



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0893CO-1 for Denver Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It is evident that building on the 2005 "Denver Plan," DPS creates a plan "Every Student Succeeds" that has the infrastructure and capacity to enable personalized learning plans.</p> <p>DPS provides an ambitious yet achievable plan built on past success and further establishes a set of rigorous goals for the future.</p> <p>Strong evidence of work already completed in use of data. Therefore, providing a sustainable model for developing strategic, data-driven personalized plans.</p> <p>A broad reform agenda identifying areas of strength and areas of need is well aligned to the four assurance areas.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal includes universal initiatives such as short cycle assessment and Learning Management System that builds capacity in learning.</p> <p>Targeted indicatives are proposed that will support smaller groups of schools and classrooms that will pilot promising practices for personalized learning.</p> <p>It is evident that significant time was spent on the schools that will participate in the grant activities as well as alternative options if they were not.</p> <p>Total number of participating students 81,190. High Needs students 65,569 and low income 59,424. Participating Educators 5,036 was provided.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DPS recognizes that have made some success in developing personalized learning, but their work has lacked a district-wide vision and implementation plan for personalized learning. The vision of DPS is that "Every Student Succeeds" plan will enable DPS to build a integrated infrastructure that supports personalized learning in all schools and classrooms. The Learning Management System is the tool DPS proposes to use to document practices and identify proof points.</p> <p>DPS expects to use the following to reach their goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting expectations for short-cycle assessment practices • Implement and support strategic school and classroom designs • Develop technology infrastructure to support • Identify and endorse a suite of technology tools to support <p>This plan is both ambitious and achievable because they recognize where they are at and the vision of where they want to go. They then have spent time developing the steps to get there.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Annual average increases in proficiency rates of 1.9 and 1.7 percentage points in math and reading are provided. These are aggressive gains that would not be there if there was not positive reform taking place.</p> <p>Tables provided show decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates and college enrollment which are both ambitious and achievable. DPS has taken the initiative to make rigorous growth goals.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A clear record of success is provided by DPS in success in raising achievement and turning around low-performing schools. The following are examples of how DPS are achieving ambitious and significant reforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPS has the highest overall academic growth on state assessments in Colorado. • DPS students posted the highest Median Growth Percentile among Colorado's 20 largest districts. • DPS' on time graduation rose more than 15% from 39% to 56% over the last 5 years. <p>The Teacher portal, Parent/Student Portal and Teacher Student Data Link (TSDL) are examples of how DPS is making student performance data available to students, educators and parents.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Financial transparency is evident through Appendix X. Access information is provided as well as an example.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It is evident that Colorado is a state that embraces and encourages education reform with the most significant example being the Innovation Schools Act.</p> <p>DPS has multiple reforms that are both ambitious and achievable. Examples are the Innovation Schools Act which provides a path for schools and districts to implement innovative ideas and practices. Colorado's Educator Effectiveness ACT which establishes new requirements for evaluating teachers and principals. The initiative requires 50% determined by academic group and Principal's performance makes up the other 50%. Merit pay and pay for performance are bold reform efforts that are supportive of a focus on providing a record of success and conditions for reform.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Evidence is provided that over 100 individuals across the district and community through active sub committees focused on developing specific strategies for the grant.</p> <p>Although there is reference to 250 principals and teachers participated in feedback and review sessions. There is not evidence that at least 70% of teachers from participating schools support the proposal.</p>		

A large variety of strong letters of support are provided across the spectrum encompassing a large set of stakeholders from the Governor to Principals, Teachers and Parents.

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

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

DPS recognizes that they have historically lacked a clear vision and explicit strategy to enhance and expand personalized learning goals. The have shown the intent of this application is to provide a direct focus on this target area.

They have incorporated the following activities in personalized learning environments. Short-cycle data assessment programs, strategic school design, blended learning programs and a data platform with customized portals.

One of the key areas the plan will focus on is integrated technology in which DPS has not yet adopted a systematic approach. Again, a direct focus on this target area.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

DPS creates a vision and pathway for preparing students for college and career that is both ambitious and achievable.

Examples of such a vision and pathway are as follows:

DPS recognizes that they must enhance its instructional core. They realize that they must refine the manner in which teachers are empowered. They must partner differently with their teachers, families, and communities in order to have more varied, more adaptive, and more personal avenues for engaging rigorous content.

DPS recognizes that research is clear that the more directly engaged students are in guiding their own learning and selecting their own learning pathways, the better their learning outcomes.

Student-centered personalized learning systems use established individual goals mapped to common standards.

Accessing relevant and individualized progress monitoring data.

It is valuable to note that DPS has created an aligned set of learning gateways to empower students and families to understand what knowledge and skills students must master and by when in order to be on track to college.

