



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0895NC-2 for Cabarrus County 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 applicant presents a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that is evidenced by the following examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing new assessments for students in Grades PK12 by reaching a goal of 95% or more for reading proficiency in Reading and Mat • providing high quality professional development for teachers, principals, and instructional supervisors for understanding the Common Core State Curriculum • making personalized learning the core of high quality professional development for teachers, principals, and instructional supervising <p>As evidence the applicant will produce competitive life long learners and ensure success for all students.</p> <p>Weakness: Does not present a clear approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A2</p> <p>The applicant's quality approach to implementing its reform will support high-quality LEA-level and school level implementation. As evidence</p> <p>a. Cabarrus District operates 39 schools including 19 elementary schools, 7 traditional middle schools, 7 traditional high schools, and 2 preschools, 1 non-traditional middle school, and 3 non-traditional high schools. Over 40% of the district's more than 28,000 students live in poverty based on the number receiving Federal Free and Reduced Meal program. Based upon the number of students receiving free and reduced meals indicates a need. As evidence the high need population is less than 200 of the low-income students. The high need data (K-2) information is from K2 Reading and Math 2011-12 spreadsheet; 3-8 Data is from NC DPI Disaggregate Data for 2011-12 and 9-10 Data is EVAAS projected probability of scoring a 26 or better of less than 60%. The applicant's rationale for selecting all schools to participate in the project was that all of Cabarrus's students could be impacted by the grant.</p> <p>b. As evidenced the narrative indicates that all 39 schools in the district are participants in the initiative.</p> <p>c. Of the more than 28,000 students participating in the initiative, school's demographic is 17.9% African American; 0.4% American Indian, 2.3% Asian American, 63.8% Caucasian, 0.1% Hawaiian Pacific, 12.2% Hispanic and 3.4% Multi-Racial . The number of students identified as low-income is 10,380. The total number of high needs is 11,398. Participating students are taught by a combined total of 1,075. Also it is noted that 13.60% are English Language Learners and 13.72% receive special education services.</p>		

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

10

7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

A.3

The applicant presents a plan to demonstrate how the reform proposal will be implemented and has potential to improve outcomes for all students in the consortium. As evidence the applicant plan to implement a program called Diploma 1 using a Logic Model strategy which involved both long term and short term goals. As evidence the applicant plan to hire a RTT staff, contract needed consultants, establish high school academies, implement additional student assessments, executing professional development activities, developing a district data warehouse and focusing on personal learning for all students. As a result of implementing the Diploma 1 Project, the applicant feels that the following goals can be attained: graduating students earn a high school diploma + 1 additional educational certification, increased student achievement, increased teacher retention, and increased ability to recruit high quality teachers. These goals are attainable, however, the applicant does not present ways to attain the goals.

Weakness: Yet, the applicant has a plan, however, there is not enough information presented to demonstrate how the applicant will reach its outcome goal. The interventions for attaining the goals are not in place. The plan lacks appropriate information for determining how student learning will be improved for those students that will be served through this proposal.

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

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8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

A.4

The applicant details information to demonstrate its effort to improved student learning and performance.

- a. As evidence the applicant measure student performance by using summative assessments throughout the district. These assessments are cumulative evaluations which measure student growth after instruction and are generally given at the end of a course in order to determine whether long term learning goals have been met. Performance on summative assessments, individualized instruction, and extended time for learning will assist school leaders and educators as they identify students who are in need of remediation or enrichment opportunities. As leaders and educators become more aware of specific areas in which each student needs support, students will have multiple opportunities and pathways to demonstrate mastery resulting in improved performance in all areas on summative assessments through the Individualized Learning Plan as indicated in vision for the reform; thus attaining predicted increases (goals). As evidence the summative assessment for Grade K-2 Reading and Math - Local Assessment; Grades 3-8 Reading and Math- North Carolina End of Grade Assessment; and Grade 11 ACT. In addition, a refined district data system will better track and provide access to achievement on summative assessments. The methodology for determining is indicated in the proposal as evidence Grade K-2 Reading and Math on grade level, Grade 3-8 Reading and Math - Achievement level 3 or higher is "Proficient" and Grade 11 ACT Composite Score of 26 or higher indicates "College Ready" for North Carolina State University. the methodology for determining status is percent proficient and above. As evidence the methodology growth is value-added, mean growth percentile, change in achievement levels. Grades 3-8 Reading and Math - EVAAS Value Added "Gain" for Reading and Math and Grade 11 ACT - EVAAS Value Added "Gain" for composite score. Observing the data presented indicates a steady increase in all

subgroups on the end of the grade assessments or summative assessments in both reading and math. The data presented also indicates that the Reading Growth Gain is projected at .5% growth from year to year for All and subgroups.

- b. The applicant shows decreasing achievement gaps for academic performance among some subgroups. As evidence these achievement gaps will be decreased through personalized learning plans and increased professional development for teachers. The data presented indicate that over a three year period in the Grade K-2 Gap Math Proficiency and Reading Proficiency shows a projected decline among some subgroups. Among some subgroups there is no projected decrease. Beginning with grades 3 -8 Math and Reading Proficiency shows a steady decline among most subgroups. A .2% - .3% decrease is projected for grades 3-8 in Math and Reading Proficiency. Among 11th graders taking the ACT a 2% decline is projected for most subgroups.

Weaknesses: The proposal is designed to decrease achievement gaps among all subgroups, however, the applicant's projections indicated for Math Proficiency for Grade 1 Gap is not available over the grant period. Also, Limited English Proficiency for Grade 2 Math, as well as, American Indian/Alaskan Natiive is not projected. There is also no projection projection for Grade 2 Reading among Multi Racial for the third year. In 4th Grade Math there is not projection for the Economically Disadvantaged. For 8th Grade Math there is no projected declined for Limited English Proficiency and Economically Disadvantage for the grant period. Finally, for Multi-Racial on performance of the ACT, there is no projected decline, as well as, for Asian no information is available.

- c. As evidence the applicant indicates that graduation rates during the grant period will increase by individualized learning and addressing gaps in student learning. The applicant projects a 2% growth increase throughout the grant period. As evidence, the 2% growth increase is for all subgroups.

Weakness: There is no indication how the applicant projected the growth increase as well as how they will address the gaps in student learning.

- d. As evidence the Diploma +1 path is mandatory for all students and a focus on careers via high school Academies and should motivate students to attend college. The district forms partnerships with regional higher education institution as well as training organization employers. College enrollment is calculated as the ratio between college-enrolled students and their graduating cohort. There is not information available for students entering college.

