



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0914TX-1 for DeSoto ISD

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant identifies the four core areas with support of current strategies in place and proposes a plan that will expand the personalized learning environment through global connections, technology based systems to monitor individual growth as well as choice as a way to personalize the environment. The plan is articulated throughout the application with a stakeholder input and support as evidenced in support letters. Attention is given to the teacher and leader and the key to increased student achievement and preparation for college and career. Applicant includes an international component to open the world of the student to a more global understanding of educational concepts. Opportunities are provided for early childhood to college success.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has chosen to address all schools in the district with this project.</p> <p>Use of the table to show participants is unclear for the number of students participating compared to the percentage of participating students.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has a high quality plan with strategic components to support all participating schools and grade spans as indicated in this grant proposal. The plan focuses on student choice for online, independent study, classroom reform for personalized learning, and global influence to increase outlook for college and career, as well as professional development to increase teacher effectiveness.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has ambitious goals and timeline. Plan addresses postsecondary degree attainment through dual credit and goals toward graduating high school with an AA degree.</p> <p>Lacking was the narrative explaining how the goals were selected, and explanation of the comparison group for gap reduction.</p> <p>Plan does not support how special education populations is to achieve growth at the same rate or faster than economically disadvantages population in some areas; ie, 10% growth for Spec Ed in 3-5 grade reading .</p> <p>Graduation rate and college enrollment rates are not addressed.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant shows a clear record of success by becoming a Gold Performance District. as awarded by the state for improvements. Reforms include data management and administrative monitoring teams to look for increased teacher effectiveness and student learning. Evidence is included of one school moving from low achieving to high performance.</p> <p>Plan addresses college enrollment through dual credit and paying for courses . Specific strategies toward high school graduation rate increase is lacking as well as an understanding of what the high school graduation rate currently is for the district.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>District has received a leadership award for transparency of finances. Transparency at all levels and by multiple statutes is explained.</p> <p>Instructional salaries are presented in the appendix. District budget is provided. Non-personnel expenditures at the school level are not provided.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has referenced state requirements for assessment as well as student graduation requirements which support the goals with the plan for personalized learning.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has provided evidence that stakeholders were included in the development of this grant and is evident through letters of support from multiple agencies, business representatives, and parents.</p> <p>Teacher input was solicited but not quantified. But the narrative includes references to teachers supporting at all levels.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant identifies needs and gaps of populations segments for technology outside the school day. Discusses a lending program.</p> <p>Based on the identified gap for technology outside the school day, the plan and budget does not reflect decreasing this gap specifically. Unclear as to whether students will be receiving 1:1 devices as a part of this grant. Funding is large for the supply budget for the global network.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	19
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A comprehensive plan and actionable timeline is outlined to support the personalized learning environment. Components of the plan are reasonable and will most likely be able to be executed with the additional support and the funding requested.</p> <p>Ongoing and regular feedback is provided to students through review of plans, and differentiated instruction personalizes their</p>		

learning.

The plan supports personalized learning plans for students and teachers to support students with choice to move them at an accelerated rate to increase depth of the educational experience.

Multiple levels of support and resources are available to students to keep them on track with their college and career ready graduation requirements.

A mechanism is in place that will support student understanding of tools and resources to keep them on track to their learning outcomes.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has a high quality plan that connects all components of the teaching and leading process to include individual teacher needs to establish a new vice principal academy to grow administrators with the skills needed to be effective leaders.

The applicant describes a system of support for professional development based on teacher identified needs that includes teams for walk throughs with feedback to teachers for an increase in performance and to create a team supportive approach.

Principals have learning strategies to build on their effectiveness as leaders.