An example provided is that because a student in kindergarten earns a DRA level 4 in kindergarten is 1.5 times more likely to score proficient or Advanced on the 3rd grade Reading TCP.

Quality individual and team-based learning experiences that develop critical thinking and problem solving.

These examples are ambitious and achievable implementation strategies that are realistic and research based.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DPS recognizes that based on research, quality of instruction impacts student achievement more than any other factor. To better support personalized learning the focus must be on increasing the capacity of its educators. They propose using short-cycle assessment (SCA) This system frequently monitors student progress towards a set of standards. There is evidence that this is a strong research based strategy to gain improvements in personalized learning.

DPS plan states that teachers must be competent not only in high-leverage instructional strategies but also how to apply those strategies to common and individual tasks; how to use data in the moment to adjust instruction. The plan focuses on Short-cycle assessment as the tool. Formative Assessment measures showing ongoing input and adjustments is the goal of the plan.

DPS will shift its assessment paradigm from a focus on summative assessments as the measurements of learning, to a focus on formative assessments. Again, using the short-cycle assessment to provide feedback. Two other key points that are evidence of strong teaching and leading are genuine collaboration within professional learning environments and analyzing

data every 6 weeks, after administrating their common formative assessments.

It is evident that DPS is poised to further develop personalized learning environments in part because of the foundational work it has already done in strategic design.

Examples of training that is both ambitious and achievable are that of strategically team matching novice teachers with expert teachers, so that novice teachers improve instruction.

A key plan that is strong in presence is the support of a small number (135) effective classroom teachers who may find themselves in schools not supported through implementation dollars but demonstrate high quality plans for personalized teaching and learning.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Regular and ongoing meetings of the Implementation and Design team reflect a strong focus on support school-level reform. An example of the key focus is on analyzing what barriers still exist and work.

It is evident that Central Office supports school leadership teams making their own decisions about roles and responsibilities. The authority for school personnel and staffing model implementation to school sites gives sufficient flexibility and autonomy for their sites.

Several DPS schools use platooning, curriculum compacting, online and blended learning and grade acceleration. It is evident through stated goals that DPS is committed to making such practice a systemic plan and state an intent to review existing policies and develop policy guidance to ensure that this remains a target goal.

DPS provides several examples of how they are targeting ELL students. The area focused on students with disabilities does not provide the same detail and content towards a focused ambitious and achievable plan to meet learning disabled needs.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DPS states that they recognize that all families do not have access to technology and tools to be successful. DPS states they are exploring options. With such detail and target focus in other areas, this area does not provide evidence of a plan, specifically in the area of closing the achievement gap for low socio-economic students.

Evidence is provided to provide technology support for families who do not have access and extending the open times for access as well.

DPS has evidence of a plan to implement a School Portfolio Management System to inventory and model school designs and associated school performance.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

DPS provides a convincing plan that provides for a continuous improvement culture that encourages stakeholders, recognizes

and rewards innovative practices that achieve results, and provides safe environment for providing constructive feedback based on a proven track record.

The plan is based on a strategy of setting and communicating measurable and achievable goals. DPS establishes stakeholder roles and responsibilities. They collect and evaluate data and make improvement recommendations. Evidence is provided in support of each of these areas.

The overall plan addresses how DPS will monitor, measure, and publicly share information but does not reference it in this section.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DPS has provided evidence of providing the Leading Effective Academic Practice program, Investing in Innovation grant, Teacher Incentive Fund to customize messaging per stakeholder group as ongoing communication and engagement examples.

These examples are reflective of a highly effective communication plan to both internal and external stakeholders.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Ambitious yet achievable growth goals are provided.

Examples are K-3 reading proficiency targets from 53.2% in 2011/2012 to 73% in 2016/2017.

DPS has provided performance goals for closing the achievement in subgroups. An example is 4th grade students (Asian subgroup) in 2011/2012 is 52.9% proficient with a target of 72.3% in 2016/2017.

DPS has identified the percentage of students with personalized education plans and a growth target that is rigorous for each participating school. Example provided is the online program which is at 86.40% in 9th grade to 95.80% in 12th grade.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

DPS shows evidence of a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of investment by hiring a third-party contractor with a specific focus on the overall effectiveness of the grant.

Evidence is provided by multiple groupings to show how the Executive Director will ensure appropriate communication is made to both internal and external stakeholders.

The plan includes details of a program improvement plan used by the Implementation and Design team to make program adjustments and changes.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

DPS plan clearly defines a budget, narratives and tables in this section.

Details are strong indicators of a well thought out plan and sufficient to support the development and implementation with extensive detailed documentation.

