



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0255AZ-1 for Dysart Unified District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

In Section (A)(1) The applicant's convincing opening statement of vision is somewhat diminished by the outdated research base. A theoretical framework that reflects more recent research than 1998 would have strengthened this section. The applicant begins the discussion of a proposed teacher evaluation system but it is unclear what the acronym TAP stands for or what the acronym NIET stands for (this came pages later) and both are integral parts of the vision of the proposal. School districts are made up of many more educators than just teachers and administrators. It was not clear if "human capital" was inclusive of other educators who contribute to student achievement such as, paraprofessionals, media specialists, and other school personnel. The vision of the proposal would have been strengthened to include all educators in the districts.

In the description of the TAP components, it was unclear what the elements of "value added" data are. Specific details as to what types of data will be added to student growth indicators would have offered more clarity to the measurement criteria of TAP. The research supporting the TAP system was more recent and supporting in later sections, but the applicant's narrative needed to explicitly state how the vision for the project in the context of the three districts would be achieved. There was significantly more information about the TAP system than how it would directly address the specific needs in each district. Detailed information about the distinct needs of each district were lacking. The vision of the proposal would be strengthened by offering a more in-depth description of how the target districts are distinctly different or similar and how the TAP system is flexible enough to address both differences and similarities.

The applicant stated that current walkthroughs, formal observations, and classroom visits are occurring, but there was little data to support these audits. Current observation protocol weaknesses and frequencies of formal observations (or lack thereof) would have provided a stronger argument for reform. Again, offering details as to how each district evaluates teachers, their commonalities and differences, and how the TAP system can compliment those processes would strengthen the vision. The applicant did not provide enough details as to what specific gaps there are in each districts' current teacher evaluation system and how TAP could fill those gaps. Pointing out instrumental distinctions or frequency differences within buildings or districts could have enhanced this section. A stronger case for TAP could be made if the alignment to specific district and/or building needs was there. Tables and graphs provide how TAP has worked in Louisiana, but what was missing was what the Louisiana charter schools have in common with the applicant districts and why TAP is likely to be as effective in the Target district as it has been in Louisiana.

The applicant states that the TAP model will provide "avenues for career advancement outside of administration" but does not provide details on whether or not this is an innovative idea in the context of the applicant districts or if it would augment current infrastructure for career advancement, their similarities, or distinct differences from each other. The graphics, slides, and charts on the **Human Capital Management System** are inadequate in font size to be useful.

The applicant indicates that "having teacher and principal evaluation systems that reflect the vision for instructional improvement, and using data from the evaluation system to support improvements in instruction will create a learning environment that enables each student to progress to his or her full potential." However, it is unclear that TAP in any way impacts the elements of the learning environment that cannot be controlled by an evaluation system such as a biography-driven instructional model, cultural competencies, or even teacher empathy. The issue of equity for diverse learners was

unclear throughout the narrative. Emphasis on how the TAP System allows for equitable access for students with disabilities could also strengthen the need for its adoption.

The applicant was vague on the process of training school board members to ensure that they understand the TAP System and are able to determine whether or not the superintendent, principals, or district were making progress. The applicant's claim that implementation of TAP will improve student learning is based on one study and lacks clarity if the study on TAP was done in a similar setting with similar student demographics. The applicant uses yet another acronym, SKR scale and offers no definition for the acronym. The case for measuring success for TAP via the Algiers Charter School Association schools or Edna Karr High School would be stronger if details had been provided of similarities between the successful schools and any schools in the three districts targeted by the proposal. Claims such as "70 percent of Special Ed students graduated" are strong claims but it is unclear if the effect occurred in a small or large student population. Also, the chart legends indicate that the data used "student-weighted averages." The strength of the extolled successes are diminished without knowing how the statistics were weighted. If the data is weighted, it would be helpful to know how it is weighted and if the same weights would be used in the context of the participating districts.

Overall, although the applicant clearly describes the TAP system, the vision for what needs to be reformed in each district and how TAP would address each targeted districts' student population(s) and their specific and differentiated needs remains unclear.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

This section (A)(2) provided a series of charts with lists of schools that will participate in grant activities. It was unclear what criteria was utilized to select the participating schools or why a whole-school approach outweighs a grade band or subject area approach. A narrative to accompany the table, providing rationale for school-level implementation would strengthen this section. Each of the four tables represented different data set and different districts's demographics. An accompanying narrative would have clarified if, for example, it is unclear why Avondale is only targeting K-8 math and reading, Dysart is targeting the entire student population in every subject and grade level, and Florence is only targeting "9 -12 M, Rdg, Wr" content areas. Specific details were lacking in the number of participating teachers. For example, it remains unclear as to whether the number of teachers in the Avondale demographics are all the teachers in the buildings, just math teachers (as might be the case in the middle grade levels) or exactly what factors were used to select teachers to participate. A detailed justification of why the applicant chose specific schools, grade bands or subject areas would enhance stand-alone charts.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

