

The applicant discusses a data team to group student's by abilities is a very problematic approach that again steers away from the individualized learning model originally discussed in this proposal.

The statement that frequently measure student progress is inaccurate as these measurements are common standards. They are a part of the common assessment plan already in place by the district. Therefore, the idea of student progress and frequency are vague at best in accurately describing the progress of student learning. If the applicant maintains the status quo to assess student learning it doesn't account for individualize learning.

The utilization of the Renzulli Learning is an approach that is marketed as a self-pace student centered design but it's placing a student in front of a computer and therefore would appear to be less engaging. To state that students can engage in self pace suggest they will be self-motivated to learning. There needs to be more discussion on the role of the teacher in such case by the applicant.

The applicant does offer strong support for the utilization and implementation of the Renzulli Learning stating it ensure individuals receive instruction tailored to their learning styles, preferred expression styles, and interest. The reviewer is a skeptic as the computer doesn't support kinesthetic learning.

The applicant established and illustrates clear goals, activities and timelines that offer strong support to the implementation and responsible parties for this project. The reviewer scored this section in the midrange level score as a result of omitted details of several key areas that would have offered more creditability to the plan.

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

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application didn't specify the type of support to be gained from the Central office for this project. The applicant has carefully identified a support staff for this project. Each identified position appears to have a vital role to the successful execution of the project. The applicant also describes the role of each individual to demonstrate no overlap of responsibilities.

The applicant discusses the student's ability to use technology to gain valuable mastery knowledge. The profile of the technology will establish a student's current state of educational development and attempt to bring them up to standard. Teachers have autonomy to add and deduct learning sessions within the program to help support student learning.

The utilization of the Renzulli Learning tools as stated by the applicant would create the opportunity for students to earn credit, demonstrate mastery and provide additional learning resources for students. The applicant stated that the teachers would assist in the development of learning tiers to help meet student learning at their current levels.

The applicant failed to explain the instructional practices that would be done by the teachers aside from their ability to add lessons to a student's online course. The applicant states a standardized examination will be used to determine mastery.

The overall idea offered by the applicant was presented to meet the requirements for this section. The lack of details, evidence and support made it difficult for the reviewer to completely understand the details to connect the infrastructure to the presented plan. The lack of details presented by the applicant justifies the reviewer's point deduction for this section. The reviewer offers a high midrange score for this section.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states that students, teachers, and parents have access to the information at school but does not address the access at home or off school grounds. It is not clearly stated whether or not this will occur with the information provided.</p> <p>The applicant offers a strong narrative to explaining the flow of technology and usage by all students for complete access.</p> <p>The applicant will utilize standardized summative assessments.</p> <p>The applicant did not discuss trainings or tutorial sessions for parents and other stakeholders that are not a part of the learning environment. The assumption is that parents have a working knowledge and that's not necessarily the case. There is technical and digital support but no explanation of the difference between the two concepts and levels of support to be offered to families. There is not an indication by the applicant that parents will receive training on the Parent Assistance Module.</p> <p>The applicant doesn't offer enough information related to the technical support for parents off school grounds. The applicant places heavy resources in the technology area and the use of technology in this proposal but fails in this key area of support resulting in the score given by the reviewer.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states, " the Improvement team will govern the continuous improvement process... be charged with monitoring, measure, and sharing information." The applicant does not describe how this plan will lead to improvement. The applicant does not offer clear details explaining the type of data this team will be identifying, analyzing, and interpreting to determine the value of this assessment team.</p> <p>The applicant did attempt to offer an example of the process of evaluation but the statement that the program will be evaluated is not enough. There are limited details to explain the example of evaluation.</p> <p>Despite the applicant failing to offer details, there are several strong indicators that the applicant will utilize several opportunities for assessment that would potentially lead to improvement. The applicant notes a biannual basis of assessment will be constructed to gather performance data. The applicant also states that focus groups will be used to address strengths and weakness from a programmatic perspective.</p> <p>The continuous improvement plan could be stronger with more details, therefore resulting in a deduction of points by the reviewer. The narrative presented by the applicant does address several components required in this section but lacked detail, therefore the reviewers score is in the mid high range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant stated that the basic lines of communication will be utilized in the implementation and planning phases of the program more frequently than once the program is up and running. The applicant will utilize phone calls, face to face and email will be common means for communication.</p> <p>The applicant explains a level of communication in a systematic approach that would allow all project partners to maintain awareness of project development.</p> <p>The level of engagement among stakeholders is not clearly explained by the applicant. The engagement of the stakeholders is critical to the improvement plan for this project. The amount of input or feedback from the stakeholders is not offered by the applicant.</p> <p>The statement of evidence offered within this narrative justifies the midrange score given by the reviewer. The narrative presented by the applicant does address several components required in this section but lacked detail, therefore the reviewers score is in the mid high range.</p>		