The details in this section does not show evidence of/nor differentiate between one-time investments compared to ongoing operational costs, nor does it share budget information on long term sustainability.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DPS shows evidence that the plan is designed on long term sustainability by its outlined detailed strategy for each major investment and 3 year sustainability plan.

Examples:

- Project governance will be absorbed by existing DPS personnel.
- School and Classroom design cost absorbed by general fund.
- Integrated services will be sustained by private funding and general fund.

The activity description provides evidence of a reasonable transition plan, the plan does not provide supporting documentation that these projects can be sustained in the general operating fund.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Strong evidence of integrated service partnerships. Examples are: Community Partnership System, Pyramid Plus, Denver Kids, Inc., Restorative Approaches, Signs of Suicide, Project Rationale.

DPS identifies population desired results and describes the process to seek continual improvement in student outcomes.

DPS provides a table of a High Quality Plan for integrated services. This plan provides an activity description, how the activity is provided, time frame and responsible party. The plan includes performance measures on Early School Readiness, Student Attendance Rates, and mental health risk factors. This plan reflects evidence of a plan that is both ambitious and achievable.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

DPS exceeds the standards to meet priority one. Their plan shows evidence of and builds on a strong foundation. Not only do they have a record of exceptional growth, but they have identified key areas to enhance and improve learning and teaching through personalized learning environments.

They provide evidence of a strong program to support college and career-ready graduation requirements. They have made an aggressive plan to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning. They show evidence of a strong plan to increase the effectiveness of educators; decrease the achievement gap and increase the rates at which students graduate from High School.

Total	210	199
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	8
Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments: The identified plan for the supplemental budget is to create a School Portfolio Management System. Although there is a budget for expenditure, and supporting detail in other sections, the plan in this section and referenced section #6 do not provide supporting detail.		



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Technical Review Form

Application #0893CO-2 for Denver Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant presents a coherent well articulated vision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It presents a comprehensive theory of action inclusive of key elements of the educational delivery system that bear on the education of the students (central office, school leadership, community, teachers, and students). • Overall framework presented for creating (or stimulating) the development of personalized learning environments across the system and in individual schools is logical, likely to result in improvements and changes across the system. • Within each component there are specific actions designed to move parts of the system in the desired direction • Builds on prior school reform initiatives (district wide improvement plan initially developed in 2005) • The vision addresses the four educational areas • Clear statement regarding commitment to improve achievement of all students--but activities will target schools with large enrollments of poor students • Recognition of the urgency to build on progress yet continue efforts to address unresolved challenges [achievement gap, low performance among key subgroups] • The approach includes a strategy for scaling up initial interventions based on evidence of success 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection of participating schools meet the eligibility requirements with respect to: percent of students from low income background; commitment to core educational assurances, and appropriate signatures; • The applicant shows evidence of operating a data system capable of providing information to school community; link student data k-12; • The ability to match student data to teacher data was not evident in the application; however the intended changes in the data infrastructure is likely to address this weakness; • All schools in the system will benefit from the system level [central office] activities consequently the applicant included a list of all schools which partially meets the requirements of this criterion. However, the applicant did identify schools that will benefit more directly from program funds. Nonetheless, the applicant described a process for selecting those schools and intent to select only those with high enrollment of students on free and reduced lunch. • The applicant provides tables listing all of the requirements und (A) (2) (c). 		

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's theory of change, strategy and plan of action are reasonable and likely result in meaningful result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan contains all elements of a plan with a reasonable timelines, deliverables and responsible party; • The strategy to scale up is sensible--using program funds to scale up programs that have already been tested and piloting innovations, gathering evidence of success then scaling up across greater number of schools • Because the applicant is planning district wide efforts [data system, PD, Educational development plans, research and evaluation] the program funds will have district wide impact (reach all students) • The strategy of district wide initiatives, a subset of schools focus, and an open invitation to a subset of classrooms and schools is strategic and supports the applicant's goals. 		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant's goals and achievement pattern can result in increased equity. • The data showing pattern of improvement and performance goals for all students and subgroups indicates that district has created conditions for success system wide. In addition, the pattern of achievement and and goals exceed statewide expectations. • With two exceptions, the applicant achievement goal across groups and for particular groups seem achievable ; • Although the performance expectations exceeds those of the state for each subgroup, those set for SWD students might be higher given the very low he baseline for SWD. It is doubtful that the goals set (% increase at each grade level and for each content area) is sufficiently ambitious for this population. Similarly, the performance expectations at 9th and 10th grade math do not appear to be sufficiently 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	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant shows evidence of a record of success in improvements district wide when compared to other large districts in the state with similar populations, with the state, and over several years. Applicant also shows pattern of significant increase in graduation rates as compared to the state. However, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Significant gaps in achievement remain and is acknowledged in the application. ◦ The application does not contain data showing record of success by subgroup. It can be assumed that there has been some increase in achievement for the free and reduce lunch sub-groups since most students in the system the system are poor. • Applicant provides evidence of its attention to low performing schools by putting in place a number of reform measures including school choice options, professional development networks. Reform measures have resulted in lowering in the number of school in the lowest category of school improvement, and increases in achievement. • The applicant has a data software program that provides student performance data to key stakeholders identified above. The program appears to be user friendly and easily accessible. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA adequately provides evidence of the having transparency in the availability of personnel data as outlined in the criterion above.</p> <p>criterion above. Data can be viewed via the internet by logging into the budget and finance page of the district webpage. The information as shown appears to be accessible and comprehensible.</p>		