It was unclear how the applicant would address (A)(3). Going back to the vision section, there were goals listed for the TAP system, but there lacked evidence of how the plan will improve student learning outcomes for the target districts. Addition of a logic model or how the TAP system will be scaled up in each district would strengthen this section.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides tables of data in section (A)(4) a in order to illustrate past performance on summative assessments and future percentages for growth goals. This entire section would have been strengthened by a narrative providing rationale behind each data set. It would be helpful if the applicant could provide information as to why particular percentages were selected as goals. In collaborating districts, Florence and Avondale, growth on assessed areas of academic achievement is already occurring. Florence United School District saw growth in the "ALL STUDENTS" category in almost every data set and every grade level. Avondale's growth was not as comprehensive, but still demonstrated increases from last year to this year. Avondale AIMS Reading and Math performance data indicates that students are gaining growth from last year to this year in the number of students who are meeting or exceeding grade level in many

grade bands and subgroups, and in some cases, current growth would outpace targeted growth. Two data sets in Avondale, for example, indicate that students are showing growth in each grade level in several subgroups. Both the 7th and 8th grade Reading and Math data, demonstrate growth in the number of students meeting or exceeding achievement benchmarks from last year to this year. It would be helpful if the applicant could provide information as to why certain percentages were selected as growth targets and why TAPS is essential to a district that can already demonstrate growth in academic achievement. In some subgroups, such as Special Education, achievement percentages doubled from last year. A narrative to provide information and clarification of percentage targets would be helpful. Also helpful would be the addition of Statewide averages in order to make the comparisons of districts to statewide data and make the case for TAP's necessity for performance reform in areas that are already demonstrating growth.

In section (A)(4)(b), ambitious goals are set for closing the achievement gap for the life of the grant and "post-grant" targets. The goals would have been strengthened by a narrative describing the rationale behind the targets and how a zero % achievement gap would be realistic by the year 2020. Also helpful would be rationale for the data selected for the charts; for example, district data is used in previous section (A)(4)(a) and building data is used in this section, (A)(4)(b) and it is unclear as to why the shift from district data to building data occurred.

In section (A)(4)(c), Graduation rates, the applicant did not provide a clear rationale for the 2% incremental benchmark selected. The section would be strengthened by information as to how the percentage was determined and in why only Florence Unified School district would be targeted for this goal.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>In Section (B)(1) Tables 1-4 are strengthened by the accompanying narrative. It would have also been helpful to demonstrate commonalities in success and challenges across the three districts in side-by-side comparisons and/or indicate how the TAPS system currently used in the Avondale district would influence current student growth rates or growth or other indicators. The narrative indicated that in the Florence district, ongoing, job-embedded professional development opportunities are contributing to continued student growth reading assessments in nearly every grade level reading and math and for the past four years there appears to be steady increases in AMAO's in ELLs, an impressive trend and indicative of the Florence district's commitment to reform. Because TAPS is used in Avondale, and Florence is improving, a compelling case for using TAPS in Florence is lacking.</p> <p>Given that the TAPS system is already in use in Avondale, the argument for implementation in the other two districts would have been strengthened by showing how Avondale was outperforming the other two districts on assessments in side-by-side comparisons.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>In section (B)(2) the applicant indicates all three districts in the consortium are committed to transparency in offering the public records of their budget (as required by law). This section of the narrative would be strengthened by evidence that the budget information currently available includes the categories recommended in the invitation, as well as actual personnel salary disclosure. The applicant stated that as part of the grant, LEA's will form a working group by designating a person from each district's business office, with a goal of providing actual personnel salaries. However, it is unclear as to whether or not any one district makes available personnel salaries or that the purchasing the TAPS system would compel districts to increase their transparency.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		

In Section (B)(3) State context for implementation, the applicant describes a positive statewide climate for educational innovation. Arizona was a recipient of RTTT funds at the state level and has received \$25 million in Phase 3 funds to offer districts professional development, technical assistance, and support services. Noteworthy is the applicant's disclosure that the entire state is working with \$25 million for reform and that three districts, two of whom are already utilizing TAPS support, need an additional \$36 million dollars, \$10 million more than the state allocation in this phase, to achieve reform in three districts. The applicant makes the case for alignment of TAPS to Arizona state requirements and differentiates how TAPS is going to be modified for Title-I schools and non-Title-I schools. This need for differentiation lacked clarity. Also unclear was the need for the TAP data system when the state, through their completion of the ADE Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) would be able to provide "timely, accurate and actionable data at the classroom, school site, LEA, and state levels." Distinction of the differences between the state data system and TAPS system would strengthen the need for the project.

The applicant indicates that the state has had a teacher performance incentive since 2002, but a lack of evaluation tool has made it difficult to use effectively. Now that Arizona has a new evaluation framework, funds will flow towards "effective" or "highly effective" teachers. The applicant does not offer information concerning why project money would be needed if the state money will flow to the teachers now that an evaluation framework is in place. Information on whether or not teachers would now have access to two pools of money, state money and project money is also unclear.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Section (B)(4) is a strong section in that it illustrates in various ways the meaningful engagement of stakeholders as the proposal development progressed. The applicant was able to overcome the lack of district collective bargaining representation through a votes among the teachers in the participating districts. In the context of Avondale, the district that has used the TAP system for the last year, it was not evident as to whether the teacher vote was before the initial adoption of TAP or if the vote from the teachers was held to continue on with the TAP system and have it supported through this project.