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant identified current assessments broken down by grade level. The utilization of the Explore test to offer data for the college and career track is also identified. The applicant explains that this test will address the required student performance measures. The 9-12 grade students utilize a completely different test. With no consistency in assessment of career inventories it promotes concern by the reviewer.</p> <p>The applicant clearly explains each assessment and keys to the assessment; however, the applicant never clearly justifies or states why these assessments are chosen which would determine appropriateness which is required for this criteria. The rationale was only discussed in relation to the work keys exam not the explore assessment.</p> <p>The applicant doesn't offer a high quality plan but does explain some of the requirements for this section that would support the midrange score by the reviewer.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant stated that an outside firm will be hired to examine and measure the effectiveness of investment.</p> <p>This is a good indication that a strong improvement plan will be developed.</p> <p>The applicant offers additional support for evaluating effectiveness and investment in the evaluation of the STEM curriculum. They will utilize short surveys to encourage informal student feedback.</p> <p>The applicant also stated that there will be an evaluation of the curriculum development and delivery.</p> <p>This criteria is clearly addressed by the applicant supporting the score offered by reviewer. The narrative presented by the applicant does address several components required to illustrate a quality plan in this section but lacked details, therefore the reviewers score has a slight deduction.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a budget for review that discusses the financial needs for the program. All the funds are stated and presented by the applicant appear to be in alignment with the overall project discussed within this proposal.</p> <p>Personnel cost don't appear to be reasonable for the Grant Manager or Data manager. Those two positions appear to be extremely high salaries. There is a missing line item for the outside firm hire that was earlier discussed in the improvement plan. The funding breakdown annually would better illustrate the budget for this proposal. The applicant offers a subsequent statement of budget needs but not a line itemed breakdown.</p> <p>The applicant describes the utilization of funds to explain the higher cost in the first year to account for building infrastructure to establish new programs.</p> <p>The applicant also explains that this approach will allow for sustainability. The applicant failed to provide a strong rationale for the budget. The applicant provided the necessary information to address this section but failed to provide additional narrative to justify or explain key areas. The reviewer scored the overall section high but deductions were made due to the limits in the details presented.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant established and presented budget support largely based on infrastructure.</p> <p>The position from this applicant is that the budget is front loaded as the implementation of the program will not require major funds in the 3rd and 4th year of the grant.</p>		

Not enough information presented to demonstrate the sustainability of this project therefore justifying the score of the reviewer. Applicant offers information about how the funding would be used in relation to technology but failed to offer information of sustainability of technology.

The applicant provides annual budgets but limits the reviewer to interpret the sustainability of the project within a strong supportive narrative.

The applicant failed to provide a detailed high quality plan for sustainability. Although some significant components of a high quality plan were not clearly explained in this section, within the overall application those concerns were addressed but more detail was needed from the applicant in this section resulting in a midrange score by the reviewer.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has established a strong community base that served 13000 students. However, there is no clear indication of how this partnership fits the development of the current proposal. Criteria 2 of this section were completely overlooked.

The applicant doesn't offer a strong explanation of how the partnership will track the indicators that are illustrated in the chart in the proposal. A clear narrative is needed to explain the process that will be utilized to address these criteria.

The applicant uses simple terminology to state that needs that will be determined and states that resources will be allocated to address those needs, yet that statement is vague at best. The vagueness of this statement causes significant concern as it leaves a lot of interpretation of the reviewer. The applicant stated, "social workers work directly with families...to help them find the resources they need and serve as a hub for partnerships with community agencies." This statement suggests a limitless possibility to aid families but doesn't suggest evidence of achieving aid to those families to help them out of their challenged situation.

The utilization of teachers to train them to identify social and emotional needs of participants appears problematic. The utilization of a school counselor would appear to be a better fit in this area compared to the teachers.

