



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0942IA-1 for Dubuque Community School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant, Dubuque Community School District (DCSD), sets forth an ambitious, comprehensive, and coherent reform vision that builds on its existing work in the four assurance areas (though no mention is made of school turnaround). DCSD engaged a wide array of stakeholders (e.g.: teacher association, institutes of higher education, philanthropy, parents, government, and many others) to collectively create and refine its vision for this RTT-D proposal - and this group thoughtfully integrated their proposed approach into the "philosophical and practical foundations" of the district, the DCSD Instructional Framework and the Iowa Professional Development Model.</p> <p>DCSD outlines three overarching goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create personalized learning environments for all students that prepare them for "21st Century college- and career-readiness" 2. Enable all teachers and principles to engage in highly effective professional growth and practice 3. Create a high-performing data culture that supports continuous improvement of teaching and learning <p>In addition to these goals, the applicant outlines in narrative and through a neatly and impressively detailed series of tables the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessments that were used to create the goals and proposal • Anticipated outcomes from the proposal for each project year, organized by the three overarching goals • Evaluation process with guiding formative and summative questions, indicators, and persons responsible, also tied to goal areas • The proposal's core initiatives (K-12 problem-based learning, K-12 assessment for learning, K-12 authentic intellectual work, K-12 collaborative data inquiry, and middle school reform) integrated with the goal areas, and tied to the percentage of the proposed budget <p>Because of the thorough detail and the clear and credible approach to accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support, the applicant scores the full amount of points possible for this section.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant puts forth a reasonable overview of how its approach will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation, through deliberately targeting high-need schools and students through this proposal, while also supporting the same reform efforts in personalized learning in all of its schools through other funds - effectively scaling this vision across the entire district.</p> <p>(a) DCSD is targeting its most in-need students for this proposal, and will include all of its schools except for two elementary schools that have high achievement levels and small numbers of low-income families.</p> <p>(b) The applicant provides a list of schools to be served by this proposal, and raw data and percentages on school demographics for each.</p> <p>(c) The applicant provides all of the pertinent requested data about students and educators to be engaged in this proposal.</p> <p>While its narrative is brief, the applicant succinctly covers what is needed to describe its approach to implementation, provides</p>		

complete and detailed tables to back the narrative, and scores the full amount of possible points for this section.

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

10

9

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant intends to target 16 of 18 of its schools through this proposal, and to extend the same services to the remaining two schools with non-RTT-D funding (instead using general district funds). In other words, all of the policies, goals, and initiatives implemented through this proposal would be scaled across the entire district, with an emphasis on equity throughout.

While the applicant mentions its vision of 21st century education for all students, it does not clearly explain how its plan will *specifically* improve student learning, the intent of this proposal; instead, it talks about related factors such as data collected, common union agreements, board policies, and other systemic changes - and makes no mention of student outcomes in this section.

Nonetheless, the applicant puts forth a strong LEA-wide reform and change vision, and scores in the highest range of available points for this section.

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

10

8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant puts forth a vision that would "support improved student learning with increased equity." Its annual goals are determined by the Iowa Department of Education (IDE) NCLB Accountability Workbook targets for the district. Unfortunately, the goals appear to be admirably but unrealistically ambitious.

(a) DCSD aims to have 100% proficiency in all of its subgroups across all grades and content areas by Year Two of this proposal (2014-2015). Currently, some subgroups are as low as 13.6% (IEP) and 26% (African-American) proficient in some tested areas; the rate of improvement to reach 100% for such a gap is unrealistic, if not impossible. Furthermore, in a system that is truly personalized, meeting students where they are in their learning and allowing them to progress through content as quickly as they can but as slowly as they need to, the goal of 100% of students meeting the same targets at the same time seems irrational and conflicting with the theory of personalized learning.

(b) The applicant assures that students with the largest achievement gaps (i.e.: low SES, African-American, and students with disabilities) will "be daily at the forefront of each teacher's attention for instructional support and assistance." While the state targets have all of the achievement gaps closing (with all students at 100% proficiency), the applicant puts forth more realistic targets for closing the achievement gaps based on district-level assessments.

(c) The applicant puts forth a flat 2% increase in graduation rates across each subgroup for each year of this proposal. The feasibility of these improvements is difficult to ascertain, as the applicant only provides two years of previous graduation rates - which indicate a decline overall in graduation rates from 2011 to 2012. Nonetheless, the rates appear to be achievable, with concerted efforts from the district to improve them consistently for *all* students.

(d) The applicant puts forth sufficiently ambitious and achievable goals for college enrollment.

Because this section requires the applicant to demonstrate that its goals are *equal to or exceed state ESEA targets*, and also requires ambitious yet *achievable* goals, the applicant is in a difficult place to respond to part (a) of this section. In its other responses, the applicant appears to hold high expectations and well-reasoned targets for student outcomes. It therefore scores in the high range of available points for this section.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant describes a long arc of successful improvement since the implementation of NCLB. However, in the data it presents on percent proficient for grades 3-8 and 11 for reading and math - while all students have substantively improved over the past four years - almost all grades and subject areas experienced a decline in percent proficient between 2010 and 2011 (the most recent data provided). That said, the applicant does demonstrate an admirable track record, and expresses a

dedication to meeting the needs of the "remaining 15% of the student population" who the district has not served as well in order for them to achieve their full potential. The applicant lays out a thoughtful and focused theories of change with respect to: its assessment of and for learning, problem-based learning, and building a high performing data culture. All of these theories of change, as well as other supporting partnerships and initiatives (such as a focus on social-emotional learning, and the *Parents as Teachers* model) support the district's vision for increasing achievement and equity. The applicant does not, in this section, present four years of data on graduation and college enrollment rates, although some data on this is included in the appendices.

(b) DCSD is a predominantly well-performing district, but has also demonstrated success in improving its lowest-performing schools. Its lowest performing elementary school reopened as a charter school for performing arts, and increased student proficiency in science from 43.7% to 69.2% over six years. In all of its elementary schools, it demonstrates an upward trend of percent of first graders reading at or above grade level on an observation survey, which it attributes to a deliberate focus on providing intensive reading intervention in Kindergarten and into subsequent grades as needed. At the secondary level, the applicant describes an alternative high school demonstrating improvement in credits earned and graduation rates, and a program designed to support "at-risk" students in 8th through 10th grades.

(c) The applicant utilizes an online data-sharing platform, PowerSchool, which is accessible by students, parents, and educators to detail progress and inform instructional decisions. This system sends daily emails to parents, updating them on their students' grades and attendance - which may be excessive and overwhelming for some parents, but a good practice. The district has a record on relatively high parent-teacher conference attendance rates, especially and understandably at the elementary level, which have held steady over the past four years. The applicant's middle and high school conference attendance rates could be improved. Last year the ranges for participation in these conferences were:

- Elementary: 83% to 98%
- Middle: 55% to 78%
- High: 50% to 53%

The applicant puts forth an array of strategies and services for improving student outcomes, as well as some data to substantiate having done so over the past four years. Some data is missing in part (a), but overall, the applicant paints a picture of its prior record of success and therefore scores in the high range of available points for this section.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant does not clearly address this part, stating only that DCSD uses the Iowa Chart of Account Coding, which aligns with the Federal Uniform Financial Accounting Chart of Account Codes. While classification is a consideration, the applicant fails to speak to actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff.

(b) and (c) The applicant is in the process of overhauling its antiquated and disjointed financial and human resource data systems. Currently, data on actual salaries at the school level for teachers and instructional staff are difficult to cull out from the two systems, as actual salaries are grouped by school level in their system. They did provide a table detailing the data, and state that all district salaries are published annually in the local newspaper. The new and improved system should be implemented this year, in advance of implementation of this project, and will capture the salary data more effectively.

(d) The applicant records non-personnel expenditures at the school (and not district) level. DCSD uses a site-based budgeting system, and each school is responsible for its non-personnel budget.

Overall, the applicant does not provide compelling evidence of existing transparency in its investments. It does, however, speak to current improvement efforts in this area. The applicant therefore scores in the middle range of possible points for this section.

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes adequate flexibility and autonomy within the state context to implement its proposal. It provides as examples: seeking legal advice on Iowa code regarding a tax referendum that allowed them to reallocate funds towards their technology needs, receiving state approval to transform a low-performing elementary to a charter, and successfully seeking waivers from the state to offer coursework in a different timeframe than is described in state administrative code. The applicant does not provide evidence that directly relates to their goals for personalized learning environment, but the processes and contexts provided can be seen as analogous to the work they would do through this proposal.

The applicant therefore scores in the high range of available points for this section.

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

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

From the opening paragraphs of this proposal, the applicant puts forth a consistently compelling narrative of meaningful stakeholder engagement in the creation of and support for this proposal.

(a) The applicant engaged stakeholders through a variety of meetings, both school- and community-based. The core RTT-D planning group vetted community feedback and circled back to stakeholders throughout the development and refinement of the grant proposal. While an impressive array of stakeholders were part of this, the applicant does not describe engaging students and students' families (which could be covered under "interested citizens" but should be recognized unto itself as "families") in this process.

(i) The Dubuque Education Association was actively engaged in the proposal development, and the applicant provides evidence of their support and commitment to implementation of this proposal.

(b) The applicant includes sixteen letters of support from a wide array of stakeholders, in addition to City Council Proceedings in support of the proposal.

Despite the lack of student and family engagement, the applicant provides strong evidence of stakeholder engagement and support for this proposal, and therefore scores in the high range of possible points for this section.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
--	---	---

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant details many needs assessments conducted in the district over the past three years, predominantly focused on technology infrastructure and implementation, community perceptions, and overall district improvement. Results from all five of these comprehensive assessments inform and support the applicant's proposal to implement personalized learning environments. For example, as a result of these assessments, the district's technology infrastructure has been upgraded and will provide a technologically rich personalized learning environment, the district is addressing the need for high quality professional development for teachers and leaders regarding technology in instruction, the district is designing different learning spaces in schools that are being renovated, and, most importantly, the district now owns the real challenge of ensuring that all its students receive an excellent education and knows it has to change practice in order to do so.

While these assessments are helpful, none is specifically focused on personalized learning environments, per se, and all are from the past. The applicant makes no mention of any plan for future analysis of its status in implementing personalized learning environments. The applicant therefore scores in the middle range of available points for this section.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	19

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant puts forward a robust, high-quality 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.

(a) The applicant outlines how educators will support the following (but neglects to include how parents will also do so):

(i) Students will understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals through a variety of means, namely: Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW), in which assignments and instruction are measured by their value beyond the classroom and teachers therefore must demonstrate the connection between student learning and the outside world; Project Based Learning (PBL), in which student are active collaborators on real-world, interdisciplinary problems; and the district's Assessment for Learning (AFL), through which students will connect their learning and mastery with their grades, and will learn to evaluate their own work and that of their peers accordingly.

(ii) The AFL is aligned with the Iowa Core, which are considered college- and career-readiness standards. Students will identify, pursue, and measure their learning goals through AFL, and all PBL will be backwards mapped from the same standards.