The professional development and outcomes are focused on the core areas of data driven decisions, teacher effectiveness, all toward improving instruction to support college and career readiness with focus on high need students.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>State authority for creating the education plans and the level of authority for the educational process is lacking. As set forth in the application, the district and the school have the autonomy to facilitate their school, calendar and school management to maximize their effectiveness. The high quality plan as described by this applicant includes support through practices, policies and rules to facilitate personalized learning with a plan to closely monitor curriculum, and student mastery. As described, all students will have the opportunity to master the content with a minimum of 70% with multiple opportunities.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant describes how it has provided increased wireless access for parents and students within the school environment and has increased library hours to promote access for parents and community. A parent portal for accessibility to student personalized data is provided and students are allowed to bring their own devices to school as an extension of the learning process.</p> <p>Information is lacking on the interoperable data systems and the open data format.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Applicant has proposed a rigorous improvement continuous improvement process that includes all the stakeholders and a</p>		

process to monitor all aspects of the plan. Deliverables and Timeline Worksheet support this process indicating monitoring and reporting for technology. The 360 Ownership model support accountability by all stakeholders. The commitment to improvement is consistent from top leadership .

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The 360 degree plan as a superintendent initiative supports the communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not specifically address this criteria in application. Although in its plan, grade specific indicators are included with a reference to three summative assessments with indicators for three subpopulations. Lacking is the social emotional or health leading indicator of successful implementation of the plan

The specific performance measure or benchmark is unclear for the SEL and reference is made to SNOC with out establishing benchmarks or outcomes for this assessment.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has indicated the use of university resources to complete formative and summative evaluation for the grant each year. Adequate attention has been given to the formative process through the onsite district staff involvement and the process for disseminating the formative data is conducted through meetings with invested partners and decision making structures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Applicant has submitted a budget that would be reasonable to cover expenses as indicated per project. Resources are identified that would need to continue after the final year of the grant and those that would end with the grant. Budget provides a breakdown of expenses per category and intervention.</p> <p>Budget narrative reflects 1:1 devices for all students but strategy is not carried out through the narrative in the grant, nor is there any benchmark or outcomes associated with individual student use of technology resources.</p> <p>Applicant has sparse resources allocated to technology support for individual schools and the increase in use of individual student devices for all students.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Reasonable attention is given to supporting the infrastructure for sustainability to increasing capacity of teachers as a result of the training and professional development that they will receive.</p> <p>Sustainability of 1:1 or individual mobile devices is not reflected. The plan for teacher incentives as developed is not included.</p> <p>No sustainability plan for software that is purchased and provided for students,</p> <p>No plan to continue with prek enrollment funds.</p> <p>Reference is made to applying for more grants to sustain these expenses.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: No competitive preference documentation submitted.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: Applicant has submitted a strong proposal that focuses on the personalized learning environment. This plan coherently supports the four core components of college and career readiness through teacher effectiveness, student achievement through deepened student learning strategies with a focus on decreasing the achievement gaps, and increase the number of students who graduate college and career ready.		

Total	210	166
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0914TX-2 for DeSoto ISD

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: The DeSoto School District captured its clear reform vision in its "Culture of 7" wherein it lays out its approach by concentrating on seven areas necessary to successfully meet the individual needs of all its students: core beliefs, the disciplines, ambitious goals, interim targets, full involvement, development and leadership. The applicant then candidly describes where the district currently is in the four core assurance areas, listing what strategies have been used and what programs have been put into place to address these areas. The proposal then lays out where the district is going in each of the areas. Particularly interesting is the district's planned emphasis on linking with national and international industry and utilizing collaborative communication technology systems to connect its students with their peers not only locally, but also internationally so that they can gain greater understanding of themselves and their future and be better		

able to personalize their goals. The district has also agreed upon several non-negotiable expectations such as all children being able to read/decode by the end of first grade.

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district seriously weighed many alternatives before deciding to implement its plan throughout the entire district rather than incrementally and gave compelling reasons for its broad approach. It already has a strong foundation to build on and since that is the case, it is able to scale up, focus on refinement and then make more progress in subsequent years. Since the district will be involving all schools, no selection process was necessary, but all school demographic information was provided showing that 100% of students will be participating.