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states that it operates under conditions that will allow sufficient autonomy to implement personalized learning environments. However the evidence is not contained in the appendix. Instead, reviewers are directed to the relevant websites. Nonetheless, a review of the description contained in this section of the application leads the reviewer to conclude that the district can put in place the learning environments supported by this initiative.</p> <p>Specifically, the district has decision making latitude in key areas such as: curriculum, personnel, school calendars, graduation requirements, and accreditation of schools. In addition, the district has flexibility to authorize establishment of charter schools, design innovative ideas, obtain waivers from collective bargaining agreements, and establish requirements for evaluation of teachers and principals.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides an adequate description of the process used to engage stakeholders including union representatives, teachers, students and parents. Applicant used an approach to involve stakeholders and elicit comments regarding proposals that was sensible. There is evidence of letters of support from stakeholders cited above and interested parties such as school reform partners, parent advocacy organizations, foundations, community agencies. The participation of civil rights groups is not evident.</p> <p>There are letters of support from state agencies and congressional representatives (congress and senate).</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not provide a needs analysis plan but proposes to develop such plan during the first year of the initiative. The applicant outlines steps that have already been taken to personalize learning environments and acknowledges that a clear vision for implementation is not in place.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes a strong plan that is likely to result in improvements in learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment.</p> <p>The applicant proposes a number of initiatives that when implemented as in its totality can result in desired reforms in the learning environment. This includes the use of rigorous standards (CCS); supplementing CCS by adding standards align more closely college and career goals; accelerating on-going efforts that focus on college and career readiness; and establishing personalized education goals for all students. In addition, the applicant proposes the use of various technology based tools that allow students to have greater control of their own learning. The tools will enable students to create their own learning pathways and track progress towards learning and career and college goals. Moreover, the applicant proposes the adoption of an early warning system that will alert students and their families when particular goals are not likely to be met.</p> <p>The major weakness in the applicant's response to this criteria is that it did not specify how SWD and ELs will access the tools and instructional approaches proposed. There is no mention of student access and exposure to diverse cultures and to non-academic 21st Century skills.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant proposes a plan that can help to build teacher capacity to deliver personalized environments to students. The</p>		

focuses on teacher professional development, building on current practices that can be adapted to meet the goal of personalization; promoting the development of novel instructional designs to expand the repertoire of tools and approaches available to classroom teachers. The actions proposed are aimed at building teacher capacity to personalize by:

- Modifying and expanding an on-going pilot efforts focusing on the use of formative assessments. The applicant intends to modify assessments by adding measures for assessing career ready standards and building strengthening the PD component that is already built into the program;
- Continuing to use teacher networks promote greater understanding of individual student needs as teachers focus on relevant topics;
- Developing a grant competition to promote teacher creativity and professional development. The applicant intends to promote the development of innovative instructional strategies for personalizing instruction that can result in scaling up of successful designs. Because it will be targeting classroom teachers in a subset of schools, it can add novel designs to the existing repertoire of approaches available to teachers that personalize learning.
- There is evidence that applicant has capacity to build a system in which students, teachers, administrators and parents will have the tools to accelerate student progress (data system, professional development, teacher/principal evaluation, school monitoring processes).

The plan as all of the major elements of a plan. The tasks and deliverables are reasonable, the timeline is appropriate, and the responsible parties identified match the skills set needed to execute completion of the given task.