(iii) Through PBL, students will theoretically develop flexible and deep learning experiences in which they synthesize information across multiple domains, and are immersed in engaging projects driven by student interest.

(iv) The applicant states that students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives through both their PBL (which require engagement with the diversity of the "real world") and through working in collaborative teams with classmates. It neglects to explain how this exposure will that motivate and deepen individual student learning.

(v) The applicant relies on the research base of PBL to assure that students will master critical academic content and develop skills and traits; it specifically cites PBL developing: flexible knowledge effective problem-solving, self-directed learning, and collaboration skills; and intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, students will be evaluated on mastery of 21st century skills in addition to the Iowa Core.

(b)

(i) Through their Instructional Improvement System (IIS), the applicant proposes that all students, parents, and educators will be able to create, access, and monitor goals within a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career-ready. This IIS would provide key data points as well as connections to acceleration or developmental learning resources, all tied to the Iowa Core as well as 21st century skills.

(ii) The district proposes a sufficient variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments, some new to the district - like PBL - and others already in place. They particularly highlight the PBIS Framework that is in place in all middle schools. It does not state how it will ensure that these assorted approaches and environments will be equitably accessible to all students.

(iii) All content in this proposal would be aligned with the Iowa Core and 21st Century standards, including commercially available digital content that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards (which Iowa adopted).

(iv) According to the applicant, students will receive ongoing and regular feedback, including (A) specific, descriptive feedback through AFL, and other data-based feedback through IIS; and (B) personalized learning recommendations through AFL, as well as individualized, differentiated instructional content, approaches, and supports from the teacher.

(v) The applicant asserts that it will provide "limitless" options for differentiation and modification of content, environment, and delivery to meet the instructional needs of students, particularly high-need students.

(c) The applicant proposes to provide training and support for students (and for their parents, as desired) in collaborative strategies and skills, as well as in technology and using assessments to inform and guide student learning.

Overall, should all of these elements be consistently implemented, DCSD could personalize and transform learning for its students through a transition to a standards-based learning for mastery, PBL, AIW approach. Despite lacking an emphasis on parental support in part (a), and a description of how its high-quality instructional approaches and environments will be consistently implemented across all schools with the same level of quality, the applicant scores in the highest range of points available for this section.

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

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes a high-quality 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. In its plan, it sets out to improve instruction and increase teacher and leader capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards.

(a) The applicant states its commitment to engaging all participating educators in training and teaming that support their individual and collective capacity, as evidenced in their first of three overarching goals for this grant, and throughout all goals and initiatives proposed for this grant.

(i) DCSD proposes to support effective implementation of personalized learning environments through developing teacher capacity in instructional strategies such as Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW), Assessment for and of Learning (AFL), and Project Based Learning(PBL); and infrastructural tools such as a Learning Management System (LMS) that supports innovations such as flipped classrooms and individualized content and instruction, and an Instructional Improvement System (IIS) which will capture and track student data and progress.

(ii) The applicant intends to enhance and adapt content and instruction through developing educator capacity in PBL, a new practice for the district. They will hire a national educational consulting firm to assist with this. Their theory of action is research-based, stating that an optimal approach to learning is when students are taught how to learn as well as what to learn, and that

classroom knowledge must be applied to real-world problems. The applicant provides extensive tables detailing PBL goals and strategies with five goals, and their corresponding action steps, measurable results, assessment methods, persons responsible, and timeline for each. Similarly, the applicant sets out tables detailing: instructional time and calendar goals and strategies, and middle school re-design goals and strategies. It is clear that the district has dedicated considerable time and thought into planning how best to build teacher and leader capacity to adapt their content and instruction across a number of critical dimensions in these tables.

(iii) The applicant will frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators through its AFL system. Similarly to in (a)(ii), the applicant provides a detailed and extensive table of AFL goals and strategies.

(iv) Akin to (a)(ii) and (iii), the applicant provides a detailed and thoughtful table of professional staff evaluation goals and strategies. DCSD's philosophy of evaluation is to use it as a tool to grow good teachers. It proposes a three-year cycle of formative and summative supervision and evaluation - with years one and two in a collaborative peer consultation process and year three with an assigned evaluator. All educators would have professional development plans, personalizing their development just as they seek to do with their students, and both give and receive feedback on their development regularly.

(b) Through this proposal, the applicant will introduce new data systems and resources, the IIS and LMS, and will have many other resources to accelerate student progress.

(i) The applicant will provide actionable information that helps educators identify learning approaches, as it details in its comprehensive table of AIW goals and strategies.

(ii) The applicant will use its IIS as a "data dashboard" that provides a readily comprehensible overview of student, class, school, and district performance information to drive instructional decisions and support RtI. It will be available to students, families, and educators. The LMS will support personalized learning and provide high-quality learning resources that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards, while allowing students and teachers to create and share additional new learning resources. The LMS has additional, innovative features such as a notification system via Facebook or text messaging, mobile apps, and other communication means to bridge between teachers, students, parents, and administrators.

(iii) The applicant has a process and protocol for reviewing feedback and student data, and matching student needs accordingly with resources and approaches. All instructional resources are standards-based, and the district is introducing two new technology resources to support personalized learning: NWEA Skills Pointer and Renzulli Learning System, both of which help teachers differentiate instruction and customize learning plans.

(c) The applicant implies that effective learning environments incorporate academic learning with character education (social, emotional, and civic skill development). It therefore proposes to provide to all school leaders and leadership teams - as well as teachers - additional training and access to policies and resources to help them achieve this. The applicant presents a "behavior study" theory of change and logic model that describe how character development will be integrated into effective learning environments. While this is laudable, it is an unexpected addition to this section.

(i) The applicant describes evaluation processes that utilize the Iowa Standards for School Leaders and the Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria as providing information that helps leaders and leadership teams to assess and improve educator effectiveness. It further proposes through this grant to target this evaluation process towards personalized learning and student achievement. The applicant does not speak directly to how this information helps to improve school culture and climate.

(ii) The applicant sets out to create a high-performing data culture in this proposal. It has assessed and determined gaps in the diagnosis and interventions for certain student subgroups, and aims to increase achievement and close gaps through professional development and processes centered on improving learning through collaborative inquiry. It outlines five actions (collecting and analyzing data; goal setting and student learning; selecting content / Common Core curriculum; program planning, implementation, and evaluation; and collaboration), with a detailed emphasis on the first, collecting and analyzing the data. A table of goals, strategies, success indicators, assessment methods, persons responsible, and timelines is included to substantiate this action.

(d) The applicant has a sophisticated understanding of the challenges of equitable distribution of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders across the district, and an array of potential incentives and solutions to increasing the number of students who receive instruction from them. It presents goals and strategies for staffing effective and highly effective teachers, and is "committed to exploring the options" with the local union. All reform in this area would have to be negotiated, but all parties appear willing to discuss possibilities.

Overall, the applicant has an exceptionally strong and detailed proposal for improving teaching and leading, and scores the full points possible for this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant demonstrated that it has the support of the superintendent and the school board for this proposal, and will organize the central office support to provide personalized learning support and services to participating - an non-participating - schools. DCSD's action plan calls for training central office first in each initiative of this proposal, so that they can capably provide professional development to schools.</p> <p>(b) The applicant district already implements site-based decision making, which allows school leadership teams the flexibility and autonomy needed to support this proposal. It further allows for variances and waivers as needed.</p> <p>(c) The applicant acknowledges that its practices, policies, and rules do not currently support allowing students to progress through content and earn credit based on mastery. It does, however, identify the specific policies and practices that will require detailed review revision to implement this proposal, and is committed to doing so should the grant be awarded.</p> <p>(d) Similar to (c), the district acknowledges that the transition to a standards-based evaluation system will require significant policy revision, and it aims to spur this revision through focusing this proposal on providing students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways.</p> <p>(e) The district has a commitment to provide for the needs of all students regardless of their program of study; this includes providing earning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. All district policy supports this focus area for the proposal.</p> <p>The applicant conducted a thorough review of all district policy in writing this proposal, and - while many policies require substantial revision to successfully implement this proposal - the applicant is aware of where policy is strong and where changes are needed, and has the support of the LEA to make changes. The applicant therefore scores in the middle range of available points for this section.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant proposes that all relevant stakeholders will have access to technology (school-based) and to personalized learning software to support the implementation of the proposal. It does not, however, account for a potential variability in access to technology outside of school, particularly for under-resourced students and families.</p> <p>(b) DCSD has a centralized technology department and uses a ticketing approach to providing technical support to school-based stakeholders. They are capturing the common challenges in IT and posting them online, in a forum accessible to students and families. While all educators will receive intensive training on appropriately integrating technology, no such training is currently planned for families and students - although the applicant suggests such training and support could take place in Neighborhood Resource Centers.</p> <p>(c) The applicant is exploring creating its own virtual cloud, in which data can be stored and accessed by stakeholders from any computer. It commits to storing and sharing data in an interoperable, user-friendly format that allows for simple downloads.</p> <p>(d) All of the applicant's current data systems - with the exception of finance and human resources, which are being updated - are interoperable data systems, as defined.</p> <p>While the applicant presents more of a focus on educators than parents and students in this section, it provides sufficient evidence that its infrastructure will support project implementation, and scores in the middle range of available points for this section.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score

