Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0317MS-1 for Clarksdale Municipal School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district outlines a high-quality plan with ambitious and achievable goals of increasing student academic achievement. The system summarizes a magnet school approach consistent with measuring student progress, personalized learning goals encompassing academics and college and careers.

A design is in place that is far-reaching from Kindergarten through high school graduation. The district outlines a proposal to begin early in a child's education, leading and guiding students toward developing their academic skills, realizing the importance of lifelong learning and the importance of being prepared for college and careers. Teachers will participate in professional learning communities to aid in their understanding of the reforms necessary to meet the goals outlined, thereby increasing their ability to guide and direct students and meet their individual interests and goals.

Teacher, principal and superintendent evaluation systems are in place. In the case of the teacher evaluation system, currently the district is participating in a pilot teacher evaluation system which encompasses the teacher performance aspect.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	**10**	**9**

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant earned 9 out of a possible 10

- Due to their clear identification of the transition to magnet schools (district wide) which will participate in the RTT initiative (A)(2)(a)
- Data was provided for each school participating and evidenced the need for improvement at the schools (A)(2)(b)
- Total number of students to be served, including those from low income households who are high-need students and educators participating. All 3,222 students in the district will participate in the program, compromises 96% low-income student population.(A(2)(c)

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is awarded 8 out of 10 based upon their ability to develop a comprehensive reform proposal which is a multi-pronged approach which reaches out and impacts all students in the district. The narrative provides insight into the methods and approach towards implementing the district-wide change. The plans outline the accomplishments already made by the district which demonstrates their leadership ability to make it happen. This high-quality plan is comprehensive, resulting in being able to achieve the level of "successful" school district and a "Star School" under the Mississippi accountability within three years.

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

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Based upon the applicants responses a 6 point value for this element is awarded based upon

- A vision is clearly articulated in a meaningful way from the school system's Superintendent and the school system - beginning with 4 out of 9 schools designed at Level 1 four years ago (data charts with performance on summative assessments - Annual Measurable goals are established through 2016 which are above required state minimum (A)(4)(a)
- The ambitious level of the goals established is not evident. Very small gains are outlined in regards to the high school graduation rate.
- Not all goals in regards to disaggregating the data are clear, details given are confusing. Achievement gaps with each sub-group are identified, which include economically disadvantaged to economically disadvantaged as well as groups that showed a large gap between the school district and that sub-group. (A)(4)(b)
- Convincing evidence regarding college enrollment goals and plans include bringing a Graduation Coach on board to promote both the college and career readiness aspect. (A)(4)(c)
- Innovation of hiring a Graduation Coach and establishing strong and diverse partnerships with postsecondary to impact college enrollment rates is admirable. (A)(4)(d)

The school districts strategic plan describes the progress toward the goals outlined which plainly demonstrates the commitment and dedication to meeting the needs of the students.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Success is evidenced regarding the districts record, therefore 12 is awarded for this element:

- The district demonstrated a record of success according to the Quality Distribution Index for the State of Mississippi. Two elementary schools in the district soared to the rank of High Progress in Mississippi over the last few years, however, clearly improvement is warranted in math, language arts and English/Language across all sub-groups. (B)(1)(a)
- The district has improved the performance of chronically low-performing schools in the district into thriving and schools. (B)(1)(b)
- To reach out to parents events are planned at school, one-on-one meetings with teachers are conducted to discussion individual student's test results. (B)(1)(c)

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- Based upon the evidence provided by the district, a score of 4 out of 5 is awarded for efforts to demonstrate a high level of transparency

- Mississippi Code requires that public school districts provide actual salaries at the school level for all personnel - instructional staff, teachers, administration. (B)(2)(a), (B)(2)(b), (B)(2)(c)
- All non-personnel expenditures at the school and district level are reported to the Board of Trustees and made available to the public. (B)(2)(d)

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is awarded a 9 on a 10 point scale for their demonstration of evidence to:

- Successfully collaborate and develop a strong working relationship with the Mississippi Department of Education
- The Mississippi Department of Education's role with the Clarksdale Municipal School District has evolved beyond providing oversight and compliance to a partnership with the district to work together to improve the academic achievement within the Clarksdale Municipal School District and develop policy to create a successful personalized learning environment

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- **Due to the following evidence, the districts plan is awarded a score of 9 out of a possible 10**
- **Strategic Plan - A New Era of Schools, engaged stakeholders in development of the plan**
- **Superintendent's Roundtable comprised of parents, and other community members become engaged in a two-way dialog.**
- **Student participation was also sought via a student advisory committee established.**
- **Parental involvement meetings. (B)(4)(a)**
- **Surveyed teachers to gain input -strong majority (92%) of teachers indicated they are enthusiastic about the plan.**
- **Teachers are involved in the development of the Teacher Appraisal System.**
- **Principals work with their teachers in the development of their schools logic model for direction. (B)(4)(ii)**
- **Extensive list of letters - 32 support letters from post secondary institutions, churches, city government and the United States House of Representative - convincing evidence. (B(4)(b)**

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

A high-quality plan - 4 points awarded based upon the evidence the school district provides in relation to the aggressive and innovative school improvement plan/approach that will provide personalized learning environments for students through the implementation of magnet schools.

The logic behind this plan points to the great need within the schools in regards to academics and the economics of the community is also convincing. A personalized learning environment for all students will encompass sound instructional goals encompassing instructional leadership, data driven decisions, timely assessment, teacher quality indicators and digital learning.

The plan is aggressive, already the system has demonstrated their ability to overcome a huge obstacle, attendance barriers. The district has been successful in allowing all students to pursue rigorous paths of personalized learning within the magnet school of their choice. In addition, transportation needs of students is taken care of by the system in order to take each student to the magnet school which will best help them pursue their area of interest and succeed academically.

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 outlines a high-quality plan which is focused on preparing students for college and careers, therefore the applicant is awarded a score of 17 based upon

(a) Learning -

- Clear well-planned approach to personalizing the learning for each student.
- Throughout this educational reform process, instruction will be presented in thematic focus strands. These strands were chosen because they offer many options within which students will be able to choose and build on their level of knowledge and application within the framework of a particular theme.-(i)
- Students pursue their interests beginning in elementary school at magnet schools focused on IBO (ambitious), Visual and Performing Arts (also offers an after-school program where students can pursue additional arts related lessons and opportunities), STEM (critical need - encouraged by the President to expand the programs by 100,000 new STEM educators), Health and Medical Sciences (science integrated and used to increase awareness of students own health and the importance that this field has for the future health and wellness of our society), Language Immersion (addressed the gap evident with the Hispanic population - at the same times allows students strong in English to learn two languages). After elementary school the middle, 9th grade academy, Vocational/Career Center and Clarksdale High School continue academic learning through the personalized learning environments and relevant goals established for preparing students for college and/or careers (ii).
- Each magnet school employs a multi-faceted approach to the learning environment - use a variety of instructional methods which bridge together the theory with practice which is a great plan to engage students and establish the connections from school to college and careers.(iii)
- Letter of support University of Mississippi describing diversity and experiences deepening the student learning (iv)
- Through the learning approach which is utilized with improving academies, students work in teams, develop goals and participate in project based learning (v)

(b) Strategy to ensure that each student has access to

- Milestones and expectations will be established collectively by teachers, students, administrators and parents - evidenced in (E)(1). (i)
- Goals - inadequate information provided regarding the individual student and the parents role in developing their goals. There is evidence regarding the magnet schools and their framework to provide the individualization. (ii)
- Magnet schools - focus on college and career areas allowing students to pursue a rigorous course of study which is aligned with college and career ready graduation requirements. (iii)
- On going and regular feedback - there will be children who struggle academically and/or socially, the district is committed to the Three Tier Model of Intervention. The district has developed school structures which will support the intervention process – curriculum and behavioral programs, assessments, daily schedules, new personnel, increased technology and the needed infrastructure. (iv)
- Frequently updated individual student data that can be used to determine progress towards mastery of college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements. (iv)
- Personalized learning - differentiated instructional approach employing research-based instructional strategies. (iv)
- Accommodations and high-quality strategies which allow students to accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs, deepen student understanding, meet individual learning goals, because the themes flow from one level to the next, students with the support of parents and educators personalize their sequence of learning. (v)
- Each magnet school has a different approach, tools and resources which will guide and lead the students toward fulfilling their own goals. (c)

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Teaching and Leading:

Training is essential to success - the goal to ensure all teachers receive abundant off-site and embedded professional development and training, as well as training focused upon the thematic focus of their school is demonstrated. (C)(2)(a)

Theme implementation and multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary skills will be developed through training teachers in Professional Learning Communities to ensure all teachers are equipped to lead students towards being able to make connections between academics, college and careers. (C)(2)(a)(i)

Each magnet school will encourage interaction not only between student and teacher, but also among classroom peers. Projects, group-research inquires, collaborative study groups are a few of the instructional strategies outlined. (C)(2)(a)(ii)

An adaptive assessment will be utilized to identify students' academic needs, target instruction, assess program and provide data for teachers, administrators and parents. (C)(2)(a)(iii)

The district is one of only three pilot systems chosen by the Mississippi Governor to participate in the development of a teacher evaluation plan that supports performance based compensation. Principals will appraise teachers on each competency and action plans which will identify weak areas. (C)(2)(a)(iv)

Technology and software programs allow educators to determine the processes and tools to meet student individual needs. (C)(2)(b)(i)

Through the system Title programs high-quality resources, especially digital resources are available in every classroom -- Promethean boards, computers, and document cameras. (C)(2)(b)(ii)

Measures of academic progress, allow teachers to pinpoint where a student is struggling or where the student excels. (C)(2)(b)(iii)

Insufficient information/evidence is provided regarding the specifics of professional development. School leaders and school leadership teams need training, regarding policy, tools, date utilizing and resources, in order for them to structure an effective learning environment that meets the individual needs of students. Lacking evidence of this element. (C)(2)(c)

Information regarding teacher evaluation system and how it helps the teachers develop the ability to increase student academic performance and how to work towards closing the achievement gaps is evident. (C)(2)(c)(i)

Professional learning communities are in place to help contribute towards continuously improving school progress. The district has shown convincing evidence towards the quality of teachers they have to work with students who are effective and highly qualified. (C)(2)(d)

Teaching will be improved by personalized the learning environment which supports all students in their plans to graduate college and career ready.