Weakness: As evidence there is no data available fo 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	10

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

B.1

The applicant details information to demonstrate its efforts to advance student learning and achievement within the last four

years.

- a. The applicant demonstrates a steady increase in District reading scores that exceed State levels as defined by student as or above grade level. There is evidence the a steady increase in District math scores that exceed State level as defined by student as or above grade level. Based upon the applicant's statement that state standards and assessment proficiency levels changed in 2010, making a comparison of scores from 2009 irrelevant, and that reported outcomes represent data trends from 2010 to 2012, the applicant demonstrates some reasonable success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement for both districts participating in the reform initiative. Significant decline in proficiency levels is reflected on data charts for the Consortium reporting scores from 2009 to 2012 in some areas, as is the ability to advance student learning.

Weakness: The trend of growth was over a three year span. Thea applicant does not provide adequate information.

- b. The applicant does not state schools in the district that demonstrate patterns of low performance.
- c. The applicant does not outline clearly defined practices to make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

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

5

4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

B.2

The applicant has a highly transparent system in terms of processes, practices, and investment. As evidence personnel salaries and non-personnel expenditures are posted on the LEA website, and some LEA-level financial information is located on the North Carolina Department of Education's website. All salaries are made public through the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Salaries are also based on a salary schedule set forth NCDPI. Each teacher received a local supplement. School level instructional funding is allocated based on per pupil numbers or school size. These instructional allocations are tracked at the school level through accounting software. School level allocations follow written guidelines for acceptable expenditures. In terms of expenditures, Cabarrus County Schools forms an annual budget committee comprised of Board of Education members, school system administrators, a teacher, a teacher assistant and a community member to determine the budget for the upcoming school term. This committee also evaluated each expense incurred by the system and also enlists the assistance of 20 subcommittees and 37 advisory committees. Then the committee presents a proposed budget to the Cabarrus County Board of Education for adoption.

Weakness: No evidence of investments.

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

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10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

B.3

As evidence the applicant has set forth current efforts towards RTTD initiative. The applicant has presented objectives and activities for the initiative. For example, North Carolina is presently guided by its current Race to the Top plan. Cabarrus County Schools has developed a Strategic Plan which is aligned with North Carolina goals. Under this plan, the LEA will utilize data to determine priority goals and activities, and set targets for performance. This plan will also provide for integrating student growth data into teacher and principal evaluations. As evidence, Cabarrus County Schools will participate in the evaluation of the RTTT initiatives and use the conclusion to improve effectiveness. By doing so, the executive director of personnel and planning will use the conclusions to improve effectiveness through the district's strategic planning process. All teachers and staff throughout will be trained in the new Common Core and Essential Standards, and related assessment. The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Superintendent of Human Resources will undertake this endeavor. Through continued success, Cabarrus County Schools continue to utilize its strategic planning process to identify strategies for personalized learning environment to attain student growth under legal, statutory and regulatory requirements.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>B.4</p> <p>The Cabarrus County Schools' District +1 Project is supported by all stakeholders as evidenced by Letters of Support in the Appendix. As evidence the LEA works with a Teacher Representative Group composed of one representative from each school that meets quarterly with the superintendent and monthly with the local chapter of the North Carolina Education Association. The project was discussed and approved by the Teacher Representative Group. Monthly principal meeting and regular community meetings are held to receive feedback..</p> <p>Evidence: No evidence of collective bargaining representation.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As evidence, a plan for implementing personalized learning environments is helpful to the needs of the students of the applicant. The goals are achievable and attainable. For example, Goal 1.2 states by June 2014 End of Grade (EOG) scale scores in Math and Reading for grades 3-8 will rank in the top ten of North Carolina school systems as measured by the NC EOG test. As evidence, a primary gap identified at CCS relates to data mining. As evidence in data presented there is an additional gap in Cabarrus County Schools, achievement population. The applicant indicates that Diploma +1 Project will fund additional targeted efforts to support and provide academic, health, and other supportive services needed by students and families. Although CCS has strong software such as Reading 3D and Discovery ED that provides teachers with student data, it must be connected to instruction in meaningful ways. When connected to instruction, the teacher can identify the strengths and weaknesses.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>C.1</p> <p>As evidence the Diploma +1 Project is designed to increase preparation for college and careers. This early intervention will begin during the early years of school to plan for improving learning to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. This is evidence by clearly defined strategies that allow students to understand what and why they are learning. Beginning in PreK and continuing through their educational career is the key to their success in accomplishing their goals; identification and pursuit of learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements to help students understand how to structure their learning. For example, through the Diploma + 1 Project students are able to be involved in deep learning experienced in areas of academic interest. through higher education partners. Students will also have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual learning through culturally appropriate text supported by professional development for teachers and staff. As evidence parental and educational support will ensure that all students have access to a personalized sequence of instruction content of high quality. For example, students will be introduced to on-line learning, real world experiences, along with content related specifics which will be aligned with college and career ready standards and core curriculum</p> <p>Strategies also include efforts to ensure ongoing and regular feedback, and the use of quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate, aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirement as evidenced by the use of online courseware, and measurement of student performance based on an online managed support service with an outcome-based focus. Accommodations and strategies for high-need students to help ensure that</p>		

they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements will be provided through strategies such as an extended learning day with transportation provided; provision of mobile electronic devices with wireless Internet access for continued availability of online curriculum, a modified curriculum, and teacher-developed online website curriculum information; and realignment of department staff to better meet the needs of students who have dropped out, been incarcerated, or are in foster care, residential treatment programs, etc. The most important fact as evidenced students will be equipped to manage the information and guide their own personalized learning.

Weaknesses: The role of parents is not described to help ensure strategies are accomplished, or to help determine if individual student learning is appropriate to the child. No evidence of how to retain highly effective teachers.

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

C.2

The quality of the plan is evidenced with four criteria (professional opportunities related to assessment, data driven instruction, and identification and documentation of best practices that will support both improved student achievement and the implementation of the Diploma + 1. As evidence this program will implement professional development as it relates to personalized learning by conducting classroom observations which will be reviewed and adjusted annually as student goals and career focuses change. The plan will also provide training to analyze student data to tailor instruction both to the curriculum and to students' abilities and needs, to set objectives related to student achievement and performance, to access student data that allows teachers to better determine what adaptations are needed in academic instructions, and providing feedback on a regular basis to ensure that teachers and principals are informed on their progress towards goals and efforts needed to better support teachers.