(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant admirably owns up to the fact that its <i>espoused</i> commitment to continuous improvement needs to be better <i>enacted</i>, and seeks to transform a "fragmented and underdeveloped" system for continuous improvement into a high-performing data culture focused on ongoing reflection and improvement (which is one of their three goals for this proposal). The applicant outlines five reform areas that need to be addressed in order to do so:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clean and build data infrastructure 2. Streamline data through interoperational system 3. Intensive professional development for al personnel 4. District wide data collection and analysis plan development 5. Parent and student training on data to support student learning success <p>DCSD then outlines a comprehensive, high-quality plan for continuous improvement (that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant) based on Love's <i>Using Data to Improve Learning for All</i> and Commodores' <i>The Seven Strategies for Assessment for Learning</i>. Their plan includes an emphasis on ensuring students are active agents in their learning through better understanding data, and a plan to share information with the public through the board and other stakeholders.</p> <p>The thoughtfulness in this section scores the applicant a full 15 points.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents a high-quality and multifaceted strategy for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders is comprised of using an assortment of effective communication means, contexts, and venues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School newsletters and websites • District website and district-created media • School site councils and school parent/teacher organizations • Local newspaper • District School Improvement Leadership Team (comprised of many community leaders) <p>The applicant scores the full five points for this section.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) - (c) The applicant chose to incorporate <i>all</i> of the performance measures suggested in the NIA for this grant competition. It provides the required tables indicating the specific performance measures and targets by grade level for each subgroup for each project year. All of its proposed targets seem reasonably ambitious and achievable, with significant but possible improvements across all grades and tested areas. At first glance, the target of 100% proficiency post-grant for all Pre-K through Grade 3 students, but the supporting explanations of the measures make even this admirably possible.</p> <p>The applicant scores all five available points for this section.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a detailed evaluation table outlining its three goal areas, the measurements it will use to track progress in meeting those goals (aligned with the NIA), and the persons responsible for doing so. It also outlines evaluation goals to be tracked annually. This proposal has no external evaluation component; all parties responsible for elements of the evaluation are internal to the district. The proposal lacks a description for how its evaluative processes will be collectively reviewed and will result in ongoing program modification and improvement as needed.</p> <p>The applicant scores in the high range of available points for this section.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant identifies \$28,570,035 in funds beyond the requested RTT-D funding to support this proposal - exceeding the requested amount considerably, and demonstrating their commitment to this reform effort. Other fund sources include: federal special education funding, state general budget funding, and locally levied tax monies.</p> <p>(b) The applicant's budget tables and supporting evidence are thorough, reasonable, and sufficient to implement the proposal. Their allocation of resources - with 53% of the funding going towards the middle school reform efforts, and middle school personnel - reflect their overarching goals for this proposed project, and their investments seem appropriately allocated across implementation years.</p> <p>(c) The applicant provides an exceptionally detailed and thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities, although it is somewhat difficult for a reader to readily ascertain from the tables which expenditures are one-time investments, and which are ongoing operational costs.</p> <p>The applicant scores in the highest range of available points for this section.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant puts forth an extensive proposed sustainability spreadsheet and tables, indicating detailed projected expenditures across all subcategories for three years beyond the life of this proposed project grant period. Furthermore, it provides a narrative to back how it will determine which elements of this proposed project will be sustained, and how much of the work taking place during the grant's implementation will build internal sustainability in effective practice. A challenge the applicant faces - through no fault of its own - is the inconsistent funding environment in which the district is situated. The applicant cannot clearly project its financial future due to inconsistent funding and timelines for funding from the state legislature. Furthermore, the allowable growth percentage has also been highly variable over the past 30 years, and student enrollment is unpredictable.</p> <p>Despite the uncertainty, the applicant presents a nuanced and careful rationale for how it would sustain the project goals. However, because it lacks a clear plan for doing so, it scores in the middle range of available points for this section.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to augment its proposal with an additional emphasis on early childhood learning as well as on a research-based framework for learning supports for all students, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom-based approaches • Crisis and emergency prevention/assistance • Transitions support • Home engagement in school • Community outreach/volunteers • Student/family assistance • Social, emotional, and civic behavior <p>(1) The applicant has a longstanding collaborative partnership with Dubuque County Early Childhood and with the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. Together they enlist the support of public and private organizations, higher education, and businesses to align and support community and school goals. They propose to further this partnership to better align existing community resources to "augment existing resources to better serve youth and families."</p> <p>(2) The applicant proposes to target preschool to grade 3 students through this project, specifically, low socioeconomic status students and English language learners in that grade range in five DCSD Title I elementary schools. It lists six desired outcomes for these students and schools that include academic and educational results as well as family and community</p>		

outcomes (e.g.: "All students make academic growth in reading and math." and "Every family...is offered parent education programming including home visitation"). While the intention and the vision for this is laudable, the desired outcomes are often *not outcomes* but rather are inputs ("is offered"), and/or they are not quantified ("make academic growth").

(3) The partnership as described would (a) track the indicators in the DCSD student information system and be able to aggregate it across schools and share it with stakeholders; (b) use data to prioritize service delivery to those most in need; (c) plan to first scale to grades 4 and 5 in targeted Title I schools, and then expand across all elementary schools; and (d) support students to come to school ready to learn, and personalize learning for them while in school.

(4) This proposed partnership would integrate education and other services that address social-emotional and behavioral needs through wraparound services to students and families, school counselors, before/after/summer learning opportunities, and health services.

(5) The applicant asserts that this partnership would build capacity of staff by (a) expanding the sharing of student data to better inform personalized learning goals; (b) continuing its regular needs assessments and ensuring that FERPA agreements are in place; (c) supporting the implementation of RtI; (d) integrating feedback and insight from the school councils, which will include partnership members; and (e) charting progress through council minutes and student data, tracked by DCSD data personnel, and discussing and resolving problems across the partnership as needed.

(6) The applicant puts forth specific, appropriately ambitious performance measures and targets for each year of the project and one year beyond. Its desired results include four educational results and two family/community results.

Overall, the applicant presents a compelling partnership proposal and substantiates its proposal with evidence of a strong track record of successful partnerships that lead to enhanced and strengthened student and community results. It scores in the high range of available results for this section.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Through its consistent and clear goals and initiatives, the applicant fully meets the absolute priority. The proposal it outlines clearly, coherently, and comprehensively puts forth a vision, plan, and strategy for creating student-centered learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with the Iowa Core; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

The applicant's three primary goals - creating personalized learning environments for all students, engaging all teachers and leaders in effective professional growth and practice, and creating a high-performing data culture - in partnership with its work plans, needs assessments, instructional strategies (project-based learning, authentic intellectual work, and standards-based learning for mastery), anticipated outcomes, and evaluation plan could lead to fully meeting the Absolute Priority for this competition, and to launching its students on a trajectory for success in college, careers, and life.

Total	210	181
-------	-----	-----

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	10

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a robust argument for this budget supplement, with a clear and succinct accompanying narrative.

(1) The applicant's proposal, the Dubuque Community-Wide Data System Initiative, has six key goals (below), all of which are grounded in the partnership's existing Every Child/Every Promise efforts. The rationale for the target population and services in this partnership is clearly explained in the narrative section of the proposal as well in each goal's description.

1. Needs assessment (youth, family, community)
2. Community-wide data system implementation
3. Support access, enrollment, quality improvements for out of school programs
4. Develop/adapt/implement community-wide quality assessment tool
5. Support program and community-level evaluation
6. Develop common outcome measures/indicators

(2) While the applicant asserts that it is developing a "research-based, best practice model" that could readily be replicated across the nation in cities of a similar size and could inform development of similar systems in larger cities, it does not specifically outline a plan for project implementation in other LEAs.

(3) The budget is adequate to support this proposed supplemental initiative.

Because of the lack of a plan to co-develop and implement this work across multiple LEAs, the applicant scores in the middle range of available points for this section.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #09421A-2 for Dubuque Community School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The DCSD proposal provides extensive evidence that the district is committed implementation of the four core educational assurance areas and indicates that the development of personalized learning environments reinforce the district's plan for improvement.

DCSD provides a description of its approach to personalized learning environments, supported through technology, to include that will integrate problem-based learning (PBL) and assessment for learning (AfL) protocol, and the Iowa College and Career Ready Standards and 21st Century Skills.

A number summative and formative data sources were outlined in the narrative that appear to be well thought out and that are likely to create the collaborative data inquiry to support student learning outlined in the proposal. DCSD indicates that teachers, students, and administrators will have access to technology-based data management platforms, the Learning Management System (LMS) and the Instructional Improvement System (ISS), to organize and analyze data for address students needs.

The proposal describes its vision for continuous improvement of teacher and leader quality through the implementation of the Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) scoring protocol, evaluating teacher practices, along with additional data sources, such as student achievement results.

DCSD plan to implement the initiative district-wide to support all schools demonstrates the district's commitment to supporting all schools, including those that are lowest performing.

The narrative includes numerous programs and projects in addition to those the district indicates they will focus on to develop

the personalized learning system that create some confusion about how these fit into the district's approach. However, overall the DCSD was able to show evidence of a comprehensive and coherent vision aligned with current reform efforts in the district that include the four core educational areas. This places DCSD in the high range of score points in meeting the criteria for this element

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD describes a process for selecting schools that is based on the percent of students from low-income families and the number of students not proficient on the state test. The DCSD proposal included all schools within the district except two who were high performing and did not meet low-income. While not funded as a participating school, the narrative indicates that these two schools will implement the reforms using other funding mechanism, providing evidence of district-wide implementation.

The narrative includes a list of schools as supporting evidence.

Based on the schools identified, 9,412 students will participate, of whom over 4,000 are identified as high need with a 40.1% overall poverty rate. These numbers demonstrate that the DCSD proposal meets the eligibility requirements for application.

Since the initiative is district-wide, all teachers will participate.

The proposal provides a compelling case for including all schools to strengthen teaching and learning in the district. DCSD's plan to include all schools demonstrates a commitment to district-wide reform that allow for the alignment of instructional methods and expectations across the district. Overall, this places DCSD in the high range of score points in meeting the criteria for this element

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

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The DCSD proposal provides strong evidence that the reform will result in district-wide change. The proposal provides a clear set of building blocks designed to architect its theory of change focused on professional development and data systems to achieve the expected outcomes. The plan provided includes activities for the professional development rollout schedule with the expectation for full implementation by 2015, as well as measures of progress, timelines, and responsible persons that is likely to result in the district-wide change.

The extensive plan detailing the initiative rollout across all schools provides strong evidence to show the proposal will be scaled up and translate into meaningful reform district-wide. Overall, the DCSD proposal scores in the high range of score points in meeting the criteria for this element.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The DCSD narrative indicates that although performance is relatively high for all students, the data indicate discrepancies across grade spans and significant gaps for specific subgroup population. DCSD set goals of 100% for all students and subgroups to be proficient by 2014-15 that align with the State's AYP targets. While these are ambitious targets required by the State for AYP purposes, the goals may not be reasonable given some of the starting points. For example, baseline for grade 4 reading for African American subgroup shows only 33.3% proficient of advanced. The goal for 2012-13 is 87.3% and 93.7% by 2013 and 2014 respectively. This may be an unrealistic goal since it would require a 55 percentage point gain to be made this year and sustained into 2013-14.

The goal to increase graduation rates by two percentage points each year and college enrollment rates by three percentage points each year is ambitious yet attainable.

The graduation and college attendance goals are both ambitious and appear to be likely achievable. The district has chosen to use the AYP targets set by the state for all students and subgroups. The goals the district has identified for improved student outcomes may not be achievable for every grade or subpopulation, especially African-American and IEP, given the baseline. Overall, this places DCSD's proposal in the mid range of score points in meeting the criteria for this element.