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

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant first considered addressing this criteria by working with the neediest children first at the early grades and then scaling up by grade level. Ultimately, this approach was rejected and it was decided to serve all students, teachers and administrators district-wide, making scaling up methodologies unnecessary. The applicant then includes all the elements of a high-quality plan though its goals could be stated as such. Its planned reforms to effect district-wide change are identified and a sequential implementation schedule is methodically laid out in the appendix.

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

10

10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates how its vision will be implemented with ambitious yet achievable goals. The assessments to be used in measuring goals are listed as are the methodologies to be used in determining progress, i.e., in determining growth in student achievement as well as a decrease in achievement gaps - and meet the criterion. The assessments will include value added and be done at three different levels - grades 3-5, 6-8 and 9-11 - not only for reading and math, but also for science and social studies.

The applicant's vision is likely to improve student learning and improve the district's graduation and college enrollment rates, but this reviewer could not find specific targets for these rates that equaled or exceeded State ESEA targets.

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:

The applicant presents as evidence that it has met this criteria the fact that even with 72% of its students being economically disadvantaged, it was given a Gold Performance Award meaning that it was a State-recognized district. Exactly what it was being recognized for is not entirely clear as the State apparently makes these awards for various achievements. Also mentioned is the district's use of data through a Parent Portal and its virtual one-stop shop for district employees to access testing data, register for courses, request technology maintenance, etc. The proposal could have been strengthened if some ambitious and significant reforms had been included, examples of the ability to close achievement gaps and more ways of making student data available to improve instruction and services.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a Financial Transparency webpage and has been awarded a Gold Circle Leadership Award for financial transparency by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. However, while information on two of the four categories of expenditures can be obtained, the district does not already make publically available for easy access information on other categories of school expenditures as required by the criteria.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant points out that in Texas, local LEA's have complete autonomy on how State standards will be met in regard to curriculum and best practices for instruction. Further, the State endorses a Personal Graduation Plan that includes five indicators, which constitute personalized learning environments.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	6
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district conducted significant outreach to solicit feedback on its proposal and received enthusiastic support. It even held a Goals Night for the community. Numerous letters endorsing the project from a wide range of community members were included. The proposal, however, provided little detail on how all of this feedback was incorporated into the district's plan. Also, the requirement that 70% of the teachers support the proposal was not met.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DeSoto designed a comprehensive needs assessment to determine the district's current status in ten areas. The results formed the logic for this reform proposal. Just how the information was used to form its plan for personalization is not clear, but the proposal contains six subsequent benchmark goals with strategies for each that will enable the district to implement personalized learning environments. Worth noting is the district's Success Network that connects schools to local businesses, community and colleges so that its students can learn about, explore, share with and shadow the real world.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This plan brings new meaning to "leaving no stone unturned." It is difficult to imagine what else could have been included to meet these criteria. There is a well thought-out philosophy undergirding it, a thorough understanding of what is needed to ensure that all students spend their years in school productively so that they emerge college or career ready and evidence of the district's determination that they do so. Numerous strategies that build on the four core assurances and emphasize personalized learning environments to carry out the district's plan are identified and described.</p>		

Beginning early is emphasized as essential to carrying out a personalized sequence of instructional content; thus, one of the innovative strategies outlined is the district's giving day care workers staff development and ongoing instructional support to improve children's readiness for school. The district has and plans to have an even richer array of efforts to individualize instruction and services for its students. Just one example of the lengths to which the district will go to meet individual needs is that it will offer a school-based, animal-assisted therapy program to help children who are emotionally, behaviorally or cognitively challenged. Another is that every child will have an IEP. Also, students will be assessed frequently – every three weeks – so that student achievement data can be used to make immediate instructional adjustments and principals can adjust campus schedules to accommodate needed interventions.