Weaknesses: The applicant does not elaborate on how to retain Highly effective teachers. No evidence of clear logic on teachers's accomplishment. Classroom observations are not rigorous.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

D.1

The applicant describes appropriate Local Education Agency practices and rules to help demonstrate it has a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student the support and resources needed. As evidence, the grant coordinator, instructional specialist, and high school coordinators will report to RTTP office to assure alignment with of all Race to the Top Initiatives with district and state goals. A hired Computer Programmer will report to the Executive Director of Organizational Planning and Accountability. Consortium districts have specified Board policies outlining the responsibility of the Directors of Schools to establish clear lines of authority within the respective districts. Each school has an organizational chart which is also posted on the system website. Policy and organizational chart existence are both evidenced in the Appendix. Each school has sufficient supervisory level staff designated to supervise and collaborate with school-level leadership. Leadership of consortium members appears to be both collegial and participative. In that collaboration occurring between teachers and administrators is described that will ensure a coherent approach to learning is in place. Consortium district schools have been represented by local association groups and have contributed individual letters of support. Signatures of superintendents, school board members, and county and city mayors showed authoritative support. Letters of support from local business and industry show support and recognition of the districts' commitment to reform and implication for the community. System-level leadership teams promote an infrastructure that promotes learning. Further the applicant demonstrates efforts that give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple

times and in multiple ways. For example, alternative formats provide flexibility in scheduling and in delivery of instruction, and delivered via technology, and often times provides flexibility in scheduling, based upon student mastery of skills within certain courses (i.e., virtual, credit recovery). The applicant states resources and instructional practices in the districts are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, to include technology, staffing, course offerings, and access to high quality professional development.

Weakness: Information is not presented to determine if policies or rules give students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, instead of the amount of time spent on a topic which would adhere to strategies outlined for on the development of Individual Learning Plans and opportunities.

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

D.2

The applicant describes Local Education Agency and school infrastructure to help demonstrate it has a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student the support and resources needed. Resources and instructional practices in the districts are cited to be adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. This is supported by the fact that partnerships with vendors will provide equal access to programming and technology for students. Appropriate staffing provides assistance at the building-level to support the implementation plan. In addition, quarterly stakeholder meetings and public forums will allow all members to access information and receive updates on project challenges and successes. For example, both instructional and technology coaches will be used to provide professional development to teachers and staff, as well as provide resources to students and parents. As evidence project and district staff will be trained on new resources and tools to assist all stakeholders with accessing appropriate information.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

E. 1

The applicant provides indepth analysis to guide ongoing improvement. Evaluation data will be used to secure ongoing feedback from program stakeholders as well as continuous program improvement. The evaluation will be provided annual and quarterly to stakeholder groups and district administrative staff. the information will be shared at district personnel meetings, school board meetings, and with other local stakeholders. As evidence Diploma + 1 will utilize the expertise of an external evaluator with experience in evaluating state and federal funded grants projects designed to improve student achievement. The external evaluator will collect and analyze the data. Process and outcome evaluation techniques will be used to link data to project outcomes, discover patters within the project implementation and identify causal relationships among the objectives and associated goals. The evaluation will use several data sources to answer research questions associated with demonstrating project outcomes. Annual and bi-annual reports for student achievement will be significant data. Additional data will include student gains at the classroom level, results of classroom observations throughout the year, and qualitative data that describes teacher participation in addiitonal leadership roles. District wide surveys which measures attitudes toward the project will be ana

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

E.2

The applicant describe a strong system of communication and engagement. As evidence press releases, annual project reports, newsletter for stakeholders, brochures are means by which communication will be conducted. Press releases will be

conducted end of project three, quarterly press releases that describe project progress. Annual project reports will be reported yearly. Newsletters will be published and distributed end of month three and monthly thereafter.

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

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2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

E.3

The applicant outlines performance measures, by grade level assessments or benchmarks overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. In specifying performance measures, the applicant also measured suspension(in school, out of school absences) as indicated the the chart. The targets for each year will be utilized for planning and performance management for the RTTT reform efforts from each level of implementation - district to school to classroom. Additionally, each measure is also set and identified by each subgroup of students (race/ethnicity, poverty, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners). Measures that are described by the applicant are critical to making every student outcome visible and holding schools accountable for those outcomes. They are actionable at the school level meaning that school leaders, teachers and staff can use them to make changes that will have demonstrated impact on learning.

Weakness: No narrative.

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

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0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

E.4. There is no information available for this criteria.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: F.1 The application asks for \$29,841,530 in funding to address Absolute Priority 4 and Competitive Preference Priority 1 in order to implement a visionary strategy to leverage on the current goals and support reform efforts. Costs associated with the development and implementation of the initiative is evident. Overall costs appear reasonable to support services. Costs are presented for all major line items. The applicant demonstrates that funds will be budgeted to provide the required services to eligible schools. Weakness: Funds outside of the grant are very limited.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: F.2 The applicant outlines unique measures to sustain project goals. As evidence once the project is implemented Cabarrus will		

offer parents and students a world class education that adequately prepares students for career and college readiness while promoting the development of 21st Century skills. As evidence the five specific project components of Evaluation, Professional Development, Career Academies, Formative Assessment, and Marketing Outreach enables evaluators to accurately track the impact of each dollar spent and its attribution towards project goals and objectives. The State ADA funds and other resources will allow the district to maximize the impact of grant funds.

Weakness: Not clear about the financial support from state and local leaders. No budget after the grant period

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Competitive Preference Priority

The applicant presents information to address the Competitive Preference Priority for the competition. The information presented in the plan is designed to move forward the educational reform goals for Cabarrus County Schools in North Carolina. One of the three main goals of the program is to implement new assessments for students Grades PK-12 by end of Year 1. The objectives were listed to accomplish the goal. The second goal of the program was develop an 'Academy" at each CCS high school by end of Year 1 . The objectives were listed to carry out the goal. The third goal of the program was to develop increased data capacity to support personalized learning. The objectives were listed to carry out the goal. Therefore, Cabarrus County Schools presented a plan for RTTD funding in order to move forward the educational reform goals in North Carolina.

Weakness: Partnering with the Lee Institute is sound. The outreach to various organization (private and public)

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Absolute Priority

The applicant has presented a reform initiative that will build on the core educational assurance areas as a personalized learning environment is implemented. The initiative uses collaborative, data-based strategies for 21st century tools such as online learning platforms, computers, and learning strategies to deliver instruction and supports tailored to the needs and goals of students, with the aim of enabling all students to graduate college- and career-ready.