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
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Although the narrative states that DCSD reading and math scores have steadily increased since the implementation of NCLB, the graphs provided in the narrative reflect an inconsistent pattern of success. Student performance in reading and math in grades 3-8 across multiple years and all grade show inconsistent gains, flat scores, and in the most recent year, losses. Grade 11 shows consistent gains in both reading and math.</p> <p>Additional evidence was included for kindergarten readiness and grade 1 reading demonstrating gains across the year as well as sustained gains, for most schools, in the grade 1 reading results across years for both Title I and nontitle I schools.</p> <p>The narrative does not include data to show achievement gap, graduation rates, or college enrollment.</p> <p>DCSD provides many examples of some initiatives that have been put into place. However, the information about what reform initiatives were implemented in the lowest performing schools was vague, with the exception of reading interventions in Title I schools.</p> <p>The narrative indicates that student performance data is available to students, educators, and parents through PowerSchool and on the State and district website. DCSD described how PowerSchool can be used by students, parents, and teachers that provides evidence that this information is available to inform and improve participation, instruction, and services</p> <p>DCSD provided data demonstrated inconsistent pattern of success, although grade 1 and grade 11 demonstrate sustained improvements. DCSD did not provide evidence for gaps by subgroups or graduation and college attendance trends. Overall, this places DCSD's proposal in the mid range of score points.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal describes the accounting procedures that align with State requirements followed by the district.</p> <p>DCSD reports that the district uses an older accounting system and therefore the district does not record personnel salaries by school level but instead records by education level.</p> <p>The current accounting structure includes both teachers and instructional staff in a single code by level of school.</p> <p>The narrative indicates that district did begin to track expenses by individual schools in the 2010-11 school year using manual calculations but did not publish that information. A report showing a system the district intends to implement this year demonstrating personnel salaries, including a line item for instructional staff only, teachers only, and non-personnel expenditures.</p> <p>DCSD reports that non-personnel expenditures are recorded on a school-level basis using a site-based budget process. The narrative did not indicate if these expenses are shared publicly.</p> <p>The evidence that DCSD provided indicates that the current accounting structure impacts the district's ability to demonstrate a high level of transparency in the LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. The district's current accounting structure does not report salaries by school level or separate salaries for teacher and instructional staff by school level. There was no evidence provided that indicates if non-personnel expenditures at the school level are reported. Overall, this places DCSD's proposal in the low range of score points.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative included examples of autonomy in budgetary expenses, such as the purchase of technology. DCSD also indicated that a local school board may provide cash to fund its maximum authorized budget and/or to provide cash flow.</p> <p>The narrative cited the Iowa administrative code (Chapter 12), which gives the district authority to offer a district course to meet credit requirements for graduation.</p> <p>DCSD narrative provided some evidence to show that the district has authority and autonomy to direct some local tax funds to support the implementation of a personalized learning environment, such as funding technology hardware. DCSD also</p>		

provided some evidence that the district has the ability to seek waivers from the State to allow for flexibility to differentiate a course schedule. However, the narrative was not clear if this was available for all courses or just electives. Further, the narrative was vague about the authority of the district and local school board that would support a student's individualized learning plan toward college and career readiness. As a result, there was insufficient information to determine if DCSD was able to provide students with a personalized learning environment, as outlined in the proposal, such as providing credit for mastery of learning content rather than seat time.

Overall, this places DCSD's proposal in the mid range of score points.

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

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Based on the evidence submitted, DCSD has demonstrated evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in the grant development. The narrative provides information about a number of forums where the district shared information and engaged stakeholder input into the development of the grant that appear to have included all stakeholders. The proposal stated members of central administration and district leadership held meetings to discuss the grant. DCSD provided evidence of feedback from school-level meetings held with students, parents, community member, and teachers in September.

The narrative further indicated that the district leadership team that includes higher education members, community and business members, parents, students, school administrators and teachers also met during September to discuss high performing personalized learning environments.

DCSD provides sufficient evidence of teacher support that includes a description of the involvement of the education association, and a letter of support.

DCSD provided sufficient evidence of letter of support from institutions of higher education, local civic and community-based organizations, the business community, early learning programs, as well as the Iowa Department of Education. The district also provided evidence of the comments submitted to DCSD and their response.

DCSD evidence that the district meaningfully engaged stakeholders in the grant development. The proposal provides evidence that stakeholders were provided with forums to gain information about the grant proposal as well as avenues to provide direct feedback about the district's plan. Response to the Iowa Department of Education's feedback was included in the appendices. Overall, this places DCSD's proposal in the high range of score points.

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

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative includes an extensive description of the logic behind the reform proposal that describes the importance of analyzing the professional development and data systems.

DCSD provides evidence of needs assessment and gap analysis to address the current status in the use of technology, data systems, and instructional strategies related to technology systems and infrastructure. The assessment of professional develop needs was conducted in 2011-12 and includes a number of initiatives but does not clearly describe an analysis of gaps. The DCSD also included evidence of planning based on their theory of change for each of the key areas addressed in the proposal.

DCSD provided a high quality plan to addressing each its goals that include includes action steps, success measures, data collection process, persons responsible, and timelines related to the professional development and data system needs.

DCSD provided evidence of a high- quality plan, aligned with the district's logic for the reform, for the analysis of their current status to implement the personalized learning environment. Overall, this places DCSD's proposal in the high range of score points.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The DCSD narrative describes how the major initiatives in the proposed reform effort (AIW, PBL, AFL, and the ISS system)

are intended to be used to create a personalized learning environment.

DCSD has proposed a well thought out approach that engages students in their own learning. Student goal-setting based on learning targets with teacher adapted lessons to address these goals demonstrates the link between goals and learning. In addition, providing the continuum of learning toward mastery of the standard will help students to understand how to structure their goals. The integration of UbD and PBL to architect lesson and instructional delivery appears to be a promising instructional planning and delivery method to deepen student learning and provide a context to integrate diverse cultures and perspectives to deepen student learning. Implemented well, these practices will create rich, personalized learning environments.

However, the approach is very teacher dependent and time intensive. It is not clear what DCSD will do to ensure that teachers have the sufficient time to create the units and adapt lessons for a range of learners.

The narrative indicates that the integration of PBL and AfL will support students to master critical academic content and develop skills such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, etc.

DCSD also describes how students will have access to high-quality instructional approaches and environments that include a mix of instructional programs or methodology and behavior interventions. While school-wide behavior is essential, the narrative did not provide a clear description of how the district intends address this as an instructional approach within a personalized learning environment.

DCSD indicates that students will be engaging in AfL that is based on learning targets aligned with the CCR standards that are structured by a sequence of mastery, providing evidence that students will have access to an individualized sequence of learning. The AfL approach will also allow students to self-monitor their progress and teachers to provide students with regular and ongoing feedback about their learning.

The development of lessons based on UbD allows educators to create lessons that engage student's deeper understanding of the material and includes adaptations for individual students based on their needs. The description of PBL and AfL and the research included in the appendices provides evidence that students will have access to high quality instruction and environments through real world problem-solving in collaborative teams.

The narrative describes how students and their families will be able to set goals based on performance on a variety of formative and summative assessment data from the ISS platform. Teachers and guidance counselors will train students in the use of the systems. In its vision the narrative presents PowerSchool as the tool to inform students, teachers and their families. The relationship between PowerSchool and ISS is not described.

DCSD indicates that high quality content is addressed through lesson alignment. However, the district did not describe how it will monitor those units and lessons are aligned with the breadth and depth of the Common Core.

DCSD provides limited evidence to demonstrate students will have access to digital tools through the NWEA Skillspointer or the Renzulli and that these systems will be used to plan for students in general education for Rtl. The district did not provide evidence of the alignment between Skillspointer and the Renzulli system and the Common Core standards.

Although the district indicates that lessons can be built in an Individualized Learning Management System for students, there were limited strategies for how students with high needs, especially those with the greatest gaps, will be supported and narrative did not provide evidence that these were aligned to the sequence of mastery toward the Common Core and Career Readiness.

DCSD described how the Rtl process would be integrated into the student learning process to address accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students.

The narrative provides sufficient evidence that students will be trained to use the ISS to analyze their assessment data to track and manage their learning as well as the identified digital tools. Guidance counselors and teachers will be the primary trainers of students, making it more likely students will use the systems since they will receive just in time training as needed.

DCSD proposal demonstrates a personalized learning environment for students that engages and empowers students by teaching students to use data to plan for goals and providing instruction through problem-based, real world learning and access to digital systems. The alignment of learning targets and formative assessments to the Common Core standards provide students, teachers, and parents with ongoing assessment of student progress toward self-directed goals and monitoring of progress toward graduation. However, the DCSD proposal relies heavily on teacher preparation of the content, including the development and adaption of lessons, link to digital learning tools, and use of commercial digital software to meet individual student needs. DCSD did not indicate how the district will ensure that teacher-developed lessons are aligned with the Common Core or evidence demonstrating the NWEA Skillspointer and the Renzulli systems are aligned with the standards as well. As a result, every student, including those who need accommodations, may not have the same access to high-quality content, including digital learning content, aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Overall, this places

DCSD's proposal in the high range of score points.

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

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD provided an extensive high-quality plan to address how all teachers will improve instruction and will receive training in AIW, PBL, AfL, LMS, and the ISS in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready.

The narrative and action plan also address how teachers will be involved in creating a culture of data inquiry through professional learning communities, integrating the peer consultation model, to reinforce the implementation for these approaches that are key to building the personalized learning environment. These structures are also intended to be used at the building-level to analyze student and school progress and to make adjustments as needed.

The proposal provides sufficient evidence of research that supports how its approaches (PBL, AfL, and AIW) provide instructional approaches that support a rigorous learning environment and which allow teachers to adapt content and instruction through real world, problem-based discussions and collaborative work.

The district provided actions and a rollout plan for the training and implementation of AfL to ensure teachers and students will be provide frequent measures of student progress toward the standards and college readiness.

The district plan also includes evidence of training for AIW and implementation of PLC protocols intended to inform teachers' and principals' practice. Plan actions also include evidence of how the observation and student data will inform the evaluation system.

The district provides a high quality plan that includes goals, actions, evaluation methods, and timelines to develop a data culture that are likely to increase access to student progress information, identify gaps, and inform student progress if implemented as planned. The design describes actions for teachers and administrators training in the use the ISS (to be developed) and the LMS to access and use data to identify student needs and implementation of data PLCs at the building-level. The narrative describes goals for expansion of the LMS to provide student coursework and tools for access at anytime that will meet individual student needs. The narrative further describes how the ISS is to provide a data dashboard of longitudinal data to inform student and school-level needs.

The narrative describes the district's intention to review the sufficiency of the district's infrastructure, resources, calendar year and day to implement the reforms. An extensive plan for the middle school redesign provided sufficient evidence of how the each approach in the reform will be addressed as identified in the narrative.

The district offers a high-quality plan for professional staff evaluation that includes actions, progress measures, evidences, timelines, and persons responsible that outline how to district will increase the number of highly qualified teachers and leaders. This plan integrates actions that show how teachers and leaders will develop the steps for evaluation. The narrative provides further descriptions for how evaluation data will be used through peer consultation. The plan is likely to result in increased teacher buy-in and quality if carried out as planned. The plans for integrating the AIW are also clear, aligned with the logic proposed, and address the actions, outcome measures, data collection, persons responsible and timelines that is likely to result in increased teacher quality if implemented as presented.

The DCSD's proposal provides evidence that teachers will be trained to implement PBL, UbD, and AfL, be trained to access and use the proposed data systems, and engage in school-based data teams to monitor progress of students and make adjustments as needed. DCSD provided evidence of numerous, well written plans that include actions, evaluation measure, evidences of progress, timelines, and persons responsible to provide educators and administrators. Overall, DCSD has provided evidence that the professional development and data systems will result a personalized learning environment that is likely to lead toward college and career readiness for students. However, these initiatives exentsive and must be fast tracked to ensure change in a timely manner to accelerate student learning.