The narrative presented by the applicant does address several components required in this section but lacked detail, therefore the reviewers score is in the mid high range. The areas of weakness raised concern for the reviewer therefore supporting the deduction of points resulting in a mid-level score.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Throughout the proposal the applicant offers a clear plan, evidence and justification of a proposal that supports the holistic development of a program that meets the needs of its participants. The applicant demonstrates a strong holistic plan to address the four course educational assurance areas to improve learning through a personalize model.

The participants identified in this proposal are students in all grade levels will be eligible for participation in this project.

The applicant continues to describe the needs of its target group to justify the design of a program to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies.

The applicant describes the online learning tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards.

The applicant provided a plan for assessment and continued improvement of the program with the utilization of an external evaluator.

The program also explains a cohesive plan to address college and career readiness plan. The reviewer therefore deemed this

absolute priority met.

Total	210	158
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

No application submitted



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0412NC-3 for Burke County Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant successfully set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. The plan provided included all middle school and high school students. By including all students the plan supports the district's goal of every student graduating from high school prepared for success in a career, two-or four-year college or technical program.

In addition, the plan builds on the district's work in the 4 educational assurance areas which will support the applicant's reform vision. By the state as well as the applicant adopting the Common Core State Standards and Essential Standards for Science and Social Studies students will be prepared to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. The district has been offering ongoing professional development on these standards to staff so that they may be fully implemented in SY12-13. Using the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) assessments developed to align with the Common Core as well as the consortium's computer adaptive tests, teachers and students will have data to provide personalized student support.

The state is developing a PK-13 data warehouse that automates much of the data collection work and uses a unique identifier system to link students and staff and match data across various sources of data. This warehouse along with the new state longitudinal data system will allow the applicant to access performance of individual schools.

To improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, the applicant will be using the new evaluation system developed by the state beginning in 2012-13 that will contain an additional standard to explicitly factor student growth data into the evaluation process and require annual evaluations for teachers.

Currently the applicant has no schools identified as a lowest-achieving school. However, the applicant has had a school designated as such and will be able to use that knowledge to support buildings in the future.

In light of the strengths identified, this application received a high score.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has successfully developed an approach to implementing its reform proposal that will support high quality school level implementation.</p> <p>Currently the applicant uses 4 pathways for high school students to prepare for college and careers. The applicant plans to expand education opportunities with in these pathways so that all middle and high school students will be able to pursue personalized education and occupational goals. Because all schools meet the eligibility requirements, all middle school and high school students will participate as set forth in the school demographics which includes participating students from low income families who are high need as well as participating educators. The applicant has provided evidence of this in a chart included in the application.</p> <p>In addition, the applicant has developed a partnership with the North Caroliona School for the Deaf to create a Career and Technical Education campus on the NCSD campus and add the additional federal career clusters that are current not available to students. This will expand opportunities for students.</p> <p>Because of the strengths identified, this application received a high score.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided a high quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change as evidenced by the expansion of personalized learning opportunities for elementary students to explore personal interests, potential careers and college opportunities. The applicant plans to field test the Renzulli Learning tool to support the expansion of personalized learning at the elementary level Through funding from the Burroughs Welcome grant, students will participate in hands-on STEM activities and field trips to universities to spark interest in college and careers.</p> <p>The collaboration with the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) to develop 3 pre-engineering programs will be scalable due to the potential for adding additional strands of engineering or extending the program to earlier grade levels. Once this is developed the curriculum can also be shared state wide and nationwide--another positive example of scaling up the work. A field test of a professional development model of co-teaching to build capacity of the staff to teach the pre-engineering courses will support this reform effort.</p> <p>Because of the strengths identified this application received a high score.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided a plan that included extensive data relating to their ambitious yet achievable goals that are equal or exceed the state ESEA targets for the district overall and by subgroups as evidenced by the data on summative assessments in grades three, five, eight and ten, showing status and growth, decreasing the achievement gaps, graduation rates and college enrollment. The district also included postsecondary degree attainment which was optional. Evidence was included on how they intend to document growth.</p> <p>Because of these strengths and limited weakness, this application received a high score.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant successfully demonstrated a clear record of success in advancing student learning and achievement as evidenced by a written description and charts detailing 4 years of data relating to closing the achievement gap in every subgroup and raising high school graduation rates. Strong evidence of college enrollment comes from a unique educational opportunity for 11th and 12th grade students. The applicant has established seamless curricula between the high school and community college where students take high school and college courses. Dual credit is available</p>		

for many courses so students can graduate from high school with a 2-year Associates Degree, tuition free.