Total	210	157
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0895NC-3 for Cabarrus County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: <i>The applicant presents a comprehensive and focused reform vision. It articulates three specific goals with concrete action objectives. The Diploma + 1 Project intends to impact students learning in all 39 schools in the district with a differentiated focus on each grade band. Academy for Career Technical Education can provide extensive learning opportunities for various student academic interests. The applicant's goal is credible and does intend to improve personalized learning. However, the applicant is not clear about how the state level initiatives of the four core education assurance areas are implemented at the district level.</i>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: <i>The applicant states that ALL schools will participate and provides the total number (and individual school information) of participating students and their demographics including the number of participating educators. However, the narrative provides few details about the selection process.</i>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: <i>The applicant presents a logic model of scaling up the reform efforts. The model illustrates the inputs, outputs, and outcomes; however, it is not clear how the stakeholders of the input group collaborate and how the activities are aligned with the goal and objectives. The model is originally developed for the Diploma +1 Project; however, there is limited evidence how the model is the best for addressing the RTT-D reform efforts.</i>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: <i>The applicant provides annual goals in the tables, but there is limited evidence that the goals are ambitious yet achievable much part because the applicant does not provide a narrative articulating the goal setting process reflecting unique realities and ideals in each school. Additionally, the area of the college enrollment rates is not providing goals. Although the applicant addresses the four areas, the narrative lacks depth as well as connection to the goal tables.</i>		

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	9
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

The applicant demonstrates a clear record of success in 4 Year Graduation Rates and Reduce Grd Rate Gaps. It is encouraging both Black and Hispanic students group demonstrate a pattern of decreasing performance gaps. However, some subject areas including Biology and English 1 (8th grade end of grade tests) do not show a consistent pattern of closing performance gaps. Similarly, an overall performance of English 1 and Algebra 1 (Gr 9 – 12) does not show a consistent increment in growth. Furthermore, the applicant (1) provides limited evidence that it has addressed its reform efforts to change (persistently) lowest-achieving schools and (2) does not articulate on the practice of data sharing with students, educators, and parents to inform instruction and service.

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

5

4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant informs that all salaries are based on the schedule by the NC Department of Public Instruction and the schedule is available to the public. However, the applicant provides no school-level expenditures for K-12 instruction, supports, and administration.

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

10

9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents strong evidence that it has implemented the current NC Race to the Top goals and plan, which can indicate the applicant's level of the district activities' alignment with those at state level. In fact, CCS RTT Activity suggests that the applicant has successful conditions and some level autonomy. It is convincing that the proposed state educational goals are implemented in the district with a unique district-wide strategy.

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

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7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates limited evidence of meaningful stakeholder support and engagement for the proposal. The applicant does not have collective bargaining representation, and it is not clear whether at least 70% of teachers from the district support the proposal. (It is noted, however, that the applicant has a Teacher Representation Group including one representative from each school, and the proposal has been discussed and approved by this group.) Letter of support from key stakeholders are provided, which can strongly demonstrate the level of support from key stakeholders; however, there is limited evidence on the level of engagement. It is noted that (1) information on whether the 10-day State/Mayor comment period was enforced is undocumented, and that (2) there is limited articulation about how the revision of the proposal based on feedback was conducted.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies its primary areas to improve to be data mining and achievement in minority student populations and briefly describes ways to improve them. However, the narrative lacks the applicant's analysis and reflection on the current status in implementing personalized learning environments. The narrative is unclear about how the areas for improvement relate to scale up the reform efforts to achieve innovative personalized learning environments for all students.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	11

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates evidence that it plans to have an approach to learning that can engage all learners, but the plan is not articulated in details, thus being unable to present strong evidence that the applicant's plan is truly achievable. For example, having high schools to house academies can help provide learning experience in areas of academic interest as well as making a great case that learning is key to success in colleges and careers. It is also noticeable that the applicant partners with IHEs to develop deep learning experiences in line with college and career-ready preparations. The applicant states that it intends to increase culturally appropriate practices; however, the narrative is unclear about how applicant frames culturally

responsive teaching and lacking information on specific strategies to have access and exposure to diversity. Similarly, it is not convincing that PDs can increase students' human traits, such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity and problem-solving when the narrative is lacking specifics about the PDs. With regard to articulating specifics and a concrete series of action plans, the applicant's plan is unclear about how to have a repository of digital learning content; what entails using data to inform instruction and impact student learning, and how to help students track and manage their learning by using the data system.

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

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant addresses the aspect of helping educators improve instruction and achieve teaching and learning for all students in the personalized environments; however, the narrative lacks depth and specifics. This allows the applicant's plan to be ambitious but ambiguous. For example, the narrative mentions that "teachers' knowledge will be reinforced by classroom observations and review of annual data to ensure successful implementation of personalized learning environments." Yet, the narrative does not follow up on what kind of teacher knowledge is meant, the details about classroom observations and relating instruments, and how the review of annual data actually ensures the implementation of personalized learning environments. Similarly, the narrative mentions that "the Diploma +1 Project is designed to support the recruit and retain highly effective teachers by increasing data on all classroom teacher accomplishments." However, the narrative does not provide a clear logic on how increasing data on teacher accomplishments results in retaining highly effective teachers. And the pattern of leaving out details and crowding the narrative with obscure statements is pervasive throughout this narrative.

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 applicant provides some evidence that it has practice that facilitate personalized learning but presents limited evidence that it has policies and rules to do the same. The applicant does have the central office that provides support and services to schools. It can be also valid that the applicant intends values flexibility and autonomy of individual school leadership teams. However, the applicant is not clear about how it affords flexibility and autonomy and about which administrative areas fall under the autonomy. Additionally, it is convincing that the applicant uses variety of assessment and activities to measure mastery and students have "continuous" assessments rather than an end of year testing. However, the narrative does not provide specific policy or rules to promote students based on demonstrated mastery and to value the framework of fair, unbiased, and differentiated assessments.

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

10

9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides some evidence that its infrastructure supports personalized learning. It is noticeable that the applicant has the Parent Assist Module that allows parents to have access to grades and attendance. The applicant also has all learning resources online accessible via district computer labs and meetings with school staff. The applicant also plans to link the data from different places in the district and their Data Warehouse will have an accessible dashboard with integration of all relevant information. However, the narrative is lacking specifics on the action plans.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence that it has a strategy for continuous improvement process including annual evaluation/quarterly reports and the Dept. Improvement Plan. It is noticeable that the applicant will have an external evaluator and its evaluation will examine multiple data sources including student achievement data, classroom observations, teacher participation in leadership roles, and district-wide survey. The list of five rich research questions for evaluation lends more

credence to a thoughtful improvement progress the applicant plans to implement.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides clear evidence that it has strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides incomplete evidence on ambitious yet achievable performance measures. Much part of the incomplete evidence comes from a missing narrative about its rationale for selecting the listed measures, an articulation about how the measures provides information and about how the applicant review/improve the measures overtime. The applicant does provide various performance measures in the tables while quantifying target goals, but the thinking and logic behind setting the goals is unclear and the information to judge the quality of the target/performance measure is insufficient.