DCSD's plan for improving teaching and learning is ambitious. Given the number of initiatives that must be trained and implemented and the timelines provided, the plan must be monitored to ensure that teachers and leaders have the necessary supports and time to implement each initiative to ensure the district is achieving its goals. However, the DCSD has provided a plan that incudes evidence that educators and leaders demonstrate instructional caapcity to implement a personalized learning environment for students that is likely to lead to college and career readiness and graduation. Overall, this places DCSD's proposal in the high range of score points.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The DCSD narrative indicates evidence of a district-level governance structure to since the superintendent has board-approved authority to use central staff to support the implementation of the project in all its participating schools, including the two schools who will not be receiving direct benefit of grant funds. DCSD also indicates that central staff will be trained.</p> <p>The narrative indicates that the district implements site-based management and DCSD and cites board policy that demonstrates school leadership teams have autonomy in decision-making to implement the requirements of the proposal and may apply for waivers, if indicated.</p> <p>DCSD acknowledges that current policies are designed for different pathways of progress through alternative and gifted policies and practices. While the proposal describes all the pathways that need to be addressed, the narrative did provide the timelines or the process for the district to address how these policies will be changed to allow for students to progress based on their mastery of the subject.</p> <p>DCSD indicated that district revisions of policies that allow students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways must be addressed but did not provide a plan for how or when this would occur.</p> <p>DCSD provided the current policies that address the learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. While these policies address that students must be provided with fully accessible and adapted resources, the proposal is not clear about how the initiatives can or will be adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities of students who are English language learners. This is especially important given the extreme gains the district has identified in its achievement goals for students with disabilities.</p> <p>DCSD has a number of policies and processes in place that will allow for the district to deploy staff and resources and for leadership teams to make site-based decisions with regards to implementation of the reforms within the proposal. However, there are numerous district policies that must be addressed to allow students to be able to learn and progress within a personalized learning environment adapted to meet their needs. While the proposal acknowledges policies that must be address, evidence was not provided to indicate the process or timelines for changing these policies. These policies have the potential to significantly impact the outcomes of the project if not addressed. As a result, this places the DCSD proposal in the low range of score points.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The DCSD narrative indicates how teachers and students will be provided with laptops, media projectors, and software. However, the proposal is vague about how families will be provided with access to technology and systems. The narrative indicates that the internet system but it is not clear if this is in school or if this is available for families who live around the schools or within the district. The proposal is also vague about family and student access to the ISS and LMS and what access to information families, students, and teachers will have.</p> <p>The narrative indicates that the technology department will complete a needs assessment based on current tickets for support to identify common problems. The narrative indicates that staff will be given current knowledge base and tutorials for support that extends to students and families but it is not clear when or how this will work. The proposal indicates that technology support will be leveraged through neighborhood resource centers but does not fully describe what those structures, their</p>		

relationship to the district or school, or the services they will provide.

The narrative indicates that the district will create and implement its own private cloud for the storage and sharing. The system will be kept secure by requiring district logins.

DCSD's narrative adequately describes its interoperable data systems that include PowerSchool, other district systems management tools, and describes plans for implementing a new human resource system.

The evidence provided indicated that DCSD has planned for the sharing of data through a secure cloud system and that there are current interoperable systems that are to be expanded. However, the narrative is not comprehensive in describing how teachers, administrators, students, and parents will have access to and be provided with supports at the school level to the systems that supports personalized learning. As a result, this places the DCSD proposal in the mid range of score points.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The DCSD plans include progress indicators for each steps of implementation. The narrative extensively describes how progress will be monitored through the implementation of data teams at the school level. Although the proposal includes multiple plans with these progress measures and an overall evaluation plan, DCSD did not provide a process to collect, analyze, organize, and report on this data to monitor progress of the district's goals for the proposed report. Although school teams may have individual information regarding school-level progress, the proposal did not indicate how the information will be shared to inform the public about the quality of its investments in professional development, technology, and staff.</p> <p>Although DCSD provided extensive plans to collect multiple measures, the district does not provide evidence of a high quality plan that demonstrates a strategy for collecting, analyzing, and reporting this information to the public, making it difficult to determine if DCSD's plan will result in a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. Overall, this places the DCSD proposal in the mid range of score points for this element.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal cites multiple methods the district intends to provide communication, including the information posted in the website and in local media sources that are likely to reach some but not all internal and external stakeholder. DCSD indicates that parent teacher meetings will be held at the school level, however, the narrative did not address how information would be shared or how families would be informed or engaged in an ongoing manner to receive feedback on progress and revisions needed. Although the district-wide team, representing school and community stakeholders, will be asked to provide ongoing feedback, a process to describe how this would happen and frequency was not provided. The proposal also did not address how external stakeholders, such as businesses and the community in general, would be engaged.</p> <p>Although DCSD provides several communication methods, these forums are not likely to be sufficient to communicate with all internal and external stakeholders. While the district accountability committee will be engaged in providing feedback, DCSD did not provide clear evidence of how other key stakeholder, such as students, families, teachers, and administrators will be engaged in providing feedback or how they will receive communication about implementation progress and revisions to the plan. Overall, this places the DSCD proposal in the mid range of score points for this element.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD indicates that the performance measures are the same as those included in section A. However, the proposal includes tables with 12 performance measures to address this section.

Although this section does not provide information about how these measures were selected or will provide timely feedback, the results of these indicators are included in progress measures within the plans submitted for implementation and in other parts of the narrative. Without the narrative to clearly describe the measure and methodology, it is difficult to determine why some goals were not written to increase or decrease across the implementation years for some of the measures. For example, it is not clear why the goals remain the same as baseline for the All students category on the kindergarten readiness measure. This is also true for some grades and subpopulations on the NWEA math and reading measures. The goals are set of a two percentage point increase each year but there was no rationale provided that would suggest why this is an ambitious yet achievable gain. Further, the overall two percentage point gain may not be sufficient for the subgroup populations who are the highest needs. Without a clear description of the rationale, the goals appear to be achievable but not necessarily ambitious for students who are the furthest behind. Evidence could not be found about how the district will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

The evidence provided for this element was in different parts of the narrative, making it difficult to clearly evaluate. Based on the submission in its entirety, DCSD has provided evidence of measures that are aligned with their evaluation of implementation and appropriate for measuring student academic progress and health. However, DCSD did not clarify why some goals did not increase or decrease for some of the measures nor a rationale for a two percentage point increase for every measure and every population, making it difficult to evaluate if these goals are ambitious enough to close gaps. The district also did not provide evidence of how measures would be improved over time if they were insufficient to gauge progress. This places the DCSD in the mid range of score point for this element.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
---	---	---

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD provided evidence of a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the funded activities, specifically related to goals, but the plan was not comprehensive and does not address the use of time or staff, resources or structural changes needed to implement the reform effort. The district did not describe in the narrative how the data would be collected, analyzed, or reported or the person responsible.

While DCSD provides a plan for evaluating goals, the plan is incomplete, addresses measures that will inform the goals, but does not include how data will be collected for the identified measure, how these will be analyzed, and how this information will be organized and reported. This places the DCSD in the mid range of score point for this element.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD provides a budget narrative and budget detail related costs and additional funds that will support the first three years of the grant proposal in addition to grant funds. Within the budget, one time versus ongoing costs are indicated. However, the DCSD narrative indicates that state funding to sustain the project may be difficult given economic challenges. DCSD did not clearly address if funds are reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the initiative, or the rationale for the investment, although clarification is offered throughout the narrative.

Rationale for a number of the budget items related to staff were not clearly identified in the narrative or budget proposal. Most of the investment is in staff, particularly to implement the middle school model but DCSD does not provide strong evidence to suggest how and what staff are necessary to implement the proposal, especially when the middle school model was not part of the initial vision for the reform proposed. The narrative also did not address student apprenticeships or how this relates to any of the approaches in the proposal so the rationale for these staff costs is not clear. The travel costs are significant but the description provided does not include the number of staff to be impacted and the rationale for attending this training for multiple years.

The district did not address the funds that will be one time only and those that will be ongoing costs (such as the personnel costs) and how these positions will be sustained after the grant period.

The plan submitted by the district that includes a narrative and budget is not extensive and does not describe a rationale for

the additional staff costs requested and how these relate to the overall implementation of the proposal. The proposal does not include all budget sources that the district will be using to implement the projects and if these are one time funds of ongoing to sustain the initiative after the grant period. This places the DCSD in the mid range of score point for this element.

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

10

5

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD submitted a budget narrative and budget as evidence of a plan to sustain the project goals beyond grant funding. The DCSD narrative indicates that state funding to sustain the project may be difficult given the current economic challenges and provided an example showing how the legislature was not following state rules for funding timelines. Further, DCSD states that funding for growth for 2011 was 0% following a ten percent cut for fiscal year 2010-11.

Although DCSD indicates it will combine funding streams to support the continuation, the narrative suggests that the district and state financial environments are unstable at this time. Therefore, it is not clear if the district would be able to maintain the additional costs, including the ongoing funding of the 33 staff included in the budget, to support the continuation of project goals. This places the DCSD in the mid range of score point for this element.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The DCSD narrative provides a description of a long-standing partnership with early childhood and community agencies for this proposal. The partnership intends to provide a preK-3 program that aligns community supports and school goals within five existing Title I schools in the district. The partnership would provide community services including before and after school care with tutoring, summer activities, and parent education to support school success.

The partnership has identified six outcomes that include increasing the quality of day care and preschool programs serving the identified school, increase parent involvement and services, increased student attendance and academic growth. These outcomes demonstrate alignment with priority 1 and are likely to improve the ability of the district to comprehensively address high needs students within these schools.

The proposal indicates that the quality rating of the preschool and childcare systems will be collected by the early childhood partner and that DCSD will collect data for the other measures. Although the attendance and achievement data is available district-wide, the proposal did not address how it would collect data related to the outcomes for families.

The district indicates that the data will be used by partners to identify needs for targeted students to prioritize services but does not provide an in-depth description or process for prioritizing, who will be included, or timelines. The proposal includes a vision of how the partnership would support the RtI model through collaborative planning but did not specifically address building capacity of staff within the schools.

The narrative indicates that the initiative would be scaled to students in grades 4 and 5 but does not include a strategy or timeline for when this would occur.

The narrative suggests that data will be analyzed over time and that students not making progress will be provided with additional instruction. However, the proposal does not include a plan for improving results over time that includes specific activities, timelines, evaluation measures, or persons responsible

DCSD's plan is to increase the impact of RtI by including outside agencies in the problem-solving process and by making these broader community resources available to support students and their families. The narrative does not sufficiently address how it will assess the needs and assets of participating students aligned with the goals. In addition, a plan was not provided to show how the partnership will identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community. Although the narrative suggests that a needs assessment occurs on an annual basis, there was no evidence provided to demonstrate that previous needs assessments had been conducted or the process for doing for the purpose of the grant.

The narrative indicates that parents will have access to data from the ISS and LMS systems about their students and that school teams will include community partners. However, the narrative does not describe how families will be actively engaged in both decision making and solutions to address family and student needs.