Other examples of the district's comprehensive efforts include the infrastructure it is setting up to make appropriate instruction and needed services available:

- College and Career Academies that will provide the ability to personalize students' educational trajectories throughout their schooling and improve their focus on course selection
- DeSoto's Success Network that links its students with local colleges and local and national industries, facilitating real-world connections and supporting a world-class education. Enhancing the capabilities of this network will be the district's Digital World Languages Program and its STEM initiatives. The STEM initiatives include making available digital science courses that make possible far more dynamic and flexible resources for the students than would be otherwise possible. The district is also committed to providing incentives to increase better instruction in these areas such as monetary compensation and additional planning time.
- A Global Network to make available age-appropriate, project-based learning that will deepen students' understandings and expose them to real-world diversity.
- A Parent Learning Center that will be established to provide parenting skills, technology skills and other job skills and assist families with college applications and funding processes.

The district's approach also includes having students get practice in setting some of their own learning goals and self-monitoring their academic progress. It addresses ensuring high-need students are on track for college and careers by emphasizing starting early and monitoring closely, which is so important for these students, customizing learning opportunities, frequent assessments, aligning meaningful technology with teaching 31st Century skills and a commitment that its students will not be allowed to fail.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's high-quality plan complete with deliverables, timelines and responsible parties strongly emphasizes that teachers and principals are pivotal in implementing a shift to personalized learning and is predicated on the belief that teachers need and deserve individualized support just as students do. The district subscribes to a system of systematic walkthroughs by instructional support staff preceded by gathering and analyzing student data for each of the teachers to be visited. There is a commitment to teachers being actively engaged in selecting what professional development they will participate in based on their students' data. One of the premises of the district's approach is that time and money will be saved by implementing only effective professional development programs (and therefore not subjecting teachers to required, generalized approaches that are a waste of their time and the district's funds).

Assessment tools will be scrutinized to make sure that weak student skills are being pin pointed. All teachers will be supported in maximizing their use of technology to personalize instruction and accelerate achievement. School-based and outside coaches will work with teachers to break down the data to show particular skills that are not being mastered.

Overall, the district's evaluation system includes 51 criteria in eight domains. It is designed to build system-wide trust while developing a sense of urgency and to result in educators being provided with the tools, resources and motivation necessary to develop the personalized environments that will enable all students to engage in their learning and successfully exit the district's educational program.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant stresses providing building leadership with the maximal amount of autonomy possible so that adjustments and accommodations can be made to facilitate personalized learning, and that includes giving total autonomy of budget allocation.</p> <p>Students are afforded multiple ways of being assessed: teacher-made and district assessments, portfolios, (state assessments, although not listed) using both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced instruments. They are also assessed multiple times – every 6 weeks (although an earlier section reported every 3 weeks) – and if they do not achieve 70% mastery, district policy allows them to be reassessed in a short period of time.</p> <p>While all students with disabilities are provided assistance with mastery learning, the proposal seems to be silent about opportunities for other students to progress or earn credit by demonstrating mastery.</p> <p>Adaptable and fully accessible resources and practices are not fully addressed in this section, but ample evidence of their provision is evident throughout the proposal.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents earlier the prodigious efforts the district makes to support personalized learning. In regard to technology specifically, the district allows or provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Wi-Fi signal for all students, parents and community members to use in school buildings • Extended library hours to promote technology usage among parents and community members • Opening school computer labs for after-hour usage by parents and students • Twice-a-week homework tutorials in the evenings in all core subjects • Websites for individual teachers to offer all matter of support including assistance with homework in the evenings • A parent portal that gives access to students' grades, attendance and instances of tardiness and enhances parent engagement by encouraging them to take an active role in the teaching and learning process. <p>The data management systems that the district has adopted will make possible the productive use of a variety of data. The proposal could have been strengthened by more directly addressing how support will be provided for educators and parents regardless of their income to enable them to make the best use the resources that are available to them both in and out of school .</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has presented solid strategies to ensure that a process to monitor continuous progress will be devised, implemented and evaluated to make certain that all components of the proposed project are carried out as intended and that where needed adjustments are identified, they are made, i.e., when programs and practices are found wanting, they will be</p>		