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

5

0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

This section is not addressed at all in the proposal with missing narratives and tables.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<i>The applicant successfully lists all funds and provides information that is reasonable and sufficient for the implementation of the RTT-D proposal. The budget narrative provides evidence that the applicant is thoughtful about investments and priorities including specifying one-time investments vs. ongoing operational expenses. However, it is noted that the funds from outside the grant are limited, which does not help to support the long-term sustainability of the proposal.</i>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<i>The applicant is not clear about how to secure financial support from state and local government leaders. Instead, the applicant relies on reallocation and braiding of state, local and federal funding. The applicant has good intent that it plans to reallocate existing teacher incentive funds/school revenues, seek public funding through local tax initiatives, and seek foundation and corporate support for the Career Academies. However, a budget for the three years after the term of the grant is not provided and the potential sources are not estimated.</i>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
<i>The applicant has partnership with the Lee Institute particularly about identifying academic needs of minority students in the Logan Community. The partnership with Lee Institute has a sound planning of tracking indicators, using data to impact student learning and scaling up for high-need students. It is a noble partnership to increase family and community engagement in education, there is clear evidence that the partnership can impact student learning with a clear set of goals and measures to reflect the RTT-D principles. Indeed, the partnership with Lee Institute produces educational results and other education outcomes. Nonetheless, the applicant does not provide strong evidence that it actively seeks partnership that may help place</i>		

the applicant in a better position to fully address personalized learning outcomes of the RTT-D reform.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

It is clear throughout the application that the applicant meets this priority. The applicant addresses the core educational assurance areas and intends to create student learning opportunities for personalized learning and meeting academic needs of all students for college and career-ready. Its proposal addresses the personalized learning environments, expanding student access to effective teaching practices, decreasing achievement gaps, and increasing graduation rates.

Total	210	150
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0895NC-4 for Cabarrus County 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 has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in four core educational assurance areas and articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests, as shown by:

1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed

- Implement new assessments for students in Grades PK-12 by end of Year 1.
- Development of an “Academy” at each CCS high school by end of Year 1.
- The Diploma +1 Project, which aligns with and exceeds NC’s RTTT initiative, will provide teachers with high quality, rewarding professional development.
- The applicant will improving the consortium’s organizational capacity to address the requests for new skills and knowledge as teachers adapt their work into this new Diploma +1 Project and further focus their efforts on improving student achievement.
- The district will implement formative benchmarks assessments for grades 3-12, Reading 3-D assessments for K-2, and a Pre-K assessment for our Pre-K students.

2. Data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data to improve instruction

- Develop increased data capacity to support personalized learning.
- CCS will hire a computer programmer to expand upon current web-based systems to support access to timely assessment data and school performance metrics as well as systems to support and track the Diploma +1 Project.

- Teachers will be trained to be able to take advantage of these systems.

3. Recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals

- The North Carolina Great Teachers and Principal Pillar works to increase teacher and principal effectiveness, through:
 - Performance incentives for lowest-achieving schools
 - Research-supported university preparation programs
 - Research- and data-based recruitment and licensure programs:
 - Teach for America expansion
 - NC Teacher Corps
 - Regional Leadership Academies
 - Strategic staffing initiatives
 - Expansion of virtual and blended teaching
 - Statewide professional development system
 - Successful innovations in identifying, developing, and supporting effective leaders
 - Statewide teacher and principal evaluation systems

4. Turn around low-achieving schools

- The Diploma +1 Project support students at every age level to best impact student achievement in all 39 Cabarrus County schools.
- These strategies will primarily center on increased age appropriate assessments and increased individualized student data to support personalized learning.
- Grades PK-K: Assess all CCS students using CIRCLE beginning in SY 2012-2013. This assessment will allow teachers to work with students on their individual gap areas while enhancing each student’s strengths.
- Grades K-2: Students will be supported by Reading 3D to provide teachers with benchmark assessments and progress monitoring tools.
- Grades 3-8: Discovery Education software will be implemented for district-wide benchmark assessments.
- Grades K-8: Balanced Reading (BR) and Balanced Math (BM) Instruction will be implemented. A variety of career options and choices through partnerships with the local community such as the fire department, police department, Suntrust Bank, and with parents will also be introduced.
- Grades 6-8: Students will be provided with more CTE opportunities in order to improve career readiness.
- Grades 9-12: CCS will implement the Unit by Design Model that requires to teachers to “begin with the end in mind,” to plan intentional lessons that specifically address the Common Core while imbedding best practice approaches. Students in grades 9-12 will also be expected to take at least one on-line course. Students in grades 9-12 will also be provided opportunities for AP courses to increase college readiness.
- Each of the CCS traditional high schools will also develop an “Academy” for Career Technical Education opportunities for students.

These goals and actions are considered comprehensive and coherent because they accurately define the steps necessary to meet these assurance areas and follow some of the latest research in their implementation.

(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has presented a comprehensive approach to implementing its reform proposal that will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal, as demonstrated by:

- Cabarrus County Schools included all schools to support a comprehensive educational reform effort, thus ensuring that all Cabarrus students are impacted by the proposed project.
- The applicant provided a list of all the schools that will participate in grant activities.
- The applicant is including all students in its grant activities and provides appropriate demographic data.

This thorough approach is aimed at ensuring that implementation will occur across the board, at all grade levels, with all students, and in all schools.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The application includes an inadequate plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools, and will help the applicant reach its

outcome goals, as evidenced by:

- The applicant presents a Logic Model to express its strategy in both implementing the Diploma +1 Project and to impact students positively through its educational reform efforts.

The narrative accompanying the Logic Model does not present an adequate description of how their plan will be translated into meaningful reform.

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

10

8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup (as defined in this notice), for each participating LEA, as shown by:

- The focus on developing personal learning plans and using achievement data to guide classroom practices will all positively impact summative assessments.
- A refined district data-system will better track and provide access to achievement on summative assessments.
- The development of personal learning plans and increased professional development for teachers to better impact student achievement will decrease achievement gaps.
- The developed data warehouse system will allow for better tracking of gaps and adjustments to educational offerings as needed throughout the school year. This will allow for a more refined and targeted approach to gaps on the individual, classroom, building, and district level.
- The applicant's cradle to career approach to achievement will impact graduation rates as students are better prepared for higher level course work and educational needs and gaps are identified earlier. This will positively impact graduation rates during both the project period and in future years as they increase capacity in all related schools to support individualized learning and address gaps in student learning.
- The focus on future courses of study and careers via the high school Academies will motivate additional students to attend college. Partners include local and regional higher education institutions as well as training organizations and employers that will inform students of future opportunities in emerging fields, and the path to these careers.
- All students will select a Diploma +1 path, helping them better define future educational and career goals.