Evidence regarding improving instruction through the implementation of articulated magnet schools provides a clear measure to attain the goals established.

A score of 16 is awarded due to the lack of focus upon the culture and climate of the school, effectiveness of teacher sand less regarding the new pay structure the system is piloting.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The central office of the district is well structured and organized. The leader is the Superintendent, who works with the curriculum team, support services, technology services, special services, food services and business services. Roundtable discussions are held each Monday. (D)(1)(a)

Each school has its own school leadership team, and decisions regarding staffing, calendars, procedures, and budgeting are left to the school leader. (D)(1)(b)

Digital learning, individualized education, opportunity to access learning any time, any place. (D)(1)(c)

The instructional personnel will learn how to tailor learning objectives, powerful strategies for assessment, monitor and adjust the personalized learning experiences to meet the interests and academic needs of students. (D)(1)(d)

Equal access is at the forefront. Each school leader works to ensure that students who quality for services are identified and provided services. (D)(1)(e)

Based upon the evidence provided by the district a score of 14 is awarded.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high-quality plan is evidenced in regard to the school infrastructure of the district, therefore a score of 7 is awarded. due to the lack of evidence regarding "out of school tools".

All students, regardless of income have access to the necessary tools, resources, and materials needed to implement the outlined strategies for the RTT project. Instructional technology projects for use by teachers in their classrooms, iPad, laptop computers, online digital curriculum, mobile devices all evidence that "all" students have access to the necessary tools to support the implementation. The district takes that they have access, however, a practical plan is missing regarding how the students from low-social economical homes will have the hardware and Internet access needed. (D)(2)(a)

Online, high quality instruction is delivered online. Students and teachers have access to a variety of online instructional resources. (D)(2)(b)

Web-based technology based instruction, technology enhancements which include wireless networks, integral District wide area network all have been ordered to support the instructional needs of classrooms, teachers, and students. (D)(2)(c)

Significant upgrades to the network have been made. Additional details regarding human resource data, student info data, budget data is not evident. (D)(2)(d)

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- A high-quality plan is evidenced based upon the following elements - score of 14 is awarded.

- Comprehensive process for continuous improvement encompassing an evaluation and communication system (how instructional staff and leadership are utilizing new digital resources, how instruction is provided, and how well students perform)

- The stakeholders consisting of the students, parents, teachers and administrators work together to develop milestones for each student. The team approach which involves getting everyone involved on the front end of the plan will increase the understanding and support of all stakeholders.

- Through the implementation of the teacher personnel evaluation system teachers will be held accountable for meeting the research-based standards and indicators.

- Administrators will be trained on how to provide timely, clear and constructive feedback - which will allow them to better lead their schools towards accomplishing the goals of the plan. In addition, the administrators will have conversations with the teachers which are tied to professional growth, professional development goals, student learning goals - all of which evidence the element of providing ongoing feedback to teachers.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants high-quality plan is awarded a score of 4 out of a possible 5 due to their ability to communicate a high quality approach. The Superintendents newsletter which is published online is a good approach, however, it is unclear as to whether the newsletter is sent to just the "Top Leadership Team" which is an internal public. The applicant does not spellout if the newsletter will be distributed to other internal publics such as teachers, staff, board members. In addition, the newsletter should be distributed to external publics as well. Due to the lack of being specific regarding the publics, a small deduction of one point is accessed.

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

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district is awarded a 3 based upon the following evidence:

- Establishing a baseline measurement with annual measurable objectives
- Involving and collaborating with the teachers, students, parents and administrators in the development of the plan
- The implementation of a "Race to the Top Leadership Team" which will meet with the Superintendent on a monthly basis to share current status that is being made towards reform goals and increasing student academic achievement. The team will examine student and teacher performance, the utilization of new curriculum, digital resources and parent engagement progress all of which focus upon the goals.
- The state of Mississippi releases a state report card measuring the school districts across the state based upon measures of effective schools. The state also takes the data from each school district across the state and develops individual report cards for that state. The district plans to compare the District Report Card to the State Report Card. After comparison the results will yield achievement gaps. The gaps will be addressed within the school improvement process. The processes outlined clearly demonstrate a comprehensive plan for improvement.
- Concern which led to the deduction of 2 points is based upon the discrepancy in the data charts which makes reference several times to the discrepancy being a "fluke".

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- Plans to evaluate how instruction is provided
- Plans to evaluate how well students perform
- A Race to the Top Leadership Team will meet with Superintendent monthly
- Plan to share current status towards meeting reform goals
- Use data measures to make decisions
- Magnet school approach
- Performance pay pilot project for teachers

High quality plan includes the above methods, a score of 4 is awarded.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant's budget explains that funding will be provided by the Mississippi Department of Education School Improvement Grants, local district support for the project through LEA and state funds. The local district will

support the project by not requesting any indirect costs in their districts budget. Often districts will build into the budget indirect costs into their budget and this applicant chose "not" to do so which demonstrates a strong commitment to the project. Collaboration between RTTT federal funds, LEA, Mississippi Adequate Education Program state funding, and external funding through the School Improvement Grant presents a strong feasible approach.(F)(1)(a)
- The school district has been successful with previous grants awarded. (F)(1)(b)
- The application includes a thorough description which demonstrates ambitious plans to fund high quality teachers - 25 additional, digital equipment for 1:1 access any time and any place, and travel for professional learning. (F)(1)(c)(i)
- One time investments are clearly explained with a plan to maintain equipment and a cycle to refresh technology. (F)(1)(c)(ii)

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan includes details regarding the uniqueness of this approach in Mississippi. The funds from other sources already total $7,625,000. Personnel costs account for the most sizeable part of the budget which demonstrates the plans ability to impact student achievement. The current teachers along with the new teachers brought on board with the funds from this grant will develop the skills and abilities to effectively provide personalized learning experiences for all students. After the grant the district plans to continue the program through implementation of a professional development community. This plan is strong in theory, however, it lacks solid evidence to ensure the sustainability of the projects goals. The applicant is awarded a 7.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The plan includes strong evidence of support which is evident due to the numerous letters of support. Details regarding how the district will partner to provide services for high poverty needs in the district is presented. The district has developed partnerships to assist with improving academic success and in life (Head Start services through this grant provide additional classrooms in elementary schools to reach P-K children at risk students, Southern Bancorp and the University of Mississippi outline plans to support teachers pursuing National Board Certification and church members are volunteering to tutor in the after-school program). The applicant provides convincing evidence of the involvement of parents and community stakeholders through partnerships developed.

The applicant specifically outlines ten Population-Level Desired Results which are comprehensive, clear and appropriate for the needs of the students in the district.

Details are provided regarding a system to track the progress towards meeting the goals and outlining a convincing plan. The applicant states that in order to accomplish this goal they will need a technology infrastructure to support the reformed outlined. This request is reasonable and one that will make a tremendous impact upon the future of the community and all students across the district. The evaluation plan will include the use of both summative and formative data, as well as 9 week benchmarks and end-of-year exams. This plan is feasible and one that will provide critical data for making informed data-drive decisions. The system has demonstrated sound leadership which resulted in the district moving from one that was on the brink of failure to one that now boasts half of its elementary schools as high performing. Included in the plan is the critical component of job embedded professional development. One of the outcomes of this professional development will be the acquisitions of the ability to not only learn how to read data, but learn how to utilize it in determining critical gaps that need to be addressed. The extensive plan that is outlined will lead to increased student academic achievement, closing the gaps between sub-groups and the ability to prepare students for college and career needs.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score

Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Evidence of the applicant to develop a clear, ambitious and comprehensive plan to implement personalized learning environments are outlined. The strong measurable, sustainable and comprehensive goals outlined by the school district are extensive and well developed. The description of the implementation plan to create a district-wide initiative which involves establishing learning environments with the magnet school approach is impressive. The district describes career/interest specific magnet schools beginning at the kindergarten level. This model is all inclusive and wide-ranging. The proposal compromises a far-reaching plan which details the personalized learning plan that encompasses kindergarten to graduation.   Improving student learning and teaching with the strategies outlined will result in the accomplishment of the core goals needed to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, increase the effectiveness of educators, expand access to the most effective educators, decrease identified achievement gaps across student groups which will allow students to be equipped with the academic skills to enter college and graduate from high school with an understanding and appreciation for the interests they have which will lead them to success.

Total	210	172

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0317MS-2 for Clarksdale Municipal School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lays out a vision that addresses three of the four core educational assurance areas directly: standards and assessments, data use, and teacher and principal quality. The applicant indirectly addresses the fourth area: turning around lowest-achieving schools. However, while the applicant addresses each of the four areas, the vision set forth does not articulate a clear and credible approach to the listed 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."