discontinued and replaced. All components will be scrutinized from the reform vision to the data being gathered and analyzed to the degree of impact interventions are having and will include social and emotional indicators. Data collected and information will be shared monthly with school staffs in relation to goals so that professional development can be related to findings and improve teacher effectiveness. A project team consisting of a wide range of stakeholders will meet regularly to review the reports.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Both DeSoto's academic and social communities were involved in the planning for this application. The district staff will meet regularly with the City, local companies, business, churches and higher education institutions, thus on-going communication regarding the project will be assured. Also, the project team will immediately set up a process for bringing up concerns regarding the undertaking; minutes of the monthly meetings will be widely shared; and a regularly updated RTT-D section will be set up on the district's website, in addition to eNewsletters and print letters being sent home monthly. Also staff will regularly hold community and campus meetings and issue press releases in addition to the Superintendent's holding monthly meetings open to all interested parties to share concerns and make suggestions.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant selected increasing the number and percentage of highly effective teachers/principals in reading math and science for all participating students, but it's not clear to this reviewer what the measures and targets are. Also, this reviewer could not find the required rationale or how information tailored to these targets would be gathered or reviewed.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies nine specific areas that will be evaluated including a personalized plan for all students and an increase in the number of students leaving high school with an AA degree and lists the instruments that will be used to measure progress. The benchmark goals to be evaluated are also listed as are the faculty member positions of the nearby university that the district will partner with to conduct annual formative and summative evaluations, although January seems late for a formative evaluation. The results of the yearly evaluations will be widely shared. This section could have been strengthened by giving more detail of the evaluation design and broadening the scope of the evaluation to include other factors that contribute student success such as how the use of technology would be improved or some aspect of working with the community.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies all the funds that will initially support the project, but the rationale for the separate components identified – technology, equipment, supplies - seems questionable when the expenditures are really all for technology – state of the art. Also, some of the expenditures seem excessive. e.g.,:

- given the average teacher's salary, \$100 a day for participating in professional development?
- \$1 million plus for international travel?
- \$400,000 for travel to out-of-state professional development (that could be done virtually?)?
- \$2,000 - \$2500 a day for experts (who may command that amount, but are they necessary?)?

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

10

2

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district's sustainability plan rather than being high-quality is vague and lacks detail. The applicant states that their ambitious plan will still be their plan regardless of funding and while that may be an attitude or philosophy, it does not constitute sustainability. There were some examples given that will help to sustain the programs such as videotaping professional development sessions for future teachers' review, but to sustain its projects, the plan is simply to pursue other grants – that may not be forthcoming.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does meet Absolute Priority 1 as the proposal includes an explanation of where the district currently is on each of the core assurances and then, throughout the proposal, addresses where it is going in regard to them. In meeting this priority, personalization of learning environments is constantly stressed and a variety of well thought-out strategies for achieving these to ensure all students' success are provided.

Total	210	169
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0914TX-3 for DeSoto ISD



