



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #03711A-1 for Des Moines Independent Community School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As described, the proposed project is a comprehensive, ambitious, feasible plan to expand applications of existing best practices in mathematics for elementary and middle school students so that they enter high school less likely to drop out and more likely to graduate with the math skills required for successful transition to college and/or careers. Rather than attempt to implement a project that is overly broad in scope and questionably realistic in potential for success, the applicant has focused on mathematics competency as the foundation on which the project is built.</p> <p>The project will upgrade existing technology that is neither user-friendly nor timely to ensure valid and reliable data collection and dissemination in real time to students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders. The RTTT-D four core educational assurance areas are addressed, with outcomes expected to improve math progress and achievement for all K-8 students while focusing on low-income, disadvantaged, and high-needs students. With expansion and enhancement of the data system, teachers will have real time access to student data that can inform their daily and long-term decision-making about student formative and summative progress and achievement.</p> <p>To recruit and retain new, high-quality teachers the district and local teachers union agreed to implement an incentivized program that rewards teachers with professional development opportunities and advanced degree attainment. The incentives are not large or inequitable in comparison to salaries and benefits of teachers not participating in the incentive program. As described, the program rewards educators to become highly-qualified and work in low-performing, urban schools that would otherwise be unlikely to attract high-quality new teachers.</p> <p>Although overall the project is clearly described, lacking are specific details and information to provide an in-depth description of how and how often project activities will be implemented, specific commitments and types of support provided by key stakeholders, how data will be used to inform project modifications, and how more than 21,000 student participants will be manageable.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>RTTT-D required data is provided for all participating schools. Based on current and past intervention successes and the identified needs of teachers and students at all of the district schools, the applicant has included all schools in the project. This choice indicates that the district has considered the linkage among grade levels of schools, that no student should be excluded from this critical initiative, the movement of teachers and students within the district and through grade levels, and scaling up the project expected successes.</p> <p>A selection process for project schools was not described; the district made the decision that for maximum project efficacy all grades in all of the elementary and middle schools will participate in the project. Lacking is information about whether or not school leaders were given the opportunity to opt out. Not described in detail is how more than 21,000 students will be served and if consideration was given to initiating the project with fewer students and scaling up in the last two years.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

All elementary and middle schools in the district will participate in the project. The project Logic Model concisely outlines project activities and outcomes that are designed to be short, mid, and long-term. A key element in the project is the addition of literacy and expansion of math personalized learning when the project is scaled-up based on expected success. The project is designed for short, mid, and long-term outcomes to improve all student learning, continue to build on current success and improvement in student achievement and progress, and scale-up to include literacy and math in grades 9-12. The major focus of funds allocation will be to ensure the technology infrastructure is capable of supporting scale-up.

Not found is a discussion of how the large student population will be adequately served with the addition of literacy and math expansion. The hours and costs associated with this expansion may be a barrier for such a large number of project students and teachers.

The personalized learning plan format will be expanded to "all core subjects at all grade levels". Not found is a description how this would be realistic and feasible, just considering the extraordinary number of teachers, hours, funding, training, and monitoring that would entail.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Performance on summative assessments, achievement gaps, and college enrollment will be compared to SY2011-12 which will be used as the baseline data in 2012-13 due to the unavailability of data at time of application submission. Double digit gains in math proficiency are expected by the end of the grant period in grades 3-8. Although ambitious, based on past success and this project design, the expectations may be feasible.

Not found is a discussion of how the applicant chose target growth and achievement percentages. Lacking is any discussion how K-8 benchmarks are linked to graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates.

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	11
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Based on data provided, School Improvement Grant project academic gains, expansion of the Advanced Placement program, success of the past four years due to multiple programs that have been implemented (e.g., Reach Out to Dropouts Walk, Academic Support Labs, Partners in Education), the district has a track record of overall improvement in progress and achievement. Evidenced by the district's past and present success, the high expectations for the efficacy of the RTTT-D project are justified.</p> <p>Academic gains in the SIG schools indicate that the applicant has documented a track record of success for these programs. Student performance data are available at both the macro and individual levels which enables parents, students, and teachers to access the data to ensure consistent and meaningful discussions can be conducted regarding student growth and achievement. The data system provides multiple pre-formatted reports from three major data sets; the project will expand the data sets reporting and training capabilities. The Reach Out to Dropouts Walk appears to have significant success with 53 students re-enrolled as a direct result of the event.</p> <p>Not found is a target number of Reach out to Dropouts Walk students to be re-enrolled by the end of the grant period. The 0.5% decrease in the high school dropout rate is cited as evidence of progress; however, it is questionable if that percentage is statistically significant</p> <p>Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate expansion is cited as evidence for increasing student achievement. The link between middle school, high school, and AP/IB enrollment and testing is unclear. Lacking is a description how AP/IB increases success for low-income and high needs students and will play a key role in this proposed project.</p>		

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Personnel salaries and other work related information is available on the district website and disseminated to the local newspaper. Non-personnel expenditures are available only at school sites, which may impede public access to the information.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states that the district has "great autonomy" to implement personalized learning programs within content specifications and Common Core State Standards, which may be adequate for some programs within the project. However, the cited state legislation regarding competency-based learning appears not to support broad, comprehensive district autonomy beyond accepted standards. Minimal discussion is provided to adequately document that the state allows the district sufficient autonomy to effectively implement an innovative project for this large of a population of students and teachers.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	2
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The eight letters of support include a diverse group of organizations that have a successful track record of providing services for low-income and high-needs children (e.g., Big Brothers, Big Sisters, United Way). The applicant has worked with these organizations in the past and indicates there will be an expanded partnership to provide services directly linked to the project.</p> <p>Lacking are letters of support and/or commitment from teachers and principals at participating schools, parents and/or parent organizations, business and industry, and other key community stakeholders. Some of the support letters have paragraphs that are template and generally lack commitments of resources, personnel, funds, and/or services that will be committed directly to the project. For a project this ambitious the expectation would be that more stakeholders would have committed to supporting the project and stakeholders would have defined more specific involvement.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Lacking is information about how district needs were determined (e.g., formal needs assessment); however, a description of needs and gaps in the current district system highlights data system issues as a major barrier to providing real time data reporting. Because the data system reports only mastery, rather than growth, teachers do not currently have access to data to inform personalized learning plans. As a key component of the project, the data system will be expanded and enhanced, and assessments of achievement and progress will be implemented so that needs can be identified and learning can be tailored to each student. The use of technology in the classroom (e.g., Student Response System) is designed to engage students while providing real time information to teachers on student understanding of content material. An implementation timeline is provided.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	6
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Overall, the applicant addresses these criteria with a plan to prepare students for college and/or careers. Enhanced use of improved technology will provide all students opportunities for self-paced learning, the option for Spanish language instruction, and self-monitoring of progress. Use of multiple instructional strategies to focus on Algebra as the gateway to college is expected to increase success and engage students in individual and group activities.</p> <p>The student personal Learner Profiles will provide students, teachers, and parents with a tool to identify areas of strength and weakness, so that all are using the same data and information, rather than utilizing varied tools with which they may not be familiar. Varied periodic formative and summative assessments will be used to inform individual student program modifications so that students do not waste time and effort struggling with math concepts.</p> <p>A generic list of activities is included to support math culture shifts, teamwork, perseverance, and problem-solving, not found are detailed descriptions of</p>		

activities and their expected measurable outcomes.

Digital math programs will be utilized for student self-paced learning (e.g., FASTT Math, Fraction Nation); however, insufficient information is provided how students will be trained to use the programs, specific support available, and how the programs will be linked to other math instruction.

A generic description is provided of how high-needs students will be accommodated; however, omitted are specific strategies, supports, and interventions. Not found are how high-needs students will receive support, training in the use of digital curricula, and personalized interventions to ensure each student is ready to graduate grade 8, transition to high school, and matriculate to postsecondary education and/or careers.

The applicant provides a clear and cohesive chart for the Balanced Mathematics Framework that indicates linkage between math skills and a clear guide for teachers and parents to personalize student learning. Lacking is a detailed description of how ongoing training will be provided for teachers, students, and parents in the use of technology, implementation and modification of personalized learning plans, and understanding how to analyze and apply data to inform decision-making and chart progress and achievement. A short paragraph addresses criterion (C)(1)(c) training and support; however, the information is insufficient.

As described, student and teacher online learning programs, digital curricula, whole class and small group instruction are examples of formats to address student needs. Lacking in the descriptions are how each of the programs and formats are expected to specifically link to target achievement outcomes for specific student sub-populations. Unclear is how parents and teachers will support student use of strategies is unclear.

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

20

8

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high-quality plan is described to provide professional development, support, and collaboration time for teachers to maximize their content literacy and become skilled in using the personalized learning plan for students. A chart of professional development opportunities, timeline, deliverables, and outcomes correlated to RTTT-D criteria provides a thorough indication of strategic planning to maximize project success and teacher mastery of math content and use of instructional tools.

The Balanced Assessment Framework is aligned to RTTT-D criteria including a list of deliverables to form the basis for authentic personalized learning plans. Specific alignment enables the project to stay on track with a clear focus on feasible and reasonable results.

As described, ongoing professional development will be provided for teachers and principals through multiple venues (e.g., PLCs, online, collaboration). By offering choices tailored to their needs and personalized learning plans, the potential for success is increased.

Vague descriptions are provided of how various tools, digital resources, and trainings will positively impact teacher quality, as well as how teachers will specifically be assessed for improvement of content knowledge and applications, and skills. The teacher Professional Development Plan is outlined in (C)(2)(a); however; how the plan will be individualized and specific student and teacher data used to assess outcomes is unclear.

Not found is a detailed plan and timeline for a needs assessment, scheduling, and assessment of outcomes for all participating educators to have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college and career-ready graduation requirements. Not described is a plan to repeat or provide additional support and training for educators who need it beyond initial offerings.