The applicant's vision is based on creating an environment of personalized learning through the implementation of school choice and magnet schools. Yet the magnet schools themselves are not described at all in this section. Even when they are described, in section (B), the applicant never explains why the magnet school approach plus school choice should provide the pathway for improved student success. The applicant makes a good case for why magnet schools and choice will increase student engagement. However, it is unclear throughout the application how these changes will foster increased student achievement. While the magnet school choices are based on student academic interests, the applicant never describes how "personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks" will be implemented through the magnet schools.

Concerns also remain around the four assurance areas:

- Standards and Assessments. While the applicant indicates that standards have been raised and new assessments have been implemented, later in the application it is clear that the Common Core Standards have not yet been implemented in the schools in question. Both assessments and curriculum will need to change in response to this upcoming implementation, and neither is addressed in the application.
- Data Use. While both the district's efforts at data collection (as described) and the Mississippi Student Information System are strong efforts at improving data collection, it is unclear from the application how this data is being used to improve student success. Data coaches are mentioned, but their specific roles are not delineated. Also, the proposal requests funding for both data coaches and other data professional development (PD) for teachers and principals; it is unclear from the provided descriptions how much data training work has occurred vs. what remains to be done. Since data use is the applicant's second basis (school choice being the first) for providing personalized learning to students, the lack of clarity in this section is especially disturbing.

- Teacher and Principal Evaluation. The district's willingness to implement stringent teacher and principal evaluation systems is admirable. However, it is unclear from the application how the results of evaluations will be used for improvement of teaching and learning. Both in this section and throughout the application, there are haphazard mentions of pay for performance, career ladders, professional development based on identified needs, and removal of teachers who are ineffective; however, never in the application is a coherent plan presented for how all of these elements will fit together to provide a clear path to increasing student success.
- Turning Around the Lowest-Performing Schools. The applicant presents some impressive data on the improvement of student achievement in the district over the last several years. This is attributed to school choice and the implementation of magnet schools. However, the link between school choice and student success is never made clearly or coherently.

Overall, the elements for success may be present in the district; however, the applicant fails to make a clear case for how all the various elements fit together, how each element individually and all elements collectively are leading to improvements in student success, and how this all adds up to a coherent vision for reform. The application is thus awarded a low-range score here.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

All schools (9), all students (3192) including all low-income, high need students (2997), and all educators (151) in the district are included in the project. The district is 96% low income, underscoring their need.

The applicant lists all nine schools in the district, and indicates that there are 3192 students in the district, of which 2997 are low-income and high-need students. All schools and students in the district will participate in the proposed project.

The applicant provides all data requested; however, column I of the table (% of Total LEA low-income population represented by each school) is filled in incorrectly. The application is thus awarded a high-range score, but not the maximum.

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

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district has planned to include all students in all schools in the LEA in the project; since all students will be included from the inception, no plan is presented for expansion, as none is needed.

The applicant explains that the entire district is in the fifth year of a seven-year strategic plan known as "a New Era of Schools." This multifaceted plan engages all schools in the district through implementation of magnet themes, diagnostic assessments, a data management system, personalized learning through technology resources, and teacher professional development.

Since all schools are engaged in this plan, all students will be included in the implementation; thus, the application is awarded full points for this section.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant sets goals for criteria (A)(4)(a-d); however, each set of goals leaves some concerns. These are detailed below.

(a) While the listed gains in proficiency status are ambitious, appear achieveable, and exceed State ESEA targets overall and by student subgroup, the applicant provides no growth measures. In addition, only three scores are provided: overall, English II and Algebra I; proficiency scores are not provided by grade band or by the years of testing. Finally, while the applicant goes the extra step of dividing out the proficiency scores and expectations by individual school in the LEA, the grades tested in each school are not indicated, and multiple grade bands are not provided, only a summative score for each school.

(b) The applicant indicates that the LEA will close gaps between itself and the state by comparing percentages of proficient students and showing that the difference is reduced over time. However, the applicant does not provide direct numbers indicating the size of the gap and the rate at which the gap would close. Also, instead of providing consistent comparisons with the "highest achieving subgroup" for the state (as requested in the RTTT-D Application), the applicant provides a variety of comparisons across a variety of "control groups", making it difficult to interpret the projections. Finally, while scores are divided by grades in this section (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, HS), unlike in (a), several of the result areas are listed as "low % as fluke" for the 2011-12 year, but no explanation for this reasoning is provided in the narrative.

(c) The applicant provides a projection of a meager increase in graduation rates. This seems certainly achievable but not at all ambitious; the rate increase is slow compared to the expected increases in performance indicated in (a) and (b).

(d) The applicant indicates an ambitious and possibly achievable growth in college enrollment. However, this does not match with the low predicted graduation rate improvement in (c), and is actually pretty steep compared to the performance improvements indicated in (a) and (b). Thus goals for both (c) and (d) appear to be incongruous with the steady inclines predicted in (a) and (b).

Therefore, while the applicant did complete this section with sometimes ambitious and achievable results, due to the various issues outlined above, the application is awarded mid-range points for this section.

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**	**7**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) To demonstrate improved student learning outcomes, the applicant uses the Mississippi Acountability System's "Quality Distribution Index" (QDI) to measure student performance, but never provides a key to explain how the QDI numbers scaffold to success. While it is mentioned that the QDI score is a measure of student performance across four proficiency levels, how that number is determined is not explained. Also, other than 103 being referenced as "near failing", no other benchmarks are provided to allow the reader to make sense of the scores. Finally, though the numbers go up over time in most schools, the breakdown of student achievement over the past four years as presented in the appendix creates a picture of high variability across schools and grade bands, not a clear record of success.

The applicant then introduces a new measure, the Annual Measurable Objective, whose mathematical basis is explained in the appendix. However, no mention is made of how AMO is related to QDI. In the presentation of results, some schools met AMO while others did not. No attempt is made to make sense of the variability here, nor why math scores consistently lagged. While there is mention that the district's high school graduation rate "meets AMO" there is no accounting of whether this rate has improved over time.

No mention is made of the district's progress in closing achievement gaps, nor is any record presented of of college enrollment rates.

(b) The applicant details the implementation of several reform measures in its lowest-achieving schools, including replacing ineffective teachers, implementing the Transformation Model of the School Improvement Grant program, introducing new standards-aligned curriculum, providing job-embedded professional development, and increasing the length of the school day.

However, it is difficult to determine conclusively whether these "reforms" made a difference in student performance. Since the QDI scores are not benchmarked or explained, it is difficult to know what a gain of 20 or 30 "points" means for student success. Also, while some elementary schools show significant point gains, others do not; no explanation is provided for why the results would be so different across the schools, since the information provided in the application seems to indicate that all schools in the district have been converted to "magnet" schools.

(c) The applicant describes multiple existing methods of sharing data with parents, students, and educators: Open Houses, Board meetings, local newspapers, the Superintendent's Roundtable, PTO groups, Title I parent nights, and collaborative work with the Clarksdale Association of Educators. Data from both formative assessments and end of year assessments are shared this way; students are also provided with their own data so they can track their own progress.

In addition to a strong record of data sharing, the applicant provides evidence of data use to improve instruction. The applicant indicates that principals work with teachers at grade level and schoolwide to analyze data and use it to inform instruction; district teams also meet with teachers to discuss data collectively and with individual groups of teachers.

As a result of the poor quality of evidence provided for (a) and (b) combined with the strong evidence for (c), the application is awarded mid-range points for this section.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	**5**	**4**

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that Mississippi Code requires public school districts to publicly report actual salaries at school level for all employees; Clarksdale is in compliance with this requirement, and shares this information at least annually, as well as each month when adjustments are made to personnel.

The applicant further indicates that non-personnel expeditures are reported to the Board of Trustees at monthly meetings, voted on for approval, and made public.

While the use of school and district websites for information sharing is mentioned in other portions of the application, the applicant does not mention specifically how fiscal information is shared or made public, nor are samples provided.

Since the applicant indicates that all of the information mentioned in this section is made publicly available, but does not provide specifics about how that information is accessible, the application is awarded high, but not full, points for this section.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that Clarksdale Municipal School District has been working for some time in close collaboration with the Mississippi Department of Education; through this partnership, CMSD has had the autonomy to implement several initiatives already, including longer school days, magnet schools, school choice, and the removal of attendance zones. The applicant indicates that the collaborative relationship between CMSD and MDE has allowed for innovative work at district level while staying within federal and state requirements; the district's record of success in this area provides a good indication of future ability to continue such work.

Further evidence that the applicant's current plan is in conformance with all legal, statutory and regulatory requirements is provided in the letter of support from the Mississippi Department of Education, included in the appendix of the application. Within this letter, the MDE specifically states that, upon MDE staff review of the CMSD application, "no state-level barriers are noted". In addition, within their letter, MDE provides an offer of assistance in overcoming any such barriers should they emerge in the future. The combined assurances of the district and the MDE are sufficient for the award of full points to the application in this section.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) involvement

The applicant indicates that students, parents and the community were involved extensively in the development of the proposal through multiple venues, including the Superintendent's Roundtable, Parents' Advisory Committee, Student Advisory Committee, and Magnet School Advisory Council. In addition, they were kept informed of proposal development progress through newspapers, TV spots, videos, newletters, and the district and school websites.

The applicant indicates that principals, teachers, staff and superintendents worked together to develop the logic model, proposal, and financing model. Further, a post-proposal survey indicates 92% of teachers support the final proposal. This is a very strong level of support from educators.

In addition, the proposal development team was responsive to feedback received from parents, students, and educators; this feedback was used to drive decisions such as designing grade band allocation to middle schools, creating a 9th grade academy, and initiating a comprehensive pre-school program across the district.