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 district's vision is clear, detailed, and comprehensive. It articulates ambitious goals for turning around its lowest performing schools along with a section that explains its vision for personalized learning environments. There is an explanation of its vision for college and career readiness, and data systems. Its vision is student centered and makes references to building the capacity of leaders, teachers and families to support student attainment of performance goals. Connections are made to the integration of technology to support personalized learning too. Differentiation, building 21st century skills and project based learning will be a major emphasis for the districts RTT grant funds. As a result, it is clear that the district will use RTT funds to build upon its existing work and structures to close the achievement gap.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district clearly explains how it plans to use the RTT funds to implement initiatives focused on personalized learning. A RTT planning team discussed how schools could be selected to participate in the grant. The final decision was made to have all schools participate in an effort to build upon the existing work in the district around closing the achievement gap. The district will use RTT funds to support 8971 students and 581 teachers and administrators. At the end of the summary there is a statement that makes reference to the appendix where one can find the list of participating schools and students; however, this document could not be found in the appendix; there was a chart at the end of this section that listed participating schools and school demographics so it is unclear as to why the district made reference to a chart in the appendix that could not be found. Also, an explanation of how students, staff and parents were engaged in discussion about the selection of students and schools for the RTT grant is not included and there is some data missing for two middle schools and one elementary school.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In the appendix section of the grant, the district includes a chart that states deliverables and a timeline for implementation. The chart identifies goals and steps needed for each goal. However, an explanation is not included to summarize how the goals will specifically improve student outcomes and who is responsible for helping the district achieve its goals. An explanation of the expected results for the goals would help all stakeholders understand the information in the chart.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district clearly articulates the assessments used to determine student growth. An explanation of the methodology used to determine expected progress from 2012-2017 is included along with baseline data. Data is provided for all students and then the following categories: economic disadvantaged; students with disabilities; and LEP. However, there is not an indication whether or not other subgroups exist in the district such as White, African American, Asian, or Hispanic. A plan for meeting proficiency targets is detailed in the appendix through a timeline with outcomes. A table of contents is included too. However, a narrative is not included to explain the plan. The methodology for determining the achievement gap isn't explained; however there is a chart with information (raw numbers and percentages) about the student gaps, but there is no explanation. There are no targets listed for 2015-2016 or 2016-2017 in this section nor an explanation as to why they are not included. Also, sometimes there is data for the economically disadvantaged and sometimes it is not included, and there is not an explanation as to why this information was omitted. Graduation rate goals and college enrollment rates and goals are not included. In the vision summary, the district mentioned that it was focused on college and career readiness; however, there is no baseline data or goals included.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district identified five goals for student success that focus on academics, the academic environment, and social emotional elements. It makes reference to attached graphical data; however, it could not be located. The district provides a clear explanation of success for the past four years in spite of its increase in students of poverty. It exceeded the district's average for performance of disadvantaged students. It explained that the district received an award for its improved performance in 2010. An explanation of data used to monitor progress and ensure analysis of data toward student success is included; however, it doesn't explain reform methods used to achieve success in its lowest achieving schools; instead it only articulates support that it provides to schools from its district curriculum team. A parent viewer and portal is used to share individual student information progress with parents. There is a virtual application for staff called Eduphoria where they can access and submit student data.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district developed and uses a webpage designed to share its financial information. A bulleted list of information that can be found on the webpage (finances, budgets, financial reports, payroll, property tax; financial rating system, and utility costs) is included in the grant. What is compelling is that the district received a leadership award for two years for its comprehensive financial webpage. The districts financial report includes actual personnel salaries at the school level and actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level.. The district states that it is in the process of further updating its system and accessibility options on its webpage, to make actual personnel salaries for school level teachers and instructional staff easily accessible. Currently this information is available upon request.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provides a clear explanation of the RTT grant alignment to the state of Texas assessment system. It explains that the endorsed personal graduation plan by the state has clear and rigorous goals which aligns with the goals of the RTT grant. The district provides a thorough description of programs that includes: personalized learning environments through the use of technology (mobile devices/web cams); business partnerships; and learning academies. It explains that the grant will allow for the expansion of these initiatives. The district allows flexibility to students in earning credit through online coursework. Principals will have autonomy for developing personalize learning plans with students and input from teachers and parents. There will be 24/7 learning access with the partnership of working with local businesses. Students will be able to design their own learning plan.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The districts application includes 52 letters of support. The district clearly explains the process it used to engage students, staff, parents and the community about the RTT application. The forums included: PTA meetings and Parent Advisory Committee meetings with the superintendent. Feedback was articulated through letters; written comments; goal nights; college and career training; community meetings; staff meetings; committee meetings; student meetings; and curriculum nights. The district explains that revisions were made based on the feedback and provided a few examples. However, the letter of support from the teacher's union is not included and the signatures from staff do not seem to reflect 70%.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district includes the context for explaining student needs and gaps by beginning with a description of its demographics and</p>		

