



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0341TN-1 for Dickson County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The project embodies a broad, comprehensive plan with the primary focus not only on students, but equally on teachers and school administrators. The applicant recognizes that to effect meaningful and sustainable reform, teacher and administrator deficiencies must be addressed at the same time as student interventions are implemented. For each of the two partner school districts, a "Reform Conceptual Framework" chart lists major challenges, identified deficiencies, reform priorities and strategies, and outcomes to provide a foundation from which to build programs that address the RTTT-D four core educational assurance areas.</p> <p>The applicant states, "Personalized learning is an emerging trend in K-12 education". Not clearly described is how the project's prescriptive or personalized learning paths for students differ significantly from various models of personalized learning that have been utilized in schools for at least two decades under different labels (e.g., student-directed, student-centered, individualized education plan (IEP), independent study).</p> <p>The project Focus Strand (2) Teacher / Leader Excellence lacks a detailed description of specific actions, activities, best practices, and assessments that will be used to improve teacher and administrator performance.</p> <p>A teacher Performance Pay Plan will be available to current teacher project participants; however, of the 1,638 teachers that will be included in the project, the budget may be inadequate, allocating annual performance pay for only 50 teachers and administrators. Unclear is why the applicant chose to allocate performance pay for a limited number of teachers and administrators when the expectation for success of the project appears to be to improve performance of a significantly higher number.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The participating schools appear to have been selected based on the number and/or percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligibility for low-income students. As stated, the similarity in needs across low-income students, combined with similar sub-population achievement data across grade levels were factors included in selection of the 33 project schools. Unclear are the specific data and parameters used to compare how the school-wide and specific sub-populations were compared.</p> <p>As described, it appears that the one primary criterion for inclusion in the project is percentage of low-income students (FRL eligible). Additional explanation is not found how the applicant determined the minimum percentage of low-income students for a school to qualify for inclusion in the project. For example, one school has only a 28.51% population of low-income students, which is significantly lower than each of the other participating schools. Additional data on which to base selection of this school is not found.</p> <p>The applicant fulfilled criteria (b) and (c) by including a list of participating schools and the data chart including the schools..</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	1

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

A "Theory of Change" flow chart clearly illustrates the project components; however, it is unclear and somewhat confusing how each of the components is linked to the Implementation Plan activities and deliverables.

The Theory of Change chart does not provide a clear linkage between students, teachers, and other key stakeholders, resulting in confusion of the bridges between target groups, key activities, outcomes, and deliverables.

Lacking is a description of how the project will be scaled up and implemented beyond the participating schools.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Overall achievement appears to be ambitious yet feasible, dependent on the implementation and outcomes of project interventions and activities. Correlated to overall achievement are expected outcomes for decreasing the achievement gap, which appear to be realistic if the participants reach the targets for overall achievement.

The description of activities that will be designed to support overall achievement is vague and lacks details of those activities. How teachers and administrators will identify specific areas in which students need support is not clearly articulated. The "multiple opportunities and pathways" students will have to improve their learning and success are not defined. Although data are provided to document the expected rate of improvement in several areas (e.g., achievement gap, graduation rate), specific steps to achieve improvement are not described in detail.

Although not substantially ambitious, the expectation to increase graduation rates may be realistic and feasible. When compared to the expected overall achievement increase and achievement gap decrease, the expected increase in graduation rate after four years appears to be quite low at only 1.6% for one partner.

The post-grant expectation for college enrollment is only two-thirds of participating students, which for the two school districts reflects an increase of 16% and 12.4%. Correlated to the expected increases in overall achievement, the data do not appear to support the efficacy that would be expected of an ambitious, high-quality project.

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	3

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant presents data that support the need for project goals and outcomes based on changes in the rigor and increased proficiency levels on State assessments, adoption and implementation of Common Core State Standards, and prior work accomplished in the First to the Top initiative. Despite the increase in assessment rigor and higher expectations for student and teacher performance, the two-year achievement trends in elementary and middle school reading and math overall appear to be relatively stable or slightly improving. Some of the scores are significantly higher, which indicates that overall, elementary and middle school students are improving in reading and in some math areas. The data support the need for the strategies that the applicant will implement in the RTTT-D project to address areas of critical need for both students and teachers.

High school ACT scores indicate a slight two-year improvement in composite, English, reading, math, and science reasoning achievement over State scores, but the comparison of scores and trends does not appear statistically significant, overall ranging from ~0.8% to less than 3.0%. Lacking is a specific discussion of grades 9-12 current success, the specific strategies that were implemented to achieve success, and project expected ACT and other achievement indicators to show improvement by the end of the grant project.

Prior efforts implemented in First to the Top Scopes of Work are described; however, specific impacts of each one are not defined. For example, two instructional support coaches were hired to sustain strategies presented in professional development for middle school teachers, but lacking is a description of how the coaches' efforts specifically supported improvement in teacher implementation of professional development strategies that resulted in increased student achievement.

Minimal information is found related to how the project strategies and interventions have supported increased graduation and college enrollment rates, particularly in the lowest-achieving high schools. Creation of alternative pathways to graduation are listed, but not found is a description of strategies for all subpopulations of low-achieving and low-income high school students.

(b) Strategies are listed that have supported reform measures in the consortium's lowest-achieving schools for the last two years; however, not found are specific information about each strategy (e.g., how progress reporting and parent conferences impacted reform progress) and the measured outcomes of their impact on reform measures. How many students and teachers derived benefit from the reform measures is unclear, as well as how any of the strategies impacted equity and other disparity issues for teachers and students.

(c) The applicant employs multiple venues to ensure dissemination of student performance data to parents, educators, and the community. In-person, online, and local media venues are employed to ensure a broad range of stakeholders have access to data.

Lacking in the description of venues to ensure information dissemination is specifically how many workshops "regularly scheduled workshops" means, a definition of "enhance transparency data" and specific steps taken by the system information officer to disseminate information. The number of community presentations with local civic and government members is not included (e.g., annually, quarterly, monthly). How often parent conferences are conducted is critical to parent involvement success; however, neither the number of conferences is stated nor the opportunity, if any, for parents to request conferences on a regular or as needed basis.

Training is not included for all stakeholders on how to read, analyze, and use the data; therefore, it is questionable if stakeholders are able to effectively use the data to inform and improve all aspects of the education system.

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

One of the partner school districts makes information available by request, while the other district's budget is available online through the district website. Both districts maintain teacher and instructional staff required financial records that are open to the public either online or by request.

Not found is a plan by the one district to improve transparency with a change in system so that the public and other stakeholders can access information online or by other means without submitting a request. The absence of a system that can be easily accessed at any time by stakeholders may present a barrier to some.

Unclear is whether or not both districts present their financial reports to governing bodies in public forums. Information is not included how the public is informed of the presentations and if the presentations are recorded and archived for access by all stakeholders.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The State Reform Agenda includes adoption of Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and math to support increased rigor in curricula. Expansion of the State data system is described as providing access to assessment data that will support personalized instruction for teachers to access instructional plans and increase their skills at their own pace, as well as personalized assessment, practice to improve instruction, and benchmarks to track student progress.

Expansion of the State data system has improved access for teachers to monitor student progress based on formative and summative data. The data access improvement is a key to the successful implementation of the consortium's project.

The applicant states that the State Reform Agenda provides autonomy for districts to implement their personalized reforms; however, how autonomous the districts can be is not fully explained. Although State reforms "allow much flexibility" and provide "a strong support system", the extent of the flexibility is not defined and details are not found to define what entails a strong support system.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a)(i) The unions representing teachers in both partner districts signed agreements and letters of support for the project. A description of engagement of stakeholders indicates that sufficient time and opportunities to provide feedback were provided to the selected stakeholders.

A plan for continuous feedback from stakeholders "will be established"; however, a brief outline of key components of a plan are not included.

(b) Letters of support (18) are from two teacher unions, numerous businesses, universities, chambers of commerce, and various levels of local government.

Ten of the letters of support are the same template, signed by different stakeholders. Without at least a minimal personalized statement of support, it is difficult to determine the impact of the project on the stakeholders and any actual support the stakeholders may provide. Not found are letters from parent, education, or civil rights organizations; tribes; early learning programs; or individual teachers at participating school sites.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The analysis of the current status of personalized learning environments produced three major student-centered strands of information that will inform the project design, implementation, and modification.

District use of "off-the-shelf" programs to implement interventions lacks a clear outline of the programs and the specific outcomes expected from each one. It is unclear if any of the programs or resources have been selected and how teachers, students, and parents, as applicable, may be trained to use them.

Not explained are how "extra time and support blocks" during the school day and "after school opportunities" differ from traditional "pull-out" and after school remediation or acceleration programs. Lacking is a description of the modifications, if any, that will need to be made to traditional classroom schedules and number of teachers and instructional support staff, modifications to student activity and work schedules, transportation for after-school programs and Saturday academies, and/or parent daycare options.

It is unclear and confusing to which "Implementation Chart Appendix (A)(1)" the applicant refers. One chart is an Implementation Plan and is referenced to criterion (A)(4). Two other charts are each an "Extended Day Plan" without reference to a specific criterion. A fourth chart is "High Quality Professional Development Plan" without reference to a criterion.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes an ambitious, broad in scope, student centered approach to personalized learning that is designed to ensure all students have multiple opportunities to take charge of their own achievement, progress, and remediation, as applicable. To facilitate student personalized learning, educators will be provided with professional development opportunities that will focus on the link between education and work. This link is a key to guiding and facilitating student choices in the design of their high school programs as they plan for graduation and transition to college and/or career.