(b) letters of support

The applicant has included numerous letters of support in the appendix. Letters of support are provided from local business, civil rights, advocacy, and community organizations; institutions of higher education; churches and political leadership; and teachers unions and teacher advocacy groups.

Notably missing, however, are any letters from parents, students, parent associations, or student organizations. Therefore, while the applicant indicates that students and parents were involved in developing the proposal, no direct evidence of their support is provided within the application.

Overall, it appears that the applicant made significant efforts to build the engagement and support of stakeholders into the development of the proposal, though the lack of letters from student or parent groups is a bit concerning; thus the application is awarded high-range, but not full, points for this section.

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

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The RTTT-D Application indicates that a high-quality plan should include, at a minimum, Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Parties. These items are addressed through the applicant's narrative of the process used to assess current needs, as well as through the applicant's description of the logic model for implementation of reforms to create personalized learning environments. Specific details are addressed below:

- The applicant explains in some detail the process used to identify needs, including: communications with teachers and parents; examination of achievement test data, qualitative results, and demographic information; and the investigation of various reform models through school leader participation in a variety of events, workshops and conferenced. Poverty, diversity, and unemployment are identified as population needs. The applicant also indicates specific student academic needs for ED students, and the fact that ELA and math targets were not being met in most schools for most subgroups.
- The applicant's overall goal is to improve student outcomes through school improvement by implementing personalized learning environments for students through a magnet schools approach. The applicant further describes two strategies that will be used to improve schools: improving educator effectiveness by providing strong professional development via coaching and modeling; and tailoring instruction to student needs by using student data inform meaningful corrective feedback.
- The applicant describes set of strategies that will be implemented in the district to enhance instruction and address the goal of providing rigorous learning paths for all students. The applicant does list and describe a variety of supports including a central office of innovation, and coaches and school-based teams for Leadership, Data, Assessment, Instruction, and Digital Learning. Responsible parties, time frames for interventions, and deliverables are indicated for each of these strategies.

- The applicant describes a system of student assessment through three assessment types, the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2), Subject Area Testing Program (SATP), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and a curriculum-based test aligned with the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks (CASE 21). The applicant indicates that these assessments will provide multiple sources of student data over the course of the year; the district curriculum team will meet with all teachers in every school after every test administration to discuss how test results should be used to personalize instruction for struggling students. Student results will also be used in educator evaluation.
- The applicant uses the example of Scholastic Reading 180 to demonstrate how various learning approaches will be provided through the different magnet schools.

The applicant provides a coherent description of its needs assessment process and the logic model address those needs, thus the application is awarded full points for this section.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The RTTT-D Application clearly indicates that a high-quality plan should include, at a minimum, Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Parties. The applicant describes a magnet school approach and data-driven personalization of student instruction and supports as its plan for improving learning. With respect to these goals, the applicant provides detailed information about the magnet schools that will be developed in the district to align content to student interests, and drive rigor through student engagement in specific topical areas. The applicant does not, however, indicate a timeline, deliverables, or responsible parties for the development of these magnet schools. Therefore, the first issue with this section is that the applicant is lacking a high-quality plan.

The proposal to develop student interest-driven magnet schools is intriguing, and some of the details provided do address some of the criteria listed for this section. However, only some of the criteria listed in the section are addressed in the proposal; significant concerns remain for how the implementation of the plan, aka magnet schools, will address all of the criteria listed. Therefore, the second issue with this section is that the applicant insufficiently addresses the criteria in the described approach.

Comments about specific criteria are provided below:

(a)

(a)(i) The applicant indicates that the themes, which flow from one school to another, will allow students to create a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development that will allow students to meet individual learning goals.

(a)(ii) The applicant indicates that all schools will use curriculum that is linked to a set of core academic concepts; the applicant indicates that the Mississippi Curriculum Standards will be taught as the transition is made to Common Core State Standards, which are explicitly linked to college- and career-readiness. It is not clear how students will be trained to structure their learning to achieve their goals, though from information in other sections the applicant describes that students will measure their progress by tracking their scores on a variety of assessments.

(a)(iii) The applicant's description of the various magnet schools provides evidence that all students will be engaged in deep learning experiences regardless of their choice of magnet school.

(a)(iv) It is unclear from the applicant's description of the magnet schools that all students will have access and exposure to diverse perspectives. Specific instances of exposure to diversity are listed in individual magnet school descriptions, but these issues are not addressed comprehensively across schools.

(a)(v) It is unclear from the applicant's description of the magnet schools that all students be able to master critical skills. Specific instances of mastery of certain skills are listed in individual magnet school descriptions, but these issues are not addressed comprehensively across schools.

(b)

(b)(i) The applicant describes how instruction will be personalized for students in the magnet schools through engagement with student interests and directive supports based on student assessment outcomes.

(b)(ii) The applicant describes a rich variety of instructional approaches and environments across the magnet schools. In addition, the applicant indicates that students will be engaged in infusion lessons, integrated units, projects, group-research inquiries, and collaborative study groups regardless of the choice of magnet school.

(b)(iii) The applicant indicates that all schools will use curriculum that is linked to a set of core academic concepts; the applicant indicates that the Mississippi Curriculum Standards will be taught as the transition is made to Common Core State Standards, which are explicitly linked to

college- and career-readiness. The applicant addresses the use of digital content by indicating that all students will have access to both a comprehensive, adaptive, technology curriculum as well as an online, video-based remediation tool in all core subject areas.

(b)(iv) The applicant describes a system of student assessment through three assessment types, the Mississippi Curriculum Test 2 (MCT2), Subject Area Testing Program (SATP), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and a curriculum-based test aligned with the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks (CASE 21). The applicant indicates that these assessments will provide multiple sources of student data over the course of the year; the district curriculum team will meet with all teachers in every school after every test administration to discuss how test results should be used to personalize instruction for struggling students.

(b)(v) While interventions for high-need students are not discussed in this section, there is a three-tier intervention program described in the following section. It is good that the district is planning on implementing a system of interventions for struggling students; however, the system described leaves many questions unanswered:

- The applicant describes a system that will provide student instruction, adaptive assessments, engaging activities, digital content, and sports-related curricula; however, no specific programs are described. It is unclear whether any programs exist that will be able to provide the interventions the district hopes to provide;
- While teachers are expected to be able to "adjust" the purchased intervention programs, no plan is provided for how teachers will be trained to use or adapt the program;
- The three tiers are not clearly articulated; there is no description provided of how students will be sorted into tiers, how the tiers will be linked with each other, and how students will work their way through the tiers to get back on-track.

(c)

The applicant does mention the use of data coaches to provide data use training to students. However, while the applicant does mention some academic content-oriented student tools and resources (field trips, musical instruments, etc.), the applicant does not describe consistent mechanisms that would provide students the support they need to make best use of the academic tools and resources provided to them, nor whether all students would have access to all of the identified tools and resources.

In addition, some overarching concerns around the magnet school plan are not addressed in the narrative:

- The applicant never addresses how students will make their school choices, nor whether they and their parents will be advised on the curriculum and instructional approaches before making a choice.
- The applicant provides no information on what happens if a student chooses poorly and fails to succeed in a school. The applicant does not address how that the student can effectively "switch" to a different magnet school and stay on a good learning trajectory, or what will be done to support the student in case crossing to a different "theme" becomes too disruptive to allow progress.
- The applicant does not address how the district will ensure that the rich learning experiences in each magnet school are of equal rigor, nor provide any assurances that students from all magnet schools will be equally prepared for college and careers regardless of their personal trajectory via school choice.

In summary, the magnet school structure described by the applicant is an intriguing approach to personalization and student engagement, and the applicant addresses many of the criteria in this section. However, four of the criteria – consistent exposure to diverse perspectives, comprehensive skill development, progress through the three-tier intervention system, and student supports to learn to use the available academic tools and resources – are not comprehensively addressed by the applicant. In addition, the applicant does not indicate timelines, deliverables, or responsible parties; also, several general concerns persist about the applicant's magnet school approach. Therefore the application is awarded mid-range points for this section.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The RTTT-D Application clearly indicates that a high-quality plan should include, at a minimum, Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Parties. The applicant describes training for educators and school leaders in the theme-based approach of magnet schools, an educator evaluation system, and data-driven personalization of student instruction and supports, as its plan for improving teaching. With respect to these goals, the applicant provides detailed information about the types of training provided to educators and school leaders, as well as about the instructional approaches that will be utilized to personalize learning. The applicant does not, however, indicate a timeline, deliverables, or responsible parties for these goals. Therefore, the applicant is lacking a high-quality plan for this section.

Comments about specific criteria are provided below:

(a)

(a)(i) The applicant recognizes that the teachers in the magnet schools will need training both in thematic implementation of instruction and intervention AND in the effective use of technology resources. The applicant indicates that all educators will supported in effective implementation of personalized learning environments through training in: teaching to the magnet theme focus of their school; the use of technology; the use of data to improve instruction; and the use of Professional Learning Communities. The applicant indicates that training will be provided by Data Coaches and Magnet Coordinators; educators will also be trained in a train-the-trainer model to become magnet coordinators themselves.

(a)(ii) The applicant indicates that the district is data-driven, collecting and using formative and summative assessment data, with the help of data coaches to provide data training for students and teachers, to personalize and improve instruction. Particularly striking is the implementation of both adaptive assessments from NWEA that allow for specific pinpointing of student learning gaps, which can then be addressed in collaboration between the teacher and the student; and the use of data coaches embedded in the schools, providing data use training to both teachers (to allow improvement of instruction) and students (to allow ownership of learning and progress).