The teachers union and district have agreed to design and implement a teacher evaluation system and participate in the design of a principal and superintendent evaluation system to be implemented in 2013. Data on student growth will be used to chart teacher effectiveness and inform decisions about teacher instructional delivery and content mastery.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	7
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In 2012, with involvement of educators, students, and community stakeholders, the district Board of Directors and leadership updated the plan to prepare students to enter the 21st century workforce. Current policies are described as supporting the project strategies.</p> <p>The current policies and procedures are stated as supporting project strategies and policies; however, details are not found how specific policies will do so. Detailed logic models and/or plans with timelines and deliverables are not found to indicate strategic planning has occurred to coordinate policies with specific actions and performance measures.</p> <p>Technical assistance will be available to all key stakeholders, much of it provided by a contractor who specializes in education. The State department of education and district have the capacity to provide technical assistance to ensure project success.</p> <p>Perhaps unique to this district is the absence of a seat time requirement for grade 8 students to matriculate to high school. This facilitates more innovative and personalized activities in which students can participate in various projects to collaborate with peers and gain experience working with a diverse group of students.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
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<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Technical assistance will be available to all key stakeholders, much of it provided by a contractor who specializes in education. The State department of education and district are stated as having the capacity to provide technical assistance to ensure project success; however, what that entails is unclear. The expanded and enhanced data system will ensure interoperability and key stakeholders will be able to export in an open data format. Specifically how the contractor will oversee a significant number of experts to provide technical support is unclear. Insufficient details are provided how the support will be consistent, cohesive, and focused on project goals.</p> <p>The applicant states that exporting to an open data format will provide students and parents with a variety of information and resources. How the students and parents will be trained in the use of the system and information is not described.</p> <p>Although the district intends to work with established community agencies and organizations to provide students and parents outside of school access to computers and digital learning tools, barriers to use of these limited resources are not addressed (e.g., time of day, transportation, child care, work schedules).</p> <p>The applicant states that it will "strive" to use the technology described for an interoperable data system. As such, it is questionable if the applicant will be able to implement this critical project component.</p>		
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E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan for continuous improvement is presented with a timeline for monitoring and measured outcomes. As described, the plan to monitor progress will be based in evaluation of the project outcomes, some linked to student achievement. The district is described as currently having the resources and personnel in place to support and evaluate the project; therefore, project personnel will be able to access assistance and support to initiate the project. A chart of the continuous improvement process activities includes a timeline and outcomes for the process. The timeline is aligned to evaluation activities.</p> <p>Evaluation of a number of outcomes (e.g., teacher technology training, teacher completion of professional development) are qualitative, such as number in attendance. Lacking is substantial data such as number of teachers who implement a strategy within one week and assess student performance on that strategy.</p>		
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(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		
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The district utilizes multiple means to disseminate information, including, but not limited to multiple social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr), TV segments, e-mail, in-person contact, newsletter, and website. The district states it embraces and employs a philosophy of transparency and communication.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Performance measures charts include required academic math data for grades K-8 and 11. PreK and grades 9, 10, and 12 were not found. Proposed indicators for health and social-emotional status are not found.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Described is a rigorous evaluation protocol designed to measure progress toward achieving objectives, measure overall effect of the project, and inform continuous improvement. The evaluation is designed to provide qualitative and quantitative data, with the data collected to be used to inform decision-making by the district, teachers and principals, students, and parents.

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 realistic and funds appear to be appropriately allocated to ensure maximum support for success of the project. Included is the cost basis and rationale for budget items, as well as the source and amount of additional funds that will support the project.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The district is able to use State, local, and private foundation funds to support the project and for sustainability. Ongoing expansion and improvement of the data system will need to occur when grades 9-12 students are added to the project; the applicant's intent is to search for funds and resources to sustain the project beyond the grant period. The district does not intend to make this project into a singular attempt to change education. Instead, the district intends to expand and implement it over the next 10 years to include grades 9-12 literacy and math. For a project of this size and scope, including scaling up to all content areas at all grade levels, insufficient evidence is provided to document a sound plan for sustainability.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: Two partners will collaborate with the district to provide social, emotional, and behavioral support and interventions, as well as work to reduce or remove barriers that prevent high-needs, at-risk students from completing school. The two partner organizations have a successful track record and each collaborates with additional agencies to ensure students in need receive services. Insufficient information is provided how the progress will be continually monitored and data based decision-making used to inform all aspects of the project.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As described, the project is a comprehensive plan that utilizes existing resources and builds on current and prior success to implement a personalized learning plans format for students and educators. The project is ambitious, yet limited in initial scope to mathematics as the focus. The more narrow focus increases the potential for success and may be a key factor in maximizing the return on investment of grant funds. The district will allocate the majority of funds to expand, enhance, and increase the reliability and interoperability of the district data systems and technology infrastructure and tools. In so doing, the district will best meet the needs of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other key stakeholders.</p>		
Total	210	121



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #03711A-2 for Des Moines Independent Community School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The following elements of Des Moines Public Schools' (DMPC) response contribute to its being a comprehensive and coherent Vision of reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vision explicitly builds on and integrates the four core assurances. • The Vision is clear because it is specific and focused on the goals of the RTTT-D reform—deepening student learning, accelerating student achievement, increasing equity through personalized learning environments and support. • The Vision is credible because the connections between the RTTT-D goals and the proposed activities are explicit and logical. • The Vision is focused on delivering the form of equity required because the students selected to be “participating students” are among the undeserved and underprivileged young people targeted for special support by this grant. The evidence of this is that collectively 73+ percent of the targeted students—Grades 3-8 math students in the DMPC—are eligible for the federal Free and Reduced Cost Lunch program (FRPL). • The participating students' academic interests will be engaged because the software and technology to be incorporated into the personalized learning environments has the capacity to do so. As part of the implementation plan, students, parents, and educators will be trained to use the software for this purpose, and access to the necessary software and hardware will be expanded including making them available at off school sites and at more convenient locations including the home or venues closer to students' homes. <p>The appendices cited to support and expand the response also contribute to the comprehensive and coherent qualities of this Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 1, the Balanced Assessment Framework is logical in its organization. The purposes of the included assessments are clearly stated. The framework is consistent with sound, current thinking regarding pedagogy and assessment. It is supportive of and complementary to DMPC's vision. (Some educators could disagree in good faith with some details of 		

what appears where in the rows and columns containing the content labeled "Purpose," but these are matters on which reasonable minds could differ.)

- No. 2, the Balanced Mathematics Framework is also complementary of the Vision. It gives prominent mention to common formative assessments which will be a frequently used tool as part of the proposed personalized learning environments.
- No. 3, the DMPS Alternative Teacher Contract holds the potential for making a strong and unique contribution to DMPS's efforts to implement its Vision. The reasons include:
 - It contains initiatives which address the difficult first years of teaching when attrition is highest. The key strategies include providing needed extra feedback, support, and training. A critical additional feature is that participating teachers are paid to engage in the support-feedback protocol including working a longer week and a longer school year.
 - The contract has the potential for enhancing equity by encouraging teachers to fill hard to fill assignments and staff hard to staff schools.
 - The contract has the potential to attract more talented individuals into teaching because of the provisions for more support and more pay.
 - Because of the timing, frequency, and duration of the elements of the training/support/feedback protocol, the protocol is more likely to enhance the effectiveness of those who participate than the same activities would if they were delivered in the sporadic and occasional way which is the current practice in most school systems. If the protocol is as successful as it promises to be, it will increase equity by producing more effective teachers to serve the participating students.
- No. 4, the DMPC School Improvement Plan complements the Vision because it includes activities which integrate, support, and enhance the Vision and DMPC's plan for implementation.
- No. 5, the Logic Model, focuses directly on the building of personalized learning environments and complements DMPC's Vision. This is because the Model provides a structure for implementation activities similar to the kind of "high quality plan" required under many of the criteria in the application for this grant. The Model includes goals linked to the creation of personalized learning environments, requires pertinent deliverables, identifies who will do what, and includes short, mid, and long term deadlines.

This response earns points at the top of the high range.

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

- (a) The DMPC succinctly describes the process used to select the schools which will participate. The schools selected by this process collectively meet the eligibility requirements for this grant. The schools selected are consistent with the goals of the RTTT-D grant and DMPC's Vision.
 - (b) The DMPC lists the schools which will participate in grant funded activities.
 - (c) The total number of participating students and the number of participating students in each of the additional required categories are provided by school in the Table titled "Applicant's Approach to Implementation."
- There is nothing missing in this response. It is at the top of the high range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The DMPC's cites its Logic Model as its high quality plan to meet the requirements under this sub-criterion. The Model contains most but not all of the necessary elements. It is focused directly on the building of personalized learning environments and complements DMPC's Vision. It includes goals/objectives linked to the creation of personalized learning environments, requires pertinent deliverables, identifies who will do what, and includes short, mid, and long term deadlines. The deadlines lack some specificity, however, because they are not expressed in terms of grant years. The rationale for the various activities is not made explicit although they can be logically inferred or ascertained by reading the narrative for this and the previous sub-criteria. The Outcomes described in the Model meet the requirement for improving the learning outcomes for the participating students.

The DMPC's explanation of how it will scale up and translate what will be done in the participating schools to support district wide change is convincing. The argument is made in the second paragraph of the response. That paragraph contains a long list of activities. Each is clearly connected to the creation of personal learning environments. Some of these activities also have a place elsewhere in the DMPC's plan under different criteria and sub-criteria. This demonstrates that the activities are complementary and that the plan is integrated. These two qualities establish the coherence of DMPC's Vision and implementation plan. A weakness in the presentation is that the timing of the activities is not more specifically described using grant years. The DMPC forthrightly notes that the costs of instituting its reforms in all of its high schools presents a significant

challenge. The narrative concludes, however, with ideas for how to obtain the necessary funds. Overall, this response is in the high range.