The applicant has shown convincing success with it low achieving school through the use of 4 key interventions-- increased learning time implemented, end of course test intervention was hired, graduation coach hired to monitor credit attainment, and a program to reward and removed staff where staff are rewarded based on their attendance and the 4-year cohort graduation rate and staff is removed based on performance on the evaluation instrument and individualized growth plan.

The Parent Assist Module and Study Island are programs that parent and staff as well as students can go to check real time data of student academic progress. It is unclear how parents and or students that do not have computers at home access this information which would pose a significant barrier.

In light of the strong supporting evidence and the limited weakness noted, this application received a high rating.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:  
 The applicant successfully set forth a high level of transparency in processes, practices, and investments as evidenced by the description of the information currently available to the public including school level expenditures, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. Actual personnel salaries and position descriptions are listed annually in the local newspaper and posted on the district website. Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level and function level are reported annually in the external financial audit.  
 Because of these data provided on a regular basis to the public, the applicant received a high score.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:  
 The applicant successfully demonstrated evidence of conditions and autonomy under the state context as evidenced by the alignment of the applicant's plan with the state initiative called Career & College-Ready, Set, Go which includes a focus on local capacity building, an accountability system focused on student readiness after high school, diagnostic assessments and the teacher/principal evaluation tool.  
 In light of the positive evidence, this application received a high score.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:  
 The applicant successfully engaged students, families, teachers and principals in the development and subsequent revisions of the plan. The plan provided described methods used to gather stakeholders input. Because the applicant does not have collective bargaining, an on-line survey was included and presented strong support for the application from teachers. The survey was also completed by students, principals and parents. Results were analyzed separately for middle schools and high schools. The plan provided also included 7 letters of support from various people and organizations, a number appropriate for the purpose of the application. It is not clear that as a result of the feedback, how the proposal was revised.  
 Because of the strengths and limited weakness identified, this application received a high score.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:  
 The applicant's plan was not of high quality and lacked a clear analysis of the applicants current status in implementing personalized learning environments. The plan provided an inadequate description of current status in the middle schools and high schools. The description did not include goals, timelines, activities, deliverables or responsible parties. The applicant did state however, Renzulli Learning tool for providing personalized education continued to rise to the surface.  
 The applicant's plan did identify three needs as noted below:

- a need for employment and the plan to solve this need included adding 5 occupational areas to the CTE

programs for students.

- a need for 21st century programs and the plan to solve this was to add additional training in STEM programs.
- a need to add video-conferenced courses so that students may have some face time with teachers and increased course offerings.

There was insufficient evidence of how, when and by whom these needs would be addressed.

In view of the weaknesses and limited strengths identified, this application received a medium rating.

### 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 set forth a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college-and career-ready.

In the plan provided, the applicant lays out a 4 stage process for implementing personalized education--identifying learning styles of students, helping students identify their own interests and develop a plan for high school and beyond to meet their personal goals, broadening education choices that offer college and career-ready options for students, and providing training and support to teachers as they implement personalized learning in the classroom. This 4 stage process is appropriate to meet the expectations for the RtT-D program. The plan also details the new opportunities for students that the RtT-D program will support including a description of the program, goals, activities, deliverables, timelines and responsible parties.

The applicant has a strong program in place to offer on-line learning that offers many options for students. Their intent is to allow students to access more rigorous and expanded course work. This expansion supports the high quality content and instructional environments that the applicant seeks.

Teachers are learning how to better incorporate the skills and traits of creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and perseverance which are the skills and traits necessary for academic success in college-and career-ready environments.

In addition, mechanisms are in place for ongoing and regular feedback. An example of this would be the Explore test that is given in middle school to measure academic progress towards college and career readiness for high school and college success. The use of Renzulli Learning will provide a frequent, updated personalized learning plan. Actively engaging students and their parents in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will be critical for high poverty students where federal aid can make the difference between student attending or not attending college.

Students are also provided training and support, especially for the online learning courses. There is a distance learning advisor position in place at each high school to support the students taking these courses. In addition, staff will be trained to support the video conferencing labs that will be established at each high school.

In view of the strengths identified, this application received a high score.

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

The applicant successfully sets forth a high quality plan for improving leading and teaching.