Students will have multiple school formats to address their individual needs (e.g., classroom, online, extended day, academies). As described, students will have access to multiple formative and summative assessments to measure their own achievement and progress. The electronic dashboard and portfolios; online courses, tutorials, and grade portals; and various formats to self-assess their progress provide excellent means for students to design and implement a high-quality personalized learning plan. With the State adoption of the Common Core State Standards, students can be confident that these standards will be the guide to prepare them to be competitive regionally and nationally. Rigorous, multiple State assessments will provide students with achievement and progress data to support their choices in how they structure their learning programs. Students trained in the use of data based decision-making should be more confident that they are making sound choices in designing their personalized learning plans.

Although the applicant addresses the criteria, the content is generic and does not provide specific details that would indicate in-depth planning has occurred. Lacking is information by which the quality of the plan can be measured. Omitted are details of a solid, high-quality, strategic plan, such as how often personalized learning plans will be reviewed for modification; how often "regular, recurring" review of electronic portfolios will occur; how professional development opportunities for educators will be selected, how often educators will be able to access opportunities, and how the

efficacy of the opportunities will be assessed not only for return on investment in dollars and time spent, but the immediate and ongoing benefit to students.

Resources are listed (e.g., ThinkLink, PLAN, Explore) that will be available to students, parents, and teachers to support the review of the efficacy and decisions about modifications of student personalized learning plans. Not found is a clear, detailed description how these resources can be used independently or linked to provide the information.

Without more detailed information how "innovative learning approaches" move beyond the traditional formats (e.g., online college courses, interactive tutorials, academic support), the variety of opportunities as listed are not innovative and have been utilized for years nationwide in various forms.

The description of themed academies to enable students to be involved in deep learning experiences of academic interest lacks details to be able to assess the potential benefit and innovation of the academies. Not defined is what constitutes "entire school teams" to develop and sustain the academies. It is unclear if the teams include entire school forces of teachers, administrators, instructional support staff, parents, and/or students or smaller teams of selected individuals.

Insufficient information is provided regarding leveraging community support to provide students with workforce opportunities, such as "internships, co-op programs, etc.". Which businesses will provide specifically what types of opportunities is not described. Lacking is information how the programs will be designed, implemented, monitored, and assessed, as well as how and how many students will be selected for the programs, provided transportation if needed, and prepare an assessment of the benefit to their overall goals and learning plans. The limited number of project support letters from businesses and a lack of commitment in the letters to provide specific opportunities indicates that sufficient planning has not occurred.

The list of intended high-quality instructional programs is vague, generic, and does not include a definition or description of how these programs will be high-quality, rather than business as usual. Confusing and incomplete is the list of mechanisms to provide training and support to students and parents to ensure they are competent in the use of tools and resources. How the technology needs of parents will be addressed is not described, particularly if the parents are non-English speaking. Omitted is a description of the types of training, how often training will be conducted to accommodate parent schedules (e.g., weekly, 24/7), who and how many people will provide support, and whether or not the Parent Centers and Family Resource Centers are accessible to a large number of parents.

Overall, the applicant appears to have compiled a list of appropriate resources, interventions, and strategies to address these criteria; however, the list is generic and omitted is substantive detail to indicate in-depth strategic planning has occurred.

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

These criteria are designed to primarily focus on how project goals and strategies will develop high-quality teachers and leaders, with outcomes that positively impact student learning, achievement, graduation, and transition to college and/or careers. The responses to these criteria are somewhat confusing as to whether or not the primary focus is on teachers, administrators, school leaders, and/or students. The responses lack clarity, cohesiveness, coherency, and specific strategy details.

The applicant initially provides a description that is student oriented regarding dual credit enrollment, Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities, and career academies with monitoring of CTE completers. Minimal information is provided regarding professional development for CTE teachers in the academies.

Lacking is a cohesive link among various groups of teachers at all grade levels and how the training they will receive will correlate to overall progress and efficacy of the project to prepare students for graduation and transition to college and/or careers. Insufficient information is provided how teachers will benefit from training and implement lessons learned for Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and for K-2 teachers on implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and grades 3-8 teachers on CCSS math during a 3-day training.

The applicant intends to purchase an "electronic instructional improvement program" and "one-to-one" and "two-to-one" technology devices for each district. Students in grades 4-12 will have access to the system at school and home. Not explained are the technology devices and how teachers and leaders will benefit from their use, training for teachers and leaders to use the devices, and how the use of the devices will be monitored and maintained.

The applicant jumps from a statement about providing transportation for students to attend after-school support sessions to district expansion of response-to-intervention from K-5 reading to include math. Inadequate is the response to criterion (c), "Training will be provided to the professional

learning community in order to build capacity in administrator and educator effectiveness." The response to criterion (d) is limited to vague statements that grant funds will support signing bonuses of teachers in hard to fill positions, quality professional development will be provided to teachers and administrators, and the district will participate in job fairs to recruit highly-qualified teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) An overview and summary of the State Department of Education and district governance structure indicate that school teachers and administrators have some autonomy in decision-making and are moving more toward a more collaborative partnership, rather than a top-down hierarchy.

Specific support and services provided by specific district leaders are omitted.

(b) As described and based on letters of support, districts will share with the county and State the authority for districtwide and school site decision-making. Letters of support from the two teachers unions indicate support for project strategies that impact teachers (e.g., alternative assignments, performance pay, professional development requirements).

The applicant states, "School boards, principals, staff, and advisory boards have input into system-level decisions such as school calendars, staffing recommendations, budgets, and responsibilities for educators and support personnel. County government officials approve budgets." Omitted is how much and of what type of input each governing and advisory group will have. Not described is the type of advisory boards, the members, how the members are selected, and the role the advisory boards will play in the project. Omitted is the extent of flexibility and autonomy for school administrators and teacher leaders regarding each component. Information is not provided whether or not school administrators have final authority in hiring teachers, grant funds expenditures, and re-organization of school systems.

(c) Insufficient information is provided to address this criterion. The applicant states that the consortium districts "believe strongly in the traditional student-teacher relationship" in a traditional classroom format. The applicant emphasizes the use of alternative pathways to graduation for only two student groups. Omitted is a description of how the traditional classroom format and/or these alternative pathways for these two groups, as well as all students, provide the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic.

(d) Insufficient information is provided to address this criterion. Districts are described as complying with optional State assessment requirements, but no effort is made to expand, refine, or improve alternative assessment for all students. Some teachers of specific subjects and grade levels are briefly described as providing accommodations and modifications during assessments. Omitted is a description of how the project will address this criterion to provide all students with "opportunities to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways."

(e) Insufficient information is provided to address this criterion. A brief statement indicates "resources and instructional practices" currently exist in the district to address the needs of all students, including those with disabilities and English language learners. Omitted is a description of the resources and instructional practices, how they will be linked to project goals and strategies, and data to document the efficacy of the resources and strategies, including how data will be used to inform project strategies implementation and modification. Omitted is a description of how current resources and instructional practices will support the project personalized learning plan format.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	1
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Insufficient information is provided to address this statement. The applicant states that "Current resources and instructional practices in the districts are adaptable and fully accessible to all . . ." Omitted is a description of specific resources and instructional practices that are relevant to the project and personalized learning plans, as well as specifically how students, parents, and other key stakeholders will be able to access them. Lacking is a discussion of how grant funds will be allocated to ensure low-income students and parents have access to necessary resources.

(b) Insufficient information is provided to address this statement. "Appropriate staffing", "instructional and technology coaches", "Additional staff", and "vendors" will provide support to teachers and parents. Omitted is a description of the number of support personnel in each school, specifically what activities they will implement to deliver support, and how the need for specific levels of support will be determined. The statement, "Additional staff will be needed in the technology departments to work with the product and the additional hardware" omits any information about what type and how many staff, whether the reference is to district or school site technology departments, and specifically which product and additional hardware is referenced.

(c) As described, the applicant is in the process of either utilizing an information technology (IT) system referenced by the State or in lieu of nonavailability of that system, searching independently for an appropriate IT solution. Omitted is a discussion of how the State tested IT system may or may not meet the needs of teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Lacking is a description of the requirements needed to ensure parents and students can fully utilize the selected system. A timeframe is not included for selection of an IT system, analysis of its appropriate use for parents and students, installation and testing, and training on use of the system.

(d) A brief description of a system used for Response to Intervention tiers does not specifically explain how this system will be effectively utilized in the RTTT-D project. Unclear is how districts and schools will use interoperable data systems to ensure project information is available to all stakeholders.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

As described, the plan for continuous improvement of the project does not specifically address evaluation of the efficacy of project goals, student progress and success using the new personalized learning plans, and the use of new technology by teachers, students, and parents, and other stakeholders.

For the first time, "system guidebook visits" are noted as components of school principals' evaluation portfolios; however, no explanation is included how these guidebooks will be used as effective evaluation tools specific to the project.

Strategies listed appear to be generic, rather than designed for the project. For example, "educational focus groups" appear for the first time, omitting an explanation of who will comprise the groups, how the members will be selected, and the specific role each group would play in the project to enhance communication, as well as how focus group roles will be enhanced. Lacking is a clear and cohesive explanation of what entails focus group reporting of data to district and community stakeholders. Omitted is what data will be reported and how the data will be used to inform continuous improvement of the project.

The list of "Strategies to monitor for fidelity of student outcomes" lacks measures that are specific to the personalized learning plans and alternative learning formats of the project. The list appears to be one that would already be in place at the State and/or district levels, and not one that is designed specifically to measure individual student satisfaction, needs, barriers, progress, and/or achievement within the project.

As listed, the strategies to inform the continuous improvement process are not components of a high-quality plan to monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by RTTT-D, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Provided is a chart of stakeholders and their roles in internal and external communication, including specific key messages each group will be tasked with disseminating. Various communication vehicles will target specific audiences. This organizational chart is a good first step toward creating a high-quality internal and external communication plan.