<b>(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (B)(5), Analysis of needs and gaps, each district of the consortium is highlighted. The section begins with Avondale, and indicates that "through its planning for implementation of the TAP System..." yet earlier in section (B)(1), the narrative indicates that, "The Avondale school district has just completed its first year of implementation of the TAP System." These two sections contradict each other and create a difficulty in deciding of funding the project is necessary, particularly if the TAP System has been implemented without a project and the other two districts could model what has been accomplished in Avondale.

The applicant offers good examples of the ability of the Dysart and Florence districts to identify needs and gaps in personalized learning environments and their ability to respond to them at multiple levels. Dysart has shifted their school schedule (the narrative was not explicit as to whether or not this was only at the secondary level), to address student failure issues, and is making strides towards a district-wide framework for consistent grading processes. Use of professional learning communities has allowed Dysart to focus on individual learning plans and student-centered learning. Based on the examples in this section, Dysart appears to be a very healthy, proactive, district that values and practices personalized learning environments. Florence, through their weekly formative assessments, weekly site data teams, and appropriation of individual students to reteach and enrichment groups also portray a district committed to individual student goals.

In section (B)(5) under the heading of "Plan to Implement Personalized Learning Environments", the applicant indicates that "none of the districts included in this consortium have a specific plan for personalized learning environments for students that includes...digital tools and resources necessary to give students, parents, and teachers ownership of student learning." Except for the digital tools, which has not been mentioned in the proposal, the applicants are contradicting the attributes of the TAPS system, since Avondale already has it.

In section (B)(5) Under the title "Figure 8: Personalized Learning Environment Digital Platform", the narrative under this figure indicates needs that have already been described as addressed by the infrastructure created through the State RTTT grant. For example, the following four key areas are identified in section (B)(5) and in Section (B)(3) the applicant describes how these needs are already being met: (for the following comments, the "Key need" from section (B)(5) is already being answered by the state in section (B)(3)).

(B)(5) NEED 1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace.(B)(3) This area is addressed at the state level by, "Implementation of the Arizona 2010 Academic Standards (Common Core) using STEM as the Vehicle."

(B)(5) NEED 2. Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction: (B)(3) This area is also being addressed by the state as the state-wide system, (SLDS,) links students and teachers to individual courses to provide timely accurate and actionable data at the classroom, school site, LEA, and state levels.

(B)(5) NEED 3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially in high-need schools; (B)(3) This area is also addressed by the state in that, "Prop 301 funds will be directed at teachers who are effective or highly effective-providing a source of state funding." While the it was vague how the state will target teacher recruitment, the proposal was also unclear as to how the consortium will reform teacher recruitment efforts.

(B)(5) NEED 4. Turning around low-achieving schools. This key area is addressed in section (A)(4) in the data charts that show many grade bands and content areas are have increased academic achievement from last year to this year and in the case of some subgroups, have done so at higher rates than the state average.

To summarize this section, one-third of the consortium, Avondale, already has the TAP System, without this project, and the other two-thirds, Dysart and Avondale have a good track record of personalized learning environments. It is also notable that for the applicant's designated needs, they have demonstrated how the state is addressing that need through RTTT efforts.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (C)(1) (a)(i) Learning, the applicant presents an approach to learning that relies on the use of a personalized digital learning environment. The applicant did not go in to great detail as to how instructional strategies of the TAP system work in tandem with the digital device to increase the ability of a student to self-monitor. This section would have been enhanced by research that lists the instructional strategies of the TAP System and which of those strategies actually increases understanding of what students are learning, and how that learning is exactly going to be measured.

In section (C)(1)(a)(ii) the applicant indicates that virtually every aspect of content can be linked to the Common Core. What remains vague, however, is exactly how that link occurs. If it is indeed linked through an online system, there remains the need for an explanation of how the link to the standards will occur. The applicant needs to provide evidence of a true link. For example, clarification on ways the TAP online system ensures that a lesson on a "point" on a number line and the word "point" in the Common Core ELA standard on understanding the author's "point" of view would be an important distinction for the software to be able to make. The applicant could provide a more clear picture of how instructional decisions are balanced between teacher input, software databases, and local control.

In section (C)(1)(a)(iv), one of the weaknesses of this section is the lack of distinction between access to content, exposure to content, and higher order thinking and instruction. While the software will offer the "opportunity" to exposure, the software cannot know the students funds of knowledge, cultural background knowledge or academic knowledge in the context of culture. It is unclear how the TAP system will deepen learning merely by exposure.