explaining how baseline information was used to develop the plan and create goals. A committee that included principals, teachers, students, parents, and community members met throughout the year to discuss the districts status in implementing personalized learning through the use of technology. They identified current success, challenges, and upgrades that were necessary. The district includes data and an explanation of its current status. It states that it is about 70 % disadvantaged, 85% African American, and 10% Hispanic. Underneath its description of overall student needs and outcomes, the district states its goals and strategies "solutions" in chart format. Strategies for each goal are thoroughly explained and this information is student centered.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district plans to use RTT funds to develop college and career academies to engage students in learning. They believe the academies will allow students to customize their learning pathway and select a career that is of their interest. The goal is for students to engage in authentic experiences as if they were working in the real world. The academies will focus on project based learning that includes: professional development; prior knowledge; state standards application; and teaching and assessing content. The district describes how students will personalize their learning sequence, and approach to learning content to allow access to diverse perspectives and motivate them to learn. Personalized learning plans and structures are explained that articulate how students will master critical content and develop skills at their own pace. At the pre-k and elementary levels, programs will focus on social emotional and physical development. Partnerships with local daycare providers will offer professional development and instructional support on school readiness. Blended learning approaches based on projects, technology, and differentiation are explained. All of the strategies are listed in an attached chart with a description for each. Blended learning will continue into middle school with a focus on science, higher level math, and college and careers. All strategies are in a chart and described in detail. At the high school level, College and Career Academies will be created. RTT funds will be used to develop the academies and students will be able to choose an academy based on their interest. A detailed list of strategies is included with descriptions. The integration of technology will be incorporated K-12. Early intervention programs will be instituted to support academic achievement and social-emotional support. RTT funds will be used to create mobile learning labs that will be open to families and the community during non-school hours. Parent learning centers will be created to train parents on job and parenting skills. All students will have access to online resources and tools. Training will be provided for teachers, parents and students too.</p> <p>The district currently uses a district-wide data management system called Eduphoria that will continue to be used to gather ongoing feedback on student learning. The district plans to use RTT funds to create additional data dashboards to coordinate individual student learning programs and house student data. There will be student, teacher and administrator dashboards. The districts provides a detailed description for the purpose of each dashboard. Assessments will be administered every three weeks to benchmark student progress. Adjustments to programs will be able to be made based on data.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provides a comprehensive overview of how it builds the capacity of teachers and leaders to support college and career readiness. The districts plan focuses on evaluating effectiveness annually; providing individualized training and coaching; and personalized performance plans. The district's leadership team called TRIBE randomly makes school visits during the year. TRIBE collects and reports a variety of data; and provides feedback to the principal and staff after conducting walkthroughs. They meet with the principal and leadership team to share feedback along with support them with determining needs for additional support. The RTT grant will provide funds for teacher and leader training that is differentiated for an individualized focus. The training will focus on school improvement, leadership effectiveness, and building instructional leadership. Outside consultants will be contracted and training academies will be created. A thorough description of training sessions is included and they focus on: team building strategies; data driven instruction; and assistant principal academies all with explicit outcomes. The district plans to create a detailed professional development plan that is data driven and job embedded. The plan will place emphasis on technology; college and career readiness and academies; personalized learning; assessments; and peer coaching. The district will continue to use its current teacher, principal and supervisor evaluation system called PDAS. The evaluation system includes specific performance criteria (15) and eight domains and four performance levels from unsatisfactory to exceeds expectations. Compensation for performance is also part of the plan.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has established an infrastructure that is data driven and allows room for flexibility. The master schedule is developed to align with personalized learning options such as learning academies. The district calendar is developed collaboratively with the School Board, parents, and community. The central office supports schools with developing their master schedule and allocates staff based on student enrollment numbers. Principals receive a budget that they have the autonomy to organize and use at their discretion. The district has developed its own curriculum that explains the amount of time for teachers to spend on each unit and student mastery is set 70%. Students have flexible paths for achieving proficiency. Student progress on content is assessed every six weeks using district created assessments. English Language Learner strategies are part of the curriculum and an instructional expectation too. Teachers are expected to assess student mastery in multiple formats over time.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Families have access to free wifi; extended library hours for research and using technology; open computer labs beyond the student day; and evening homework tutorials twice a week. A web based tool allows teachers to create their own website and it is used to communicate information about assignments, assessments, and projects. The district's parent portal houses ongoing information into one area that parents can access at any time. Teachers provide support to parents and students with accessing content, tools, and resources; and since technology is integrated into the curriculum and classroom instruction, students become proficient in the use of technology and support their parents with accessing information and resources. The district has also developed a web-based parent portal that allows parents and students access to information about attendance and grades. The Texas Education Agency website is linked to the DeSoto website and provides student level, human resource, and financial information about the district.</p>		