However, there are area of weakness in the applicant's plan. One is the omission of strategies that focus on special needs students (SWD, ELL). For example:

- The reader is led to believe that the formative assessment (to be developed) will measure both career goals and English language acquisition. If that were to be the case, it would be totally inappropriate and in violation of principles of test validity.
- In the table summarizing the plan it refers to hiring an external translator to translate the formative assessment. But, in this same section the application stated that the formative assessment would be used to assess English language development. To assess ELD another type of instrument will be required. It appears that there is lack of understanding about measuring language development versus measuring content knowledge of EL learners.
- The plan makes reference to inclusion of ELs in the use of instructional technology, but there is no narrative describing how ELs will access the technology or which technology might be most appropriate for this population.
- The plan omits discussion regarding how high performing teachers will be deployed to low performing schools.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	7

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The LEAs organization of central office operations to support personalized learning is reasonable and likely to result in desired objectives. Specifically,

- The applicant's approach of creating a collaborative structure for working with teacher's union is commendable and important as it assures teacher buying and minimizes barriers during process of implementation.
- The flexibility needed at the school level is in place to facilitate implementation of proposed plans
- Structurally, the management design has clear roles, lines of responsibilities and accountability, and mechanism for parent, staff, and school community input.
- There is one major area of weakness throughout this application and superficially this section. The paragraph regarding access SWD and EL access to the reforms is thin. It describes what is already in place rather than how program funds will enhance opportunity for personalization for EL and SWD students. For example, teachers in the district are required to participate in professional development focusing on English language acquisition but the section does not address training to personalize instruction for students that have not yet English proficient. There is reference to a program that targets ELs and is currently implemented in the district with support from the i3 grant. However, how

the program addresses personalization of movement towards college and career readiness is not addressed in the application. Finally, there is reference to providing information to teachers regarding student progress in learning English, but no reference to information about measuring student progress towards academic standards.

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

10

8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Throughout the various sections of this application there has been a clear message that the district is cognizant of the importance of establishing a sophisticated data management system that would provide technical support to the various reform strategies in existence, and to those proposed with program funds. The district is already using technology that provides meaningful information to the school community. However, it has proposed to build on current system by incorporating an interoperable data systems that links current data systems, can support additional data bases, and can easily generate reports at the school and district levels. The plan to adopt such as system appears reasonable and well developed (clear rationale), the table delineating plan elements shows reasonable timelines, reasonable management plan, and activities that are appropriate at the LEA level.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant asserts that a continuous improvement culture and framework in place and that it is reflected in how small scale innovations are brought to scale. Examples of a continuous improvement approach include the development and district wide implementation of interim assessments, and teacher recruitment and development reforms. However, the current continuous improvement strategy as illustrated in a graphic included in the application, may need augmentation to serve the purposes of the RTTD program.		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant outlines a reasonable plan for stakeholder engagement that addresses types of message to be directed at various audience and channels of communication. The contents of the messages directed at the various stakeholders is appropriate to their roles and function in the school community.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant's plan includes 12 performance that are appropriate and credible. When applied to judge overall accomplishment of program goals should yield meaningful information about degree to which overall program actions resulted in student access to personalized instruction, higher levels of achievement and higher numbers of district student meeting of college and career goals. The plan include one of social emotional indicator of student level satisfaction with schooling.		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: The applicant proposes to evaluate annually the effectiveness of the grant with particular attention directed to those component of the overall initiative that are new to the system. The major program areas and evaluation focus are appropriate. Specifically, grant areas outlined (program delivery, performance measures) fit with the types of data to be collected.		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant meets the requirements of this section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> presents a budget that is reasonable given the level of effort, provides a justification, identifies external funding as appropriate, and distinguishes between one time investments and on-going operational costs. 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicants provides a strategy for the major investments and rationale sustaining appropriate components based on long term need for the particular staffing/function. The plan outlines component, level of investment and sustainability plan beyond the grant period including potential sources. However, the level of detail regarding state, local and other financial support was not identified in those cases where the functioned is transitioned into the current operations. The reviewer assumes that the staff or task will be supported with local funds.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The plan is coherent and is designed to address a set of challenges confronted by the school community that can have a negative effect on student achievement. The applicants lists a group of partners, identifies 9 academic and non-academic indicators and delineates how the indicators would be used to monitor implementation, assess progress, evaluate overall efforts, and inform decision makers. The activities proposed supports the district overall goals to promote student personalization and academic success. The applicant proposes to partner with several community organizations whose task is to addressing particular barriers or needs of students enrolled in the school system. The partners provide supports in a range of academic and non-cognitive domains such as school readiness, suicide prevention, dropout prevention, tutoring, and behavior problems. The plan outlines grade levels to be served by each partner organization and coordinating body responsible for managing the effort. The use of technology is instrumental in evaluating the effort, providing parents and teachers with information about program services and means of accessing the services, and collecting data about all aspects of program implementation. The performance measures and target seem adequate. Finally, the applicant proposes a communication strategy to ensure that services are known to school staffs and broader community.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: This is a very strong application with a major flaw. It lacked language regarding how the district would personalize instruction		

for SWD students and for ELs. The references to both populations in the text describe what is already in place, not how the applicant will adapt plans to accommodate these students instructionally. Moreover, in the case of ELs it was clear that the writer lacked basic understanding about assessment of these students. There is a section describing formative assessments and it implies that single assessment would be used for measuring both progress in learning English and content. This is highly problematic considering that competition mentions special needs students in a number of the selection criteria and that in the case of EL students they comprise over one third of the district's enrollment. Nonetheless, the applicant's score is met because it is hard to conceive how the reforms (if funded) would not be adapted to accommodate the identified subgroups. The subgroups represent a significant proportion of the enrolled students in the district. Consequently, the applicant cannot institute targeted or district wide reforms without considering and responding to these students.