DCSD does not describe a method for assessing the progress or a plan that includes activities, progress measures, timelines, or persons responsible to comprehensively assess impact and make adjustments as needed.

DCSD describes three measures related to achievement. The chart provided indicates that goals are yet to be decided for grades K-2. Therefore, it is not clear if these goals will be ambitious yet achievable. Attendance rates for 100% are ambitious but do not take into account the possibility of student illnesses.

DCSD describes a positive and potentially powerful partnership for supporting students with the greatest needs. However, plans demonstrating a well thought out approach and design to create and sustain this partnership were not provided. This places the DCSD in the mid range of score point for this element.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

DCSD proposal has the potential to accelerate achievement, deepen student learning, and impact educator effectiveness. Students will have access to deeper, real- life learning and ongoing, formative assessments that can help them to track progress toward the sequence of targets through the implementation of PBL and AoF. The use of PLCs and implementation of data systems will likely result in increased achievement. The alignment of RtI within these initiatives, and use of software designed to address areas of need and advance learning, will also provide a way to address and individualize the needs of students with achievement gaps.

The plans to increase teacher quality through a rigorous professional development agenda and use of student and classroom implementation data to inform instructional decisions will likely result in increased teacher and administrator quality.

Although the number of initiatives that teachers are expected to understand and learn may impact implementation quality and sustainability, overall, DCSD addresses all the requirements of Priority I.

Total	210	134
-------	-----	-----

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	10

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides a compelling rationale for creating a community-wide data system to develop common measures and indicators across agencies, assess needs, and evaluate impact of services to students. The narrative indicates that the population of K-3 in Title I schools in the district was selected since many of the agencies were providing out of school programs to this age group of students with families accessing some of the services. In addition, this age-group provided the next step in extending the preschool partnerships that had already been created between agencies.

However, the proposal does not evidence that DCSD is working in partnership with other LEAs but demonstrates a partnership with community agencies that is likely to produce a replicable model for other LEAs.

DCSD and partners will work with a vendor to create a scalable platform for data collection to be used for cross agency data collection.

The proposal includes goals, activities, outcome measures, and timeline and persons responsible for ensuring the activity is implemented.

The narrative indicates that a user fee will support the sustainability of the project.

The budget provided appears to be reasonable and the narrative includes a rationale for costs.

Overall, DCSD was able to provide a reasonable plan for a replicable data platform that will allow the school district to partner with agencies providing after school programming to collect and share data sources to monitor program outcomes and continually assess needs. The proposed budget is reasonable and includes only those line items proposed in the narrative. The project also addresses how the initiative will be sustained beyond the life of the grant funds. However, the budget does not indicate that DCSD is partnering with other LEAs in the planning of this proposal. Further, DCSD did not provide a plan for how the proposal will scale to other LEAs. This places the DCSD proposal in the mid range of score point for this element.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0942IA-3 for Dubuque Community School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Dubuque Community School District (DCSD) articulates a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that is clearly already in motion. The success of the educational reform movement is supported by the recognition gained in recent years for the city of Dubuque, which includes the school district. They have been recognized as one of the *Best Communities for Youth*, by the America's Promise Alliance, and as the *Best Small City to Raise a Family* by Forbes.com and most impressively by the U.S. Dept. of Ed as a *Together for Tomorrow Challenge* winner. The vision described by the Dubuque's Instructional Framework and the Iowa Professional Development is perfectly aligned with the four core educational assurances. Dubuque's

Instructional Framework describes four competencies used to prepare their students for the 21st Century:

- Digital-Age Literacy
- Effective Communication
- Inventive Thinking
- High Productivity

It is critical to note that community is visionary and focused on significant reform. The community commitment is evident by the varied stakeholders who take an active role in the educational reform movement of DCSD. The collaborative effort will serve to support the high-quality plan outlined in this proposal.

DCSD identified the goals for the proposed project are (abbreviated):

- to realized a personalized learning environment for every student with the focus on preparing them for the 21st Century and College Career Readiness (to engage student's interest and motivation to learn)
- implement professional learning and protocols for teachers and principals (highly engaging)
- create a high-performing data culture to be used by students, parents and school personnel to provide continuous improvement in teaching and learning

The reform effort is supported by a comprehensive needs assessment, goals, and research findings by experts in the field , Brigid Barron and Linda Darling-Hammond. The outcomes are clearly outlined over the 4 years of the project and evaluation indicators as well as the person(s) responsible identified. Separate evaluation goals and measures are identified along with a chart of initiatives for the reform goals. The proposed plan is articulated in an easy to follow format (charts/tables) and supported by convincing narrative.

While the plan is quite ambitious, it is highly achievable given the depth of the plan, the high number and varied stakeholders, and the clearly identifiable (reasonable) performance measures for each goal.

The Applicant articulates to a high degree that their plan is comprehensive and coherent and is based upon a reform vision that will achieve each of the measures for this criterion, earning a high score for this criterion.

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

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant proposes a high quality approach to implementing the articulated plan across all grade levels with an emphasis on the middle school level and all schools. Two schools in were omitted because the schools do not meet the criteria for the percentage of low-income families and students who are not proficient on the Iowa standardized test. While not stated in the application, the inclusion of the two school that were excluded would have placed this Applicant outside of the eligibility requirements. The participating schools have a poverty rate of 40.1%, allowing this district to barely meet the eligibiity requirements. This assessment for selection was clearly evident by the details provided in the narrative.

A list of the schools (16) participating was provided in the narrative as well as a detailed table with school demographics. A review of the chart revealed disparity between schools with low-income and high-need students. While some reported as high as 87% low-income, some schools reported as low as 25.2%. For the participating schools, 49% of the students are identified as high-need and 40.1% low-income, meeting the requirements. While two schools will not be included in this project, district general budget funds will be avialabel to support the implementation of the RTTT reform plan for those schools.

The total number of studnets participating and the number of students from low-income families, high-need students and educators was clearly identified with within the application and meet the requirements for this RTTT-D grant funding. A total of 1175 educators are included in this proposed project.

The Applicant scores extremely high for the details provided in regard to the plan to implement this project.

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

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

A list of the schools (16) participating was provided in the narrative as well as a detailed table with school demographics. A review of the chart revealed disparity between schools with low-income and high-need students. While some reported as high as 87% low-income, some schools reported as low as 25.2%. For the participating schools, 49% of the students are identified as high-need and 40.1% low-income, meeting the requirements. While two schools will not be included in this project, district general budget funds will be available to support the implementation of the RTTT reform plan for those schools. The extent to which the district will support the schools not included in this RTTT-D funding confirms the districts dedication to scaling up the implementation to support reform to all school in the district. The dedication for the district to support the nonparticipating schools will help DCSD to meet the overall Instructional Framework competencies, the Iowa Professional Development Model, and to improve student learning across the district. The Applicant scores extremely high for this criterion due to their willingness to adopt and support the reform effort across their district, even to schools that don't meet the eligibility of this funding.

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

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

"Increasing equity" is the vision expressed by DCSD for this educational reform effort. Within the current summative

assessment data, DCSD identified that an upward trend for achievement was occurring in elementary school but only marginal growth for all students is noted at the middle and high school levels. This proposed project targets middle school performance. This high quality plan clearly demonstrates ambitious yet achievable goals that exceeds State ESEA targets by completely "closing" any gaps between sub-groups.

Current summative assessments of students, identified the subgroups of Low SES, African-American and students with special needs as the most at-risk for marginal growth. For that purpose, DCSD proposes to implement a high-performance "data culture" with the full intention of monitoring individual student progress and intervening with appropriate instructional interventions using the process of RtI. DCSD advocates that the use of high-performance data, interventions, and personalized learning environments will ensure that gaps in achievement across student subgroups will be closed. Using the word, "closed" is impressive and the exceptional high level of ambition that is needed to demonstrate "equity" for students.

The plan outlines three ambitious yet achievable goals for this project that target the overall goal of education reform, and the Iowa Core College and Career Reading and the 21st Century Skills. The goals seeks to prepare all students for college and careers, increasing graduation rates and college enrollment.

Furthermore, the Applicant expresses that this plan will assure students are ready for college and career, noting that college enrollment and retention rates will increase.

The Applicant provides extensive support for improving student outcomes across at individual schools within the LEA to meet the overall LEA wide goals. The Applicant meets all the requirements for this criterion and earns a high score.

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	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD shares a track record of success beginning in 2001, the beginning of NCLB legislation. The reports provided in this application clearly demonstrates overall success, yet identifies that better strides have been made at the elementary level, then at the middle school level where they have experienced only slight increases of success and at the high school level where performance has remained unchanged. For the past five years, success at the elementary level has been quite exceptional in the areas of reading and math proficiency, moving from 75% to 90-95%. This record is impressive and demonstrates that this district is collecting and effectively using the data to make appropriate adjustments. The application provides a glimpse into the types of changes that have been made and they include professional development training to improvement teaching and learning at the elementary level in regard to reading and math. DCSD reports that process in their middle grade levels, starting in 4th grade, declines. While it may seem unique and frustrating for this district, it is typical for schools across America and is known as the 4th grade slump. This district while recording declines for middle school levels has continued to show a record of success for the past 4 years with only a slight decline for the year 2011-2012. As a result of the concentrated efforts in place to identify and correct the "middle school" slump, the data shows a significant increase in student performance and proficiency in their 11th grade scores. Impressively, the measures implemented help the students to recover from the middle school decline somewhat.

But, DSCD reports that the increase has not produced a significant change in high school performance, no reported losses have occurred, they have remained the same. The Applicant reports significant graduation increases (37-54) and number of credits earned (1058-1122) of students from the Alternative Learning Center for high school students. However, the Applicant did not provide evidence of a record of success for high school graduation or college enrollment data.

DCSD has a strong position (belief/approach) for closing gaps among subgroups, their focus is to eliminate gaps so that all students performance at 100% proficiency level. Extensive measures are taken to assess the "whole" child (student), physically, emotionally, socially, and academically. The application provides a plethora of ways the district strives to reach all students through outreach programs and surveys as well as through community organizations and communication with students and parents.

The district demonstrates strong and continued commitment to achieving ambitious and significant reforms in a multitude of ways from closing failing alternative schools to the implementation of charter schools to help specific groups of students. To further support their commitment for significant change, the district uses a comprehensive communication system, PowerSchool to keep parents, students, teachers, and school administrators up to date each day about students grades, attendance, and overall performance. The application provides many details along with charts and graphs to support this criterion including average performance scores for each school for the past 4 years. The gaps for between subgroups are identified only as schools that are Title 1 versus non-Title 1, specific groups for each school is not presented clearly.

Overall, the measures taken and clearly outlined in this application are impressive and are to be commended. DCSD scores in the high range for this criterion with only a few points deducted for failing to demonstrate a record for successfully decreasing gaps in achievement between subgroups and for missing information regarding graduation rates and college enrollment.