Not found are letters of support or commitment from various stakeholders listed as key to the success of project communication and community engagement (e.g., media, ministries). Innovation in communication strategies is absent and an assumption without substantial evidence appears to be made that online survey feedback from district and school website users will be used to "drive decisions and offer adjustments". The types of surveys and sample questions that may be used are omitted; therefore, it is unclear how surveys will effectively inform project modifications or improve communication.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Data tables for all grade levels PreK-12 provide baseline and target performance measures. Not found in the data tables, Narrative, and Appendix (E) (3) is information to address the required criteria: (a) rationale for selecting that measure; (b) how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and (c) how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

Some of the tables do not specify the baseline year; however, an assumption is made that it is 2011-12. Not found in the Narrative and data tables is an explanation why specific target numbers and percentages were selected. For example, the grade 11 performance measure of mean ACT composite scores has a goal to increase scores by only 0.1 points per year. Omitted is an explanation why the target increase is so minimal; therefore, an assumption is that the total increase of 0.5 points over four years is not statistically significant and does not support ambitious project goals and outcomes.

A grades 4-8 health or social-emotional indicator is "Average of 95% attendance rate". Without an explanation of how attendance rate is linked to this criterion and successful implementation of the project, the indicator may be considered inappropriate..

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The strategies for evaluation of the project are generic and lack substantial details to form a high-quality evaluation of the project. Omitted from the list of project evaluation strategies are explanations how each strategy will be applied alone and linked to other strategies to determine project efficacy and return on investment of funds, resources, and personnel. For example, "Monitor for usage of technology by both students and teachers" lacks a clear, concise explanation how and how often the monitoring will be conducted, what qualitative and/or quantitative data will be collected, and how the conclusions drawn from the monitoring will fit into the larger, overall project evaluation.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the two districts will commit \$2,711,123 over the four-year grant period; however, the source and percent of the funds from each source is omitted (e.g., local, State, foundation, federal). Not found is a letter of commitment or some type of agreement that the partners will ensure the funds will be allocated to the project. One-time (e.g., Project Coordinator) and ongoing (e.g., hardware maintenance) investments are identified.

The funds allocations appear to be sufficient for the majority of project budget categories; however, a brief rationale and cost basis for items is insufficient to support budget justification. Personnel salaries and fringe benefits appear to be consistent with the positions the funds will support; however, slightly more than 5% of the budget is allocated for performance pay for 50 teachers and administrators, which may not be realistic if the number of high-performing educators significantly exceeds expectations.

Approximately 67% of the budget is allocated to the purchase and maintenance of hardware and software. The amount may be reasonable; however, other budget categories appear to be underfunded or not funded. Throughout the Narrative, project activities and strategies include bus transportation for low-income students to attend after-school classes; however, it is unclear if transportation and other expenses will be provided for Saturday academies and local business internships. Not found is funding to support parents to receive training and remove barriers to the use of the new technology platform.

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

The applicant states that the two partner districts have made a commitment to invest more than \$2.7 million allocated over the four-year grant period. The applicant states, "While not all focus strands of this plan can become self-sustaining . . ."; however, omitted is an explanation of which specific focus strands the statement refers, the impact on parts or the whole project of discontinuing any one or more strands, and the possible direct impact on a system which will have invested more than \$32 million in the project.

Not found is a letter of commitment or other form of agreement signed by the partner districts that ensures sustainability of all or part of the project; therefore, it may be questionable if sustainability is possible.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

This priority is not addressed.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

As proposed, the RTTT-D project overall is an ambitious template to address the needs of all students, improve the quality of teachers and administrators, reward educators who meet high standards for their own performance, and involve parents and community stakeholders to invest in the progress and achievement of students.

As described, the applicant did not present a compelling case that extensive planning had occurred in the design of the project and that the project has potential to achieve the outcomes and performance measures described. At times confusing and lacking required information and detailed descriptions and explanations, the Narrative and Appendices lack clarity that the potential exists for the project strategies to achieve outcomes and meet performance measures. The majority of the Narrative is generic and often vague, without details to document innovation and linkage of project strategies.

The applicant admits that some components of the project may not be sustainable beyond the grant period. Without letters and/or agreements from community stakeholders, grantors, and/or other sources, it is questionable if the project can be sustained.

Data to support decreasing the achievement gap and increasing achievement among disadvantaged student populations were not consistent. Over four years, an increase in the graduation rate and multiple formative and summative benchmark assessment target scores at all grade levels for various assessments varied from minimal (less than 1%) to ambitious (23%) without a clear explanation of why target scores were selected.

Total	210	55
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0341TN-2 for Dickson County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Although Strand I directly addresses the A 1 goal of equity by personalizing student support, the underlying strategy of after school remediation for unsuccessful students is not one that typically attracts high levels of student participation or results in increased learning among most such students—especially as students get older, more independent, and fill their after school time with work or activities. The statement appearing in the Dickson County Extended Day Plan that students will be required to attend after school, and the provision in both County's plans for after school buses are not sufficient descriptions of how this problematic approach will be made to work in the DRC. For this reason, Strand I does not meet the tests in A 1 of being likely to accelerate or deepen student learning.

Strands II and III do not directly address any of the three A 1 goals. In addition, there is no explanation of how or why the proposed salary and performance pay inducements proposed in Strand II will significantly increase the number of effective educators working with low performing or high needs students, result in the filling of a substantial number of DRC's hard to staff assignments, or substantially increase the numbers of effective educators working in low performing schools. In Strand III there is no attempt to explain how increasing the supply of teachers certified to teach AP, IB, or dual credit courses will result in increased student enrollment or greater success among those who do enroll. There is no explanation of how the increase in these courses will contribute to either greater enrollment or higher levels of achievement, and no explanation of how an increased number of internships will result in more students being more career-ready.

The scope of the vision, to impact 19,500+ students and 33 schools, is very ambitious. Such ambition typically requires a specific and detailed plan for implementation. Such a plan is not provided. The DRC Implementation Plan uses Goals which do not coincide with the A 1 goals; so, it is not possible to connect the Activities which are included in the Implementation Plan with the A 1 goals. The same is true for the Deliverables described in this Plan. The time lines for both Activities and Deliverables are the entire four year duration of the RTT D grant. The lack of direct connection with the A 1 goals, the absence of detail, and the lack of specificity all reduce the credibility of this Plan and this vision. Because the A 1 goals are not each addressed directly, because the key initiatives each contain apparent weaknesses, and because the scope of the vision lacks credibility, the Applicant cannot be

said to have articulated a comprehensive or coherent vision. This section earns points in the low mid range.

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

The DRC names each school that will participate in the grant activities, and it provides the aggregated and disaggregated data regarding participating students as required by the Application. The list of schools includes every one of the 33 schools in the two consortium-member districts. The tables indicate that every one of the 19,500+ students enrolled in the two districts are to participate in the grant activities.

High quality implementation of this broad scope approach requires a detailed and highly specific implementation plan. The DRC's Implementation is not that. The Goals stated in the Implementation Plan are not the same as the goals in A 1 of the Application. This prevents one from linking the Activities and the Deliverables described in Implementation Plan with any of the goals in A 1 of the Application. The time lines are collapsed so that in most instances there are four years, the life of the grant, to produce them. Those responsible for Activities and Deliverables are described in general categories rather than by name or specific position. Strand I as described in the DRC's vision in A 1 is the only place a group of students is linked directly to a grant activity, the extended day initiative. Otherwise, the DRC has not identified any priorities among either the schools or sub-groups of students to be served. All of these factors reduce the credibility and quality of the Plan. They earn the approach to implementation points in the low end of the mid range.

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

The vision of DRC is to include every one of the 19,500+ students enrolled in its consortium and to include each one of the 33 schools in the member districts. Apparently for that reason, the narrative does not directly address the issue of scaling up implementation over time.

The DRC's Implementation Plan does not meet the requirement of being high quality. The Goals stated in the Implementation Plan are not the same as the goals in A 1 of the Application. This prevents one from linking the Activities and the Deliverables described in Implementation Plan with any of the goals in A 1. The time lines are collapsed so that in most instances four years, the entire duration of the grant, are allotted for producing the Activities and Deliverables. Those responsible for Activities and Deliverables are described in general categories, and the layout of the Implementation Plan makes it unclear who is responsible for what. The narrative and the accompanying diagram do not present a clear or specific rationale for either the Activities or the Deliverables. All of these factors reduce the credibility and quality of the Plan. The response earns points in the low mid range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The DRC does not describe its aspirations for improvement in student performance on summative assessments in terms of annual goals, and it does not differentiate between proficiency status and growth. Both sets of data were required. The DRC does not compare its goals with those of the State. This means that it cannot be determined whether DRC's annual goals are ambitious.

The DRC is not projecting any annual improvement in any of the designated achievement gaps above that which the State projects will occur state-wide. This suggests that the DRC's goals are not ambitious. This also suggests that the grant activities will have no greater impact on DRC students than if its grant activities were not funded.

There is no explanation of how the DRC made its projections for improvement in graduation rates and no comparison with projections for graduation rates state-wide. There is no explanation of how the DRC made its projections for improvement in college enrollment and no comparison with state-wide projections. This means that it cannot be determined whether DRC's annual goals are ambitious in either area.