In section (C)(1)(a)(v) the narrative would have been strengthened by addressing how exposure to the life-skill of teamwork concepts will actually increase a student's skill level of being part of a team. Throughout this section, the applicant assumes by exposure to content on the LTI Learning Registry that teacher/student joint productivity will occur and there are few examples of how joint productivity would occur.(e.g.. student/device, student/teacher, student/student) The applicant offers that the LTI registry will provide content, and the teacher will have strategies, but there seems to be little description of the actual learning process or activities that would provide the opportunity for incremental progress. This section also states that thinking and problem solving are two critical indicators on which teachers will be observed. This section would have been stronger if there had been an example of the kind of evidence that can be gathered through the TAP System of critical thinking skills or problem solving in a team setting while using individual digital devices.

In Sections (C)(1)(b)(i), (ii), and (iii), The applicant offers a logical approach to a personalized sequence of instructional content. It remains unclear as to the opportunity for the students to "override" the individualized learning paths. The narrative indicates that individualized learning paths may be created "automatically" which would require in-depth analysis of the origin of the content, if it was aligned to what the teacher was utilizing in the classroom in order to meet the standard. It also remains ambiguous as to whether a students would push themselves beyond their current developmental level via the digital learning platform.

In Section (C)(1)(b)(v), the applicant indicates that accommodations and high-quality strategies for high need students will be presented during cluster meetings, but it is ambiguous as to how the accommodations will be linked to the digital devices. For example, it is unclear how the software might offer an EL native language support, a cognate strategy, or a link to the students' funds of knowledge, all important accommodations for EL students.

In Section (C)(1)(c), the only two mechanisms for providing training and support highlighted for Avondale were "Kids at Hope" used to promote the understanding of the language of hope, and presenters for the 8th grade explore test. If the Avondale district has just completed a year with the TAP System, as indicated in (B)(1), it would seem that the TAP System would include mechanisms that are in place to ensure they understand how to use its tools and resources, but this was not apparent from the narrative. Also apparent in the he narrative was that the highlighted mechanisms for training and support exist only at the middle and secondary level. The mechanisms at Florence are robust, and include many concepts that appear to be very similar to the TAP System: Standards and objectives aligned to the Common Core, personalized learning environments, academic progress tracking through software, open source digital educational resources for thematic STEM curricula and subscriptions to them, as well as individualized learning plans tailored to students. Florence also already has a 1:1 computing initiative. The robust list of mechanisms at Florence seem to match very closely to what the plan for the TAP System includes and the applicant does not address how the TAP system would be superior to all the resources already in place in the Florence district.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(C)(2) The application indicated in the third paragraph of this section that a chart illustrates how PD will work in the consortium schools. Figure 12 is actually found four pages later and while the narrative assures that the PD is during the school day and "job embedded" it is unclear what is happening in classrooms during the time teachers are out for PD. The narrative would have been strengthened by the site-specific issues that will arise with such a structure such as teachers giving up individual planning and grading time, school schedules being altered, the results of the first year of implementation at Avondale, and how the challenges and successes might inform the full consortium implementation.

In Section (C)(2) under the heading of "individualized Coaching" is the evidence of a strong model within the consortium for Professional Learning Communities and how the PLC's are working effectively to analyze summative and formative data for instructional improvement, addressing challenges such as student motivation, Common Core Standards, pacing guides, and formative assessments. Considering the current climate of upward trends in academic achievement in each district, the applicant should make a more convincing argument for spending millions on a system that has so many components that are similar to what is already in place and demonstrating success.

In Section (C)(2), under the heading, **Teaching and Leading through the TAP System:** the applicant states that providing differential incentives based on performance can impact teacher turnover so that effective teachers stay and less effective teachers leave. The applicant should offer research or examples to differentiate their incentives from those now in place and funded by the state of Arizona.( (B)(3) Educator Performance Pay). Also unclear is why the same goals cannot

be achieved with the infrastructure already in place: PLC's, teacher incentives, open source content aligned to the Common Core, a data management system, individualized learning plans, a state teacher evaluation system, and in the case of at least one of the districts, a 1:1 technology initiative. Further more, if Avondale already has been through the training, has TAP clusters as well as the entire infrastructure in place, it seems that the other two districts in the consortium could be mentored into the same framework and save millions of dollars.

**D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(D)(1) LEA Practices, policies, rules. This section of the application portrays three very strong districts with comprehensive policies and infrastructures to promote optimum teaching and learning environments. Each consortium district is detailed through strong evidence of flexible curriculum options, resources, and instructional practices as well as technology initiatives. There was a lack of information on what learning resources exist that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and ELs. More robust and evident was the myriad ways that the three consortium schools are already providing comprehensive policies and infrastructure with the support and resources they need. The language of the narrative seems to portray an either/or approach. The narrative in this section is somewhat ambiguous as to how the TAP System would capitalize on an already healthy infrastructure and in what ways it could enhance existing support and services.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(D)(2) The current infrastructure of all three consortium schools is a strength of the application. It is evident that all three districts prioritize informational and technological access to students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders. All three districts are to be commended for their due diligence in regard to technical support strategies and the free flow of information regardless of income. The applicant offered insufficient information as to how the TAP System would capitalize on the existing infrastructure and provide flexibility of system delivery to augment an already strong infrastructure.</p>		