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

The DMPC responds completely and meets the requirements under this sub-criterion at an overall high level as noted below. Factors leading to this conclusion include the following:

(a) Summative assessments:

- All the required sub-groups are addressed.
- The overall quality of the DMPC's Vision and implementation plan make achieving the goals likely.
- The projected regressions are not significant.
- The predominant pattern in the projections shows an acceleration in student learning and achievement over time. This meets a goal of the RTTT-D grant and justifies labeling the goals as ambitious.
- A weakness is that It is not clear whether the goals stated equal or exceed ESEA targets.

(b) Decreasing achievement gaps:

- It appears that the goals stated equal or exceed NCLB targets for the State.
- All the required sub-groups are addressed.
- The overall quality of the DMPC's Vision and implementation plan make achieving the goals likely.
- The predominant pattern in the projections reflect acceleration in closing the gaps. This meets the goal of the RTTT-D grant and justifies labeling the goals as ambitious.

(c) Graduation rates:

- It appears that the goals stated equal or exceed NCLB targets for the State.
- All the required sub-groups are addressed.
- The overall quality of the DMPC's Vision and implementation plan make achieving the goals likely.
- The first cohort of students to participate in grant-funded activities is scheduled to graduate at the end of the first post-grant year. They cannot affect the rate of graduation during the life of the the grant; so the question of whether the rates are ambitious applies only to rates projected for the post-grant year. That projection is set by the NCLB target which does not anticipate the impact of the grant. For that reason, it is at a medium level of ambition.

(d) College enrollment:

- The goals stated are calculated appropriately under this sub-criterion.
- All the required sub-groups are addressed.
- The overall quality of the DMPC's Vision and implementation plan make achieving the goals likely.
- The first cohort of students to participate in grant-funded activities is scheduled to graduate at the end of the first post-grant year. They cannot affect the rate of college enrollment during the life of the the grant; so the question of whether the rates are ambitious applies only to rates projected for the post-grant year. That projection is part of pattern characterized by accelerating rates. As such it can be labeled ambitious.

This response is at the top of the high range.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a). [Student Achievement]: Based on the information provided, it appears that over the long-term (10 years) modest improvement has occurred in grades 3 and 8 math achievement. In the last four years, which are the years the District is to specifically address, progress has slowed or stopped. The District

does not provide this information in systematic way that makes complete analysis possible. This is a mixed record of success.

Closing gaps: The District asserts that achievement gaps are “slowly diminishing.” The District does not provide information on gaps in a complete or systematic way. The District's assertion cannot be analyzed. This does not constitute a clear record of success.

Graduation Rates: The four-year improvement in graduation rate in the DMPS is better than the rate State-wide. The five-year data is mixed in terms of success—the State-wide graduation rate is higher in absolute terms, and the DMPS did better in terms of improvement in the one-year for which data is provided. No evidence is offered regarding sub-groups or closing gaps among sub-groups. The DMPS offers data on drop-out rates, but this is not responsive to requirements under this sub-criterion. At best, this information indicates a mixed record of success.

College Enrollment: DMPS does not provide evidence regarding college enrollment, per se. The information regarding concurrent enrollment is marginally relevant because (1) taking a high school course and earning “college credit” for it is not the equivalent of matriculation at a post-secondary educational institution, and (2) such information is not responsive to the requirements under this sub-criterion “College preparation” during high school in whatever form is marginally relevant. No information regarding sub-groups or achievement gaps is offered. It must be inferred that the DMPS's record in this area is weak.

(b). Turn-around schools: The DMPS does not specifically name its schools which fall under the label as “low performing” or “lowest performing” The DMPS narrative refers to six turn-around schools but presents data for five. This makes the presentation somewhat confusing.

DMPS says its primary turn-around strategies are those listed in Appendix 18. These strategies, however, are nothing more than a list of expectations and operating procedures common to any competently administered school in the country. As such they do not meet the requirement here for “ambitious and significant” reforms. The DMPS describes additional turn-around tactics which have been used in the District. It does not make clear, however which have been used at the six schools mentioned above.

As proof of actual turn-around's which have occurred in the District, the DMPS cites the average percentage point improvement in math proficiency among the 4th graders rising through 6th grade in the five identified schools. DMPS also cites efforts to reduce students dropping out. Although the improvement in math scores is substantial and significant, neither the scores nor the attempts to reduce drop out's constitute significant evidence that these schools have been in fact turned around as that term is used in this application.

The DMPS offers the link to a website with the inference that what is to be found there would provide further of evidence of turn around success. Such information cannot be considered.

The DMPS offers no other evidence within the confines of its response showing success in this area. For these reasons, the DMPS record on turning around low performing schools is weak.

(c). Making student performance data available: The DMPS has a few ways to make the specified information available to parents, students, and educators. Those which are accessible to parents include the information on Parents Portal, obtained at semi-annual parent-teacher conferences, or obtained from social media and/or phone contacts with teachers. Students can contact their teachers and administrators directly. Otherwise, it appears that students must rely on information which a parent first obtains. Educators generally have access to various data and reports through several educators-only on-line sources. Elsewhere in its application, the District indicates that educators' access can be substantially improved. This level of access is common among school districts across the country. The District's response earns points in the low mid range.

points)		
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>(a-d). DMPS indicates that it complies with the State law which requires it to make available to the public the actual personnel salaries for teachers, instructional staff, and support staff by building. It provides additional ways for the public to gain the same information. DMPS appears to say that it does not make all non-personnel expenditures at the school site available to the public because they are not necessarily accounted for by building. Non-personnel expenditures which are accounted for at the building level are reported to the public through reports to the school board. This is a medium to high level of transparency.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>DMPS asserts that it "has great autonomy to implement personalized learning environments" within the confines of the curriculum content specified under State law. This assertion is supported by citation to a law which enables districts and their certified teachers to award credit based on a demonstration of competency (rather than "seat time"). The law seems scheduled to take effect in November 2013, and DMPS implies that this will coincide with its initiation of its grant funded personalized learning environment initiative. DMPS also says that another law which created "Iowa Learning Online" gives it needed autonomy. This part of the narrative is not directly responsive to what is asked for because it does not clearly describe the current state of the law. In addition, the response does not directly and fully describe what laws are needed so that DMPS can implement its plan unimpeded. Finally, a complete response would also include whether and when (if at all) all the necessary laws might be passed and operational. This response earns points in the mid range.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>(a). The DMPS planning staff met with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members from the participating schools during the planning of this project. Organized school site groups charged with school improvement work also participated in the planning. Typically, the organized groups mentioned in DMPS's narrative (Site Leadership Teams, Site Councils, PTA's) include parents, teachers, site administrators, and community members. Although it was not specifically stated, it is a reasonable inference that these interactions resulted in the stakeholders' ideas and feedback being incorporated into the Vision and implementation plan. These interactions meet the requirement for stakeholder engagement and support under this sub-criterion.</p> <p>District staff met with teachers' union representatives and obtained the signature of the union leader on a letter of support. That there is a signed letter meets the requirement for the teachers' collective bargaining agent engagement and support under this sub-criterion.</p> <p>(b). The DMPS offers eight support letters as evidence of support from "key stakeholders" not directly associated with the District. Groups represented include: a local community college, the local juvenile justice system, United Way, a family advocacy organization, Des Moines police, Big Brother/Big Sisters, a "family resources" organization, and a children's health organization. Each of the groups is involved in the lives of children in some significant way.</p> <p>A number of groups which presumably exist in Des Moines and could lend support are not represented, however. These include: elected officials, four-year colleges, minority groups, civil rights organizations, organized parent groups and advocates, the District's PTA or equivalent, the organization (whether unionized or not) of site and central office administrators, local and/or regional business associations. The District claims support from many of these groups exist, but the absence of such letters reduces the creditability of the assertion. In addition, the District will need significant financial sustain its grant related activities after the grant expires. The District says it will seek grant support and State funds. The absence of supportive letters from those who can influence whether such funds are given to the District weakens the District's showing of support. The support letters appended to the application all share a problematic feature. It is the presence of two and usually three paragraphs containing precisely the same words in the same order appearing in the same sentences which are in turn in the same order. In short, these paragraphs are duplicates. The duplicates appear in all eight of the letters of support. This reduces the credibility of the letters and raises questions regarding the level of understanding and enthusiasm the letter-signers possessed regarding the Districts' proposal.</p> <p>The response earns points in the medium range.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>It appears that the DMPS has already done an analysis of the current status of personalized learning environments (PLE) for the students it wishes to have participate in the grant-funded activities. It has found that, for all intents and purposes, PLE's do not exist. The District has also analyzed its mathematics program for these same students and identified a series of gaps and</p>		

needs preventing them from being successful. The existence of this information eliminates the need for a high quality plan to do an analysis.

The logic behind DMPS's proposed PLE initiative is quite strong. In its response under this sub-criterion, DMPS addresses each identified gap or need with an integrated approach to using hardware, software, changes in the kind and frequency of assessment, the modification of instructional methods, the adjustment of student groupings based on assessment data, and personalized instruction focused by individual learning reports. Notably, students will be able to conduct some self assessment and engage in some self pacing. DMPS's RTTT-D grant-funded PLE's seem highly likely to increase student engagement, deepen student learning, and increase achievement. That is, they seem highly likely to reach the goals the grant has been designed to attain.

DMPS says it has already successfully piloted PLE's similar to or the same as those it proposes for its K-8 math program. It cites three initiatives including its "Academic Support Laboratories" each of which appears to exist at one or more of its high schools. None of these high school remediation operations is sufficiently similar to DMPS's proposed K-8 math PLE's to make these claims of success relevant.