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

5

4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In regard to transparency of processes, practices, and investments, the Applicant states that the District is in the process of implementing an advanced accounting system. Currently, the system they are using and have been using for a very long time do not interface the non-personnel budget and the personnel budget. The overall expenditures for personnel salaries is not provided on the school level, but rather on the education level without categories to differentiate staff, teachers, and support staff.

To support the transparency of the district, an independent auditor reviews the accounting records of the district and the Applicant reports that for "many years" the auditor reported that the accounting practices of the district were sound. Since 2009, the District has earned the Association of School Business Officials International Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting. The Applicant does explain that the district is moving to an updated accounting computerized system, yet notes that the district has received awards and recognition for meeting official accounting practices with the older outdated system.

A "high level of transparency" is not clearly apparent by the information provided, yet the comments from the independent auditor and the recognition from the ASB and the compliance with the state accounting requirements provides evidence to support a high level of transparency.

Taking into account that the district does publish all district salaries in the paper annually and that the district appears to have met the accounting principles as required by the State and an independent auditor, the Applicant scores in the high range for this criterion, but a point was deducted from missing data as noted in the application.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The District provides several examples to support their overwhelming willingness to seek the measures and resources that best serve their students.

This District doesn't hesitate to seek legal counsel if necessary to assure educational needs of the district are met. Several times they have sought and gained approval for redistribution of funds (i.e. sales tax redistribution, cash reserve levy) and changes in Charter schools, and flexibility in Carnegie units of credit for graduation. The letters of support and signatures from district leaders provide support that conditions and autonomy are clearly in place for this proposed high quality educational reform plan.

The examples and the aggressiveness of the District to pursue autonomy provides a high level of evidence that this District will be able to continue to operate with sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments as described in the application and scores at the top of the high range.

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

10

10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Seeking input from various stakeholders appears to be an area in which this school district excels. The application provides several strong examples of invitations for collaboration from a variety of community stakeholders that includes businesses, school personnel, parents, and students. In addition, the District seeks outside consultants to collect information to inform change.

Letters of support are from the collective bargaining representative as well as various stakeholders are included with this application.

The Applicant earns full points for this criterion due to the quality of examples provided that demonstrates the Districts desire to include stakeholders within and outside of the District.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Applicant provided a high-quality plan to assess its current status in implementing personalized learning environments. The current status for implementing this proposed plan was based upon the current needs assessment for the District.</p> <p>DCSD reports having implemented an “exhaustive” number of needs assessments in the past 3 years and this is clearly evidence by the summary provided and supported with reports in the Appendix. The needs assessments that began with a focus on technology infrastructure and community perceptions and preferences has lead to a \$4,000,000 upgrade in the district computerized network system. The Applicant explains that this upgraded system is ready to support the personalized learning environment as proposed for this project. Furthermore, needs assessments have been completed to gather information about the community perceptions and opinions towards the school district when identified the need for the school facility to better meet the needs for 21st Century learners, a design for different types of learning spaces. Additional needs assessments were conducted by outside educational professionals that further supported learning environments that are authentic and student centered. As a result a needs assessment conducted as a result of the No Child Left Behind District in Need Assistance (DINA) program, a need for professional develop for both teachers and administrators was identified. This PD is needed to train teachers how to better serve subgroups who are noted “at-risk”. A “data culture” training is included in the PD.</p> <p>The exhaustive list of needs assessments along with the findings serves to support evidence that this Applicant has a high-quality plan for analyzing and implementing the proposed plan to foster personalized learning environments.</p> <p>The Applicant scores all points for this criterion given the exceptional quality of the needs assessments presented and the plan for change already in motion.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Using a multitude of measures, the DCSD describes within the narrative and provides supporting evidence in the appendix for how they will use the proposed plan to implement a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching through the use of Authentic Intellectual Work, Value Beyond School (instructional teacher evaluation), Problem-based Learning, and Assessment for Learning. All of which will be included in the Instructional Improvement System that will provide teachers, students, and parents with student evaluations and feedback. A sample of this Instructional Improvement System is also provided in the Appendix. The outlined systems and programs are recognized as effective within the educational community and have proven to provide postive results.</p> <p>Learning Management Systems like the ones highlighted in the appendix of this application are becoming more commonly used at the community college and university level. DCSD is to be commended for stepping out to incorporate this model into the K-12 world. The use of LMS allows for individualized personal learning environments where students are continuously updated on their performance. While not stated in the application, for K-12 students the "dashboard" may serve as a motivator because it is similiar to playing electronic or digital games. Mastering standards or skills produces quick "rewards" to acknowledge successful mastery. The use of an interfacing Instructional Improvement System will serve very well to inform students of their achievement goals and to help teachers to indentify standards in which the students are struggling to master. Through the consistent use of the “dashboard” students will become more aware of the learning targets and <i>what they are learning</i> and need to accomplish to meet their goals. The use of the program will help to move students from a “grade” oriented world to a “goals” oriented world, similar to the real world. This shift in thinking will help students to set goals and then to obtain them, but also to gain the skills needs to set life goals and to obtain them as well. Mastering the use of academic standards through Problem-based Learning mimics real-life and seems reasonable that students would be able to transfer this concept to their personal life, better preparing them for college and career opportunities.</p> <p>As stated above, a continuous stream of analysis and feedback is provided within the LMS and the Instructional Improvement System that will prepare students to approach the instructional framework that is currently expanding at colleges and universities across the U.S. and it will also prepare students for the real world including their possible career choices. Success within the LMS automatically means progression and students are not delayed by time restraints or seat time and are very similar what students can expect for advancing in the workforce.</p>		

For those students who are identified as high-need, DCSD states that they will follow the model of Using Data Process and implement the protocols as outlined in Rtl to determine what measures of support, remediation, and/or acceleration may be needed to put in place for individual students. Teachers will create appropriate modules or learning activities within the LMS, assign Renzulli Learning System Modules, create small group instruction, or one-on-one remediation with the teacher. DCSD further states that the options for differentiation are limitless and that this process is supported by the I-Plan, a protocol that requires the setting and tracking of specific behavioral or academic goals for students who are at high-risk.

DCSD has provided a clear and extensive plan for training students, parents, and school personnel is an interwoven into the goals for this proposed project.

For this criterion, the Applicant provides strong evidence and confidence for their ability to implement a high-quality flexible, multi-layered personalized learning environment with the full intention of providing rich learning experiences for all students that will prepare them for college and career readiness.

The Applicant scores in the high range for this criterion.

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

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DCSD has interwoven within the goals of this proposed project to address professional development for all educators including administrator at the central office. The development of Professional Learning Communities is fully described including a sample PLC log and Handbook that is paired with the proposed evaluation system that includes peer consultation. Further interwoven is teacher and administrator evaluation that is directly related to the demonstration and evaluation for preparing students for the 21st Century.

Professional Development for all educators will include training to create personalized learning environments and will focus on two instructional protocols:

- Assessment for Learning
- Problem-Based Learning

The integration of a personalized learning system (Learning Management System LMS) and an Instructional Improvement System (ISS) will be used to measure, monitor, and redirect/redesign/remediate instruction as necessary. In additional restructuring of the middle level (instructional time, calendar). Instructional time will be readjusted to allow time for project based learning.

The ISS dashboard of data will be shared will be assessable to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members. ISS dashboard information will be used to identify and monitor intervention groups for Rtl. Data can be comparative and longitudinal offering information from the top down (district to individual student level). This degree of data sharing and analysis seems to be exactly what is needed to make real change. By keeping constant tabs on academic performance of the district, schools, classes, and students, adjustments can be made or addressed to avoid yearlong decline before realizing change is or was needed in regard to instruction, teachers, or leadership. Quite often students lose an entire year of academic progress before administrators realize a real need for change.

Significant changes are proposed for the middle school level to integrate philosophies between elementary and secondary education trained teachers. The district is applauded for recognizing these two very different philosophies and how neither adequately relates to the students in the “middle” school level. A new logic model is proposed to meet the specific needs of students in middle grades. This plan includes a Wellness teacher and middle school endorsements for teachers. Most importantly, the plan allows for autonomy within “houses” in regard to instructional time. These changes will certainly support the proposed plan to improve move the students in the middle school from the current decline in academic performance to increasing academic performance levels.

Middle school is the perfect time to reassess students and to get them back on track before moving onto high school. DCSD fully recognizes this unique developmental period and has proposed adequate training to support change at the middle school level that including instructional training, student progress assessment, and changes that will support college and career readiness.

A extensive elaborate plan for implementing Problem-Based Learning Goals and Strategies is presented within this application. A very careful review reveals rigorous goals for educators including intervention and strategies, success indicators, assessment methods, persons responsible and timeline.

Furthermore, DCSD has provided core beliefs that guide the system for change. These beliefs demonstrate a strong commitment for professional growth for administrators and teachers that hinges on reflection, cooperation, and collaboration.

Moreover, includes formative and summative professional evaluations. The application clearly notes that in some cases *sifting* of ineffective personnel is required.

To this extent, the District further proposes the use of performance-based bonus pay system to support greater academic performance of students.

For Staffing Effective and High Effective Teachers, DCSD presents Goals and Strategies along with a detailed table that outlines a solid plan including interventions and strategies, success indicators, assessment methods, persons responsible and a timeline. All of which are commendable and reasonable for staffing hard to staff schools and shortage areas. The plan includes offering teacher loan forgiveness programs for ongoing service in those hard to staff areas. But interestingly, the district recognizes that a teacher may be effective in one school but not in another and strives to matches culture, climate and instructional design that is needed for student success as well as to increase the effectiveness of the teacher. This seems to show commitment on the part of the district to meet the needs of the teacher as well as the students they serve.

Overall the complexity and the degree to which this Applicant extents to meet the criteria for this section is exhaustive and overwhelming supports the criteria, earning the Applicant an extremely high score.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DCSD reports that the central school board offices are active participants in this RTTT-D grant proposal and ready to transition to a personalized learning environment for all students. A detailed organizational chart, the DCSD policy included in the appendix outlines the administrative organization of the district and identifies the superintendent as having full legal authority from the board to make decision for the district schools.</p> <p>An action plan to support this proposed project is provided with clearly identified personnel needs. The plan advocates training for central office personnel and then the use of the train the trainers model to be implemented with support, collaboration, trouble-shooting, and supported at the building and staff levels. The plan seems logical, sequential, and reasonable.</p> <p>Autonomy is incorporated into the DCSD philosophy as well as use of Site-Based Shared Decision Making (SBSDM). With this philosophy and autonomy at individual sites (schools), building-level administration and leadership teams have the autonomy over factors that influence the implementation of this proposed project with includes school schedules, calendars, personnel, staffing, roles, responsibilities, and budgets.</p> <p>DCSD reports that their current practices and policies will allow the change as proposed in this plan to move from a course attendance, graded systems to one that is based vested in a standards-based mastery and evaluation system. The Applicant states that this plan will remove barriers to specialized pathways that will open new options for at-risk, special needs, or talented and gifted students to progress in alternative paths of learning. The Applicant provides a list of visionary alternative learning paths to support learning for at-risk students that will serve to decrease achievement gaps between subgroups.</p> <p>Allowing students to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways is reported as summarizes the focus of this reform effort. In other words, moving from traditional letter grades and course credit to a <i>standards-based</i> evaluation system will allow the flexibility to adapt instruction to meet the needs of all students.</p> <p>The details provided for this criterion is exhaustive with all measures fully illuminated the District's practices, policies, and rules are amendable and prepared to progress with this proposed project for reform. For this criterion, the Applicant scores full points for the exceptional detail and illuminate of the criteria.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DCSD states that they will provide equal access to ALL by providing computer/internet technology and personalized learning. Further details are provided for how technology/internet will be provided as well as personalized learning access. Support seems to be in the planning stages for implementation.</p> <p>As noted previously in the application, DCSD has just completed restricting of their technology department. They have hired a personnel to provide support across the district including at the school level. Moves are currently in progress to provide</p>		

“ticketed” tech support for school personnel, students and parents.