The DRC does not explain with any specificity how its grant activities will affect student performance in any of the areas of improvement targeted in (A)(1) and (A)(4). Where it does not use the State's projections for improvement (with one exception), the DRC projects a flat annual rate of improvement in each of the targeted areas. This suggests that the DRC has not considered whether the timing of its activities or their nature will have any discernible effect on student performance. This detracts from the credibility of both their vision and implementation plan. These factors indicate that the DRC's vision is not likely to result in improved student performance in the targeted areas. The response earns points in the low 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	9
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The DRC urges that its response be based on the past three years of data rather than four because the State raised standards and the required score for scores of Proficient in 2010. This seems appropriate given the facts cited.</p> <p>a. Dickson County presents a mixed three year record of improving achievement. There are gains in some subjects and almost no gains in others. The results for closing achievement gaps are acknowledged to be "minimal." Significant annual gains have been made in the County's graduation rate. There is no mention of college enrollment. Robertson County reports positive trends for three years in almost all subjects to be accounted for. The County reports multiple gains in closing achievement gaps. There have been small annual gains in the graduation rate. There is no reference in the narrative to college enrollment.</p> <p>Tables with either raw or analyzed data pertinent to the applicable criteria are scattered among the various appendices. Neither the tables nor the data included are clearly labeled or explained. This makes verifying and analyzing the DRC's assertions difficult.</p> <p>b. The districts comprising the DRC have invested substantial new resources and initiated additional support for struggling student in their nine lower performing schools. The districts have also placed seven new administrators in these schools in the past two years. The DRC refers to "Report Card (A)(1)" for verification of the assertion that the involved schools have shown growth in reading/language arts and mathematics. Because the schools and which of the various report cards in the appendices provide the necessary data were not specified, this reference did not provide sufficient verification.</p> <p>c. The DRC provides a list of activities which it regards as meeting the applicable criteria. The narrative does not include a sufficient explanation of how the activities address the criteria. There is sufficient description of the activities, however, so that it can be concluded that students and families are given several kinds of ways to access performance data and some opportunities to access and make meaning of the data. It can also be reasonably inferred that educators have similar access, understand the data, and can use it for planning and communication. The DRC does not explain how the listed activities result in improved participation, instruction, or services.</p> <p>The response earns points in the mid range.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The DRC's does not make a direct and clear response to whether the four minimum categories of expenditures are made available.</p> <p>Regarding Dickson County, it appears that a member of the public could go on the District's website and, if s/he selected the correct report option, could learn the actual personnel salaries of a. school-level instructional and support staff, b. instructional staff only; and c. teachers only. This response does not specify whether there are actually reports which provide the above information or whether a member of the public must extrapolate from the report options available on line. It is not clear whether or how a member of the public could obtain the actual non-personnel expenditures for any specific school.</p>		

Regarding Robertson County, a member of the public could not obtain any of this information at the District's offices. The information is kept at the offices of the "local government"--presumably the County government's offices. There it appears that a member of the public would have to request to see the District's budget and specify the correct report to obtain the information under "a.", "b.", and "c." above. As with Dickson County, the response does not specify whether there are actually reports which provide the above information or whether a member of the public must extrapolate from the report options available at the County offices. It is not clear from the response how a member of the public would learn what the actual non-personnel expenditures for a specific school were.

The burden and challenges placed before a member of the public by the two Districts collectively to obtain the minimum items of information described represents a low level of transparency.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The DRC's vision contemplates three Strands which it believes will enable it to provide Individual Learning Plans and learning experiences for each of its students (Strand I), enable it to substantially increase the number of its effective/highly effective educators and to increase equity by distributing the services of these educators to better serve struggling students and fill demanding staff positions (Strand II), and enable it to significantly improve the college/career readiness of its graduates by increasing the numbers of teachers teaching and students participating in advanced placement/dual credit courses and career-focused internships (Strand III).

By listing and describing Tennessee's Race to the Top-funded activities which support various one's of its Strands, the DRC provides strong evidence that the State has created conditions and sufficient autonomy for the DRC to realize its vision. The evidence includes:

- the State's continues to work with a consortia of other states to create rigorous common core standards, curricula, and assessments consistent with increasing participation in STEM-related learning and college/career readiness (Strand I)
- the State's is continuing to build a high quality data system linked to its curricula, standards, and assessments; capable of connecting individual student's with educators of record (Strands I and II)
- the State's has developed a rigorous and transparent system for educator evaluation (Strand II)
- the State has given individual district's the autonomy to use instructional and contractual time to implement the district's reforms (all three Strands)
- the State has given districts the autonomy in budgeting and spending its funds to create salary schedules, staff positions, and monetary incentives consistent with each district's reform activities (all three Strands)
- the State has given districts authority and autonomy in budgeting and spending so that it can resource a variety of non-personnel resources and activities consistent with its reform vision (all three Strands)

This evidence and DRC's ability to show how the State's efforts and its vision complement one another justify points in the high range.

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

10

5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Collectively, the evidence of stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal is not strong. The reasons include:

- The evidence of student involvement is limited to two Robertson County student advisory agendas neither or which mentions the proposal. There are no letters of support from students or student groups.
- The 19,500+ participating students all presumably have families, but other than the assertion in the narrative that they were involved, there is no evidence of it. Significantly, there are no letters of support from parents identifying themselves as such or from any parent group.
- Both County's teachers' union leaders did sign letters of support. This is significant and meets the minimum requirement of support from teachers collectively. The letters, however, are duplicates of one another. They reflect a

modest grasp of the substance of the proposal and a modest level of enthusiasm, focusing first on the money available and secondarily on what a funded proposal would enable union members to do.

- The sole reference to principals' involvement is a mention in the narrative of an "informal meeting" of "school administrators" at the beginning of the effort to apply for this grant. There is no letter of support from any group of administrators whether site-based or supervisors.
- Five hundred thirty one educators or 54 percent of all participating educators replied on the Survey Monkey survey. This is a large and significant number. The survey, however, only asked for participation in the proposal at the level of a respondent indicating his/her preferences among 11 packages of resources. By itself, this does not represent meaningful involvement in the development of the proposal.
- There were 15 letters of support. Thirteen were duplicates of one another. This suggests that the authors knew little of the proposal. This suggests that the authors were, at least in part, simply providing a professional courtesy to the leaders of the DRC.
- Given that the proposal is to address struggling students, achievement gaps, and equity, that there are no letters of support from advocacy groups or civil rights groups is notable.
- There are few or no letters from organizations who could partner with the DRC to provide career ready experiences or internships for students.

For these reasons the response earns points in the mid range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The DRC does not present a high quality plan for analyzing its current status in implementing personalized learning environments. The logic behind the proposal is not compelling.

Instead of a plan, the DRC asserts that it has already concluded these analyses, and it provides a bulleted list of resources and services which it found among its 33 schools. There are few pertinent details. Instead, there are a short series of generalizations about the various resources and services which DRC says can be found somewhere among the two districts' schools.

The connections between these bulleted lists and the three Stands in the DRC's vision of reform (i.e. the "logic" of DRC's proposal) are not apparent, described, or analyzed. At best, some connections can be inferred. The last paragraph of the DRC's response contains a recital of activities the DRC says will be carried out sometime in the future.

The DRC cites two appendices in support of its response. The first, "Achievement Gaps (A) (1)," does not appear under that title in the appendices. If this is intended as a reference to the achievement gap data appearing in the State report cards, such data in the format presented does not serve as substitute for a high quality plan of analysis as required. Similarly, the second, "Implementation Chart Appendix (A) (1)," does not qualify as a high quality plan.

This response earns points in the low mid range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	4

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The DRC's response is not in the form of a high quality plan as the term is defined. The DRC provides bulleted lists of activities which are placed under headings which are the same as the several criteria and sub criteria appearing in the Application at "(C) (1)". Presumably, these headings are to be understood to be goals which the DRC is seeking to achieve and the bulleted lists are to be understood as activities designed to achieve the the "goal" under which they appear. What

is missing in terms of the requirements of a high quality plan are timelines indicating which activities will be completed when, who is responsible, and the reasons why this set of activities is likely to result in the "goal" being achieved. The DRC does not provide a table or chart which provides the missing information.

Without the missing information, it is not possible to assess the extent to which the listed activities are likely to have the desired effects among the 19,500+ participating students, the 980+ participating educators, and the 33 participating schools over the four year duration of the grant.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	3
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The DRC's response does not address this criterion using the form or substance of a high quality plan as that term is defined. In addition, the response does not attempt to directly or systematically address the requirements of each of the sub-criteria "(a)", "(b)", "(c)", or "(d)" which appear under the rubric "(C) (2)." More specifically:

- Re. "training" under sub-criterion "(a)": Very few of the various activities listed in the narrative address directly or indirectly the types of training specified under this sub-criterion. Because the requirements under the sub-criterion are as specific as they are, the sparseness of the response makes it inadequate.
- Re. "educator access" under sub-criterion "(b)": The only responsive reference is made to the requirements under this sub-criterion, and they occur in a paragraph describing the purchase of software described as "an electronic instructional improvement program." Confining the response to such a passing reference renders the response inadequate.
- Re. sub-criterion "(c)": Only brief and cryptic references are made to the kinds of training, polices, tools, data, and resources which could enable educators to assess and improve their colleagues' effectiveness and/or assess and improve school culture and climate. None are identified directly or grouped and labeled as contributing to the goals under "(c)." Such a response is inadequate.
- Re. increasing the numbers of students served by effective/highly effective educators under sub-criterion "(d)": There is no discussion of this matter in the narrative. There is nothing that is labeled as or can be argued to be a high quality plan to achieve equity in this regard. The response is inadequate.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

a. There are two District's comprising the DRC. The DRC response under this sub-criterion references appendices which are to include both the Robertson and Dickson County's pertinent School Board policies and organization charts. Those of Robertson County were found; those of Dickson County were not. The two one-page documents referring to Robertson County policy and organization can be interpreted to show that support and services are and will be provided to all schools participating in this grant.

b. The Robertson County organization chart does not directly document the existence of a District-level leadership team, but one can be inferred to exist. No such chart was found for Dickson County. The team described in the narrative potentially includes so many persons as to make it unwieldy and possibly dysfunctional. Without more specificity regarding membership of the system-level team and how it functions, it cannot be determined whether Robertson County currently meets the pertinent requirements as asserted. More important, neither the narrative nor the appendices show that the required autonomy and flexibility are currently afforded the principal's and/or the participating schools. In general, the Robertson County documents suggest the opposite. The DRC offers no high quality plan to provide any additional autonomy or flexibility.