Total	210	162
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

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

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The plan contains a budget with appropriate level of detail and justification. Proposed amount appears adequate for the range of activities proposed. Since all of the funds in this budget are contractual, it has no effect on the budget associated with the major activities proposed with program funds. Other sources of funding to support the project are listed, but source of the funding is not identified. There is a rationale for areas and population that the various partners will serve.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0893CO-3 for Denver Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths

The RTTT-D proposal was a collaborataive process (250+);

Weaknesses

The vision, goals, and objectives that the district have for the proposed PLE intervention are sound and research-based. However, as presented, the goals and objectives are theoretical in application.

Although a vision is conceptually theoretical, in order for the theory to be applied in practice, there need to be clear, concise, actionable, and visible strategies of how the theoretical framework(s) will be realized or put directly into practice.

There is not enough information about the District Plan (2005). For example, lessons learned, practices implemented, groups targeted, student achievement outcomes, educator inputs and outcomes, etc.

Also, unclear on how the District Plan's vision (2005) is informing current school or district practices;

It is not clear on how the district's plan will increase the current high school graduation rates during the grant period by 50%;

The goals of the proposed project are not specific enough to be ambitious or achievable;

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths

List of 164 schools and potential participants includes all schools within the district (universal group);

Weaknesses

District is proposing to develop or explore how a personalized learning environment could be piloted, implemented, and eventually scaled up after the reception of RTTDD grant funds;

It is not clear whether or not the Learning Management System (LMS) exists, or if the system will be developed with grant funds;

It is unclear how the "targeted initiative" group will be selected for participation in the initial implementation, nor how the group will be selected;

Unclear as to why the targeted schools were selected based upon a 73% FRPL enrollment and whether the outcomes associated with interventions will be generalizable to the full population;

Not sure if the targeted school sample will also be a nested or stratified sample design;

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	0
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths

None found

Weaknesses

Not sure where the research- or evidence-base is for the proposed "theory of action" framework is;

District beliefs are not research- or evidence-based if they do not articulate how these "beliefs" will be applied with specific measurable steps;

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	0
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Weaknesses

A "belief" or emotion such as "confidence" is abstract, which can not be considered as evidence or hypothesized as empirical evidence;

Without empirical evidence, it is difficult to attribute positive growth to specific strategies or "beliefs" if there is no scientific evidence (e.g. math and reading gains);

Gains in student achievement can happen by chance, which is why there needs to be empirically- and research-based evidence for historical gains;

It is often perceived as unrealistic to assume that if previous gains are only by one or two standard deviations to increase 4, 5, or 10 points annually without previous research that supports that the intervention being utilized has contributed similar gains with students of a similar demographics;

It is noted that baseline data for achievement gaps between subgroups that subgroups fell during baseline years for all subgroups, which could have happened "by chance" or by not having any interventions in place, negative effects of the intervention implementation, teacher attitudes, or the interaction between some or all of the aforementioned variables;

It is not clear what specific scientifically- or research-based strategies will be used to enhance student learning (PLES, graduation rates, college-, or career-readiness, etc.) that will target subgroup achievement without negatively affecting majority group achievement;

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	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths</p> <p>The District has been engaging a district-wide reform plan since 2005;</p> <p>Between 2005 and 2012, the district has seen increases in reading, math, writing, and science;</p> <p>Since the implementation of the district plan, the graduation rates within the district has increased by approximately 15% and the achievement gap has decreased at a faster rate than the state achievement gap rates (2006-2011);</p> <p>District plan was designed to engage schools in initiating targeted reform initiatives that are designed to enhance the student achievement in low performing schools such as: a) implementing a accountability system or framework; b) closed historically underperforming schools; c) opened new schools; d) supporting school choice and charter school options for families; e) develop educator evaluation frameworks; and provide performance-based incentives for high quality instructors in high need schools;</p> <p>District developed a school performance evaluation framework under the district's reform plan (2008);</p> <p>District conducted a self-study (case study) of how a low performing school turned around into a higher performing school (2011);</p> <p>District engages in a portfolio-type of educational models or options for students and families, which offers a more holistic view of educational options for students and families to select schools that will best meet the needs of students;</p> <p>District is supportive and proactive in the training and professional development of career-changing and recent graduates for placement in high need schools;</p> <p>District provides job-embedded and targeted training for school leaders;</p> <p>State legislation requires that school leaders be evaluated using multiple and broad indicators, such as student growth and professional practice;</p> <p>Teacher incentives were designed in partnership with the teacher's union;</p> <p>District has developed a series of data portals for principals (2008), teachers (2009), parents and students (2009), and teacher/students (2013), that will be used to help increase personal learning opportunities;</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5	5	5