DCSD states is moving towards all-encompassing professional development that will allow educators to successfully integrate instructional technology so that technology coaches can work one-on-one with staff to seamlessly implement technology integration.

Neighborhood Resource Centers are planned to provide additional support to students and parents who have difficulty with the proposed Learning Management Systems.

According to DCSD, an interoperable data system is already in place for student information data, transportation, library dining, human resources, payroll, sub finder, and school messenger. However, it will not be until July of 2013 before the new Finance/Human Resources system will be in place, eventually able to be exported to the cloud.

Overall, the Applicant meets and in some areas exceeds the requirements for these criteria. However, the short comings of the interoperable data system requires a slight decrease in score for this criterion.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DCSD notes that the district has sought to provide continuous improvement as evidenced by their Instructional Framework and the Iowa Professional Development Model (each attached in the appendix), yet at time the focus has been “fragmented and underdeveloped” due to the shortcomings of the current data system. Goal #3 for this proposed funding seeks to implement a high-performing data culture that will allow the district to make the proposed continuous improvements. The proposed measures founded on the principles as outline by Nancy Love in <i>Using Data to Improve Learning for All: A Collaborative Inquiry Approach</i> will allow for efficient and effective monitoring and reporting on the progress towards meeting the goals outlined in the proposal.</p> <p>The Applicant scores in the high range for this criterion for tying together previous district visions and plans with the current respected model as outline by Nancy Love.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Ongoing communication and engagement seems to already be in place for the district. Communication is shared throught the use of newsletters, school websites, various business partnership, councils associated with the schools, and to the public via the local newspaper and district websites. The District has a Leadership team that is comprised of higher education, businesses, community leadership, teachers, administration, and students.</p> <p>Without any hesitation, the district fosters a spirit of ongoing communication and engagement for internal and external stakeholders. The varied letters of support and media pieces included in the appendix provided additional evidence for this criterion. For this criterion, the Applicant scores extremely high with no point deducted.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Applicant provide detailed tables just after section (E) with clearly identified performance measures, indicators, baseline data, and targeted annual measures across all grade bands and subgroups. The Performance measures are ambitious yet very achievable and will likely result in the district meeting or exceeding the annual targeted goals for each measure. The Performance Measures are appropriate for each grade level band, including health and social-emotional indicators as well as a clear focus on preparing all students for college and career readiness. Performance measures at the midde and high school more intensely focus on college and career readiness including assessments for entering college.</p> <p>The performance indicators will be monitored at appropriate intervals, annually. The measures are rigorous (aggressive) and will support the proposed educational reform effort as proposed by the Applicant.</p> <p>The Applicant scores very high for meeting the criterion in this section.</p>		

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DCSD is focused on implementing a data culture to not only implement and monitor the proposed project, but also to evaluate the effectiveness across all measures. The district describes measures and has established baseline data, along with clearly defined targets, and methods for evaluating each measure each year. The data culture will be used to determine make decisions about changes or adjustments that may need to be made to assure the effectiveness of the model. The details provide support a high quality very well defined evaluation system that will monitor the effectiveness of the investments contributed from this RTTT-D funding source. Overall the Applicant exceeds the requirements for this section and earns full points.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Information for this criterion was provided in section XI. Clear descriptions of all funds that will support the project were clearly identified and seem reasonable and sufficient to support the proposed project. In fact, the details are exhaustive and seem to align perfectly with the overall plan. Internal and external funds were easily identifiable in the tables provided for the proposed budget and clearly match the plans for the project. DCSD was sure to front load expenses that may not be easy for the district to sustain over time demonstrating responsibly and commitment to sustaining the project. A strong concentrated effort to train central office staff and leadership team at the local schools in the 1st year will help DCSD to sustain this project if they are unable to retain additional funding sources in the future. But, at this time, the district does not provide evidence that they will be able to “fund” this project completely after this grant funding period is over. However, with the current plan they may be able to use the train the trainer model to sustain the professional development allocations. Overall, the budget is solid and reflects the required criteria and focus has been purposefully used to sustain the project long-term.</p> <p>The Applicant scores high in regard to meeting this criterion for clear and thoughtful rationale for the investments and priorities. With only slight deduction in points due to the uncertainty of complete sustainability.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DCSD provides a plan for sustainability that is somewhat uncertain. The application provides insight to financial hardships due to the instability of the State legislature meeting the timelines in funding local school districts. It is noted that for the budget year 2011/2012, the budget is not expected to be set until march of 2012 if at that time. In additional budget cuts by the Governor’s office and decreased allowable growth and enrollment funding has been erratic due to the struggles of economic hard times. The Applicant explains that the goals of the grant have carefully frontloaded training within the district to help with sustainability of the project citing that highly trained curriculum and coaching staffs will be able to carry on the training after the grant years. The DCSC Board of Education approved for the president of the School Board to sign this RTTT application, signifying the support of the Board to support this project after the grant funded years.</p> <p>A detailed reasonable yet somewhat aggressive budget of sustainability is provided with the application with plans to use federal, state, and local funds as identified to continue the project in years 5, 6, and 7.</p> <p>The details provided are good and seem reasonable for identifying necessary measures needed to sustain the project after the grant-funding period has ended. Yet, while it is no fault of the DCSD, funding sustainability may be in jeopardy given the instability of the budget appropriations by the State and the uncertainty of future changes in leadership and vision that may not support this proposed project. The costs associated with sustaining the reform are substantial at \$17,482,397.00 for the three years after the grant funding has ended.</p> <p>While we are living in uncertain financial times, concerns abound regarding the districts ability to continue such an expense project. Due to the concerns regarding the districts ability to sustain this project after the grant-funding years, a few points are deducted for this criterion. However, earlier in this application, it was stated that the district was able to pass a 1 cent sales tax to support the school district suggesting the possibly that the community might be a resource for increased funding. For these multiple, possible rationales, the applicant is awarded a score in the high range for their ability to sustain this proposed project after the grant-funding period.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The DCSD proposes to integrate public and private resources in a partnership designed to augment school resources and provide student and family support at the early childhood level in 5 elementary Title 1 schools. The plan described is coherent and surely sustainable given the history provided for previous sustained partnerships that support early childhood programs described in the application. This particular proposed project focuses on the will integrate services at the preschool to grade 3 levels at Title 1 elementary schools, those identified as of high need. Six desired outcomes are presented for the project all of which are reasonable and seem plausible. The desired outcomes will serve to support the applicant's broader RTTT-D proposal by helping to provide a solid foundation for preschoolers- 3rd graders and to engage families in the school community. This proposed project will help 3rd graders to exit with academic growth in reading and math and will promote better attendance through the use of communication and additional services (summer learning opportunities). The partnership is clearly described along with systems for tracking data on individual students within the existing student information system and implementing the RTTT-D funded Learning Management System. Data collected will help each of the partners prioritize services that will help to provide the support needed to families from the appropriate partner. The varied partnerships: parents as Teachers, the Title 1 elementary schools, community-based organizations, and the community Foundation will work together to provide before, after, and summer programming that is a continuation of the regular school day and year. This concerted effort will surely prepare and help early childhood students to experience greater success in academics (reading and math), and will provide support and instruction to help their parents. Three ambitious yet achievable performance measures are clearly identified for this proposed competitive preference. Literacy Mathematics Attendance Population groups are clearly identified (low SES, ELL,) as well as clearly defined desired results for students. The population groups and the desired results are appropriate and reasonable. This project will help the district to maintain their success for increasing student academic performance at the elementary level and will provide a strong foundation to sustain increases in academic performance on the middle school. In the RTTT-D boarder proposal the applicant noted that they have experienced a decrease in performance at the middle school. It is probable that this proposed program will serve to provide a solid foundation in math and reading as well as establish good habits for attendance. The Applicant proposes a well-designed plan to integrate public and private services to support high need student populations in such a way to increase academic achievement to the extent that full points are earned for this competitive preference.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Without a doubt this proposed plan comprehensively addresses Absolute Priority 1, the use of personalized learning environments by implementing:

- Learning Mangement Systems
- Individualized Learning Plans
- Project-Based Learning
- Authentic Intellectual Work
- Collaborative Data Inquiry
- Assessment for Learning

And it builds upon the core educaitional assurance areas in the at ultimate focus is on preparing educators to create learning environments aligned with college and career ready standards. The Applicant proposes to implement a sophisticated system of individualized learning and dashboard assessment monitoring based upon mastery of standards rather than the traditional "grades". By focusing on mastery of standards and concepts and the use of individualized Learning Management Systems, educators, parents, and students will be able to better evauate the students progress. Teachers and administrators will be trained to implement this "new" personalized approach to learning and to implement approach strategies and remediation as

needed using the Rtl model.

The District will target middle school where they have identified a downward trend in academic performance in reading and math with the purposeful intention of helping to accelerate student achievement and to deepen the students learning experience. Ultimately, the district has set clear goals and targets to increase high school graduation rates, enrollment in college/university programs, and to better prepare students for college and career.

Total	210	203
-------	-----	-----

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

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

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant provides a high-quality plan for how they will carry out the proposed out-of-school time(OST) project. While the project is co-developed with many community agencies and the Applicant suggests that it may be replicatable for other districts, the proposed project does not include any other districts.

The data collected for the proposed OST project will be used by the DCSD to better understand the youth, family and community needs. And the information collected will help to improve access to high quality learning opportunities that will increase achievement and prevent learning loss. The project connect schools and key partners, creating a learning focused community. The information obtained will integrate into the RTTT-D reform effort by offering venues for community engagement for students, their families and the community. The proposed plan has established reason goals and evaluation measures. In addition, the proposed plan certainly provides a bridge for the gaps among at-risk students including ESL and low-income families. The plan includes a focus on literacy, attendance, and a community wide data system. Six key strategies are identified and the strategies clearly support the RTTT-D proposed project as mentioned previously.

A detailed adequate budget along with a narrative explaining the budget lines is included in the application with additional community foundation funds from other agencies and institutions included (\$45,000). The budget seems adequate to meet the proposed activities and the number of students to be served.

This optional Budget Supplement meets the criteria earning the Applicant a high score for this criterion.