(a)(iii) The applicant indicates that educators will be trained by Data Coaches to monitor student progress through a variety of assessments aligned with curriculum that is based on college and career ready standards; educator data use training through data coaches will allow them to develop the necessary skills to inform instructional improvement through examining individual student data from these sources.

(a)(iv) The applicant describes a comprehensive teacher evaluation and improvement plan based on the district's Teacher Appraisal System. Teachers are monitored through quantitative (student assessments) and qualitative (classroom observation) means; teacher effectiveness is the basis for increases in compensation. Teachers in need of improvement work with their principal to create an improvement plan targeted to their needs; those that do not improve are asked to leave. The applicant also describes a Principal Evaluation System involving multiple measures and collaborative engagement of principals and superintendents.

(b)

(b)(i) The applicant indicates that educators will monitor student progress through a variety of assessments aligned with curriculum that is based on college and career ready standards; educator data use training through data coaches will allow them to develop the necessary skills to inform instructional improvement through examining individual student data from these sources.

(b)(ii) The applicant indicates that educators will have access to a comprehensive, adaptive, online curriculum solution combined with an adaptive assessment and instructional management tool that together will allow educators to identify student needs, target instruction, and assess student progress towards college and career ready learning goals.

(b)(iii) The applicant indicates that educators will have access to a comprehensive, adaptive, online curriculum solution combined with an adaptive assessment and instructional management tool that together will allow educators to identify student needs, target instruction, and assess student progress towards college and career ready learning goals.

(c)

(c)(i) The applicant describes a comprehensive teacher evaluation and improvement plan based on the district's Teacher Appraisal System. Teachers are monitored through quantitative (student assessments) and qualitative (classroom observation) means; teacher effectiveness is the basis for increases in compensation. Teachers in need of improvement work with their principal to create an improvement plan targeted to their needs; those that do not improve are asked to leave. The applicant also describes a Principal Evaluation System involving multiple measures and collaborative engagement of principals and superintendents. These detailed evaluation systems, as described by the applicant, will allow school leaders and teachers to work as a team to continuously improve school culture, climate, and effectiveness.

(c)(ii) The applicant indicates that school leaders will be provided the same training as educators on data use, thematic curriculum design, and effective use of technology; in addition, school leaders will be trained in the use of data to evaluate educators, and in addressing educator needs through appropriately assigned professional development opportunities.

(d)

The applicant presents a multi-faceted plan to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. The applicant's plan includes: the principal and curriculum team's use of the district's teacher appraisal system and classroom observations to identify and assign supports to teachers in the form of professional development aligned with their identified needs; and, working with external partners such as Teach for America and the Mississippi Association of Educators to use "grow your own" strategies to proactively address educator shortages in high-need subjects and areas.

In summary, the applicant describes an excellent process to use adaptive assessment and data coaches to create an environment of continuous improvement in classrooms, and an effective approach to evaluating teachers and following up with professional development in areas of teacher need. However, the applicant does not indicate a timeline, deliverables, or responsible parties for these goals, which are necessary components of a high-quality plan. The application is thus awarded high-range, but not full, points for this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	**15**	**6**

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The RTTT-D Application clearly indicates that a high-quality plan should include, at a minimum, Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Parties. The applicant has not included these items in a coherent way in this section. Since these items are not clearly indicated

in the application, but information is presented about the applicant's plan, what follows is a review of what can be inferred from what is actually presented.

(a) The applicant indicates that the LEA central office is organized around two teams: the leadership team headed by the superintendent, and the curriculum team headed by the assistant superintendent. The minimal description of each team does not clearly delineate how support will be provided to schools, or how the roles of each team differ from the other. For instance, it is unclear how the decisions made in the central office team meetings are communicated to the schools, much less implemented in them. There is no description of how school leaders and administrators can communicate with the central office or request their assistance. Thus while the structure of the two teams appears sound, how this translates to providing support andserivces to all participating schools remains ambiguous.

(b) The applicant indicates that the required flexibility and autonomy over scheduled, personnel, roles, and budget has been, and will continue to be, provided to the principal of each school by the district office, with supervision by the Superintendent.

(c) The applicant describes how a self-paced, personalized digital learning curriculum will be made available to all students. Through this program, students will be able to learn at their own pace and demonstrate mastery as they develop competence in each area, and also can receive extra help or tutoring if they are not achieving mastery. The applicant mentions that this allows students the "best of blended learning" by learning online at home and also by learning in class at school. However, the applicant does not address the following considerations important for the effective use of this resource:

- The applicant does not address how all students will be able to access the online material provided. In a poor rural district, it is likely that not all students will have a home computer with a fast internet connection. The applicant does not indicate whether there are options for students to check out computers from the school, to use the school lab after-hours, tor o access the materials through the public library, etc.
- The applicant does not address what vendor or entity will provide the online curriculum, nor what entity will ensure that the chosen online curriculum is aligned with the in-class curriculum.
- The applicant does not address how students will track and share their scores on assessments and projects online with their school, teacher, classmates, and parents, nor how students' online work will be integrated with their classroom work.
- The applicant does not address whether all students will be expected to complete an online curriculum and, if not, how students who only participate in the in-class curriculum will have equal opportunitites to demonstrate mastery.

(d) The applicant mentions formative, interim, adaptive, and summative assessments as ways that students will have to demonstrate mastery. However, it is not clear whether all of these assessments are simply the same kinds of tests, or if elements such as project-based assessments, oral reports, and other methods will be available to students for demonstrating their mastery. From the description provided, neither the content nor the presentation of the "research-based, rigorous, engaging curriculum" to be prescribed to students based on their assessed needs is made clear. The evidence presented is inadequate to support the applicant claim that students will have the "opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards … in various ways."

This is one of the only places the applicant provides a clear plan including activities, timeline, and responsible parties. However, the activities are not grouped by goal – there is perhaps only one goal represented by this specific plan, which is the implementation of an adaptive assessment system. The activities are not described clearly enough to explain how they will lead to greater teacher capacity to develop and use instructionally relevant assessment; in addition, no deliverables are listed at all. Finally, there is never mention of what the assessments might be, other than "formative, interim, summative" – which begs the question of how these assessments will provide not just multiple times, but multiple ways for students to demonstrate mastery of curriculum concepts.

(e) The applicant clearly lists out several categories of students that will require special adaptations of curriculum and instruction for full accessibility. However, the applicant is unclear about how support will be provided to these classes of students. The applicant mentions that school counselors and principals receive training in the importance of proper identification of these students, and that these individuals work to ensure that such students are identified and provided with the services needed. The nature of the services provided are never described, however, nor how such students will be ensured of reaching academic content mastery through these interventions.

In summary, the applicant clearly indicates that school leaders will have the necessary flexibility for implementation, and that students will have access to online curriculum and adaptive assessments to demonstrate mastery before moving on academically. However, no clear plan is presented overall; in addition, it is unclear how the central office organization will facilitate school support, how students will have multiple ways to demonstrate mastery, or how students will special needs will be served. The application earns a score at the low end of the mid-level range for this section.

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

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

While the applicant states that all students regardless of income will have access to necessary tools resources and materials, no evidence is provided about how such access will be made available to all students. Especially in a region of high poverty, most students will NOT have access to the technology tools described by the applicant. Yet the applicant does not describe any methods, such as checking out equipment, or late class hours, or external lab resources, available to such students. The Mississippi Virtual Public School, while an excellent resource for

those with access to a good computer and a fast internet connection, will be useless to students without these elements in the home. The virtual tutoring and technical support will also be missing for such students. The application lacks evidence that (a) and (b) can be fulfilled.

While it is laudable that the district and its schools are using and planning to continue to use the Mississippi Student Informaiton System as a data warehouse for student level information, there is no indication in this section or elsewhere that parents and students will be able to export their own information in an open data format (c); nor is there any indication that the LEA and schools use interoperable data systems. For instance, the applicant does not address whether all schools are plugged in to MSIS; whether all schools can get information from MSIS as well as providing information to MSIS; or whether all the actionable data on individual students used by individual teachers in the schools is uploaded to MSIS. The applicant also does not identify who has access to these records, how are they made available, and how are they protected.

Of all of the criteria in this section, the only one met for certain by the applicant is the implementation of virtual curriculum, tutoring, and technical support aimed at all students. Even this resource, however, may or may not be accessible to all students. In addition, the applicant does not address either the open data format issue or the interoperable data systems issue. As a result, the application is awarded low points in this section.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a process for continuous monitoring of progress on their RTTT-D goals, through tracking the use of digital resources, provision of instruction, gains in student learning outcomes, and teacher performance. The applicant explains that a Race to the Top Leadership Team, made up of teachers, students, administrators, and parents, will be used to establish expectations and milestones for these tracked elements. This leadership team will track progress on these indicators and meet with the superintendent monthly to discuss this progress. As needed, interventions and adjustments will be implemented at the school level by school leaders and administrators; these individuals will be trained on how to provide timely, clear and constructive feedback through strategic conversations with educators.

Since the applicant presents plans for a coherent and continuous improvement process, the application is awarded full points for this section.