points)		
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: State requires that all schools and districts be fully compliant with financial transparency in their expenditures by publically publishing all allocations, budgets, and expenditures.		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: State Constitution provides local school districts with autonomy and flexibility to control public school instruction; State laws provide the frameworks for local school districts to establish the evaluation of effective educators and to design and implement innovative ideas, strategies, and practices to improve student achievement,		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: The district engaged a steering committee that included district leadership, teachers, parent advocacy groups, parents, student/student advocacy groups, state leadership, mayor's office, and teachers in the development of the RTTT-D proposal; Over 100 individuals participated in committees and subcommittee (eg. subject matter experts, district leadership, community partners, school staff, etc.) input into the development of grant proposal; District conducted feedback sessions with teachers (250), parent advocacy groups and parents, and students and student organizations to encourage input and participation of multiple stakeholders and perspectives;		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: Strengths District has implemented a pilot study of 7 schools on the use of short-cycle data assessments; Pilot of data use included grades 4, 6, and 9 in 10 schools; Pilot student included developing hybrid learning personalized education plans for 6-12 grade students, data platform portals, and adaptive assessment, curriculum, and instruction; Weaknesses Design of the pilot study appears to lack cohesiveness and structure;		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: Strengths District has developed many data platforms for students, parents, teachers, and administrators to give stakeholders access to student achievement data; Weaknesses		

District vision for student-centered PLEs appear to be theoretical and not based upon the early pilot data from early implementation (2011-2012) of proposed strategies or plan;

Despite vision, district may be challenged in identifying concrete learning outcomes, specific teacher professional development, and stakeholder "buy-in";

Proposed PLE strategies and programs do not appear to be cohesive or connected;

Current personal education planning required by state law, are developed between counselors and students only, there does not appear to be a clear strategy of how teachers, administrators, or parents will be involved in the development of these quarterly plans;

It is unclear how interventions (e.g. PEP, LMS, CCSS, Gateways, etc.) will be work together to improve PLE opportunities;

Not clear whether or not a single person will be able to handle the districtwide implementation of the PEPs;

Not sure when and how often educators will be trained on intervention strategies, as well as by whom;

Unclear as to whether current PEP system will be replaced by PLEs or will PEPs be modified to fit PLE goals and objectives;

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

Strengths

District has developed several data platforms to provide data to stakeholders (eg parents, students, educators, administrators, etc.);

District is intending to provide common and individual opportunities to build capacity and collaboration among education stakeholders by creating districtwide systems, policies, and infrastructures for creating PLEs;

District officials are proposing to develop short-cycle assessments in order to build a culture of professional learning among educators and learners;

District is planning to develop collaborative, 6-week assessing and planning sessions for addressing student gaps;

Weaknesses

District is attempting to fully implement a system that supports PLE implementation, however, it is not clear what the outcomes of the piloted study are and how they will inform the scale up of the proposed data platforms, training, and infrastructures;

Notably, it appears that the district has student-level data available for stakeholder use. However, it does not appear that the use, purpose, and utility of the different data formats lacks cohesiveness and clarity;

It is not clear whether or not there is the appropriate amount of knowledge or understanding of the purpose and types of available data;

It is unclear if there is stakeholder buy-in for the proposed use of data-driven pedagogy and the use of the numerous data systems and platforms;

District does not appear to have a system that will be able to collect, analyze, and synthesize summative or formative data;

It is unclear how much training educators have received in data analysis, curriculum integration, instructional change; and effective data platform usage;

It is not clear how "mastery" will be taught and assessed among students;

District does not indicate how school calendars (students and teachers) will be adjusted to accommodate data analysis, advising, revising, instruction, re-assesing, and re-teaching;

It is not clear how and when the 6-week assessments will be developed and implemented;

District appears to be uncertain as to whether or not it will be possible to truly provide individually-based PLEs for every district student;