It is unclear whether these goals are equal to or exceed the state's goals. No data was available for college enrollment or postsecondary degree attainment.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Each LEA has demonstrated evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching, as demonstrated by:

- In 2011, the Cabarrus County Schools (CCS) graduation rate increased nearly 10 points over the previous year to 84 percent - 6.3 percent higher than the state average.
- Cox Mill High School- recognized by State Superintendent June Atkinson, Lt. Governor Walter Dalton and State Board of Education Chairman Bill Harrison for having one of the highest graduation rates in the state in the 200-299 student cohort category.
- High school students continued to outperform students across the state and the nation on the SAT. CCS students averaged a score of 1019 on the mathematics (522) and critical reading (497) segments of the exam. The average score in the state is 1001; the average score nationwide is 1011.
- Student participation rate for the exam also has increased 10 percent in the past two years – increasing from 55.3 percent in 2009 to 65.3 percent in 2011.
- Advanced Placement enrollment increased 19 percent; Advanced Placement pass rate increased 4.3 percent; Middle

School reading and math proficiency were the highest in district history; Thirteen out of 19 elementary schools had math proficiency rates above 80 percent, with two schools having a proficiency rate above 90 percent; Thirty schools met Expected Growth standards for the 2010-2011 school year and 15 schools met High Growth standards for the 2010-2011 school year.

The applicant does not specifically detail ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools.

The applicant does not address making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

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

5

4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Each LEA has demonstrated evidence of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration, as evidenced by:

- Cabarrus County Schools has a highly transparent system in terms of processes, practices, and investments. Information is housed on the LEA website that presents information regarding personnel salaries and non-personnel expenditures.
- Some LEA- level financial information is also housed on the North Carolina Department of Education’s website.
- All salaries are based on the salary schedule set forth by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and available to the public.
- Each teacher receives a local salary supplement, which is both determined by and available in each local community.
- CCS forms an annual Budget Committee to guide the process for establishing a budget for the next school year. The committee is comprised of Board of Education members, school system administrators, a teacher, a teacher assistant and a community member, and evaluates each expense incurred by the school system.
- The committee enlists the assistance of 20 subcommittees and 37 advisory committees.
- The committee then presents a proposed budget to the Cabarrus County Board of Education who makes a decision on adopting the budget.

The applicant's approach appears to foster a high level of transparency; however it is not clear if specific salaries by individual can be accessed from the district's website.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Each LEA has demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal, as shown by:

- North Carolina is guided by its current Race to the Top plan. This plan sets forth a number of strategies, all of which CSS has embraced and implemented.
- CSS provides a table indicate how its goals are matched to State of North Carolina RTT Activity.
- The Diploma +1 Project represents an alignment with the current state of North Carolina’s educational goals and strategies.
- Each LEA in North Carolina has local autonomy to meet and exceed standards and expectations as determined to be most prudent for its local community and student population.

Cabarrus has carefully considered the state context in which it operates, and is proposing Race to the Top District funding to build upon this work and take the proposed state educational goals to the next level in a unique district-wide strategy.

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

10

8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Each LEA has demonstrated evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal, as shown by:

- Cabarrus County Schools' District +1 Project is supported by all key stakeholders as evidenced by Letters of Support.
- The LEA does not have collective bargaining representation, but instead works with a Teacher Representative Group comprised of one representative from each school that meets quarterly with the Superintendent and monthly with the local chapter of the North Carolina Education Association. The project has been discussed and approved by this key group.
- The LEA also holds monthly principal meetings and regular community meetings to solicit feedback and input.
- The LEA approached the Teacher Panel, Assistant Teacher Panel, Student Advisory Panel, and parent groups in regards to the training and support needed at the teacher level to implement the District +1 Project.
- The project has been approved by students and families through recent strategic planning undertaken this past year by CSS.
- The idea of academies developed at each high school was proposed and approved several years ago by all stakeholders, but did not move forward on a large scale due to a lack of funding. Thus, much of our proposed strategy has been discussed and refined over the past few years.

CCSD has attempted to involve all stakeholders in this critical process in a meaningful manner; however, no evidence is presented to indicate support of 70% of the teachers from participating schools.

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

Each LEA has demonstrated evidence of a high-quality plan for an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal contained within the applicant's proposal, including identified needs and gaps that the plan will address, as demonstrated by:

- Cabarrus County Schools has developed a 2011-2014 Strategic Plan which aligns with North Carolina goals and captures the concerns of all stakeholders.
- The goals include: Globally Competitive Students, 21st Century Professionals to lead schools, healthy and responsible students, and Leadership will guide innovation.
- Although CCS has strong software such that provides teachers with student data, it must be connected to instruction in meaningful ways.
- The District has a fairly robust reporting system. However, CCS currently only has the ability to provide information at the Administrative level due to server space which undermines its effectiveness. The Diploma +1 project will fund a Computer Programmer to build a data dashboard for teachers that will facilitate the use of student data in educational planning and goal setting. This dashboard will include both formative and summative information, and will include such at-risk indicators as student attendance, disciplinary incidents, discipline record, and assessment information.
- An additional gap in CCS is achievement in minority student populations. The Diploma +1 Project will fund additional efforts to support culturally appropriate practices and training. In addition, a partnership with The Lee Institute will support targeted efforts in pockets of minority populations to provide linkages to community organizations and resources that provide academic, health, and other supportive services needed by students and families.

CCSD appears well on its way to implementing its strategic plan which will, in turn, meet the goals of this criterion.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a relatively 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., as shown by:

- The Diploma +1 Project is a comprehensive PK-12 strategy to increase preparation for college and careers. Beginning in the early years, students will be introduced to a variety of career options, leading to the selection of a Diploma +1 strategy in their secondary educational path.

Beginning in PK and continuing through their educational career, a greater focus will be placed on both careers and career paths so that students better link their learning to future goals. This will be further supported through the development of personal learning paths geared towards future goals to be reviewed and adjusted on an annual basis. Secondary students will be allowed the option of a specific Academy at one of our high schools, to prepare for future career paths.