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

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a process by which internal stakeholders will be informed of progress on a monthly basis through a Race to the Top Leadership Team meeting with the Superintendent. The outcomes of that meeting will be shared with external stakeholders, also monthly, through the online publication of the Superintendent's Newsletter. This appears to be a solid strategy that has worked for the district in the past; the application is awarded full points for this criterion.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	**5**	**2**

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant generally provides ambitious yet achieveable performance measures in each of the required categories, and provides an appropriate "total number" of measures. However, there are multiple issues with the measures provided in this section:

- Effective and Highly Effective Teachers and Principals – while the application notice clearly defines an "effective" teacher as one achieving one year of student growth in one academic year, and a "highly effective" teacher as one achieving one and a half years of student growth in one academic year, the applicant re-defines both of these terms in the chart presented. No correlation or rationale is presented for these alternative definitions;
- With no accompanying explanation, this section appears to contain an erroneous "cut and paste" of a chart from Section (A) (4);
- The applicant provides only one social-emotional indicator for one grade band (6th) in the 4-8 grade bands, and no social-emotional indicators for its 9-12 grade bands;
- The applicant's "on-track to college and career readiness" indicator is never defined (percent proficient? above basic? scores?);
- In all cases, the applicant never meets criterion (a), (b), or (c) for its applicant-proposed measures: there is no rationale provided for the measure chosen, no description of how the measure will provide formative information, nor how the measure will be altered if it is insufficient to gauge progress.
- In the 9-12 grade band measures, which grades are being included in the measures are generally not listed, with a single exception of three grade-band academic measures presented at the very end of the document. Perhaps all grades are included in all measures; however, this too is not listed. Finally, there is a perplexingly low number in the "total" students column for the FAFSA measure as compared to all other measures for the 9-12 grade band.

- The percent of students on-track to college and career readiness (indicator not identified) and the percent of students scoring career-ready actually go down every year in the 9-12 grade band projections, which is not an acceptable progress goal, but is never explained.

Despite the fact that the applicant proposes a significant number of measures, and mostly proposes ambitious yet achieveable gains in the measures, the lack of description around applicant-proposed measures, and the ambiguities and inconsistencies listed above, lead to the application being awarded a score on the low end of the mid-range for this criterion.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not address this criterion, either in this section or elsewhere in the application. Since the applicant provides no plans to evaluate the effectiveness of its RTTT-D funded activities anywhere in the application, the application is awarded no points for this criterion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's budget, including the budget narrative and tables, do an effective job of identifying all funds that will support the grant. The main sources of funding for this proposal will be the RTTT-D grant, the state School Improvement Grants in two of the district schools, and LEA and state funds.

The applicant cites its work in current School Improvement Grant schools within the district as experience in implementing the type of reforms they are proposing. However, in examining the numbers proposed, there are some concerns:

- The amount of money allocated for coaches' salaries – instructional, literacy, data, and graduation – is quite low, $40,000 a year. The district will require some very capable professionals for these jobs if its plan is to succeed. The low salary point budgeted for these positions will make it difficult, if not impossible, to find qualified individuals for these positions.
- The amount allocated for the RTTT-D director seems way too high at $100,000; the amount allocated for the budget analyst seems way too low at $28,000. A strong financial analyst will be required for the success of the project; such individuals require much higher salaries than the one proposed in the application. The Director has an important job; however, it does not seem right to be paying the director 2.5x the salary that is being paid to the on-the-ground implementors (coaches).
- Some of the elements suggested by the applicant seem duplicative. For instance, the applicant does not explain why each school needs both embedded data coaches and contracted data training for all teachers and principals, or why each school needs both an instructional coach and a literacy coach, or what data is used to determine the appropriate number graduation coaches in one high school of 150 students. Without explanations for these expenditures, it is unclear whether the funds could be better spent on other professionals or services.
- The applicant has set aside money for travel for professional development of its staff, but not listed any of the potential meetings those staff might attend. It is therefore unclear whether this expenditure is prudent.
- While the applicant derides "canned curriculum programs" in its rationale to hire more personnel, the applicant is also requesting funds to purchase and implement "canned" virtual curriculum for all students as part of its plan to individualize instruction. These are conflicting ideas.
- The applicant requests a large amount of funding to purchase equipment for the schools, but does not request money to invest in theft protection devices, or a check-in-check-out system for these devices. There is also no plan for purchasing protection (cases, protective screens, etc) for the devices, which can easily be damaged or destroyed. A hefty investment should be protected, but the applicant does not mention a plan to do so with the technology purchases it proposes.

The applicant clearly identifies one-time expenditures separate from ongoing operational costs, and provides a coherent rationale for all expenditures.

Overall, the applicant provides a strong accounting of all of the revenues and expenditures expected for the project. However, specific rationale for certain investments (such as specific salary levels for different positions, travel expenditures, or items that appear to be duplicative expenses) and protection of equipment against theft or damage is omitted from the application. Therefore, the application is awarded mid-range points for this section.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. Not only are there no goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, or responsible personnel listed, the applicant only vaguely mentions 'continuing work with district partners and state legislature' as their only plan for sustainability. No direct or indirect resources are listed, only a mention of the possibiity of continuing to apply for additional grant funds. The applicant provides no budget or uses of funds for the term following the grant period; there is only mention that the investments in personnel will allow replication of models with "little to no additional cost." This seems short-sighted. As a result, the application is awarded low-range points for this section.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

(1) The applicant describes multiple partnerships that the district has established with public and private organizations, though it is unclear whether the various partnerships described are aware of and integrated with each other. Some examples of district partnerships include those with health service providers to encourage student health; financial service providers to increase parent and community fiscal literacy; early learning and tutoring supports for students through Head Start, churches, and other community associations; and partnerships with local businesses to provide students with job embedded training and educational relevance.

(2) The applicant has identified ten population-level results for students and parents; half are educational, half are parent and community supports.

(3) The applicant describes how the district would track academic indicators for students. Notably missing in this section is any description of how social/emotional or community support indicators would be tracked, or how the partners outside the district would be involved in the tracking or targeting of resources. The applicant indicates that resources will be targeted to needs, with special attention to students with significant challenges. The applicant's plan to scale the model is to work with the partners to move the model out to surrounding districts, but it is not clear how the partners will be involved in this process. No coherent plan is presented that would allow the district or its partners to improve their results over time.

(4) The district describes a plan to integrate education with its partners' services through thematic integration within its magnet schools; students will be provided with supports that help them make sense of their academics. For instance, employers providing hands-on experiences will allow students to see the relevance of their academic studies; health providers increasing awareness of wellness will help students to see the value of their STEM education; music programs will help students apply musical competence to academic pursuits.

(5) While the applicant addresses this criterion, the description focuses wholly on the work of the LEA, not the work of the LEA with its partner organizations. It is unclear how the partner organizations will be involved in inventory of needs and assets, creation of a process and infrastructure, engaging parents and families, or assessing the applicant's progress. In addition, while needs identification is stressed, asset identification or matching of needs to assets is largely ignored.

(6) The applicant provides performance measures that are the same as those in rest of proposal. This is not inherently wrong; however, only measures for academic outcomes and student social/behavioral outcomes are provided. No measures of any kind are proposed for any of the results related to family/community supports, such a financial literacy, health and wellness, etc.

The applicant clearly has worked hard to establish partnerships with many local resources, both public and private, and this is to be lauded. However, the description provided here does not clearly indicate how the partners will be engaged in decision-making in collaboration with the district leadership, nor is it clear how the non-educational outcomes will be tracked or met. In other words, there is potential, but the way forward to achieving the listed criteria is unclear. The application is awarded a mid-range score for this section.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	**Met/Not Met**	**Not Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

After reviewing the entire application, it is clear that the applicant does not meet Absolute Priority 1 for the following reasons:

- No High Quality Plans are available in the application. Throughout the application, whenever a high quality plan is requested, the applicant is expected to provide, at a minimum, goals, timelines, activities, deliverables, and responsible parties. Some of these elements are addressed in some areas, but never in the entire application is a single fully developed high quality plan presented.
- While the applicant clearly plans to implement magnet schools as its main tool for achieving personalized learning environments, the application does not contain a clear rationale anywhere for why this model was chosen, why these particular magnet themes were chosen, how the individual themes allow for students to increase not only engagement but achievement, and how students will be counseled to alter their trajectory if their initially chosen magnet school "theme" does not suit them.
- Throughout the application, many of the tools, resources, interventions, and strategies that are to be employed by the applicant are only mentioned, or only described in very vague terms, which does not engender confidence in the district's ability to effectively implement its plans.
- The data presented for the last four years provide a mixed picture of achievement at best. This does not tell a story of consistent success in improving achievement across all schools; yet no explanation is provided for the variable performance across schools. In addition, measures referenced by the applicant are not fully described, and different measures for the same elements are presented in different places within the application without providing a sense of comparability across those measures (QDI and AMO).

These significant insufficiencies in presenting high-quality plans, explaining the magnet school model, providing specificity in descriptions of interventions and supports, and providing either data showing consistent past progress or, alternately, providing a description of what was causing the mixed academic results, has led to the conclusion that this application does not meet Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	132

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0317MS-3 for Clarksdale Municipal School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	**10**	**5**

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Throughout the entire application it is evident that the district demonstrated a clear vision for leading the district toward increasing student achievement. There are detailed descriptions of a vision for providing personalized student learning as the applicant writes about the elementary magnet schools and the secondary interest based academies. The charts are well organized and provide evidence of data that supports the district's dedicated commitment to being accountable for student learning in all the district buildings in three concentrated sub group areas. Goals for the vision are aligned with the participating schools and skills that demonstrate needed improvement. The district has put together a vision that consistently focuses on providing equity for all students while allowing for consideration of student academic interests.The applicant provided convincing details about their vision for a reformed system of education and at the same time demonstrated coherence connecting the plan for personalized student learning to common goals and programs. The comprehensive documentation combined with the appropriate goals supported by the data tables, and the uniqueness of the vision warranted the applicant to earn a score of 5.