- c. The response indicates that currently specific groups of students in specified instances can earn credit based on mastery.
 - d. In response to the requirement for students to have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways, the DRC asserts it meets the minimum State requirements and offers a short list of other instances in which the requirement is being met. The DRC does not claim that all 19,500+ of its participating students are so served, and it offers no plan to do so.
 - e. Without providing specifics, the DRC asserts it currently meets the requirement for universal accessibility for resources and instructional practices. There is no plan for continuous improvement.
- Collectively, these responses earn low points in the mid-range.

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

a. Without providing specifics, the DRC asserts it meets the pertinent requirements regarding resources and practices. Its assertion that it will provide equal access to programming and technology to all 19,500+ students in the future is not supported with a plan to make this happen.

b. The DRC does not indicate that it currently meets the requirements under this sub-criterion. It provides no plan to do so in the future.

c. The DRC seems to assert that it currently meets the requirements for using information systems which permit students and parents to export data as required, but it does not say so directly or unequivocally. It seems to say that it will meet the requirement for using data in other electronic learning systems either through the State's efforts or on its own. Such a statement does not constitute a high quality plan.

d. The DRC's response under this sub-criterion is neither direct nor focused. Therefore, it is not possible to determine what the current status is regarding the pertinent requirements. The DRC's response regarding future compliance is not in the form of a high quality plan.

Collectively, these responses earn points in the low range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

DRC's strategy for continuous improvement is to focus on the "Fidelity of Improvement" and "Fidelity of Student Outcomes." These terms are not defined and their meaning must be inferred from the list of activities under each. The DRC does not provide a rationale for choosing this approach. The DRC does not describe how these rubrics are linked to or support its Vision or any of the Three Strands included in it. The DRC does not explain how or why it picked the activities ("strategies" in DRC's narrative) found under each of the two rubrics. The DRC does not say how frequently or when it will monitor the activities. It does not describe the nature of the feedback it anticipates obtaining although in some instances this can be inferred. The DRC does not specify who will monitor which activity. The DRC does not say who will decide or what standards will be applied to decide if or when its plan of implementation will need to be modified. The DRC does not describe who will participate in correcting its plan if required. The "Conceptual Diagram" incorporated in the narrative does not provide any additional, helpful information.

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

Here the DRC is asked to describe its strategies to engage and communicate with stakeholders so that the DRC can gain feedback and information enabling it to improve its implementation plan during the life of the grant. The DRC offers

narrative and two tables. The tables are titled collectively as the “Dickson-Robertson County Communication Plan.” The response contains a compilation of activities which include most if not all forms of communication currently used in public education. The response is not focused as required and raises a series of concerns. The more important among them are:

- Presuming the labels under “Key Messages” in the first table are intended to have distinct meanings, the information regarding implementation of DRC's Vision to be shared with “Top Six [sic: Seven] Audiences” is different for each Audience.
- According to the first table, only “Teachers/Administrators” will receive “Reform criteria progress” information. Four of the six other Audiences will receive data under various labels which could or could not assist members of the Audiences to make judgments and give feedback on reform implementation. Two Audiences, the “Local Teacher Associations” and students, are not scheduled to receive any such information.
- There is no explanation or rationale for sharing certain kinds of information with one group and not others.
- Only the school board is scheduled to receive information on “Expenditures” under the Communication Plan. This can prevent any of the other six “Audiences” from making judgments on the quality of the investments under the grant as required.
- Outside the seven Audiences, there is just one other activity explicitly designed to provide information on DRC's progress with implementation. It is a monthly radio show devoted specifically to the DRC Vision.
- Among the myriad of activities listed by DRC in the narrative and the tables, the DRC does not specify occasions for either stakeholders generally or any of the seven Audiences to give the required feedback. Most of the activities preclude interaction between the disseminator of the information and the audience by their nature. Although evaluative exchanges can be anticipated to occur occasionally during some of the proposed activities (e.g. meetings among staff and school board meetings where implementation of the Vision is on the agenda), the failure to include them explicitly and uniformly detracts significantly and substantially from the credibility of the approach.

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

All "a." and "b.": Presuming that the goals the DRC states are achievable, three of the four tables show a large number of instances where it predicts that the percentage of students served by highly effective teachers and principals will reduce rather than increase. The reductions occur in the last years of the grant. This is the antithesis of improvement and calls into serious question the effectiveness of DRC's implementation plan, itself. This also prevents these goals from being labeled ambitious as the term is understood for purposes of this grant. In DRC's response for "b.", there seem to be errors in in the Dickson County data regarding effective educators. It appears that the numbers of highly effective educators were not added to those rated effective as required under FAQ “18f.

All "c.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- Despite the references to the State's “AMO's” and “on-target for high school graduation” measures, this response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- Because DRC's implementation plan as described thus far is of low quality overall, it is not clear that the proposed goals are achievable
- There is insufficient information to determine whether the improvement projected is ambitious as the term is understood under the grant application.

Pk-3 “a.”: Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- There is no explanation of why the data for Dickson and Robertson Counties are disaggregated here. Separating the proposals could be seen as contradicting DRC's Vision including its assertions that combining the otherwise sparse supervision and professional development resources of the two Districts will lead to more uniformity of implementation and greater efficiency in the use of resources.
- Because DRC's implementation plan as described thus far is of low quality overall, it is not clear that the proposed goals are achievable
- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measure, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups for Robertson County.

Pk-3 “b.”: Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- There is no explanation for why both County's projections are aggregated.
- There are no annual goals.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups.
- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- For the reasons above, it cannot be determined whether DRC's goals are ambitious.

Gr. 4-8 "a.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- There is no explanation of why the data for Dickson and Robertson Counties are disaggregated here. Separating the proposals could be seen as contradicting DRC's Vision including its assertions that combining the otherwise sparse supervision and professional development resources of the two Districts will lead to more uniformity of implementation and greater efficiency in the use of resources.
- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- There is are no projections for required sub-groups.
- Because DRC's implementation plan as described thus far is of low quality overall, it is not clear that the proposed goals are achievable
- There is insufficient information to determine whether the improvement projected is ambitious.

Gr. 4-8 "b.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- The goals for improvement are based on student performance before the proposed reforms are implemented. The apparent failure to consider the impact of the proposed reforms prevent DRC's goals from being seen as ambitious.
- The projections for Robertson County do not include the required projections for sub-groups.

Gr. 4-8 "c.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- The goals for improvement are based on student performance before the proposed reforms are implemented. The apparent failure to consider the impact of the proposed reforms prevent DRC's goals from being seen as ambitious.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups.

Gr. 9-12 "a.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- The goals for improvement are based on student performance before the proposed reforms are implemented. The failure to consider the impact of the proposed reforms prevent DRC's goals from being seen as ambitious.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups.

Gr. 9-12 "b.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- The goals for improvement are based on student performance before the proposed reforms are implemented. The projection of flat annual growth suggests the proposed grant-funded activities will not have a positive effect. This prevents the goals from being labeled ambitious.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups.
- There is no explanation of why the performance data and projections for the Counties are combined.

Gr. 9-12 "c.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups.
- The projections for student participation under both measures show no increases during the grant-funded years. This suggests that DRC does not expect this aspect of student performance to improve as a result of the grant-funded activities This in turn prevents the goals in this response from being labeled ambitious.

Gr. 9-12 "d.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups.
- There is no explanation of why the rate of annual improvement is the same for each of the grant-funded years and for the year which follows. This prevents a determination of whether the projected improvement is ambitious.
- It is not clear why the number and percentage of of participating students annually is not projected.

Gr. 9-12 "e.": Concerns which reduce the quality of this response include:

- This response does not include a rationale for the proposed performance measures, how the data obtained will provide leading information tailored to DRC's Vision or areas of concern, or how DRC will revise the measure to improve it if necessary.
- Projections are made for just one of the two Counties in the consortium.
- Apparently the projections are mislabeled. As they read, however, the projections show fewer (rather than more) students will meet the 95 percent attendance goal each year. Such goals are not ambitious and contradict the purposes of DRC's Vision and the grant.
- Were the goals to be for 2 percent annual increase in the percentage of Robertson County students attending 95 percent of the school days in the year, there is not sufficient information to determine whether a flat rate of annual improvement takes into consideration DRC's proposed reforms and/or whether this goal is ambitious.
- There are no projections for the required sub-groups.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

DRC's response raises the following concerns. Each reduces the quality of the response.

- There is nothing which addresses the requirement that DRC's plan include how it will make more productive use of time, staff, money, and other resources to improve results.
- The proposed evaluation plan is not focused on specific grant-funded activities, and there is no explanation why this choice has been made.
- Five of the twelve activities listed address compliance issues or quantify "inputs." These activities are not, therefore, designed to meet the requirement that this plan determine the effect of the grant activities on student achievement, learning, and equity. The non-evaluative activities which are part of DRC's plan under this sub-criterion are found at bullets 5, 7, 9, 11, and 12.
- One bulleted activity, the eighth one, is grammatically incomplete. This error makes the bulleted proposal nonsensical.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

a. According to the two Tables, 3-1 and 4-1, in the DRC's narrative, there will be two sources of funds to support the entire project. They are RTTT-D grant funds and "LEA General Funds" to be supplied by the two participating districts. Both are identified.

b. The proposed project budgets cannot be unequivocally labeled reasonable. The more important concerns leading to this conclusion are below. They are not listed in order of significance and are not of equal weight, but collectively they have the effect stated of casting some doubt on the reasonableness of the proposal.