In lieu of a high quality plan for analysis, DMPS provides a plan meeting all the requirements for a high quality plan for the implementation of its K-8 math PLE. This substitution adds to the credibility and quality of this response.

Because DMPS has found that there is nothing resembling the kind of PLE it proposes now serving the students it wishes to participate in its proposed grant-funded activities, because it has competently and specifically identified gaps and needs in its current math program for its targeted students, because it has used a logical and convincing approach in proposing its PLE project, and because DMPS has added a high quality plan for implementation, this response earns high points.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Although not in the more familiar table form, the DMPS's response under this criterion meets the requirements for a high quality plan. The primary goal is the creation of a personalized learning environment (PLE) for the designated "participating students." The deliverables are the various components of the PLE. Specific rationales for specific activities are stated in this response and elsewhere throughout the DMPS's application. In summary, the primary rationale is that the current system of instruction and assessment is not sufficiently successful. Research and experience indicate that personalizing learning will produce better results. The parties responsible are the various staff members charged with creating and operating the PLE. Who will do what when is either stated elsewhere in the application or is implicit in the nature of the task. Students and to a lesser degree parents also have responsibility to make the PLE work. For these reasons, the DMPS's response to this criterion focuses almost exclusively on the activities or deliverables which they believe meet the requirements under the various sub-criteria below. The requirements are met or not met as described below.

(a) (i). The DMPS's approach to developing this understanding (and attitude) is not clear or specific. The DMPS seems to argue that this understanding will evolve from students' exposure to the proposed personal learning environments. This is not convincing. The District indicates elsewhere in the application that it will assess student's attitudes regarding learning. This mitigates the absence of a clear approach somewhat. The requirement is not met.

(a) (ii). By definition, mastery of the Common Core Standards (CCS) in mathematics including the mastery of Algebra by the end of ninth grade is the pursuit of a critical college-readiness standard. The new data platform which is part of the DMPS's proposal will make the monitoring of each individual's progress by students, parents, and educators easier and more likely. The requirement is met.

(a) (iii). The DMPS points out that mastery of the CCS-driven math curricula it has adopted within the parameters of the Balanced Math Framework (BMF) will require a deeper level of learning than most students currently experience. The DMPS provides a table summarizing the BMF. The table illustrates the connections between math concepts, personalized learning activities, and assessments This and the previous explanation of how learning is expected to take place which the DMPS provided under "B." above makes an acceptable case that the required deeper learning will take place.

(a) (iv). Collectively, the students of the DMPS are demographically diverse. The DMPS's plan contemplates students interacting with one another frequently in a variety of instructional configurations. This would meet the requirement if the DMPS had assured that students would find themselves in demographically heterogeneous instructional configurations. The reason that this is an issue is that the further in school students progress, the less heterogeneous the instructional groupings prove to be. Because the matter is not mentioned, this requirement is partially met.

(a) (v). The DMPS argues that aligning its curricula with the CCS and BMF and routinely providing learning activities and student groupings as contemplated by its plan will cause students to master the critical content, skills, and traits contemplated under this sub-criterion. Based on what is said in this response and elsewhere in the application, this requirement is met.

- (b) (i). Meeting this requirement is the primary reason for DMPS's plan. Because DMPS's Vision and implementation plan are coherent and comprehensive, this requirement is met.
- (b) (ii). The list of instructional approaches to which each student will be exposed under DMPS's plan include what are currently regarded as best instructional practices. Because the plan makes it reasonable to believe that all participating students will be exposed to all of them frequently, the requirement is met.
- (b) (iii). The curricula to which students will have access using digital technology are high quality because they are aligned with the CCS and BMF. The requirement is met.
- (b) (iv). (A). Ongoing and frequent feedback is to be provided by the new data system to be acquired with grant funding. Because it will link several data systems together, the feedback will include each participating student's progress toward college/career-ready standards and graduation requirements. The requirement is met.
- (b) (iv). (B). The new data platform will provide personalized learning recommendations. Some will be created by teachers after analyzing a student's learning data, and others can come from the software that students use on their own. The requirement is met.
- (b) (v). The new data platform enables educators to design interventions based on personal data regarding mastery, learning gaps, and learning styles to be generated for each student. In addition, the platform will enable students to design what are in effect customized accommodations for themselves. The requirement is met.
- (c). Under DMPS's plan, students will be trained to use the tools and resources which are to be part of the PLE. This will be accomplished by teachers training students in their classrooms and by DMPS training staffers employed by organizations which serve students such as Boys and Girls Clubs and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Staff at community centers and libraries could be trained as well. Teachers have been doing the required kinds of training for decades in science, math, photography, and shop classes; so the likelihood of this training occurring is high. The likelihood of DMPS employees training community-based staffers and their training students is less likely. More confidence could have been placed in this part of the plan had more detail regarding who, how, and when were supplied. The requirement is only partially met.
The response earns points in the high range.

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

20

17

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a).(i. - iv.). DMPS provides an overview of its approach by presenting a plan which fully meets all of the requirements for a high quality plan. The use of the format enables a reviewer to evaluate the substance of the plan. The column showing the "Criteria Alignment" is particularly helpful in this regard. The format and substance of the plan will enable DMPS personnel to evaluate and modify the planned activities based on their effectiveness.

Overall this presentation indicates that substantial significant thought and planning have gone into organizing the training and support for the participating educators. Overall, it is a credible approach to meeting the requirements outlined under the four sub-criteria, "i." through "iv." There are additional strengths as well as concerns regarding aspects of the plan. These include the following:

- Adjusted Dismissal Wednesday's: Districts across the country are increasingly providing time during the contractual day for professional development of the kind planned here. Giving such time is coming to be seen as a best practice and necessary to get the kind of work done which DMPS has outlined in this plan. DMPS is to be commended for taking this approach.
- The Professional Development Days:
 - The term "Professional Development Days" does not appear anywhere in the tables labeled "Balanced Assessment Framework" or "Personalized Learning within a Balanced Mathematics Framework." Because Professional Development Days are to be used by several kinds of teams, curriculum coordinators, and individual teachers to work on "building and district improvement initiatives," the apparent failure to include them in these tables creates confusion about whether they are actually part of the DMPS's implementation plan.
 - It is unclear how often Professional Development Days are to occur.
- Monthly Teaching and Learning Meetings: Because they will be used for analyzing student data, building data teams, and implementing the Balanced Mathematics Framework, the plan would be enhanced by a more complete explanation of how "Teaching and Learning Meetings" will be organized and how they will fit into the school day and school calendar.
- Focus Groups:
 - The structure, composition, and protocols to be followed by Focus Groups are not explained completely enough to determine whether they are sufficient for the purposes designated. This is important because the term focus group is commonly associated with opinion gathering rather than with professional development.
 - In the table, "DMPS Teaching and Learning Organizational Support Structures," Focus Groups are described as convening twice per year. (See the fourth row of the table.) In the table which follows, "Balanced Assessment Framework, Focus Groups are described as convening monthly starting September 2014. This makes the plan confusing and detracts from its credibility.

- Summer Course Academies:
 - Using the voluntary Summer Course Academies to “understand all components of the Balanced Assessment Framework including new assessment pieces” and to follow up in Monthly Teaching and Learning Meetings could lead to slow and spotty implementation of this crucial component.
 - Using the Student Response System is likely to require substantial training followed by considerable practice. Providing training through voluntary Summer Course Academies could lead to slow and spotty implementation. There is no specific provision in the tables which constitute DMPS's plan for followup after the Summer Academies. This reduces the credibility of the plan.

(b)..(i). The technology DMPS proposes to acquire will provide the necessary information. As outlined in the comments re. (a) (i.-iv.) above, there are concerns about how quickly and uniformly educators will be prepared to use it.

(b)..(ii). The DMPS has done the work to align the curricula. It will be able to purchase the necessary technology with this grant.

(b)..(iii). DMPS will acquire the necessary technology with this grant. The concerns outlined in the comments to (b) (i) and (a) (i.-iv.) above apply here.

(c)..(i). Presuming that DMPS's plan is implemented as conceived, educators will have the information described. The comments and concerns regarding the professional development plan pertain to this response.

(c)..(ii). The comments and concerns regarding the professional development plan pertain to this response. With those reservations in mind, the overall approach meets this requirement.

(d)...Steps necessary to creating an evaluation system for educators in the District are summarized. Nothing in the response meets the requirements for a high quality plan as the term is defined, and nothing in the response directly addresses how the number of students who are served by effective or highly effective educators will increase.

The response earns points at the lower end of the high range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a).DMPS's description of the current practices, policies, and rules indicates that this requirement is met. The involvement of the central office in the planning and submission of this proposal coupled with the roles and obligations it has taken on during the implementation phase make it highly likely that the office will provide the necessary services and support.

(b).DMPS says that Principals (as opposed to school leadership teams?) have autonomy regarding the instructional schedule and “personnel and budget decisions within their schools.” It is unclear if or to what degree the last three quoted words limit or qualify this “autonomy.” Apparently, neither the principal nor the school leadership team has autonomy/flexibility regarding school calendar, staffing models, or the roles and responsibilities of staff members. Autonomy and flexibility of the type required under this sub-criterion appear significantly limited.

(c).Participating students under this proposal will have the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery without regard to seat-time because current DMPS policies do not include seat-time requirements for the specified grade levels, and there is no plan to change that.

(d).No DMPS policy limits the frequency or ways by which a student can demonstrate mastery. DMPS's plan when fully implemented is likely to provide multiple ways and multiple times for a participating students to demonstrate mastery.

(e).Current DMPS policies and practices and compliance with applicable state and federal law make instructional resources and practices accessible to all students, now. DMPS's plan when fully implemented is designed to personalize the instructional resources and practices so that the current level of accessibility is enhanced. The enhancements are designed to serve students with disabilities and English Language Learners well.