Reforming their education system PreK- grade 12 ,using themes, academies, and magnet schools based upon student interest is an incredibly ambitious task. The applicant does not provide specific steps for the action plans that will be implemented and explain specifically how the creation of magnet schools and academies will increase student learning. The applicant does not provide enough detail in these areas to warrant a credible approach for the succcessful implementation and delivery of the activities connected to student learning gains and the vision.

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

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant earned a score of 10 as a result of thoroughly reporting school participation and meeting all eligibility criteria as set forth in the grant requirements. The district chose to select all schools to participate. The applicant provided a clearly understandable chart that shows all schools that are participating along with the data demonstrating that an average of 93% of the students throughout the district are classified as low income students (based upon the Mississippi Department of Education. October 2012 Free and Reduced Lunch district-wide totals 94%. Detailed charts show exact number of teachers, administrators and students within each building.

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

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

There is strong evidence that shows that the district has listed clear goals, appropriate activities to be implemented that are aligned with the goals. The rationales for execution ot the goals are clearly articulated. The credibility of the plan is supported by signatures from key parties involved in the project, such as the superintendent and association leaders. The district-wide plan for change demonstrates that strong outside relationships have been fostered. Business and community members have pledged support for the presented activities. The applicant has partnered with a variety of business organizations and higher education institutions who provided letters pledging to continue to help improve student learning beyond what is happening within the schools. Letters of support from community businesses, agencies, and universities provide documentation that substantiates the successful implementation of district-wide change connected to the reform proposals named in the application. The applicant earned a score of 10 because the plan provides a sound basis for all the components needed to support a high quality plan.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	**10**	**5**

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant earned a middle range score of 5 because :

a. There are charts showing comparing student overall performance and student performance for ELA students. These charts demonstrate that the district has set achievable goals for increasing equitable student learning in Math, Language Arts, and English across all grade levels. The data is taken from summative assessments such as end of course tests, State Subject Area Test, and State Curriculum Test 2. There is documentation supporting the district will use the data to demonstrate meeting targets connected to the Common Core State Standards.

b. The data from these charts indicates that some targets were met and some were not met. For example, Economically Disadvantaged students in Higgins School did meet AYP standards in Math; Myrtle Hall's Economically Disadvantaged students did not meet math targets. Evidence was not clearly presented to demonstrate interventions that the district will take to decrease the achievement gaps within the named schools while decreasing the gaps among IEP students, ELA students, and Economically Disadvantaged students.

c. There is charted data providing evidence of graduation rates for Black and Economically Disadvantaged students.

d. There is charted data providing evidence for data and goals for college enrollment.

e. Each chart shows current data and achievable goals for increases in future years ranging from 2010-2017. The goals appear to be achievable, but could be more ambitious. For example: currently college enrollment overall is at 50%. The goal for college enrollment for SY 2016/2017 is 70%. Many of the goals for the SY 2016/2017 are set between 65%-75%. 65%, and 70% achievement goals for SY 2016/2017 appear to be achievable and limiting for an ambitious vision. It would seem that even reaching future goals of 80-85% over a five year period would seem more ambitious.

The applicant presents low targets that are achievable,but there is not detailed information to prove the goals to be ambitious.

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**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant earned a score of 8 for this component because the Clarksdale Municipal School District overall has showed increases in student achievement. However when reviewsing the data, the gains have not been consistent across all content areas in all schools. For example, the district did not meet Annual Measurable Objectives in Math, but did meet targets in Reading/Language Arts. The District met Annual Measurement Objectives in English/Language Arts across all sub-groups, but did not meet AMO in Math for black students. Again, goals for the 2016/2017 school year are achievable as set by the district. In order to be ambitious, the district should set goals higher than 10-

18% increases over a five year period of time for the low achieving schools. As a result the data presentation is questionable as to meeting the rigorous requirement for a clear track record of success and documentation for the goals being deemed ambitious for setting the standards for what is determined to be a clearly tracked record of success. At times this appears confusing when closely examining ALL the data. As a result of this ambiguity the district did not receive the highest score for this component.

The district states that student performance data is displayed in areas in each building and accessible to teachers, administrators and students. The district explains comprehensively how teachers and administrators are trained to access and use data. There is minimal information as to how parents and students will be trained to access, understand and use the data to increase student achievement.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant scored a 3 for this component because there is documented evidence provided in which all personnel salaries are reported in the following manner:

- the Superintendent's Roundtable, which is a rotating committee of educational stakeholders and business/community leaders that meets monthly with the school district administration.

- At the local Board of Trustees meetings each month, all fiscal records are presented for a vote and made public. Mississippi Code requires that public school districts in Mississippi provide actual salaries at the school level for all employees – instructional and support staff, administration, and district office personnel. This information is shared annually.

The applicant did not earn the highest possible score for this category because the applicant did not provide evidence of looking to find ways to increase or improve transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district demonstrated successful efforts in this area as they battled with the Mississippi Department of Education to realign school attendance zones in order to allow families to choose which schools they desire to attend. As a result of the coherent steps taken to secure alternate attendance zones, the district demonstrated their perseverance to execute their vision and belief as they provided the parents/guardians with opportunities to become decision makers who are granted their equity choices throughout the district. The applicant earned the highest amount of points available in this category because of their documented evidence demonstrating their perseverance to align the zones which resulted in dedicated efforts to provide successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments as outlined in the vision.

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

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant earned a score of 10 for this category because of the high level of engagement that is clearly documented throughout the entire application.The district addressed and provided documentation of what they collaboratively decided upon as best practice articulation strategies for the Race to the Top reform proposals from parents, teachers, students, and business and community members, such as:

- Title I Parent Involvement meetings
- PTO meetings
- Superintendent's Roundtable
- Business and community dialogue meetings
- student advisory council meetings.
- magnet school advisory committee meetings
- teacher and administrator dialogue meetings
- public education discussion forums.

The applicant has documented strategies demonstrating that the district has gone above and beyond to seek out opportunities for stakeholder feedback and input. In addition, the application contains a letter of support from the bargaining unit President. Also the proposal contains 32 letters of support from local university representatives, business and community partnerships, local legislators, and the Mayor.

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

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The document contains comprehensive details focused on reform innovations dedicated to creating personalized learning environments. Each initiative is supported by a logical rationale demonstrating convincing reasons for implementing the programs outlined in the proposal. The district provided credible evidence and data identifying the needs the district hopes to meet and the gaps that exist within their educational system. These needs and gaps are addressed throughout the proposal. The applicant addressed key goals relative to needs and gaps. Analysis results were clearly defined in narratives and charted tables. Principals and leadership teams were named to monitor needs and assessments as well as execution of activities. The presentation of data and explanation of the plan was thoroughly explained and credible while maintaining a focus on explaining the current activities being implemented for the purpose of personalizing learning environments as well as extended and future plans. The applicant earned a score of 5 as a result of the details presented in this category.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant earned 15 points for this category because of the reasons listed belos"

a. The applicant provided documentation continuously and coherently relative to this category. The district has developed a comprehensive plan designed to personalize learning at all PreK-grade 12 levels. The plan involves mbitious implementation activities including theme based magnet elementary schools in the following areas:

- International Baccalaureate
- Visual and Performing Arts
- STEM
- Health and Medical Sciences
- Language Immersion

b. The applicant explained how parents and students could choose to attend these schools based upon individual student academic needs and interests. Based upon information provided in the proposal, parent and student committees provided input and feedback for the academic infrastructure and design of the schools. The district stresses the collaborative efforts of parents, students, business, and community for implementing this reform movement. Teams of administrators and stakeholders are assigned to assist with decision making and very involved with the execution of the plan.

c. The plan accounts for progressions at each level, which further demonstrates foresight on the part of the applicants in providing a workable plan for learning. An example of this is how students would transition to Middle School Personalized Learning Academies, then enter a 9th Grade Academy which the district has further designed to allow advanced students to pursue higher level class, based upon individual student needs.

d. The proposal outlines the instructional approaches and learning environments that each school will provide for the students. Activities proposed for curriculum are aligned with college and career ready standards. Research based theories and active learning are very much a part of individualized learning opportunities.

The applicant did not earn the highest number of possible points in this category because the applicant did not provide detailed information such as: the processes families would use to choose their school, how staffing for each school would be decided, progams staff would use to meet student learning needs in content areas outside of the theme based area, etc. The applicang lacked process details that would provide convincing documentation for a credible plan.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	**20**	**15**

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant earned 15 points for this category because of the reasons listed belos"

a. The applicant provided documentation continuously and coherently relative to this category. The district has developed a comprehensive plan designed to personalize learning at all PreK-grade 12 levels. The plan involves mbitious implementation activities including theme based magnet elementary schools in the following areas:

- International Baccalaureate
- Visual and Performing Arts
- STEM

- Health and Medical Sciences
- Language Immersion

b. The applicant explained how parents and students could choose to attend these schools based upon individual student academic needs and interests. Based upon information provided in the proposal, parent and student committees provided input and feedback for the academic infrastructure and design of the schools. The district stresses the collaborative efforts of parents, students, business, and community for implementing this reform movement. Teams of administrators and stakeholders are assigned to assist with decision making and very involved with the execution of the plan.

c. The plan accounts for progressions at each level, which further demonstrates foresight on the part of the applicants in providing a workable plan for learning. An example of this is how students would transition to Middle School Personalized Learning Academies, then enter a 9th Grade Academy which the district has further designed to allow advanced students to pursue higher level class, based upon individual student needs.

d. The proposal outlines the instructional approaches and learning environments that each school will provide for the students. Activities proposed for curriculum are aligned with college and career ready standards. Research based theories and active learning are very much a part of individualized learning opportunities.