- Project Coordinator: The project coordinator has major and wide-ranging responsibilities not the least of which is being responsible to account to the federal government for the spending of 30 million dollars in four years. The coordinator's salary appears low for the significance and range of responsibilities. It is not clear if the coordinator will be supported by any staff, but there is no mention of this in the budget. This seems unreasonable given the responsibilities assigned to her or him.
- Individualized Learning Platform Technology: It is not clear how it was decided that 425 classrooms required equipping or whether all 19,500+ students will have equitable/equal access to the equipment.
- Instructional Coaches: There is no explanation how the number of coaches (12) was determined. That number will create a ratio of coaches to teachers in the realm of one coach to every 60 to 75 teachers. (This is based on the presumption that between 10 percent and 17 percent of the 988 educators listed in the tables re. effectiveness are non-instructional staff.) These cannot be said to be reasonable given the range of tasks to be fulfilled by the coaches during the four years of the grant.
- Career Coaches: It cannot be determined how it was decided that three coordinators were sufficient to accomplish the number and variety of tasks and effectively reach the number of students and families associated with this initiative. It is not clear how the amount of equipment needed was decided. Given these factors, the amount of resources devoted to this project might not be sufficient.
- Compensatory Pay: As said elsewhere in these comments, the plan to induce and engage the students targeted by the extended day in the program is not convincing. The same is true regarding the plan to induce staff members to fill hard to staff position and schools. There is no explanation of how the number of teachers entitled annually to the pay provided for here was established.
- Extended Day: The plan to gain student's participation, especially the older ones, is not convincing. Giving teachers a stipend to make students attend and learn is not a sufficient plan to meet the goals of the program and DRC's Vision.
- Teacher/Leader Professional Development: There is no explanation of how the individual building-level professional development strategies fit with the DRC's anticipation of centralizing responsibility for professional development by forming this consortium. The strategy of developing a professional development plan for each building also puts greater demands on the instructional coaches whose numbers have been called in question above. Paying teachers who use their non contractual days for training has proved successful in gaining participation. The number of days budgeted and the number of teachers to be paid both seem quite low given the amount of training necessary to implement DRC's plan. The training budgeted for principals to learn to be data based decision makers appears insufficient given that most principals are not skilled in either manipulating the applicable technology or doing the site-based data analysis likely to be required under this proposal.

c. i. : The funds and the revenue from each are identified adequately.

c. ii.: The narrative makes clear that the Project Coordinator initiative is a one-time "investment." To the extent that the project is successful, it can be inferred that all of the other personnel costs are and will be on-going. Typically the purchase of hardware and software licenses are regarded as one-time expenses, and the costs of replacement and renewal of licenses will occur after the grant expires. There is no discussion of sustaining any initiatives here.

The portion of the response addressing the proposed budget project by project is competently done, overall. Many of the concerns raised can be said to be matters of professional judgment on which opinions can legitimately differ. The response is of medium quality.

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

10

2

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Given that the personalized learning technology costs represent two-third's of the 32 million request, it appears that the DRC will need about \$10.5 million dollars annually to sustain this initiative after this grant expires. This does not include estimates of costs for technology replacement and renewal of licenses. It does not include any increase for salary increases or inflation.

The DRC is not specific or concrete about how it will address these costs in the future. One could infer from some of the language in the response that the DRC does not intend to continue most or all of the grant-funded activities after the expiration of the grant. Given the amount of on-going expenses, the lack of a specific plan for sustainability is a serious flaw. The response earns low points.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: No response was found.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The DRC did not meet the Absolute Priority for building personalized learning environments. Its approaches to meeting the requirements under the criteria and sub-criteria in the grant application was not coherent. Instead, the narrative and the proposal read as though they were written by multiple persons who had not and were not communicating with one another. As a pertinent and telling example, the three Strands which are asserted to be the foundations on which the DRC's Vision are grounded are not mentioned anywhere except in the initial "A" section where a Vision statement is required. In short, the Implementation Plan does not explicitly (or implicitly) connect the Vision to the three Strands.

The scope of the Vision, that it will affect 19,500+ students in two school districts, and across 33 schools through the efforts of 988 site-based educators plus another unstated number of central office and unaffiliated persons in as yet not formed partnerships strains credulity. The problem is exacerbated rather than cured by the implementation plan which does not definitively or concretely create priorities and, therefore, includes no response to the requirement for a description of how the initial activities will be scaled up over time to encompass an increasing number of students and educators. This is the case despite the fact that the few activities directly related to increasing learning involve very few students and few educators. Said another way, the Vision and implementation plan do not coincide, and there is no specific plan to make that happen.

The DRC does not articulate specific goals for accelerating achievement or deepening student learning for all 19,500+ participating students. The most frequently omitted of such goals are those for the traditionally underserved and underprivileged sub-groups for whom special attention is expressly required. Where goals are specified, they are not ambitious; and as frequently commented upon, the uncoordinated nature of the implementation plan makes problematic the achievement of even the modest goals which are typically stated.

The DRC's goals for increasing the number and percentage of effective and highly effective teachers and increasing the number and percentage of students served by them regress in the latter years of the grant. By definition, these cannot be regarded as ambitious, and represent the antithesis of one of the primary purposes for which the grant is offered.

The DRC does not offer a comprehensive set of strategies to close the achievement gaps which it has identified. In some instances, it omits goals in this regard despite their being required by the application. The goals which are described are modest. The DRC does not specifically or substantively address how it will increase graduation rates.

For all these reasons, the Absolute Priority is not met.

Total	210	72
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0341TN-3 for Dickson County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A.1.</p> <p>The applicant has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that is in direct correlation with district and state initiatives, and provides a clear and credible approach as evidenced by the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of individualized, prescriptive student learning plans that help support the shift from curriculum-focused education to learner-focuses education • providing resources that support learning including technology that enables interactive and innovative teaching interfaces, and provides in-class,, extended-day, and at-home opportunities for instruction • the availability and use of immediate and transparent data systems to guide teaching and learning for use by all stakeholders • job embedded, sustained, and measured opportunities for professional development that moves beyond the sit and get approach, and involves instructional coaches assisting data-driven instructional strategies • improving college and career readiness by increasing the number of students enrolled and successfully completing advance placement and/or dual enrollment courses, implementing career pathways which incorporate STEM initiatives at targeted grade levels, and increasing the number of community-based or higher educational partnerships through job shadowing opportunities or paid internships <p>Based upon the information and supporting evidence, the reform vision is likely to make effective impact on the population targeted. Achievement should increase in the district and more students are likely to be better prepared for college and career. The vision should also align with other reform efforts the district embarks upon.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A.2.</p>		

The applicant clearly demonstrates an approach to implementing its reform proposal that will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal.

a. More than 50% of Robertson and Dickson Counties' 20, 113 students are currently eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, thus an indication of need. Based upon the similarity of needs and demographics within the counties, the data guided the Consortium to include all nineteen (19) schools in Roberston County School District, and all fourteen (14) schools in Dickson County School District. The decision to include all schools is appropriate as all children in need will be given the opportunity to excell.

Weakness: The applicant does not describe a process by which its used to decide all schools would be included in the proposal.

b. The consortium is comprised of two school districts - Robertson County School District and Dickson County School District. All nineteen (19) schools in Roberston County School District, and all fourteen (14) schools in Dickson County School District will participate in the initiative as evidenced by the (A) (2) Applicant's Approach to Implementation - School Demographic Chart) (pg. 7-11). The two districts participating in the consortium are appropriate to be included in the reform initiative. They are both in need in terms of efforts to adequately prepare the students they serve.

c. The total number of participating students is 11,118. Students identified as low-income participating in the Consortium is 10,802. Students identified as high-needs number 5,435. Participating students are taught by a combined total of 1,638 teachers. The chart (A) (2) Applicant's Approach to Implementation - School Demographic Chart) provided on pages 7-11 is evidence the numbers cited. An appropriate numbr of students is participating in the initiative. All students are likley to be impacted and results of the initiative will give a better picture of district efforts in preparing students academically.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 A.3
 A clearly defined plan is outlined to demonstrate how the reform will be implemented and has potential to improve outcomes for all students in the consortium. Goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible are clearly charted out (DRC Implementation Plan - Appendix (A) (1). pg. 15-16). For example, the goal of extending instruction time and support will be addressed in August 2013. To accomplish the goal, additional time will be added to the end of the school day to provide time for students to master deficit skills. Deliverables will take the form of a review of student proficiency levels. Persons responsible will be educators, principals, and administrators. Activities related to training and instruction involving the Common Core Standards will be ongoing.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(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 both of the participating school districts. Performance on summative assessments, individualized instruction, and extended time for learning will assist school leaders and educators as they identify students who are in need of remediation or enrichment opportunities. As leaders and educators become more aware of specific areas in which each student needs support, students will have multiple opportunities and pathways to demonstrate mastery resulting in improved performance in all areas on summative assessments through the Individualized Learning Plan as indicated in vision

for the reform; thus attaining predicted increases (goals). Additionally, training opportunities designed to increase teacher and leader effectiveness will increase the capacity at each school to support individualized learning initiatives. College and career readiness initiatives will ensure that students are prepared as they leave school, but they will also provide opportunities for students to choose learning paths that are based on their career and/or college interests.