The District meets all of the requirements under this section except for the full level of autonomy/flexibility. Such autonomy/flexibility could make a strong positive contribution to the climate and culture of the District schools and enhance the implementation of this proposal. The apparent limits on the principal and leadership team weaken this response. The response earns points at the low end of the high range.

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

a).The District's plan amply provides for student and educator access to the necessary resources for successful implementation of this plan at the school level. The greatest challenges are providing significant access out of school and, especially, to parents. The District's plan to provide training and technology to well-established, accessible community

organizations as indicated in the response will be helpful if carried out. That these partnerships are not definitely established weakens this response.

(b).DMPS appears to have considerable resources which it can devote to technical support for staff and students within the District. Reservations noted above regarding the speed and uniformity of teachers' implementation of the data platform apply here. The District does not appear to address providing technical support to its community partners and/or to parents. Each of these factors detract somewhat from the quality of this response.

(c).The DMPS meets the pertinent requirements for students and parents to be able to export their information.

(d) The District will provide inter operable systems as required.

The overall quality of the response earns points at the top of the mid range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Monitoring: The DMPS presents a high quality plan which addresses each requirement under this sub-criterion: goals, on-going feedback on progress, creation of regular opportunities for correction or improvement, compilation and sharing of information, information of the type which allows judgments to be made on the effectiveness of the investments made. The elements of the plan meet the test of high quality because of the following;

- The goals for which progress is going to be checked represent major milestones in the areas of project completion, professional development and parent training, student attitudes and learning, and high school graduation.
- The measurements to be used will produce data understandable and useful to those charged with managing the project and to involved stakeholders.
- The link between the measuring activities and the goals are obvious to those who understand the project. For that reason, DMPS does not need to elaborate on the rationales for them.
- Data will be generated regularly in sufficient time and at such intervals that judgments can be at the appropriate level regarding the effectiveness of what is currently being done and whether changes or corrections need to be made.
- Those responsible to produce the information are sufficiently identified.

Dissemination: The table labeled “Feedback Procedures” complements the monitoring plan. It summarizes a process which should result in those who need the information generated under the monitoring plan to get what they need to make implementation a success. In this regard, the creation of the Advisory Council as it is to be constituted, is an excellent step. This group can keep the PLE initiative progressing, and because of who its members represent, can keep the school community as a whole attentive.

As a whole, the plan is comprehensive, integrated, and highly likely to cause continuous improvement to occur. The response earns points at the top of the high range.

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

The District describes a sound philosophy of constant communication and engagement. It cites Attachment 37 which illustrates this philosophy graphically. The table the District includes in its narrative lists a wide array of potential audiences and means of communication. Most of its “Communications Channels,” however, lend themselves more to one-way communications from the District to the audience than to true dialogue. More focus on how, when, and with whom such substantive interchanges will occur would strengthen this response. The response earns points in the mid range.

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

The District selects 13 performance measures. The District meets the requirements for selecting different types of assessments depending on the grade grouping of the student population to be monitored. As required, the District provides a reasonable rationale for each of its applicant-selected measures, indicates how the information provided would be formative, etc., and

explains how it could improve the measure if necessary. Given the overall quality of this plan, the goals set by the District here are achievable. Below are comments regarding whether appropriate sub-group data was supplied and whether the goals are sufficiently ambitious.

Performance Measure, All Applicants-a: sub group data provided; improvement accelerates over time making the goals ambitious.

Performance Measure, All Applicants-b: sub group data provided; improvement accelerates over time making the goals ambitious.

Performance Measure, Pre K-3-a: Iowa Math Assessment, Grade 3: sub group data provided; improvement accelerates over time making the goals ambitious.

Performance Measure, Pre K-3-b: Office Referrals grades PK-3: no sub-group data/students aggregated PK-3: The District does not explain the aggregation. It is presumed this is an issue of equity; i.e. discipline must be provided without regard to sub-group membership. It is also assumed that the data will be disaggregated by grade level so that age-appropriate interventions can be implemented based on that data. The rate of projected improvement is flat from baseline year until post-grant year. This raises the question of whether the grant activities will have any differential effect. Because the amount of annual improvement projected is substantial, the goals are acceptably ambitious.

Performance Measure, Grades 4-8-a: Gr. 4-8, Students on College/Career Track: sub group data provided; improvement accelerates over time making the goals ambitious.

Performance Measure, Grades 4-8-b: Gr. 8, Students taking Algebra I: Flat rate project until first year after the grant expires. Absolute annual improvement in two percent range. Not sufficiently ambitious.

Performance Measure, Grades 4-8-c: Percent Office Referrals; Gr. 4-8: The District does not explain the aggregation. It is presumed this is an issue of equity; i.e. discipline must be provided without regard to sub-group membership. It is also assumed that the data will be disaggregated by grade level so that age-appropriate interventions can be implemented based on that data. The rate of projected improvement is flat from baseline year until post-grant year. This raises the question of whether the grant activities will have any differential effect. Because the amount of annual improvement projected is substantial, the goals are acceptably ambitious.

Additional Applicant-Proposed performance Measure #1 (SMI): annual improvement goals projected to accelerate over the life of the grant; goals are ambitious.

Additional Applicant-Proposed performance Measure #2 (Math and Me): The rate of projected improvement is flat from baseline year until post-grant year. This raises the question of whether the grant activities will have any differential effect. The amount of annual improvement projected is substantial. On balance, the goals are acceptably ambitious.

Additional Applicant-Proposed performance Measure #3 (Algebra in 9th Grade): Most annual improvement goals projected to accelerate over the life of the grant; goals are ambitious.

Additional Applicant-Proposed performance Measure #4 (22 on Math ACT): Annual improvement goals are projected to accelerate over the life of the grant; goals are ambitious.

Additional Applicant-Proposed performance Measure #5 (Average Standard Score, Iowa Assessments Mathematics, Gr. 3-8): Annual improvement goals are projected to accelerate over the life of the grant; goals are ambitious

Additional Applicant-Proposed performance Measure #6 (Score on District Math Test for K-2): Sub-group data is not provided, and there is no explanation. Annual improvement goals are projected to accelerate over the life of the grant; goals are ambitious.

The District meets all the requirements under this sub-criterion with minor exceptions. Those exceptions are where the use of aggregated rather than sub-group data is typically used. A very high number of the goals are ambitious. The response earns points at the high end of the high range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The introduction to the “E” sub-criteria includes, “it is vital that the applicant have a clear and high quality approach... .” The District describes its approach to the evaluation of the grant-funded activities in narrative style. It does not follow the “high quality plan” format described in the application and specifically required under some sub-criteria. As a result, the description is less clear than it might otherwise have been. As examples, what will be done when by whom is not methodically specified, and what information (i.e. “reports”) will be provided to whom when is not clearly and specifically stated. Some jargon is used which adds to the lack of clarity. Who is on the evaluation team is not specified. Many forms of assessments are said to be part of “the evaluation.” It could be that too many assessments are being made part of “the evaluation” but that cannot be determined because the audience or audiences to receive “the evaluation” or parts of it are not specified. This plan might realize the goals stated at the beginning of the narrative, and it might not. “The evaluation,” composed as it is to be of very many assessments both quantitative and qualitative, might prove useful to various audiences, but possibly not. In short, the the plan to evaluate is copious and seemingly comprehensive but not clear. The response earns point in the mid range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) DMPS identifies the four sources of funds which will support this project. They are federal, state, local, and Prairie Meadows Foundation funds.</p> <p>(b) The DMPS narrative provides a clear, direct, and concise explanation of its Project Budget. The proposed expenditures are consistent with its Vision and implementation plan. One-time costs are noted, and sustainability is referred to frequently. This shows that the budget has been thought through and that DMPC has anticipated some of the budget issues raised elsewhere in the application. There is nothing in the narrative to suggest that the proposed budget is other than reasonable and sufficient to support the proposal.</p> <p>(c) (i) Each of the specific funds which will support the project are identified in a table. The total revenue from each is specified.</p> <p>(c) (ii) Funds are identified as one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs as required under this sub-criterion. A table is provided which provides the information in an easy to understand format.</p> <p>DMPS meets all requirements in its response. The response earns points in the high range.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The DMPS provides a brief narrative which summarizes and complements the detail provided in the budget tables under its response to (F) (1) (c) (ii). The detail in the tables confirms DMPC's assertion that the bulk of the expenditures under the grant are for one-time investments.</p> <p>DMPS provides a three-year budget table detailing the expenditures required to sustain and scale up this project. The sources of the funds are clearly identified for each of the 30 line items. The application requires the DMPS to demonstrate support exists from State and local government leaders. There is an assertion that such support exists elsewhere in the narrative, but as noted under the comments to (B), there are no letters in the appendices which provide evidence to support the assertion. This weakens the response.</p> <p>Other than not responding as strongly as it might to the matter of elected official support, DMPS has provided a competent plan for sustaining this project. The response earns points in the high range.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(1).The DMPS describes a "partnership" with two programs within its own Learning Services Department, "SUCCESS" and "Community Schools." The 40 Case Managers working for SUCCESS are DMPS employees. Community Schools (CS) appears to be funded independently of DMPS. It is not clear whether this is kind of "partnership" contemplated by this application because it appears that SUCCESS and CS are actually organizations within the DMPS. For the purpose of providing feedback to the applicant and the Department, the balance of these comments will assume that this partnership meets the Department's requirements in this regard.</p> <p>SUCCESS provides case management services direct to identified students and their families. The case managers facilitate the student/family obtaining services such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. Case managers also make referrals to "community partners" for services such as mental health service, and case managers provide classes to meet needs such as parenting or social skills.</p> <p>CS employees use DMPS data to identify students who are struggling with academic or behavior issues. It "facilitates building-level response teams to provide a comprehensive approach of coordinating/implementing support services," and makes sure</p>		

“the community-based service providers and schools are communicating about the students and families being served.”