- Included in each student's personal learning path is a plan to guide them to their college-and career goals which includes benchmarks for achievement of progress towards goals as well as steps to obtain these goals. All students are guided towards graduation and are prepared for college through the use of assessment data, determined Diploma +1 plan, exposure to career paths and opportunities through local resources and personal learning plans.
- The availability of new on-line coursework coupled with real-life experiences from area businesses provides students the opportunity to explore academic interests.
- All academic offerings are provided in a culturally appropriate context, supported by professional development for teachers and staff.
- Teacher professional development opportunities are provided that allow our staff to promote the development and mastery of academic content and interpersonal skills.
- Their new data system will allow for better personalization of instruction and tracking towards education and career goals.
- New courses and course content will be developed to fill determined gaps in current offerings augmented by offerings from higher education partners.
- Personal learning will hinge on a variety of instructional approaches including, but not limited to, classroom learning, on-line learning, real world experiences, training and certification opportunities, and other approaches and environments as needed.
- The applicant will develop a repository of digital learning content. Much of this content will be specifically related to STEM and to the career academies, but also other career opportunities. All content will be aligned with college-and career-ready standards and core curriculum areas.
- The proposed data system will allow for individualized student data to track progress towards graduation requirements, career goals, and learning plans. Teachers and staff will be instructed on both the addition of information to this data system and the interpretation of data for individualized instruction. This information will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to be shared with both students and parents in regards to progress towards goals.
- Personalized learning plans will accommodate all students, and allow specific focus on high-need students who may require additional resources.
- Students and teachers will receive instruction on how to input, track, and interpret the information in the newly developed data system.

The applicant does not provide evidence of support from parents and educators for this criterion.

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

The applicant has outlined an relatively high quality approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements by enabling the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching for all students, as shown by:

- This grant will fund teacher professional development opportunities related to assessment, data driven instruction, and identification and documentation of best practices that will support both improved student achievement and the implementation of the Diploma +1 Project.
- CCS intends to increase the level of professional development, particularly as it relates to personalized learning environments, the newly created data system, and new assessments and standards for all age levels to better prepare for college and careers.
- Much of this professional development will be in relation to personalization of instruction and inclusion of available resources for optimal learning.
- Their proposed project includes the development of standards and benchmarked assessments as well as the development of a new data system to allow for the tracking and analysis of student progress and improvement of educator practice.
- Their proposed teacher and principal evaluation system is based largely on student achievement. Goals will be revised annually, and more frequently as needed. Data from all assessments will be used to determine successful completion of student achievement goals, which will impact evaluation and disbursement of bonuses.
- All teachers will have access to both professional development related to personalized learning and student data. All

new tools and resources developed to support the Diploma +1 Project will be accompanied by training for all stakeholders to ensure optimal use.

- All developed tools and resources will align with college- and career- ready standards.
- The personalized learning plan developed for each student will be supported by data from assessments and benchmarking, movement towards goals, and classroom achievement.
- All information from the new data system and teacher evaluation system will be available to school leadership to make decisions needed continuous school improvement. Teachers will provide feedback to school leadership regarding professional development, new tools and resources as well as the Diploma +1 Project.
- School leadership will attend trainings regarding new tools and resources so they can best develop needed policies and procedures to support implementation and success.
- The Diploma +1 Project is designed to support the recruit and retain highly effective teachers by increasing data on all classroom teacher accomplishments. Recruitment will targeted to specialty areas, as needed, to secure highly qualified teachers addressing gaps in current staffing plans.

The applicant does not indicate the details of the classroom observation process nor its rigor.

The applicant does not identify PK-3 teachers as effective or highly effective under the LEA or State's teacher evaluation system.

The applicant also does not specify PK-3 whether measures of student achievement as developmentally appropriate and reflective assessments as defined in RTT ELC.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, as shown by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabarrus County Schools will manage the Diploma +1 Project out of the Office of the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. • The proposed Grant Coordinator, Instructional Specialists, and High School Coordinators will report to the C&I office to assure alignment of all Race to the Top Initiatives with district and state goals. • A hired Computer Programmer will report to the Executive Director of Organizational Planning and Accountability. • All these departments will work in collaboration to develop a data model to inform teachers. • Each school will function separately but move towards consortium goals and implementation of tools and resources. • Students can demonstrate mastery of subjects at CCS based on a variety of assessments and skill related activities available to students at all grade levels. • Students can demonstrate their mastery of standards on a continuous basis using assessments, project-based learning, and skill related activities. • All resources and practices are designed for use in personal learning environments, thus they are adaptable and accessible to all students including those with disabilities and English learners. <p>The applicant's plan lacks specificity as to how mastery can be achieved or what happens after a student achieves mastery.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All tools and resources will be made available to all key stakeholders, including students, parents, educators and others. • Data regarding individual students will be analyzed and made available to parents and students on a regular basis. • All resources are available online which ensures accessibility via district computer labs and meetings with school staff. • Quarterly stakeholder meetings and public forums will allow all members to access information and receive updates on 		

project challenges and successes.

- Project and district staff will all be trained on new resources and tools to assist all stakeholders with accessing appropriate information.
- Regular meetings will be held for information on this project as well as access to data.
- They will also utilize a number of other strategies through local organizations to provide additional peer, online, and local support.
- The hired Computer Programmer as well as current CCS IT staff will determine means for parents to easily export appropriate technology data to whatever electronic learning system they choose.
- All project collaterals will include contact information to project staff and key district and school staff so that all key stakeholders can easily access.
- They have also implemented the Parent Assist Module (PAM) that allows parents access to their child's grade and attendance on a daily basis.
- A data warehouse will be created for the Diploma +1 Project that will ensure all systems currently in place in each district will be compatible and link together needed data.

CCSD has or will have the infrastructure necessary to implement a personalized learning program.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents a strategy for implementing a rigorous 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, as shown by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Diploma +1 Project will be strengthened through the use of empirical data and in-depth analysis to guide ongoing decision making. • Diploma +1 Project will utilize the expertise of an external evaluation firm with experience in evaluating state and federally funded grant projects designed to improve student achievement. The selected organization will conduct a multi-faceted evaluation plan with the aim of understanding the specific aspects of the project that are effective in increasing student achievement and computer literacy. We will also examine activities that are effective impacting success in postsecondary education in our target population. It is unclear whether the external evaluator will have the necessary expertise to conduct this evaluation. • The external evaluator will undertake data collection, analysis, and reporting processes that identify the systemic issues that positively lead towards goals and elements that are barriers to success. • The evaluation will utilize several data sources to answer research questions associated with demonstrating project outcomes. The most significant data will be annual and bi-annual reports of student achievement gained through analysis of student performance on state tests. Data will also be controlled for teacher characteristics and student demographics in order to isolate the effects of significant factors on student achievement levels and teacher effectiveness. • After each annual evaluation and quarterly reports are completed results will be provided to stakeholder groups and district administrative staff. The Grant Coordinator will work with these groups to interpret and analyze findings. • The Diploma +1 Project staff will prepare a continuous improvement action plan and timeline using the Department Improvement Plan process that will be updated quarterly. This plan will be shared at district personnel meetings, school board meetings, and with other local stakeholder groups in order solicit from them feedback regarding the program and ensure their engagement in the leadership and direction of the initiative. <p>This strategy addresses the key components of monitoring, measuring, and sharing the results of its implementation of RTTT-D grant monies.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders, as

noted by:

- The proposed Diploma +1 Project will help support the six school districts to reform outdated systems and raise the bar in regard to acceptable standards of teacher effectiveness.
- Ongoing communication and engagement will be effected by:
 - Centralizing and increasing the number of press releases.
 - Preparing and distributing annual project reports.
 - Preparing and distributing a newsletter for stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students, and industry partners.
 - Creating Career Academy “At a Glance Brochure.”
 - Promoting civic/service organization engagement in the project.
 - The responsible parties for these plans has been clearly delineated.

These strategies are effective measures to ensure continuous engagement of all stakeholders.

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

The applicant presents tables that adequately address populations and a satisfactory number of performance measures; however, they present no narrative to describe its rationale, how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant’s implementation success or areas of concern; or how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide any narrative explanation of its plans to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology, and to more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results, through such strategies as improved use of technology, working with community partners, compensation reform, and modification of school schedules and structures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant’s budget, including the budget narrative and tables identifies all funds that will support the project; and is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant’s proposal; and clearly provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities, as shown by:

- The District will work with existing accounting staff, and the technology provider to develop a plan that analyzes future costs of the program and identifies technology systems that will need to be modified in order to track and award financial incentives.
- The plan will delineate the annual budgeting process for the project and project cost categories that will occur in association with it. It will also analyze the expected impacts of the project on faculty salary costs and support services associated with the project over time. This plan will result in a fiscal program model that can be used in the development of the sustainability plan.
- During the grant period, additional resources for support of the project that will supplement the RTTDistrict funds include District allocations received from State and local revenue sources.
- State professional development categorical funding will be utilized to fund professional development activities that are aligned with the goals of the project.
- English Language Learner Funds will also be utilized to support release time for staff while they are engaged in some related professional development activities.
- The school has already accepted responsibility to provide performance based compensation to personnel who earn it under their existing system and will continue to honor this commitment.

- The strategies that will be included in the sustainability plan over the course of the project period include: redeployment of current school funding sources to the fullest extent allowable within funding source restrictions, reallocation of existing teacher incentive funds to the project, reallocation of school revenues, seeking additional public funding through local tax initiatives, and seeking foundation and corporate support for the Career Academies.
- Cabarrus has received state support via RTT round 1 funds and the knowledge gained has allowed the district to continue to explore ways to boost student achievement and career and college readiness.
- The budget is comprised of five individual projects that collectively address the needs identified in their analysis of gaps in student achievement. The projects are presented with the application criteria noted and placed in the order that the criterion appears in the project proposal. They have selected the five specific project components of Evaluation, Professional Development, Career Academies, Formative Assessment, and Marketing and Outreach.
- Additional funding and factors that support project success include State ADA funds and other resources.

Limited funds, outside of this grant, will be used for this project. It is also unclear what the applicant means by "other resources."

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

10

5

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has an adequate plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant., as defined by:

- In order to facilitate sustainability of the improvements and reforms after grant funds have been exhausted, a plan for the reallocation and braiding of state, local and federal funding sources will be created during the first project year. It is unclear what "braiding" constitutes.
- This plan will guide the District in assuming a larger portion of the costs and set the tone for long-term sustainability.
- The strategies that will be included in the sustainability plan over the course of the project period include: redeployment of current school funding sources to the fullest extent allowable within funding source restrictions, reallocation of existing teacher incentive funds to the project, reallocation of school revenues, seeking additional public funding through local tax initiatives, and seeking foundation and corporate support for the Career Academies.
- The plan includes support from State and local government leaders including financial and in-kind support; however, there is no evidence of any other local support.

There is no budget presented for the three years after the term of the grant provided.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students, giving highest priority to students in participating schools with high-need students, as demonstrated by:

- CSS is partnering with the Lee Institute and Community Leaders in a pilot program designed to identify the academic needs of primarily African-American and Hispanic students within the Logan Community and bring coordinated resources to bear in meeting those needs. After creation of a replicable model, CCS intends to target similar populations across Cabarrus County.
- Ensuring that all students are healthy and learning is the community-wide vision for our partnership with Lee Institute. The Lee Institute theory of change outcomes that align with and support the personalized learning outcomes of this grant include the following:
 - Increased academic achievement
 - Improved school attendance (Decrease in chronic absenteeism rates - absent 10.0% to 19.9% of all possible school days)
 - Decrease in disciplinary actions and severity of actions (Suspension and expulsion data)

Graduate from high school

- Stronger links between students, families, and the schools (Monthly data reports from School Counselors)
- Attendance team meetings will be held on a weekly basis. In addition, community School Leadership Teams will meet monthly throughout the year and complete an annual needs assessment of the students and families in their buildings to plan strategies, programs, interventions and activities to help decrease the barriers and challenges to learning the students are experiencing.
- A targeted universalism approach will be taken to reduce the inequities and disparities for the most vulnerable students through any strategy for scale-up.
- Surveys and data collection will be utilized to assess progress over time and strengthen and align principles, practice and policies of the developed replicable model.
- Data will be used to strengthen the work along with public good will building to develop political, structural, and financial capacity.
- This partnership will impact target schools by engaging local organizations currently offering high-level culturally appropriate services and developing to partner with both the schools and individual families to provide services for students. These services will focus on academic achievement, but will also engage other services and resources as needed by the individual students and families.
- Students and families are referred from school principals, teachers, nurses, support staff and school social workers and counselors to
The Lee Institute in order to access needed services and supports. Students are frequently identified based on absenteeism or behavioral issues or are self-referred based on need. Technical assistance and professional development will be initiated for school staff.
- At the school building level Community School Leadership Teams led by the principal meets monthly to assess the needs of the students and families, set priorities, plan activities, bring in new resources to the school and evaluate the community school. These teams are comprised of key building partners and community stakeholders and are focused on results.
- Annual performance measures by population and results expected include the following:
 - Increased access to academic resources
 - Families are engaged in school
 - Schools are engaged with the community
 - Decrease in chronic absenteeism

This partnership with the Lee Institute appears sufficient to yield the desired results.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on the core educational 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 ; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	165
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