The applicant did not earn the highest number of possible points in this category because the applicant did not provide detailed information such as: the processes families would use to choose their school, how staffing for each school would be decided, progams staff would use to meet student learning needs in content areas outside of the theme based area, etc. The applicang lacked process details that would provide convincing documentation for a credible plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

It is clearly evident that central office takes responsibility for the delivering learning and instruction to all students and stakeholders as part of the educational process in this Race to the Top proposal. It is also clearly stated that "each school's administration will have the autonomy and authority to make key decisions that relate to the implementation and delivery of the Race to the Top grant proposal. Decisions regarding staffing, calendars/time, procedures, budgeting, and other major issues have been assigned to the school leader." the proposal specifies opportunities for blended learning opportunities combining technology and human teaching and learning resources. These programs are currently in place and timelines are provided for extending and improving these programs,

The proposal specifies credible, ambitious interventions that allow all students to access virtual learning opportunities in order to complete courses and assignments in a digital environment. The applicant thoroughly accounts for students to have the opportunity to pursue college credit and high school credits simultaneously. In addition, students who need extra time to complete coursework and assignments will have access to programs and materials designed to meet their personalized needs. The applicant does provide a reasonable timeline for expanding the acquisition and implementation of digital resources. These examples mentioned above support the criteria required for the applicant to earn 15 points for a high-quality plan.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	**10**	**7**

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There is extensive documentation throughout the proposal ensuring that all students and stakeholders within the educational community have access to all resources with the district. Documentation with the proposal continually mentions all students will have choices to utilize all district resources and also choose to attend desired schools within the district. Responsibilities for monitoring progress, providing leadership and delivery of the plan rest with assigned Leadership Teams.

The proposal outlines a thorough professional development plan that provides various levels of support lor implementing teaching an learning. The proposal provides documentation for providing help with personal contact, technical assistance and outside experts. Building leaders are assigned the responsibility for delivery of programs. Phases of professional development have been assigned within reasonable timelines.

Overall the activities, goals, timelines, assigned responsibilities for implementing activities are appropriate as well as credible. The proposal boasts of a robust database system that is aligned wit a state system. There is evidence that teachers, administrators and staff members have access to the system. It is unclear as to how parents and students can export data from the system to monitor student learning. It is also unclear with the documentation that is provided as to whether the information system addressed in the proposal is able to simultaneously import and export student demographic information and academic information simple enough for parents and students to access and understand. Because the information about how parents access the system is a bit vague the applicant earned a score of 7 in this area. The applicant did not earn the highest possible number of points in this category because it is unclear as to where the responsibility lies for this part of the plan.

.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal supports the creation of a district Leadership Team that will meet with administration on a monthly basis to report progress on the Race to the Top initiatives. A monthly newsletter will be published from the Superintendent's office and continuous progress will be shared with all stakeholders. The proposal documents that training will be ongoing, student and teacher needs will be assessed regularly and with fidelity as part of the teacher evaluation program. The district cites that administrators will be provided with training specific to articulating information to the public. The applicant demonstrates that thought has gone into creating reasonable timelines. Goals are feasible. There is documentation to support the utilization of all stakeholders in the feedback and improvement process. There is an extensive list of communication and articulation activities at all levels. The applicant clearly describes the process and expectations for continually looking for opportunities to evaluate and revise the plan in order to be successful. The applicant provides sufficient documentation in this area resulting in a score of 15.

	Available	Score
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal supports the creation of a district Leadership Team that will meet with administration on a monthly basis to report progress on the Race to the Top initiatives. A monthly newsletter will be published from the Superintendent's office and continuous progress will be shared with all stakeholders. The proposal documents that training will be ongoing, student and teacher needs will be assessed regularly and with fidelity as part of the teacher evaluation program. The district cites that administrators will be provided with training specific to articulating information to the public. The applicant demonstrates that thought has gone into creating reasonable timelines. Goals are feasible. There is documentation to support the utilization of all stakeholders in the feedback and improvement process. There is an extensive list of communication and articulation activities at all levels. The applicant clearly describes the process and expectations for continually looking for opportunities to evaluate and revise the plan in order to be successful. The applicant provides sufficient documentation in this area resulting in a score of 5.

As stated previously, the district has a thorough plan for providing information to their constituents. The proposal documents regularly scheduled internal meetings, external forums, monthly newsletters and training provided to district personnel for the specific purpose of delivering quality communication.

	Available	Score
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	**5**	**3**

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant received a score of 3. The score is indicative of the overall comprehensive presentation. The applicant did not receive the highest number of points for this category because the applicant does not provide rationales for the performance measures. The applicant does not detail information that will provide evidence as to how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

The applicant presents the appropriate number performance measures.

For all students:

- The applicant provides detailed charted information and performance measures that demonstrate the number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup whose teacher of record and principal are a highly effective teacher and a highly effective principal.
- In an organized table format the applicant clearly presents the number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup whose teacher of record and principal are an effective teacher and an effective principal.

In the PreK-3 category the applicant provides detailed information addressing literacy and math performance measures.

In the PreK-3 category the applicant does not detail a performance measure for addressing the social emotional needs of students.

In the 4-8 category, the applicant provides extensive data in clearly organized charts to report the number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup, who are on track to college- and career-readiness based on the applicant's on-track indicator.

The applicant justifies for grades 4-8 proposing a performance measure to provide students with a plan for preparing students to master college and career ready standards.

In the 9-12 category:

- The applicant clearly lists in chart format the number and percentage of participating students who complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form;
- The applicant clearly lists in chart format the number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup, who is on track to college- and career-readiness based on the applicant's on-track indicator.

- The applicant provides evidence by charting two measures related to career-readiness in order to assess the number and percentage of participating students who are or are on track to being career-ready.

The applicant did not earn the highest possible points in this category because:

The wording for the performance measures appears confusing. There is a mix of increasing and decreasing student learning percentage scores. The table employs the use of the word "flukes" for dismissing teachers. On the data tables the applicant states that teachers were dismissed as a result of "flukes." The "flukes" are not defined or explained. The applicant does not explain how these "flukes" are related to performance data. It is unclear as to why the word "flukes" is presented on the data tables. Since the data does not clearly indicate consistent successes and there is not a clear explanation as to why "flukes" are tied to this data table,

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal supports the creation of a district and building Leadership Teams that will meet with administration on a monthly basis to report progress on the Race to the Top initiatives. A monthly newsletter will be published from the Superintendent's office and continuous progress will be shared with all stakeholders. The proposal documents that training will be ongoing, student and teacher needs will be assessed regularly and with fidelity as part of the teacher evaluation program. Central office documents taking responsibility for assuring collaboration of program evaluation with stakeholder teams. The district cites that administrators will be provided with training specific to articulating information to the public. The applicant demonstrates that thought has gone into creating reasonable timelines. Goals are feasible. There is documentation to support the utilization of all stakeholders in the feedback and improvement process. There is an extensive list of communication and articulation activities at all levels. The applicant clearly describes the process and expectations for continually looking for opportunities to evaluate and revise the plan related to investments in order to be successful. The applicant has included letters of support from community partners who are currently providing feedback and have pledged their support to continue to offer assistance as part of the continuous improvement process.The applicant provides detailed explanations for a change in school structures resulting in magnet schools and academies. The rationales and goals that are presented are clear and credible.

School leadership teams are being employed. Letters of support from community and business partnerships have been provided. Since a comprehensive plan was outlined to continually evaluate the ongoing activities laid out in the proposal the applcant earned a score of 5.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget is well organized, detailed and appropriate for the investments proposed for the Race to the Top project. The budget clearly indicates one time costs and long term sustainability of the project. The applicant used tables to clearly present the information. The applicant thoroughly explains how funding will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for operational costs. The budget supports the thought processes, overall goals, and goals related to personalizing student learning that are presented in the plan. The activities, interventions and strategies that will be funded are focused on maintaining long-term sustainability. The detail of the budget and the presentation of the budget in organized tables provide evidence that the district has taken extra steps to assure the sustainability of productive personalized learning environments. Because the budget and rationales were presented in a comprehensive format the applicant earned a score of 10.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	**10**	**5**

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has documentation form state and local government leaders assuring current support, support during the term of the grant and beyond. The budget provides for funding and support from local businesses and community members. The proposal lists generalized comments related to the sustainability of the Race to the Top project after the term of the grant such as, "continuing to work with partners and teacher opportunities to learn from one another". Specific follow up activities that can guarantee the ongoing success of the Race to the Top project after the term of the grant are lacking. A score of 5 was earned for documented support for support of the grant proposal.

The applicant did not earn the highest possible points for this category because it was not clear as to what specific activities each of these groups would support.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lists an ambitious and ongoing listing of partnerships with the district. An extensive amount of support letters provide evidence of these successful partnerships. The applicant clearly explains that the district enlists ongoing assessment measures that support improved continuous learning. Parents and families are constantly engaged as members of committees, public forums, and surveys. Procedures and routines for articulating information are clearly described, currently in place, and constantly monitored for future continuous improvements. The district earned a score of 8 for the above mentioned documentations.

Goals are achievable. Convincing documentation that the goals are ambitious is lacking. Lack of a detailed explanation as to why the district feels the limited percentage increases are ambitious for the student achievement goals resulted in the applicant not earning the highest amount of score points.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	**Met/Not Met**	**Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides evidence throughout the entire document as to innovative thoughts for personalizing learning environments. The charts clearly indicate that data is being gathered and analyzed on a regular basis and aimed at improving student learning. Goals are presented that demonstrate the district is designing programs that will move towards decreasing gaps and increasing student gains. Technology, tiered interventions and other resources are documented as research based tools designed to improve personalized student learning.

Total	210	169