(2).The DMPS identifies six population level groups and states a desired result for each. The results include education and other education outcomes. The outcomes support the DMPS RTTT-D proposal.

(3).(a).The DMPS provides a table summarizing how it proposes to track the indicators for its desired results. The methods will allow tracking at the aggregate level for all children in the DMPS. For five of the six indicators, DMPS will be able to track the indicators to the student level as required. For the other, “volunteer engagement” which is defined as the number of volunteers in schools, tracking to the student level does not seem possible.

(3)(b).DMPS Learning Services will use the data it captures in its Early Indicator System (EIS) to measure the effects of the services SUCCESS and CS provide. EIS provides data by student on grades, attendance, “lack of connection with school,” behavior, and “low achievement.” Because SUCCESS focuses its efforts directly on individual students and their families, it appears that DMPS will be able to determine the effects of the SUCCESS Case Managers and target those resources to improve results for the participating students.

DMPS Learning Services proposes to use the same EIS data to evaluate and target the CS resources. Because CS focuses on the work of school teams and facilitates communication between agencies and the schools, its impact on students is not as direct as that of SUCCESS. It follows that the EIS data will provide a less clear picture of the effectiveness of the CS work and that EIS data will not be as helpful for deciding how to target CS resources.

(3)(c).The DMPS plan for scaling up its partnerships with SUCCESS and CS is not clear or definite. It is said that grant funds could be used to expand the services currently provided by SUCCESS and CS. It is said that DMPS might offer contracts to outside agencies to expand the services they currently deliver to schools and/or to broaden those services. This focus on alternatives is not a sufficient response.

(3)(d) The DMPS proposes to use the EIS data as a driver for identifying needs and directing/expanding services, and, ultimately improving results. As discussed above, this is a reasonable strategy as it applies to SUCCESS and it is less so regarding services delivered by CS.

(4).DMPS is asked to describe how this partnership would integrate education and other services. This is what both SUCCESS and CS currently do. The District gives credible examples of how SUCCESS has integrated outside agency work with that done in the DMPS schools. The District offers credible examples of how CS could do so.

(5) The District describes how SUCCESS Case Workers, CS staff, and school staff can use the EIS data to identify students at risk of dropping out and in need of services. It points out that, when staff intervene for the students and to meet the identified needs, such efforts are consistent with improving the supports which DMPS and these partners provide.

(5)(b). SUCCESS, CS, and DMPS school staff conduct ongoing inventories of needs and assets with the schools and communities which they currently serve. The District says that it could use some of the funds from this grant to buy additional services from outside agencies. Elsewhere in the narrative, the DMPS notes that it could use grant funds to increase the size of the SUCCESS and CS staffs and thereby expand the services of one or both.

(5)(c).DMPS responds to this request for a decision-making/evaluation process and infrastructure by describing examples of how SUCCESS and CS can and do collaborate to identify needs, seek or provide services, and evaluate the results of their individual and collective efforts.

(5)(d).DMPS convincingly describes how SUCCESS Case Managers routinely engage parents in decisions regarding their needs and goals. SUCCESS managers also coach and advocate for parents. DMPS says that CS Coordinators serve a similar function when SUCCESS managers are not available.

(5)(e).DMPS describes an established protocol in which the heads of SUCCESS, CS, and DMPS Learning Services conduct six-week and year-to-date evaluations of the effectiveness of their efforts as they effect students, schools, and students. Each of the entities does an annual review of results and decides upon modifications accordingly.

(6).The DMPS offers its “Performance Measure” table as evidence of whether its goals for improved results are achievable and ambitious. There is no additional comment in the narrative. The table reflects a projected flat rate of improvement from year-to-year. This suggests that additional funding will not have an impact on the current rate of improvement. Such a projection is not ambitious.

In many ways the partnership as described is a model of collaboration and the for the delivery of integrated services based on client-identified needs. Engaging the clients in the decision-making empowers them. The plan for the expansion of services is vague. The projected results of continuing or expanding [?] the partnership are not ambitious. Despite these weaknesses, the overall quality of what and how the partnership does its work earn the response points in the high range.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The DMPS has presented a clear, complete, and coherent picture of how it would proceed to create personalized learning environments for its participating students. Its explanation of how it will integrate the State's work on the core educational assurance areas is especially impressive.

The DMPS is clear on how and why it selected its participating students, schools, and primary student achievement goals.

Given the demographics and student achievement levels, the District's focus on middle schools and their 8th and 9th graders mastery of Algebra I—a major barrier between the District's students and college-readiness—is sound. The DMPS offers strong plans for implementing and then scaling up its project. Given the quality of the District's implementation plan, its performance measure goals are achievable and reasonably ambitious.

The DMPS does not have a strong record of past success as a foundation for its reforms, but it better meets the other pre-conditions necessary for the success of its project. The DMPS presents a well conceived, high quality plan for thoroughly personalizing the learning environment in which its participating students will work. Its plan for student access to high quality resources and the training to use them are equally well thought out and credible. The DMPS approach to preparing and supporting its educators, especially the teachers who enter into the contract described in the application, is excellent.

The practices, policies, and rules of the DMPS are adequate for the purposes of this reform. The LEA infrastructure is adequate to support the reform effort. The DMPS describes a thorough and well-structured approach to fostering the continuous improvement of this project.

The budget presentation is well done. It provides all the required information in formats which are helpful. The response to the requirements for the budget presentation are clear, specific, and sufficiently detailed. By relying on grant money for necessary large one-time expenditures and relying on on-going sources of funds for on-going tasks and personnel costs, the DMPS has set itself up to be able to sustain the work associated with the project for at least three years after the grant expires.

Overall, the District's proposal meets the Absolute Criteria.

Total	210	172
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #03711A-3 for Des Moines Independent Community 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:

A.1.

The applicant has set forth a achievable reform vision that reforms how students are educated across the District through the development and implementation of a personalized learning system within a Balanced Mathematics Framework. The vision is aligned with the core educational assurance areas, and will focus on the core area of mathematics from kindergarten through 8th grade to improve achievement, increase student engagement, improve student attitudes toward math, and provide students with choices in how they learn and demonstrate what they learned. Strategies to be implemented include a personalized learning model within a Balanced Mathematics Framework, Data-based decision-making within a Balanced Assessment Framework, and efforts to ensure teachers and principals are effective. Tools to be developed and utilized are described as an online data platform, learner profiles, adaptive technology (hardware and software), and Student Response Systems. Factors that make the vision is achievable is that it builds upon current data systems, has curriculum alignment with Common Core Standard, and provides professional Development for educators and training for parents, students, and community partners.

Weakness: The applicant does not present information on decisions to focus the initiative on the core area of mathematics from kindergarten through 8th grade, when further in the proposal the applicant indicates there is a need to reform instructional initiatives and practices in areas such as reading across the board, K-12.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on how addressing K-8 mathematics achievement through the vision will help promote college and career readiness.

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

10

8

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A.2.

The applicant presents information on the target population to help demonstrate its approach to implementing its reform proposal that will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal. All elementary and middle schools in the District will participate in the reform initiative. Elementary Schools: Brubaker, Capitol View, Carver, Cattell, Cowles, Downtown, Edmunds, Findley, Garton, Greenwood, Hanawalt, Hillis, Howe, Hubbell, Jackson, Jefferson, King, Lovejoy, Madison, McKinley, Monroe, Morris, Moulton, Oak Park, Park Avenue, Perkins, Phillips, Pleasant Hill, Riverwoods, Samuelson, Smouse, South Union, Stowe, Studebaker, Walnut Street, Willard, Windsor, and Wright. Middle Schools: Brody, Callanan, Gateway, Goodrell, Harding, Hiatt, Hoyt, McCombs, Meredith, Merrill, and Week. There are 11 middle schools in Des Moines serving 6,345 students. Each middle school independently meets the 40% Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) eligibility requirement. Collectively, 72.5% of the middle school students to be served by the project are enrolled in FRPL. There are 39 DMPS elementary schools, serving 15,491 students. Thirty-four of the 38 elementary schools independently meet the 40% FRPL eligibility requirement. Collectively, 73.0% of the elementary school students to be served by this project are enrolled in FRPL. Of the 21,836 students to be served, 72.8% are enrolled in FRPL.

Weakness: The applicant does not describe a process by which its used to decide that all elemental and middle schools (K-8) would be included in the reform initiative.

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

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

A.3

The applicant demonstrates how the reform initiative will be implemented. Included in the Appendix is a program Logic Model that details the District's plan to improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps. Additionally, the applicant states District policies and procedures already support the shift to personalized learning, eliminating potential barriers to scaling up the project. The Logic Model is a reasonable tool to determine if components of the initiative are being implemented appropriately. The Logic model described is useful in determining the effectiveness of a program or initiative, providing a graphical depiction of the logical relationships between the resources, activities, outputs and outcomes of the initiative. Key activities and associated actions; a timeline; person(s) responsible; and deliverables are clearly specified in the program to ensure implementation.

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

10

6

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

A.4

The applicant outlines how the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals.

- a. The applicant outlines some ambitious goals for performance on summative assessments in the participating elementary and middle school. Goals for growth from 2013-2017 and post-grant are incrementally appropriate and achievable.

Weakness: The applicant presents information that shows no change in performance growth from the 2011-12 (baseline data

year) to the 2012-13 (the first projected growth year). No information is presented explaining why no growth is expected.

Weaknesses: The applicant's methodology is not clearly described. The applicant provides the following: Made expected gain in scale score. Expected score is conditional on previous year's performance. Note: Growth cannot be determined for 3rd grade as there is no previous year's data (i.e. 3rd grade is the first year students take the Iowa Assessments) for this application, growth is defined as the percent of students who made expected growth. This information does not present a clear picture of how growth was calculated. It also leads the reader to surmise that growth could possibly have calculated in some other form.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate of how components of the proposed reform initiative will contributed to achieving stated goals.