**E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(E)(1) The applicant offers the plan of an advisory board and includes the membership of the "District Executive Mentor Teacher." It is unclear what this position does outside the role of the advisory board. In regard to Fig. 13, under the heading of Developing Instructional Skills of All Teachers, the graph depicts a growth in the percentage of teachers and then a consistent drop off in the percent of teachers participating or being evaluated, the table was unclear.</p> <p>In section (E)(1), under the heading Continuous Improvement at the District Level, the applicant states, "Dysart, Avondale, and Florence are integrating the TAP System and reforms supported by this RTT-D grant." This statement is inconsistent with the rest of the project and it is unclear why the funds are necessary if the TAP system is already being integrated.</p> <p>In section (E)(1) Continuous Improvement at the District Level, it is apparent that Dysart's continuous improvement process has made consistent improvement since 2008. This section contains robust evidence of each district's commitment to continuous improvement. The infrastructure is apparent in each district's distinct features and assets,</p>		

however, there is little information as to how the three districts could or will share any aspects of their infrastructure to strengthen their counterparts in part or as a whole.

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

**5**

**1**

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

In Section (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement, right before the heading "Performance Measures", the applicant states that ongoing communication and engagement would be handled through each district's Directors of Public Relations to ensure information goes through the right channels. A more robust description of strategies for ongoing communication and engagement would have enhanced this section of the application.

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

**5**

**1**

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

In Section (E)(3) in review of the performance measures, it was unclear how some of the subgroups' data would be collected, synthesized, and reported. For example, in the Pre-K 3 chart, the performance measure is based upon multiple measures for both reading and math, yet the targets were set at 2 percent increments. The measure is vague in that the statistic of 80% is not directly tied to a particular performance. The performance measure would be much stronger if there was a description of what the targets represent. There was not a clear indication of what age-appropriate non-cognitive indicator of growth, a requirement of the proposal, would be utilized.

In Section (E)(3) in review of the performance measures for grades 4-8, AIMS reading and math assessments were listed, but it was unclear what would be utilized to represent at least one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of the plan.

In Section (E)(3) in the performance measures for grades 9-12, the applicant did not make clear what measure would be used to fulfill the requirement of one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of the plan.

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

**5**

**1**

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (E)(4) The application would have been strengthened by information of how the district consortium will evaluate district funded activities, such as professional development. Also unclear were any plans for analysis of the needs for career ladder funds now that the state of Arizona funds teacher performance. Information on cost-benefit analysis and ongoing internal evaluation would make the section stronger.

**F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>In section (F)(1) (b) It remains to be explained why expenditures for Avondale would be the same as the other two districts in the consortium if they have already implemented the TAP System. it is not clear why a District Executive Master Teacher will be needed in Avondale, if they will be in year 2 of implementation. Several of the budget items border on the unreasonable, for example, \$3 million for a data management system when one is provided by the state, \$45,000 for communications for Dysart only, when the narrative expressed that communication would be addressed by each district's communication director.</p>		

In section (F)(1)(c)(ii) the application budget was not strong in identification of strategies that will ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments, for example, in Section (F)(2) paragraph 2 states that "All LEA's will reallocate federal and state dollars to sustain TAP in their districts," If this were possible, what is the justification for the need for RTT-D funds? If the Consortium can utilize a "train the trainer's model for sustainability and Avondale district is already implementing the TAP System, their master and mentor teachers could train Dysart and Florence teachers at a greatly reduced cost.

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

**10**

**2**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

In section (F)(2), the applicant offers potential sources for funding sustainability that include provisions in the lead Districts' capital plan renewal, however, funding for the other LEA's is contingent upon reallocation of federal and state dollars. Support for sustainability was also linked to gaming revenue but amounts and allocation mechanisms were unclear. There lacked a high quality plan for sustainability of the projects goals.

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**Absolute Priority 1**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>	<b>Met/Not Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant offers a coherent plan for an improved learning environment. The comprehensive nature of the project has some inconsistencies. Of the three districts targeted by the proposal, one has already implemented the TAP System. An examination of the budget shows no differentiation in the district funding allocation with TAPS from the two districts that do not have it. This is a large discrepancy that impacts the proposal in a negative way.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>93</b>
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**Race to the Top - District**