The plan provided details a method to engage all participating educators in training and professional learning that supports personalized learning. Professional learning communities are included in the rubric for North Carolina's new teacher evaluation system that the district has adopted. The plan also frequently measures student progress and then adapts the content and instruction to the students needs and progress toward college and career readiness.

It also improves the evaluation system for teachers and principals through feedback using student growth data. In addition, the plan provides teachers and administrators with training in personalized learning communities, tiered

instruction and differentiated instruction--which supports the district's expectation to improve principal and teacher practice. All certified staff were trained on the McRel tool/process for evaluation at the beginning this 2012-13 school year. The application includes a table showing goals, activities, deliverables, timeline and responsible person.

Because of these strengths identified this application received a high score.

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 successfully set forth a high quality plan to support project implementation as evidenced by the following:

- LEA central office will provide supports and services to all participating schools that includes flexibility and autonomy at the school level
- Students are given opportunity to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways and times using standardized summative assessments.
- NC now uses improved formative assessments so teachers may help students throughout the year.
- All students and staff are provided learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable to all students including students with disabilities, English learners and academically gifted students through differentiated learning and tiered assignments.

In light of the strengths identified, this application received a high score.

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

The application successfully set forth a high quality plan relating to LEA and school infrastructure. The plan calls for the software programs Renzulli Learning and Study Island to support personalized instruction and feedback. Renzulli Learning will allow students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery. Study Island is a digital remediation tool that provides a set of learning resources so student can meet their personal education goals and perform at grade level.

Additional evidence for this high quality plan includes when students take courses at the learning center they will receive technical and digital support from the center. Students taking videoconferenced courses and hybrid courses will have face time with teachers to provide support. If students take courses at the CTE campus, they will have peer support as they complete projects.

The systems that the districts use securely store the student performance data and make recommendations for additional learning supports. It is the district's intent to use data systems chosen by the NCDPI that are being rolled out as part of the statewide RttT initiative and will participate in the state systems that are moving to the NC Education Cloud. PowerSchool is now the required data system beginning in the Summer 2013. This program will allow both parents and student to determine at what level the student is progressing in a particular class. Parents also have the ability to log in to the Parent Assistance Module to view student homework and grades.

While the plan provides technical support for teachers and students it did not include how parents would access this information if they do not have computer access. With the increased use of computers in the plan, the district must address the parent support at the same level they do the students.

In light of these strengths and the limited weakness identified, this application received a high score.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant successfully set forth a high quality plan for a continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant.

The plan provided included hiring staff to put into place to monitor, measure and publicly share information on quality investments. These new staff members are appropriate for the plan's success. In addition to new staff, focus groups will be conducted to provide feedback and a study committee has been developed to study current State vocational training and to improve the quality and relevance, align basic, vocational and higher education and ensure that students who are not college bound are career ready. The state of NC has recently developed a joint Study Committee on Career and Technical Education to study current State vocational training to improve the quality and relevance of training, align basic education, vocational, and higher education training and ensure that student who are not college bound are career ready. A part of this district's continuous improvement process will be to stay abreast of the committee results so that their program can evolve as changes are made at the state level. This is an important strategy in order to stay current.

A table included in the application helps to clarify and summarize the goals and activities for continuous improvement. In light of these strengths, this application received a high score.

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

The applicant did not put forth a quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement.

While the plan provided identifies 2 teams and 2 processes that will be used for internal communication, it makes no mention of any external communication or engagement.

Because of this weakness, this application received a medium score.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant successfully set forth a high quality plan with ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets and applicant proposed performance measures.

The plan provided includes rationale for selecting the measure and how the measure will inform implementation success. The Explore Test will be used at grades 4-8 because it is an entry measure of academic progress. The Work Keys was chosen for grades 9-12 because it provides a gauge of career readiness by measuring real world skills critical to job success. The plan also includes the charts that support the responses to the performance measures in the applicant's narrative.

It is unclear how a measure will be reviewed and changed over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

Because of the overall strengths and limited weakness this application received a high score.

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

The applicant has successfully set forth a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the investments of the Rtt-D funded activities that included but are not limited to professional development and activities that employ technology, productive use of time, staff and money to improve results.

The plan provided included a narrative of how an outside facilitator who is an appropriate and experienced partner to conduct this work, would provide the external evaluation services as evidenced by the process the firm will use which will include focus groups, external surveys, evaluate the professional development activities. The evaluation of the STEM curriculum developed and delivered will seek to understand how clear, and usable the course curricula are for students and instructions as well as informal student feedback at the end of each unit.