- b. The applicant outlines ambitious and achievable goals for decreasing achievement gaps in the targeted service area for academic performance. Achievement gaps will be decreased through data analysis and individual student support and specified in the reform vision. The methodology for determining achievement gap is the difference in percent proficient in Mathematics (Race gap with white, FRPL gap with non-FRPL, IEP gap with non-IEP, ELL gap with non-ELL).

Weakness: The applicant presents information that shows no change in decreasing gaps from the 2011-12 (baseline data year) to the 2012-13 (the first projected growth year). No information is presented explaining why no growth is expected.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate of how components of the proposed reform initiative will contributed to achieving stated goals on the decrease of achievement gaps.

- c. The applicant outlines some ambitious and achievable goals for increasing graduation rates. The target Rate for 2015-16 is based on the Iowa Plan NCLB goal of an annual 2% increase.

Weakness: The applicant does not present a methodology or explanation of how target rates were determined for years 2012-13 or 2013-14. An overall methodology for determining rates is not described.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on how project goals were determined for 2012-12, 2013-14, etc., when data for 2011-12 has not been calculated by the District. Data will not be available for the 2011-12 until winter of 2013, after a certified count is completed in early November.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on how components of the proposed reform initiative will contributed to achieving stated goals on increasing graduation rates.

- d. The applicant outlines ambitious and achievable goals for increasing college enrollment . As evidenced in a chart, goals of increase are shown in comparison of baseline data presented.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on how components of the proposed reform initiative will contributed to achieving stated goals on increasing college enrollment.

Weakness: The applicant presents information that shows no change in increasing rates from the 2011-12 (baseline data year) to the 2012-13 (the first projected growth year). No information is presented explaining why no growth is expected.

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:

B.1

The applicant details information to demonstrate its efforts to advance student learning and achievement within the last four years. Through the 2010-11 school year, the applicant states academic achievement in the District was measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) for grades 3-8. Ten-year ITBS Mathematics achievement data shows evidence that achievement gains are being made, and achievement gaps are slowly diminishing. Included in Appendix Item 6, Appendix Item 7, Appendix

Item 8, Appendix Item 9 is an analysis of the ITBS Mathematics data and proficiency trend lines for 4th and 8th grade students. Evidence of consistent student growth is also shown in the cohort data from the 2008-09 3rd grade students through their 5th grade year in 2010-11. The chart included in Appendix Item 10 shows evidence that learning was mastered by students in the cohort and maintained from one year to the next. Further, the applicant states in 2011-12, the District (and all other Iowa school districts) discontinued the ITBS and began taking a new annual standardized exam that was re-normed in alignment with the Common Core Standards called the Iowa Assessments. Additional, to improve student learning outcomes, close achievement gaps, and making strides toward turning around low-achieving schools in the District, the applicant used a variety of strategies and practices in school reform areas of strong leadership, instructional improvement, Professional Development, learning services, database decision-making, and community and family involvement. Strategies used to promote gain include:

- alignment of programs, services, and resources to focus on learning for all students
- district wide, job-embedded, instructionally-focused Professional Development
- district- and school-level emphasis on teamwork and professional community
- the principal is accountable for student learning and has the authority to make it happen
- investment in the development of instructional leadership of principals and teachers
- alignment of curriculum, materials, and assessments to performance standards, and
- system wide use of data to inform practice, hold school and district leaders accountable, and monitor progress.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on areas where there is a decline in proficiency.

Weakness: The applicant does not identify which of the school are designated as persistently low achieving and the reason for the low achievement, and how it connects with the proposed vision of addressing K-8 Mathematics.

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

B.2

The applicant demonstrates increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. In compliance with state law, the District makes available to the public actual personnel salaries for teachers, instructional staff, and support staff by building. This information is shared annually with the state's largest newspaper and is also posted on the Facts & Figures page of the District's Web site. The file is sortable, and one can filter to see the data by name, job type (i.e., for teachers, instructional staff, or support staff), location (including school), job description, full-time equivalency, salary, and hire date. In addition to personnel salaries, some non-personnel expenditures at the school level are accounted for by building. For example, construction and renovation costs (architecture and constitution payments) included in the Board agenda and minutes are identified at the school level. Transparency efforts are appropriate for a district.

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

B.3

The applicant presents evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal. For example, State law delineates the subject areas and content specifications that must be taught at each grade level evidenced by information in Appendix Item 25, Appendix Item 26 specifying the relevant code language. The District has greater autonomy to implement personalized learning environments within the context of the content specification and the Common Core Standards at the middle and elementary school level. It should be noted that the Regulation also call for the expansion of personalized learning environments and competency-based learning to be expanded to the high schools outside the scope of the grant proposal. In the 2012 Legislative session, an education package (Senate File 2284) was adopted by Iowa legislators. The bill was signed by the governor on May 25, 2012. The education package also codified Iowa Learning Online (ILO) within the Department. As the capacity of the State to support personalized learning and competency-based education in high schools expands, the District will be positioned to expand with it as strategy of helping students become college and career ready.

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

B.4

The applicant demonstrates meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members from participating schools were involved during the planning process through conversations with stakeholders and surveys of stakeholder groups. In addition, the more structured functions of the School Leadership Teams, School-Based Councils, and PTAs that are the basis for each school's School Improvement Plan were utilized as evidenced in the School Improvement document in the Appendix. The District also held ongoing meetings with the teachers' union and building administrators to solicit input and feedback. As an LEA with collective bargaining representation, the applicant states the District had several meetings with the Teachers' Union regarding the proposal and has the support of the Union, as evidenced by the Signature of the President of the Local Teachers' Union in the Application Assurances. Letters of support from the community and school supporters are provided. Additionally, stakeholder is demonstrated also by the development of an Advisory Committee consisting of two elementary school and two middle school principals; six teachers (two middle school math teachers and four elementary school teachers); four parents (two elementary school and two middle school parents); four students (two middle school and two elementary school students); two community partners; two Mathematics Curriculum Coordinators; District Central Office staff; and the (to be hired) Grant Director, which provide ongoing input on program evaluation and modification, and continuous improvement efforts.

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

B.5

The applicant describes analysis of needs and gaps that guide the logic behind the reform. Gaps were discovered in the K-8 math program, and current data systems did not provide daily or weekly feedback, only reporting the number of students who had attained mastery rather than specifics related to growth on a particular standard. The reform initiative will allow the development of a personalized learning approach that will tailor instruction and learning to students' individual needs, and District-wide student assessment measures will be implemented that provide more frequent feedback. For example, Interim Assessments, administered three times annually, and teacher-directed daily/weekly Formative Assessments will be introduced through this project. Additionally, a Student Response Systems will increase student engagement by creating interactive learning environments.

Weakness: The applicant does not describe a plan/process by which it used to identify gaps in current processes and practices of providing student instruction and support.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

C.1

The applicant outlines a strong plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. The District proposes to reform how students are educated across the District through the development and implementation of a personalized learning system within a Balanced Mathematics Framework. Grounded in effective teaching practices, the focus will be on the core area of math from kindergarten through 8th grade to improve achievement, increase student engagements, improve student attitudes toward math, and provide students choices in how they learn and demonstrate what they have learned. A personalized learning system will provide educators the opportunity to customize instructional practice and learning activities, real-time data utilization, and targeted interventions to meet the unique needs of individual students, to include students in special

populations designated as high-need. The initiative will enhance teacher capacity through the use technology in conjunction with a Balanced Mathematics Framework, allowing teachers to establish, monitor, and meet individual learning goals based on student learning styles and interests. The proposed initiative is evidenced by the description of three main components described as:

- Strategies to be implemented: personalized learning model within a Balanced Mathematics Framework, Data-based decision-making within a Balanced Assessment Framework, and Effective and highly-effective teachers and principals.
- Tools to be developed and utilized: Online data platform, Learner Profiles, Adaptive technology (hardware and software), and Student Response Systems.
- Supports: Curriculum aligned to Common Core Standards; Professional Development for educators; Training for parents, students, and community partners; Continuous school improvement processes.

Evidence to support the initiative is a table Appendix Item 30 illustrating the progression of the Common Core Standards concepts that work toward Algebra spanned across grades kindergarten through 8th grade, and an overview of The Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment implications for personalization within a Balanced Mathematics Framework.