**Technical Review Form**

**Application #0255AZ-2 for Dysart Unified District**

**A. Vision (40 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The project vision is limited to a focus on improving educator capacity through implementing TAP, a national program with a proven track record of improving student performance in traditional classroom settings. While the creation of personalized learning environments is mentioned, a vision for how these environments would actually be implemented is not well-described. Of specific concern is the fact that the vision statement makes weak, if any, linkage between TAP system implementation and the development of teachers' capacity to implement personalized learning environments. Simply stating that "students will have access to strategies, tools, portals, activities....etc." does not provide a compelling vision of a coherent and effective personalized learning system. Of the four core educational assurance areas, the vision focuses most on recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals. Second in emphasis is building data systems to measure student progress and inform instructional improvement. Adopting standards and turning around lowest-achieving schools do not receive much emphasis in the vision description.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The consortium will consist of three districts and 28 schools. The proposal provides a strong description of the district and school selection process and criteria: that districts agree to implement the TAP system and that high-need schools fully participate. A full list of participating schools, students, and educators is provided. Participants meet the definitions in the notice.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>For two of the consortium districts, participation is district-wide. In the third district, the proposal only vaguely states that "lessons learned" from the participating schools will be evaluated for their potential application to non-participating schools. No description is provided as to what the criteria will be for determining such application to other schools.</p> <p>While a theory of change is implied (i.e. that the TAP system will lead to higher student performance through data analysis and educator evaluation), the proposal does not provide a logic model or similar specific cause-and-effect linkages. As mentioned in A(1), it is not clear how the TAP implementation will necessarily lead to teachers being able to specifically implement personalized learning environments for all participating students.</p> <p>The proposal does not provide all the required elements of a high-quality plan: it includes goals and general activities (e.g. professional development, career pathways, performance pay, contracting for an on-line content vendor), but not a specific timeline, deliverables, or responsible parties. It is not clear when and in what order these activities will occur, especially activities to scale up reforms district-wide in the the third district, so it is not possible to tell how feasible the plan might be. Therefore, this plan cannot be judged as high-quality.</p>		
<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Performance goals related to state test results, reducing achievement gaps, and increasing graduation rates are detailed very well for all participating schools, students, and subgroups. The goals seem to be ambitious yet incremental across the grant period and thus achievable.</p> <p>However, no goals are provided for (d) college enrollment.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(a) The three consortium districts have made overall steady gains in reading and mathematics at all grade levels, with one district being significantly lower but generally moving in a positive direction. The data provided demonstrate a general track record of success in the area of student achievement. The proposal does not provided data to determine a track record of success in improving high school graduation rates or college enrollment rates.</p> <p>(b) Data do not show past success in reducing achievement gaps; gaps generally remain consistent even as all group performance is rising.</p> <p>(c) The applicant provides descriptions of a variety of methods being employed to share data with students, educators, and parents. However, the application does not describe specifically <u>how</u> the available data are currently used to improve participation, instruction and services.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The participating districts make district budget information available, but do not currently post school-level expenditure data.</p> <p>While the consortium proposes implementing a new transparent business/budget data portal, it does not demonstrate evidence of currently making the required school-level data (a-d) publicly available</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Arizona is a Race to the Top state and is currently implementing the four key reforms. In addition, State law supports the proposed Race to the Top District reforms in the areas of teacher evaluations, teacher pay for performance, and student progress based on mastery. The proposal provides the appropriate statutory references as evidence.</p>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(a) For this consortium, (ii) applies, as the participating districts do not have collective bargaining.</p> <p>The participating districts conducted extensive outreach and communications related to proposal development that included meetings with faculty , staff and parents; website postings, broadcast video; and electronic feedback mechanisms. Each school's teachers voted on their support for the proposal, with over 70% of staff at every participating school voting "yes." The proposal provides specific voting percentages for every school.</p> <p>(b) Letters of support are provided from school district representatives (superintendents, principals, school board members, teacher associations) and several community-based organizations (e.g., Rotary, Boys &amp; Girls Club, Substance Abuse Coalition) and one mayor. Most of the support letters are form letters expressing general support for the grant proposal. However, the letters do not provide descriptions of specific supports that the writers' organizations might provide.</p>		
<b>(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal lacks the required elements of a high-quality plan: there are no specific descriptions of the goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties to complete an analysis of current status of personalized learning</p>		

environments. In addition, the proposal does not explain how the TAP program will specifically prepare teachers to understand and use the digital resources and differentiate instruction accordingly. Digital content specifications are not provided: for example, it is not possible to tell whether the system will only address reading and mathematics.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(a) The proposal lacks the required elements of a high-quality plan: there are no specific descriptions of the goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties that will develop and implement the personalized learning environment. Reference is made to training teachers, field-testing instructional strategies, “tagging” content to standards and life skills, etc., but no information is provided as to who will be responsible for conducting these activities, when they will occur, and how they will be monitored for effectiveness.

The plan relies heavily on an unidentified digital content provider, which content may be limited to English and mathematics; actual content areas are not described.

A process for students receiving frequent feedback on progress is included; however, adjustments based on this feedback are only generally described: the digital system will generate learning strategies for individual students, which methods will then be taught in “cluster group” meetings [check page 241], then implemented and monitored in the classroom. It is unclear how cluster groups are selected, how instructors become qualified to teach them, and how the newly-learned methods are translated with fidelity into classroom instruction.

(b) Access to high-quality content appears to rest with a yet-unidentified digital content provider. The proposal does not describe the actual content areas that will be included, nor how students will learn to manage this new learning environment. How current curriculum materials (outside the digital content) will be incorporated is not described. The concept of personalize learning environments is only generally and vaguely presented.