Weakness: The applicant does not present any type of statistical data to help demonstrate that overall achievement goals as predicted will increase

- b. The applicant outlines ambitious and attainable 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. Achievement Gaps will be measured by the state of Tennessee and reported through the state-determined Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) Accountability Data. Additionally, the gap targets are determined by calculating the percent difference between an identified subgroup and all other students not included in that particular subgroup. For example, Tennessee's ESEA waiver combines the traditionally low performing subgroups of Black, Hispanic, and Native American together to form a single subgroup (BHN). The BHN group's achievement is compared with the All Students group and the difference is the Gap Target. Growth is measured in a percent decrease, or closure, in the percentage difference in the two groups. The other comparison subgroups identified are: Economically Disadvantaged (students identified as qualifying for free/reduced lunch), Limited English Proficient, and Students with Disabilities (identified as students meeting the qualifying guidelines for IDEA and Section 504). These subgroups are compared with their counterparts (Non-Economically Disadvantaged, Non-Limited English Proficient, and Non-disabled students). All groups are shown as making closure.
- c. The applicant outlines ambitious and attainable goals for increasing graduation rates. The percent of Growth for the 2013 Graduation Rate was calculated by the Tennessee Department of Education in direct response to the state's ESEA Waiver provisions. The following growth percentages were used to determine the target graduation rate for 2013, and for the rest of the school years' goals. All Students: 0.4%; White Students: 0.3%; Black Students: 0.4%; Hispanic Students: 0.9%; Asian Students: 1.4%; Economically Disadvantaged (ED) Students: 0.7%; Students with Disabilities (SWD): 0.9%; Limited English Proficient Students (LEP): 1.6%. As evidenced in a chart, goals of increase are adequate in terms of baseline data presented.
- d. The applicant outlines ambitious and attainable goals for increasing graduation rates. College enrollment is calculated as the ratio between college-enrolled students and their graduating cohort. The applicant states for SY 2010-11 college enrollment is calculated as follows:
- (College enrollment SY 2010-11) = Number of SY 2008-09 graduates enrolled in a higher-education institution during the 16months after graduation
 - (College enrollment rate) = (College enrollment SY 2010-11)÷(Cohort Population, e.g. total number of SY 2008-09 graduates)*100

As evidenced in a chart, goals of increase are shown in comparison of baseline data presented.

Overall the proposed reform initiative will likely improve student learning and will provide students with mechanisms that are appropriate to garner them with the tools needed to succeed academically.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>B.1</p> <p>The applicant details information to demonstrate its efforts to advance student learning and achievement within the last four years.</p> <p>a. Based upon the applicant's statement that state standards and assessment proficiency levels changed in 2010, making a comparison of scores from 2009 irrelevant, and that reported outcomes represent data trends from 2010 to 2012, the applicant demonstrates some reasonable success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement for both districts participating in the reform initiative. Significant decline in proficiency levels is reflected on data charts for the Consortium reporting scores from 2009 to 2012 in some areas, as is the ability to advance student learning.</p> <p>Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on areas where there is a decline in proficiency during the year 2010-2012. For example, for the Dickson County Grades 3-8 Mathematics, the African American subgroup, had a proficiency level off 38.0 in the 2010-2011 year. In the 2011-2012 year proficiency was reported as 37.8, a decline in proficiency form 2010-11 to 2011-2012.</p> <p>b. The applicant states there are nine (9) schools in the consortium that demonstrate patterns of low performance. Schools receive focused support through supplemental funding to implement ambitious and appropriate services to help raise achievement. Some services and reforms include hiring new school administrators in seven of the nine school over the past two years; providing extensive after-school remediation and enrichment programs for students; increasing the instructional coaching support provided by the district in lowest-achieving schools; and providing research-proven reading intervention programs for students scoring below identified levels on STAR reading.</p> <p>Weakness: The applicant does not identify which of the 9 schools in the consortium demonstrate patterns of low performance. For example, information presented in the Appendix (A) (1) as indicated in the proposal on student growth scores reported through Tennessee's Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS)/Report Card for the Consortium districts does not identify the schools; thus a demonstration of low achievement persistence and/or growth in reading / language arts and mathematics is not adequately shown.</p> <p>c. The applicant outlines clearly defined practices to make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. Practices supporting this premise include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple benchmark assessments administered three to five times per year. Results are reported to parents, recorded on individual data cards for longitudinal analyses, and shared with students to assist with goal setting in grades 4 – 8. • Regularly scheduled progress reporting, grade reporting, and parent conferences. • Web-based grade reporting for daily monitoring by families at selected schools • Progress reporting through regular contact with local media and a regularly updated website, and • Regularly scheduled parent workshops that address curriculum standards, student assessment results, school expectations, child development, and home learning environments as evidenced by the Parent Workshop Flyers in the Appendix. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

B.2

The applicant clearly demonstrates how Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. For, example, school level instructional funding is allocated based on per pupil numbers or school size. These instructional allocations are tracked at the school level through accounting software. School level allocations follow written guidelines for acceptable expenditures. School and district funds are audited yearly for acceptable expenses and following local accounting procedures. Additionally, both districts demonstrate comparability on an annual basis of the distribution of local, state and federal dollars. Comparability of local, state and federal dollars is monitored for compliance. All personnel including administrative positions are monitored yearly for staffing equivalents between Title I and Non-Title I schools. Financial reports are presented to the various governing bodies in public forums.

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

10

10

(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, under the state's reform agenda the state allows local school systems to create local salary schedules for teachers and principals, inclusive of merit pay, and has adopted statutory reform to allow performance pay for educators. The state has also unlocked the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) data by removing statutory barriers to using it in key employment decisions for teachers and making it fully available for teacher access, as well as requiring training for TVAAS interpretation of data. The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) is a method for measuring a teacher's effect on student performance by tracking the progress of students against themselves over the course of their school career with their assignment to various teachers' classes. Successful conditions of the state's reform agenda encompasses implementation of rigorous college and career-ready standards in response to the need to aim higher in expectations for student learning; expanding the state's rich data system by joining with twenty-six state to develop summative assessments in English language arts and mathematics to align with Common Core State Standards; and capturing the power of a highly trained workforce through alternative pathways to certification.

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

10

7

(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. An informal meeting with school administrators describing the available opportunity demonstrates appeal for support, allowed the applicant to gain information on prioritized needs for major reforms for the district. Outreach was expanded to other stakeholders through electronic surveys and committee meetings, as evidenced by the copy of the educator survey (Survey Monkey electronic survey) in the Appendix. Feedback from parent, student, community, and educator surveys helped shape the application. Community-based organizations, parent organizations, local government agencies, and business and industry have responded with letters of support. Additionally, local teacher association leaders and city mayors provide support to the reform initiative as indicated by MOUs referenced in the Appendices

Weakness: The applicant does not present information on whether the LEAs have or do not have collective bargaining representation. No evidence in presented specifying that at least 70 Percent of teachers from participating schools support the proposal.

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

5

2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

B. 5

The applicant states members of the consortium analyzed the current status in implementing personalized learning environments and examined the requirement of a reform proposal, and that the reform proposal will refine the process by addressing gaps in resources from school to school and the lack of consistency in implementation. Members of the consortium work to revolutionize personalized learning plans.

Weakness: The applicant does not present information evidencing an actual plan for the analysis of needs and gaps to be addresses. Analysis is only stated. Additionally, information described in in reference on the analysis by the applicant does not describe provisions of service in the context of gaps in resources, thus presenting a lack of connection between efforts described as addressing the gaps.

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

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

(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. This is evidence by clearly defined strategies that allow students to understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals; identification and pursuit of learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements to help students understand how to structure their learning ; access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning; the ability for students to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest; and mastering of critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving . For example, strategies that allow students to understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing specified goals include

- identification of barriers to success, self-identification of deficiencies, visits and partnerships with institutions of higher learning and business and industry, self-awareness of personal learning styles; collaboration of stakeholders in developing plans of study; and immediate feedback on assessments all contribute to a student’s taking responsibility for the learning and relating it to college and career planning;
- Individual Learning Plans based on students’ personal goals determined by online interest inventories, academic performance and parent input contribute to student ownership;
- preparing students with essential academic knowledge that creates clear, transparent connections between their program of study and tangible opportunities in the labor market will be enhanced through this systemic reform; and
- ensuring educators professional learning opportunities that enable them to apply transformative teaching and learning strategies throughout their practice to encourage work-link learning among students.

Strategies also include efforts to ensure ongoing and regular feedback, and the use of quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate, aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirement as evidenced by the use of online courseware, and measurement of student performance based on an online managed support service with an outcome-based focus. Accommodations and strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements will be provided through strategies such as an extended learning day with transportation provided; provision of mobile electronic devices with wireless Internet access for continued availability of online curriculum, a modified curriculum, and teacher-developed online website curriculum information; and realignment of department staff to better meet the needs of students who have dropped out, been incarcerated, or are in foster care, residential treatment programs, etc.