Weakness: The role of parents is not described to help ensure strategies are accomplished, or to help determine if individual student learning in appropriate to the child.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

C.2

The applicant outlines a strong plan for improving teaching and leading to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements by enabling the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching for students. This is evidenced by a structure to provide personalized professional development for educators presented in the proposal. This existing structure will be used to implement a professional development plan in support of three main training components of this proposal: Implementation of a Balanced Assessment Framework, Implementation of Personalized Learning Environments within a Balanced Mathematics Framework, and Implementation of Teacher and Principal Evaluations to improve instruction. As laid out, teachers will gain access to and know how to use tools, data, and resources to implement a personalized learning system within a Balanced Mathematics Framework. The tools that will provide actionable information that will enable teachers to respond to individual student academic needs are appropriate to enhance capacity. Based upon information presented teachers will have the ability to match student needs with resources. For example, students will have choice in learning modalities, including online learning tools. The online learning tools will likely provide feedback to the teacher on student progress and will also be adaptive to student learning levels. In addition, teachers can also utilize the Student Response Systems for daily/weekly formative assessment to make data-driven instructional decisions. The applicant also describes other appropriate efforts that promote the effectiveness of educators in the District. For example, revisions to the current teacher and principal evaluation systems will focus on supporting staff to improve their skills as educators and to improve the student learning environment. This will help enhance the plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

D.1

The applicant describes appropriate practices and rules to help demonstrate it has a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student the support and resources needed. The applicant reports that the District has a strong foundation of practices, policies, and rules at the central office level that support the proposed shift personalized learning. Technology usage policies are already in place and support the project as evidenced in Appendix Item 35. With the exception of policy changes to implement the new evaluation systems, most changes to be

implemented toward personalized learning are supported by existing policies and will occur at the practice level. For example, the District is reported as not having policies around seat-time requirements to earn credit at the elementary or middle school levels, because credit is not assigned at these levels. Further, the applicant reports the district has supportive policies for integration of technology into curriculum, teaching, and learning because of pilot projects and grant-funded projects. As described in the proposal the District has supportive policies and procedures for shared decision-making related to school-based management. As a result of the proposed project, the applicant reports practices will change at the school-level as the district implements the systemic approach to personalized learning at the K-8 levels across the District. Principals will maintain autonomy over choosing their site based leadership teams, delivery systems, instructional schedules, and non-curricular matters. They will also maintain autonomy over personnel and budget decisions within their schools. No policy, procedure, or rule changes will be required related to demonstrated mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. Policies and guiding principles ensure that educational programs are equally available to all children, thus providing the opportunity to be educated to the full extent of abilities, aptitudes, capabilities, and interests. The District will conduct a classroom-by-classroom audit to ensure every participating classroom and school has the minimum technology required for the implementation of the proposal in schools. Technical assistance will be provided to teachers, counselors, administrators, and other school staff; parents; and students to support the personalized learning environment structure, curriculum development, instructional strategies, and other elements of school reform through a variety of venues.

Weakness: The applicant does not present an organizational structure or documents supporting the existence of polices to help support its description of policies and practices, nor is information clear on wether policies and practices described include the provision of learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.

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

D.2

The applicant describes Local Education Agency and school infrastructure that are feasible to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure and provide every student the support and resources needed. The plan to support personalized learning in K-8 mathematics is supported by technological tools and content. The District will conduct a classroom-by-classroom audit to ensure every participating classroom and school has the minimum technology required for the implementation of proposal components in schools. The District will work with community organizations where students and parents can access computers and online learning tools when unavailable. Technical assistance will be provided to teachers, counselors, administrators, and other school staff; parents; and students to support the personalized learning environment structure, curriculum development, instructional strategies, and other elements of school reform through a variety of venues. Information technology systems will be implemented house student performance data in an open data format. Students and parents will be able to export their data to use in an electronic learning system. District will ensure that any data systems and the new data platform are used in conjunction with this project are interoperable to manage student information, learning materials, and financial data. The interoperable data systems will enable participating schools and teachers to better exchange data with each other about students who move from one school to another. Strategies outline are a significant concern in a district with a high mobility rate and are likely to enhance current infrastructure.

Weakness: Local Education Agency staffing and resource is not described as being appropriate to help ensure appropriate implementation of the reform plan. Information is not presented on the addition or rearrangement of staff to support schools in implementing the reform initiative.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

E. 1

The applicant outlines a strong continuous improvement plan that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements. The process is Evidenced by clearly defined graphical illustrations. The District Assessment Team has developed a sound system of gathering a broad base of student data that is analyzed, synthesized, and made available to staff via the student information systems. The systems will enable staff to maintain connections with students and student data, despite the challenge of high mobility of many students. Further, formative, summative, and process assessment and evaluation activities will be conducted to verify completion of objectives, measure progress toward performance measures, and identify areas of improvement and needed modifications. The applicant presents clearly delineated outcomes, the monitoring plan, how the outcome will be measured, plan to report findings, timelines, who at the LEA level will be responsible for conduct monitoring or the timeliness/timeframe of conducting the monitoring strategies, and evaluation activity. The process will likely produce some tangible outcomes linked to student achievement.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

E.2

The applicant describes a through system of communication and engagement. The District will employ multiple outreach methods to ensure ongoing communication and engagement. For example, the program will be highlighted on District TV segments. The program will also be featured on the District Website; in the bi-monthly district-wide newsletter (which is distributed via email to all Des Moines Public Schools' families and employees and is made available online and distributed through Facebook and Twitter); and on the District's Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Tumblr, and Pinterest pages. In addition, school and District officials will use Infinite Campus to send messages to parents. Individual schools will disseminate information via school Web sites, monthly newsletters, and teacher Web sites. The communication plan is designed to establish a comprehensive and integrated plan for effective communication with stakeholders. As evidenced in a chart, the applicant specifies various stakeholders related to this project both internal and external to the District. Communication channels include electronic, media, and interpersonal mediums. Information presented ensures an appropriate line of communication.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

E.3

The applicant outlines ambitious and achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. Applicant-proposed performance measures are aligned with achievement and performance in the area of mathematics and align with the reform vision.

Weakness: The applicant presents information that shows no change in increasing rates from the 2011-12 (baseline data year) to the 2012-13 (the first projected growth year). No information is presented explaining why no growth is expected.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

E.4

The applicant outs a focused plan to evaluate the effectiveness of its investments. As described methods will yield information on the impact and success of the initiative. For example, the case study design was chosen qualitatively evaluate the initiative will provide a greater understanding of practice within context using multiple sources of evidence. Data collection methods will include observations in the classroom setting and observers will write narrative and enter descriptions of what they observe in the classrooms. The evaluation team will meet bi-monthly to make decisions about the evaluation design and activities, keep informed on upcoming evaluation activities and deadlines, and keep updated on the progress of the evaluation. To ensure students attending a variety of schools are represented, the evaluation will draw a stratified random sample of 15 schools within strata (or subpopulations) based on school demographics and type (elementary or middle school). Within schools, a stratified random sample of 20 percent of all teachers in the school to observe and interview will also be drawn based on grade level. One school administrator will also be randomly selected to interview at each school. In order to gain longitudinal data, observations and interviews will occur yearly with each teacher and administrator (interview only) over the four year data collection window (years two through five of the grant).

Weakness: The applicant states that both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected from staff, students, parents, however little information is described on quantitative methods for evaluation. Great emphasis is described from a qualitative view.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: F.1 The applicant has requested the designated amount, \$43,214,960.00 in accordance with Federal guidelines. Costs appear reasonable and sufficient to support the proposed Personalized Learning Initiative over the cycle of the grant and for three years beyond. Detailed descriptions explain the associated costs listed in the budget. Costs are presented for all major line items. The applicant demonstrates that funds will be budgeted to provide the required services to eligible schools. The applicant provides an adequate non-federal match for the project. Further, information is presented in a manner to justify the in-kind/non-federal sources and related expenses to include descriptions and cost calculations.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: F.2 The applicant outlines thorough measures to sustain the project. The bulk of expenses for the proposed personalized system are one-time investments to purchase and build technology infrastructure as the foundation for the system. After grant funds end, local funds will be allocated toward personnel costs to sustain the Grant Director and IT Specialists as the project scales up to include literacy and then to include all grade levels. Local funds and state funds will be allocated toward ongoing Professional Development costs related to the project. The proposed PD will be embedded in the District's Professional Development plan on an ongoing basis. Local funds and external foundation funds will provide funds for technology upgrades and maintenance, as well as ongoing database and data platform fees. A three year breakdown of anticipated funds and their sources of sustainability is evidenced in Budget Subpart 2 of the proposal.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The District meets the Competitive Priority by working within the framework of two Learning Services programs: SUCCESS and Community Schools (CS). SUCCESS is a strengths-based program that serves individual students and their families. The school-based youth services program is designed to provide year-round services to meet students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs to reduce/remove barriers that hamper academic success and increase the risk of dropping out. CS identifies needs of groups of students (e.g. school wide, grade-level, gender specific) and coordinates internal and external programs and community resources to those needs. Specifically, CS is a strategy aimed at systemic change – it is not a program that provides direct services. The mission of CS is to champion the connection of needed community resources with schools to help young people successfully learn, stay in school, and prepare for life. CS provides the link between educators, students, families, and the community. The program yields partnerships with numerous agencies, programs, and individuals to provide services to District students, including: Alpha Phi Alpha, Boy Scouts of America, Mid-Iowa Council, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Iowa, Camp Fire USA, and Heart of the Hawkeye Council, Central College, Des Moines Area Community College, Drake University, Educational Talent Search, Employee & Family Resources, and Everybody Wins! Iowa, Family Directions of		

Iowa, Grandview University, Iowa College Access Network, Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates, Iowa Lutheran Auxiliary, Monsoon United Asian Women of Iowa, Oakridge Neighborhood Services, Orchard Place – Child Guidance and PACE Juvenile Center, Rotary clubs, Simpson College, United Way of Central Iowa, Willkie House, YMCA of Central Iowa, and Young Women's Resource Center. Additionally, selected indicators that measure results are clearly defined to include suspension data, parent-teacher conferences, volunteer engagement, absenteeism, and student data. The use of data resources will include the use of the Early Indicator System, a National Dropout Prevention model that identifies students at-risk of dropping out of school. Specifically students are flagged in an EIS Report if they demonstrate a minimum of two dropout indicators: failing grades, poor attendance, and lack of connection to school, behavior problems, or low achievement. This data is re-analyzed every six weeks by Learning Services staff to identify students in need; to determine the degree to which interventions are helping students succeed; and to identify additional or alternative services with which the student/family might benefit.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Absolute Priority

The applicant has presented a reform initiative that will build on the core educational assurance areas as a personalized learning environment is implemented. The initiative uses collaborative, data-based strategies and 21st century tools such as online learning platforms, computers, and learning strategies to deliver instruction and supports tailored to the needs and goals of students, with the aim of enabling all students to graduate college- and career-ready by addressing areas of achievement that impact readiness early in the child's education. Educators are also supported in their efforts to be effective.

Total	210	188
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