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	9
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths</p> <p>Based upon state requirements, district has the capacity and autonomy to create and implement policies, practices, and infrastructures that are unique to the specific needs of stakeholders;</p> <p>District has created initiatives that address specific district needs (e.g. created a pipeline for district leaders), State flexibility encourages use of innovative strategies in budget management, individual student-based funding formula, etc.);</p> <p>District works collaboratively with teacher union to improve student performance;</p> <p>District data portal system includes portals for students, teachers, principals, and other educators;</p> <p>The district is exploring options to making interventions accessible to non-traditional stakeholders (eg. family members, students, etc.) outside of traditional methods and modalities;</p> <p>District is proposing to introduce a school-level portfolio management system to allow better triangulation of student performance data and best practices among teachers and schools;</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>The proposed reform leadership team appears to be focused more on the format and implementation of the program, and less on the stakeholder outcomes and implementation;</p> <p>There doesn't appear to be a cohesive and strategic plan for implementation of the intervention. For example, each of the proposed strategies or supports are evidence-based. However, there is little evidence of how these practices or strategies will be strategically leveraged in support of student achievement;</p> <p>District description of mastery-based strategies are not described;</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths</p> <p>District data portal system includes portals for students, teachers, principals, and other educators;</p> <p>The district is exploring options to making interventions accessible to non-traditional stakeholders (eg. family members, students, etc.) outside of traditional methods and modalities;</p> <p>District is proposing to introduce a school-level portfolio management system to allow better triangulation of student performance data and best practices among teachers and schools;</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Not sure how many schools have developed common assessment and rubrics to assess student performance or mastery of</p>		

standards as cited in proposal;

Not clear what the outcomes of the project-based learning strategy has been at 2 high schools implementing PBL;

It is not clear whether the LMS is something that will be introduced or is currently being implemented;

The project design does not address how ELL (30%) population will benefit from intervention;

ELL interventions are targeted to language acquisition rather than content or mastery of content;

How district officials comprehensively integrate data systems and platforms, is unclear;

It is not clear how the LMS interfaces with the current (and anticipated) data systems, or how it provides users with "adaptive or smart" responses to pedagogical processes;

How the current (or anticipated) technology will be used to address PLE is unknown;

It is unclear if LMS or technology software makes instructional decisions, make recommendations, monitor progress, pinpoint student growth opportunities, integrate portal data dashboards, recommend student groups and multi-method pedagogy; etc.;

What the LMS, in its current form or format does, is unknown;

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths</p> <p>District has piloted and implemented reform-based interventions using evaluations, surveys, and feedback from stakeholders and data;</p> <p>Through the PLE intervention, the district is seeking to scale up a culture of continuous improvement using short-cycle assessments, strategic school and classroom interventions, and personalized education plans;</p> <p>District has acknowledges the need to plan for periodic corrections and other modifications;e</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>District proposes to hire a knowledge management coordinator, whose role it will be to identify and distribute lessons learned though the evaluation process. However, this process of knowledge management does not appear to be a collaborative or reiterative process for remediation or replication;</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strengths</p> <p>District plans to use, or build upon previous models and methods for providing communication, plans, platforms to stakeholders;</p>		

Weaknesses

Communications platforms appear to be directive (reporting) rather than collaborative (uni-directional and diagnostic);

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:
The district performance targets for proposed targets appear to be reasonable and achievable over the timeline of the grant;

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:
The district appears to have a clear and reasonable sense of the need for multiple measures for evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed project (e.g. short cycle assessments, PLAs, PLEs, LMS, PEPs, program schedules, student achievement data, etc.);

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:
District proposed budget appears to provide reasonable costs for personnel, contractual obligations, and supplies.

It is not clear why there are no expenditures assigned to training and equipment;

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:
According to the district, expenditures associated with the intervention are centered around annual salary and benefits for personnel who will oversee the implementation of various aspects of the intervention implementation. However, once the program has been fully implemented, these positions will be eliminated;

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:
District is proposing to leverage current partnerships and practices that are geared at building upon previous reform efforts;

It does not appear that the proposed partners were determined based upon a comprehensive school and community needs assessment, other than school expulsion data. It is possible that not ever social, emotional, or behavioral issue is "negative," but rather developmental or culturally discognitive/misinterpreted;

The district does not appear to be utilizing any culturally appropriate or relevant partners or strategies. Many of the interventions appear to be deficit-based in orientation.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The proposed intervention does not provide enough detail as to which interventions are proven strategies that have worked (or have the potential to work, in a school district such a this.

The intervention does not appeared to have a cohesive framework for implementing the reform methods in manner that will lead to greater student achievement or support the implementation of PLE infrastructures;

Total	210	129
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

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

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The district is proposing to add additional resource alignment-related interventions to the proposed project. However, it does not appear that the proposed additional partners will add evidence- or research-based value to the intervention.