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

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

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

C.2

The applicant outlines a strong plan for improving the teaching and leading efforts of teachers and administrators. The plan outlined directly correlates to the components of the reform initiative, and will lead to the increased capacity to prepare students academically. All participating educators have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Professional development such as training on the Electronic Instructional Improvement System for all educators which will likely enhance development of instructional strategies, and promote a stronger effort in analyzing achievement data and refinement of in-class instruction. This will also allow teachers will use the data from this system to create a prescribed personalized learning plan for students that includes either a diagnostic driven remediation or enrichment plan. Training provided to the professional learning community will also build capacity in administrator and educator effectiveness. The plan to use funds to offer signing bonuses to attract teachers in areas of need such as mathematics, science and special education field will ensure students received instruction from high quality teachers and principals.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on school leaders and school leadership teams in regards to training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

D.1

The applicant describes appropriate Local Education Agency practices and rules to help demonstrate it has a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every students the support and resources needed. Consortium districts have specified Board policies outlining the responsibility of the Directors of Schools to establish clear lines of authority within the respective districts. Each district has an organizational chart which is also posted on the system website. Policy and organizational chart existence are both evidenced in the Appendix. Each district has sufficient supervisory level staff designated to supervise and collaborate with school-level leadership. Leadership of consortium members appears to be both collegial and participative. In that collaboration occurring between teachers and administrators is described that will ensure a coherent approach to learning is in place. Consortium district schools have been represented by local association groups and have contributed individual letters of support. Signatures of superintendents, school board members, and county and city mayors showed authoritative support in their signed MOUs. Letters of support from local business and industry show support and recognition of the districts' commitment to reform and implication for the community. System-level leadership teams promote an infrastructure that promotes learning. For example, the applicant cites Professional Learning Communities Leaders; instructional coaches' cohort; RTTT teams; teacher mentors; data-interpretation coaches; parent-engagement providers (e.g. Title I Parent Center & Family Resource Center); and technology coaches. These teams can provide research-based and effective instructional support, as well as monitoring for fidelity of implementation. Further, the applicant demonstrates efforts that give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways. For example, alternative formats provide flexibility in scheduling and in delivery of instruction, and delivered via technology, and often times provides flexibility in scheduling, based upon student mastery of skills within certain courses (i.e., virtual, credit recovery). The applicant states resources and instructional practices in the districts are adaptable and fully accessible to all students,

including students with disabilities and English language learners, to include technology, staffing, course offerings, and access to high quality professional development. Practices, policies, and rules described are supportive of the initiative and will ensure implementation in a legal and timely manner.

Weakness: Information is not presented to determine if policies or rules give students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, instead of the amount of time spent on a topic which would adhere to strategies outlined for on the development of Individual Learning Plans and opportunities for learning. Additional, reference is not made to practices or policies governing the provision of learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible to students. A description would support the collegial and participative framework that allows collaborative decisions to be made.

Weakness: The Organizational Chart for Robertson County Schools does not show a foundation of supervision and support for learning. System-level leadership teams are not described on the chart as stated. An organizational structure is not described or evidenced for Dickson County School District.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

D.2

The applicant describes Local Education Agency and school infrastructure to help demonstrate it has a plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student the support and resources needed. Resources and instructional practices in the districts are cited to be adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. This is supported by the fact that partnerships with vendors will provide equal access to programming and technology for students. Appropriate staffing provides assistance at the building-level to support the implementation plan (i.e., instructional coaches/ technology coaches). For example, both instructional and technology coaches will be used to provide professional development to teachers and staff, as well as provide resources to students and parents. The infrastructure provided is strong in foundation and will be useful in ensuring support or components being implemented an assurance academic needs of students are being met. Proposed information technology systems used by the consortium allow for the export of data in open data format capable of being used in other systems. Proposed new systems appear to readily accept exports for analysis. A vendor will provide an instructional improvement system which will include universal screeners and benchmark assessments, probes, progress monitoring, and reporting appropriate to all Response to Intervention tiers. As described all systems currently used allow for the exchange of data between systems. Data is likely to be appropriately provided as needed, and an increase in transparency for stakeholders provided.

Weakness: Local Education Agency staffing and resource is not described as being appropriate to help ensure appropriate implementation of the reform plan. For example, the applicant states additional staff will be needed in the technology departments. Also, the use of technology to support implementation of the reform initiative and provide building level instructional and system support does not appear to be sufficient. Information is not presented to determine if the proposed reform initiative will help secure resources or if the Consortium districts will secure the resources prior to implementation of the reform initiative.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

E. 1

The applicant outlines a strong plan for a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements. The illustration presented lays a found for continuous improvement strategies that support the identification of measures of the fidelity of implementation and student outcomes. To ensure efficacy the strategies will need to be translated into procedures at the school level. Examples strategies outlined to monitor the fidelity of student outcomes include

- administering formative benchmark assessments and analyzing student performance (grade-by-grade, subgroup-by-subgroup, student-by-student, skill-by-skill)
- monitoring student data to include attendance, suspensions/expulsions, number of students enrolled in alternative programs, number of students requiring credit recovery, and rate of post-secondary enrollment; and
- monitoring subgroup achievement gap closure rates.

Weakness: The applicant does not elaborate on who at the LEA level will be responsible for conduct monitoring or the timeliness/timeframe of conducting the monitoring strategies

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

E.2

The applicant describes a strong system of communication and engagement. Traditional and non-traditional activities will allow districts to maintain as well as improve communication with parents and guardians. Traditional events and activities will be combined with a new emphasis on personalizing student learning and focusing on academic achievement. Non-traditional events and programming will be used to create new relationships and to strengthen others. Parent Teacher Organizations will be used to promote and recruit involvement in the lower grades while student organizations and athletics will be used to establish and create parent support for the students. Efforts will be made to tie the success of students in extracurricular events to academic success and allow them to see the correlation of extra-curricular activities to building a resume for postsecondary enrollment. School events such as dinners, auctions, and other fundraising events will contain an element to emphasize student academic success and the new opportunities that students have through enhanced technology. All student newsletters, report cards and other send home announcements will contain district goals and academic accomplishments. The system will also promote and utilize social media as a means to engage students, parents and the community with updates and announcements concerning student achievement. Accounts with Twitter and Facebook will be utilized as a means to promote individual school and district needs as well as to establish district expectations. Additionally, the use of websites will also enhance communication efforts with stakeholders.

External and community engagement will be supplemented with opportunities found in communication with civic organizations, ministerial alliances and other community clubs. Regular appearances with civic and fraternal groups will allow for the district to communicate expectations and provide regular updates and progress toward the academic goals established. Newspaper and radio programming will also be utilized to reach all stakeholders. The local papers will provide opportunities for schools to promote activities and events. Schools will be encouraged to seek and communicate academic success and to recognize outstanding achievement of students. A monthly radio program will allow district leadership to promote and communicate progress toward the components of the reform vision.

The ability of members of the consortium to promote and foster community and school relationships is vital to ensure the success and achievement of the goals which have been established in this reform vision, as establishing clear lines of communication among all stakeholders will enhance and promote a culture that will value education and post-secondary training.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>E.3</p> <p>The applicant outlines thirteen ambitious and achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. In specifying performance measures, the applicant indicated that consideration was given to Tennessee’s accountability measures as stated in terms of Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO’s) as well as the on-target indicators for successful completion of high school graduation. The targets for each year will be utilized for planning and performance management for the RTTT reform efforts from each level of implementation - district to school to classroom. Additionally, each measure is also set and identified by each subgroup of students (race/ethnicity, poverty, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners). Measures that are described by the applicant are critical to making every student outcome visible and holding schools accountable for those outcomes. They are actionable at the school level meaning that school leaders, teachers and staff can use them to make changes that will have demonstrated impact.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>E.4</p> <p>The applicant outs a focused plan to evaluate the effectiveness of it investments. Current and future evaluation initiatives are specified that allow for continuous improvement and adjustment of the reform plan. For example, immediate evaluation of the success of individualized instruction will occur with the increased frequency and diversity of design within formative assessments. In the future participation in Tennessee the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career consortium will help ensure appropriate access and use of performance based measuring tools. Key elements of the applicant’s efforts are consistent and an allow timely monitoring and reporting of activities involved with the overall project and communication to governing and key stakeholders. Specific strategies of evaluation will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comparison of achievement and growth targets on both formative and summative data; • teacher-made rubrics for performance and demonstration to evaluate the effectiveness of reform instruction; and • intensive monitoring of extended day participants against control group to measure growth; • records of professional development sessions (e.g. reports of hours & effectiveness ratings, etc.); and • survey of all stakeholders. 		

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>F.1</p> <p>The Dickson-Robertson Consortium [DRC] application asks for the maximum qualifying amount of \$30 million in funding to support reform efforts. Additional funding from various state and local sources will support the implementation and strategies set forth in the project application. The total budget expenditures will be approximately \$32 million inclusive of local support. Costs associated with the development and implementation of the initiative is evident. Overall costs appear</p>		

reasonable to support services. Costs are presented for all major line items. The applicant demonstrates that funds will be budgeted to provide the required services to eligible schools. For example, costs for a Project Coordinator to oversee the program are requested; costs associated with an Individualized Learning Platform to increase student achievement are requested; and costs of instructional coaches are requested to support teacher instructional development. Costs appear to be of historical and current costs, and usage. The applicant provides an adequate non-federal match for the project. Further, information is presented in a manner to justify the inkind/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 unique measures to sustain project goals. Consortium has developed a strategy that will rely on intensive training for teachers and leaders at initial implementation and grow steadily more independent as training continues. This plan allows for staffing instructional and technical coaching positions with teachers-on- assignment (independent contractors) initially. Their roles will be as intense support for teachers as the transformation from traditional teaching strategies to one of prescribed learning for students. Consortium districts have pledged to review each position and each program in light of success generated by results at the end of the final grant year. Having already committed a total of \$2,711,123 over the four-year grant period, they commit to fully funding costs associated with the performance pay and extended day plans. When the initial technology requirements and career academy equipment are in place, they commit to the ongoing maintenance and upgrades associated with maintaining these investments commensurate with need. Supporting the training on reformed instructional strategies and new technology for new personnel will be incorporated into the districts' existing efforts to ensure that all personnel are knowledgeable and up-to-date with expectations. Districts have committed a 2% dollar investment in each grant year with the intent of fully funding costs associated with maintaining and expanding proven initiatives that safeguard a plan for one and success for all. The most likely factor in the continuation of this program is its success. The key to creating sustainability is to start planning for it at the very beginning, as demonstrated by applicant actions referenced above.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Competitive Preference Priority

The applicant does not present information to address the Competitive Preference Priority for the competition. No information is present on efforts to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

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.

Total	210	166
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

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

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

No applicable.

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
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Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Not applicable