(c)The proposal lists a variety of student support mechanisms currently being utilized in the participating districts, but does not specifically describe how these supports will be relevant to the new personalized learning environments or how students will be trained and supported to use the new resources available through the digital content interface and other aspects of the proposed personalized learning environment.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal, with its heavy emphasis on TAP, concentrates mostly on (C)(2)(a)(iv) and (C)(2)(c)(i), using the evaluation/feedback system to improve educator effectiveness. While the proposal provides research evidence that TAP improves student outcomes and teacher retention in traditional school delivery models, no evidence is provided that it has been specifically tested in or is effective in personalized learning delivery models. For example, in the TAP model, teachers are described as learning instructional strategies in cluster group meetings, then implementing these in the classroom, but these instructional strategies are not described as addressing personalized learning, differentiating instruction, or otherwise managing multiple student learning pathways simultaneously, as would be required in a PLE classroom.

Also, the proposal does not how the master and mentor teachers will have gained the necessary personalized learning/teaching skills to instruct others in these methods. For example, the proposal states that teachers will have access to high-quality strategies in cluster group meetings, but does not describe how these strategies will be selected and who will have the necessary experience and expertise to conduct the training.

Descriptions of how the project will support the development of personalized learning environments are very general and lack specific detail that would indicate a deep understanding of how this would be accomplished. Only digital learning resources to be obtained through a contracted vendor are included; other learning resources are not described.

While effective and highly effective teachers are a focus of the proposal, it does not include elements of a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties) for how the consortium will increase the number of students receiving instruction from these teachers, and does not include hard-to-staff schools, subjects, or specialty areas.

**D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal describes examples of <u>individual</u> district central office practices that could potentially provide support to participating schools but does not describe a coherent support system across the consortium. Support appears fragmented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no overarching consortium governance structure is described, and</li> <li>• consistency in support across participating districts cannot be determined from the proposal.</li> </ul> <p>In all three districts, schools have authority over schedules, calendars, and personnel, but not school-level budgets. School-level budgets are proposed for the future as a component of this grant project.</p> <p>While the state recently passed a “Move on When Ready” law to promote mastery learning and early graduation, only one of the consortium districts appears to be offering students this option. The proposal mentions a test that students can take as a pathway to an early diploma, but it is not clear from the proposal whether taking this test is a stand-alone demonstrated mastery option or whether there are other mastery demonstrations required to attain the diploma. Thus, while state law supports demonstrated mastery, the participating districts do not provide convincing evidence that mastery approaches, which will be essential to personalized learning, have been successfully implemented.</p> <p>While the proposal states that learning resources and instruction are adaptable/accessible for students with disabilities and English Language Learners, actual policies/rules are not referenced or provided as evidence.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Data systems as described are fragmented, and interoperability is not adequately addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal includes descriptions of various individual district data systems, including ways that some (but not all) parents can check grade information and schools can access budget and personnel information.</li> <li>• The proposal lacks a coherent description of an overarching data system beyond the digital content portal that can comprehensively serve the needs of the consortium in implementing the project.</li> <li>• The data systems appear fragmented, and the proposal does not address interoperable data systems as defined in this notice.</li> </ul>		

**E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Each district demonstrates experience with standard continuous improvement processes such as strategic planning and progress reporting on student achievement and achievement gaps. The proposal includes adequate descriptions of implementation monitoring and feedback, including reviews of process data and resulting program modifications. However, implementation progress must include monitoring of the project goals as well as its activities.

The outcome evaluation plan addresses the four goals of the proposal but only weakly.

- Graduation and college enrollment rates are not mentioned in student growth measures.
- There are no measures specified for how teacher professional development and personalized learning environments will be deemed successful.
- An increase in teacher retention is a goal, but no baseline data or targets are provided.
- No instruments are identified for measuring effects of professional development or personalized learning environments.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal provides sufficient evidence that public communication will occur through internal meetings, RTT-D websites, e-newsletters, social media, print and broadcast media, and policy papers. .

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

Most required performance measures are provided, but not all:

- Non-cognitive indicators of growth are not included for grades PreK-3.
- Actual measures of career readiness are not specified for grades 4-8 or 9-12.
- Grade-appropriate health or social-emotion indicators are not included for grades 9-12.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal did not specifically address this criterion; however, information from the general response to Section E apply and demonstrate that this criterion will be partially met:

- There are no measures specified for how teacher professional development and personalized learning environments will be deemed successful.
- An increase in teacher retention is a goal, but no baseline data or targets are provided.
- Teacher compensation will be based in large part on student performance.
- Modification in productive use of leadership teams and decision-making structures are integral parts of the proposal

**F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposed project will serve 23,114 students, making the proposal eligible for up to \$30 million. The proposed budget request is \$29,941,161.05, putting it in the eligible funding range.

The proposal identifies all funds that will support the project, including \$6.8 million in funding from local sources. (Projects are framed as district implementation costs in the three consortium districts, mostly involving TAP implementation costs.)

TAP implementation costs are based on published costs from NIET and other TAP districts; however, no justification is provided for the vendor costs associated with the digital learning portal needed for personalizing learning environments (\$141,000 per district per year).

One-time investments such as iPads and software are clearly identified.

Costs are built in for such items as tuition reimbursements, recruitment & retention bonuses, and performance bonuses. There is no explanation of how these types of ongoing expenditures will be supported beyond the grant period.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal does not include the required elements of a high-quality plan for sustainability (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties).