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 district states that it will establish a project team to review and monitor the goals and initiatives in the grant. A timeline of activities that will be monitored is included in the appendix. Revisions will be made based on feedback. Staff will be trained to understand and monitor the performance goals. The district's plan is to share RTT grant progress monthly. District leaders and the superintendent will meet monthly to discuss and review progress too. An clear evaluation plan is also included in the grant application.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provides a clear and detailed explanation of ongoing communication. The following mechanisms will be used: community meetings; school and district meetings; press releases; superintendent roundtables; the district's website; electronic and print newsletters; the distribution of meeting notes; joint stakeholder nights; professional development sessions; and parent centers.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This section of the districts grant lacks clarity and the inclusion of information is challenging to locate. There is no rationale provided for selecting performance measures, nor how the measures will provide timely information toward a theory of action; or how the measure will be reviewed or improved. The general process for reviewing goals is described somewhat in section E (4). No subgroup information is included. Performance goals are not included; instead, just a chart with subject areas,</p>		

baseline data and targets; and there is no overarching goal stated. Twelve to 14 performance measures are not included; and expectations for the all population is listed, not the PK-3, 4-8, and 9-12 grade bands.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district will utilize an outcome evaluation method for the RTT grant review. A summary of areas that will be evaluated is listed and they align to the initiatives in the grant and the district's vision. Adjustments to the initiatives will be made when necessary. Data for grade bands and programs will be analyzed. A partnership with the Dallas Baptist University will be established and they will conduct a yearly evaluation of the RTT program (January and May). The grant includes a list of faculty who will conduct the evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be shared with all stakeholders.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The district includes a budget that outlines expenses for all four years of the grant. Each budget category is explained along with how funding for each category will be used. A budget table is included for each activity with a detailed description of expectations. The district includes rationales for each component of the budget and the expenses seem reasonable, except for the high cost for travel. The explanation in the charts lacks clarity with identifying one-time and ongoing costs; there is no wording in the body of the charts to know which cost descriptions are one-time verse ongoing costs.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The district states that prior to applying for the RTT grant, they had already started some of the initiatives focused on personalized learning and college readiness. Funds have been used from other grant awards to begin these initiatives. A detailed list and explanation of strategies for sustaining the initiatives is provided. The strategies explained are reasonable.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: Overall, the district's RTT application addresses personalized learning for students and emphasizing building the capacity of all stakeholders in an effort to close the achievement gap. It makes references the expectations of Absolute Priority 1 throughout its application. The inclusion of specific performance measures for different grade bands and data for college and career readiness can enhance its application. The descriptions and explanations demonstrate the district's commitment to enhancing its current programs to allow for personalized learning and add to its existing programs to ensure that its students are college and career ready. Its charts and explanations of the programs that will be supported through the RTT grant allow one to understand how it plans to significantly improve teaching and learning.		

Total	210	185
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