Because of the strengths identified, and no weaknesses were found, this application received a high score.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant successfully set forth a plan for the overall budget for the project which is reasonable and sufficient to support the plan.</p> <p>The plan provided included identification of all funds that will support the project and clearly identifies funds that will be used for one-time investments as evidenced by the Budget Table 2-1: Overall Budget Summary Project List. Also each budget subpart for project level budget summaries identifies the amount of funds coming from other sources (if any).</p> <p>In light of these strengths identified, the application received a high score.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant successfully sets forth a high quality plan for sustainability of project goals as evidenced by support from state and local entities as well as the reduction in the Federal funds in years 3 and 4.</p> <p>Evidence of the sustainability includes the following. By adding new CTE programs, enrollment will increase and thus and the district allotment will also increase. Through the use of video conferencing, high schools will be equipped to expand the number and range of courses as a result of Project Lead the Way being established in the middle schools. Attendance at STEM school at the North Carolina School for the Deaf will increase student enrollment at that program. Funding for social worker positions and teachers to teach the 5th period classes and transportation costs will be absorbed by the local district budget.</p> <p>In addition, the plan provided describes each project proposed and the sustainability related to the project. However, there is no timeline or parties responsible for implementing the activities included in the plan.</p> <p>In light of these strengths identified, the application received a high score.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant successfully proposed to integrate resources in a partnership designed to augment schools resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address social, emotional, or behavioral needs of participating students.</p> <p>The plan provided included a description of the coherent and sustainable community partnerships formed through its Safe Schools Healthy Students Grant in its 4th year which supports 4 additional social work positions. This grant is ending and the district recognizes the need for continuation of this type of support. Through a series of more intensive grants, the district has developed a mental health program for schools that will continue after the Safe Schools grant ends. In addition the district has a program for high-risk students that engages suspended students in community service rather than unsupervised suspension time. Seventeen community locations have partnered with the school district for community service at this time.</p> <p>Data will be used to target resources to improve results for students, especially students facing significant challenges. Staff can be placed based on the frequency of needs these students which will support the overall alignment and integration of services. This supports the types of family supports that will be needed. Students will meet educational goals while families are linked with services they need so that all services are integrated. The plan also identified 4 population level desired results for students as follows which support the overall plan.</p>		

- families in need of resources and referrals
- students in need of mental health services
- students receiving out of school suspensions and engage in community service
- students receiving out of school suspensions and receive support to complete course work and receive attendance credit during suspension time

Decision making processes and infrastructure to evaluate supports for students are in place. Parents have a large role in the decision making process regarding services for their children. Parents must give consent for services as well as provide feedback when services are completed. This feedback supports its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.

The plan did not identify its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population nor describe desired results for students.

Because of the strengths identified and the limited weakness, this application received a high score.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has coherently and comprehensively addressed Absolute Priority 1 in the following ways:

\*build on core education assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements--

- adopted the Common Core Standards, Essential Standards for Science and Math;
- will use the Smarter Balanced assessments which are aligned with Common Core;
- has been offering ongoing professional development on the Common Core standards;
- will use state PK-13 data warehouse;
- will begin using the new evaluation system for principals and teachers beginning 2012-13;
- adding new measurements including the Explore test and Work keys;

\*accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student--

- supporting the district's low achieving school;
- ambitious yet achievable goals that are equal to or exceed State targets in all subgroups in grades 3,5,8,10;
- have 4 years of data relating to closing the achievement gap and have successfully closed it in all subgroups and grade;
- use the Renzulli system for the personalized learning plan with training and support for teachers as they implement in the classroom;
- teachers learning how to better incorporate skills and traits of creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork and perseverance;

\*increase the effectiveness of educators and expand student access to the most effective educators--

- teachers receiving training on social and emotional skills;
- all teachers and principals evaluated on the new tool beginning 2012-13;
- all middle school and high school students are participating in the RttT-D project;

\*decrease achievement gaps across student groups--

- 4 years of data showing closing the achievement gap in every sub-group;

\*and increase the rates at which student graduate from high school prepared for college and careers--

- 4 years of data showing high school graduation rates have increased;
- 4 state process to personalize education--learning styles, help students identify their own interests and plan for

high school and beyond, broaden educational choices, and on-going training for teachers

In light of the strengths identified, this application has met Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	197
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