The response to this criterion is extremely brief and lacks any supporting detail such as a follow-up budget, evidence of state and local government support, and evidence of financial support. While state gaming funds are mentioned, no amount is provided, nor is information about these funds' allowable uses.

Federal funds (Title I-A and Title II) are identified as the main sources of financial support after the RTT-D grant period ends. However, the proposal does not describe how these funds are currently used and how this use will be affected by using the funds to continue RTT-D activities. It is also not documented how the allowable uses of these federal funds will make them available for such expenditures as performance pay.

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

This proposal did not address the competitive preference priority.

**Absolute Priority 1**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>	<b>Met/Not Met</b>	<b>Not Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

In reviewing the proposal overall, a continuous weakness pervades the plan: the proposal does not coherently link the implementation of the TAP teacher improvement process to the development of personalized learning environments.

- There is a heavy reliance on an unnamed digital content provider to create the capacity for personalized learning.
- While teachers will be using student data to identify strengths and weakness and presumably tailor instruction, it is unclear where the expertise will come from to adequately train teacher clusters and translate this learning to personalized instructional support for students.
- The TAP program data shows that TAP schools produce student gains, but not necessarily in schools implementing personalized learning.
- Little to no mention is made of differentiating instruction to meet student needs, and no specifics provided to indicate that anyone involved in the proposal has experience in differentiated instruction/personalized learning.

- The proposed project would presumably strengthen educator effectiveness and increase student access to these effective educators; however, without the explicit link to personalized learning, it is uncertain whether all students would benefit.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>106</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0255AZ-3 for Dysart Unified District

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has proposed a strong system to improve human capital as a means to increase student achievement, and increase graduation rates and prepare students for college and careers. While the project also proposes to implement a digital learning platform, it is not clear how the investment in improving human capital and implementing the digital learning platform will operationalize personalized learning that will meet each student's needs. The application also lacks specific strategies of how the proposed project will turn around lowest-achieving schools.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has provided a detailed list of the participating schools with an enumeration of the required demographic information. The participating students include high percentages of students from low-income and high needs groups.</p> <p>No information was provided about the grades and subject areas to be served in the Dysart schools. The information for the Walker Butte school in the Florence District is confusing. The name of the school indicates that it is a K-8 school but the information in the "Grades/Subjects" column is for grades 9-12. The proposal also lacked sufficient information about how the districts are similar and how this might impact the need for different budgets and implementation plans across the districts.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>All of the schools in two of the three districts are involved in this proposal. No information was provided to indicate how the Avondale District will scale-up to include high school students and staff. The proposal also lacked a clear logic model that would indicate how the use of the TAP program to improve teaching effectiveness coupled with the digital learning platform will lead to personalized learning.</p>		

The applicant describes a sound set of activities focused on professional development and use of data to inform instruction as a way to improve student learning outcomes for the students that are to be served by the project. The other elements of a high quality plan are not addressed:

- key goals,
- the timeline,
- the deliverables, and
- the specific parties responsible for implementing the activities.

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

**10**

**7**

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The Florence and Avondale districts have proposed ambitious performance and status goals in both reading and mathematics. The application provides data from the Algiers Charter School Association that shows the use of the TAP model has produced gains in math and reading scores over a four-year period that averaged approximately 6 points per year. Using that as the best gauge available of the gains to be expected indicates that most goals are achievable.

The performance and status goals for the Dysart district are ambitious, and as for Florence and Avondale, most goals appear to be achievable. The Dysart data presented in the application was confusing with two sets of tables labeled as containing the same information but with differing values within the table cells.

The Dysart district did not calculate achievement gap information as defined in the notice. For the achievement gap information that they did provide, the goals appear to be ambitious and achievable. The Florence district achievement gap information is appropriate to this application. The goals are ambitious but do not appear to be achievable. No achievement gap information was provided for the Avondale district.

Graduation rate data was provided for Dysart and Florence and the goals appear to be both ambitious and achievable. All participating students in Avondale are in grades K-8.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The student achievement data presented in the proposal indicates some success in reducing achievement gaps in all three districts. However, there is no consistent pattern of success with every subgroup and in both content areas.

The applicant did not provide specific information about success in raising high school graduation rates or about success in increasing college enrollment.

The Florence district indicates that it is "making substantial progress in the lowest achieving schools." The other two districts in the consortium did not specifically address student performance in low-performing schools or in the persistently lowest-achieving schools.

The proposal indicates that the Florence district provides limited access to student performance data and has plans to implement a data warehouse that will make such information more broadly available if this proposal is funded. No information was provided with regard to how student performance data is made available in the Dysart and Avondale districts.

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

**5**

**1**

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Although the proposal indicates that the three districts will provide public access to the data specified in this section there is currently no strategy implemented that already makes the information available to the public.

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

**10**

**9**

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

As a recipient of a state RTTT grant Arizona is committed to implementing teacher and principal evaluation systems that rely to a significant extent on student performance. The state is also committed to allowing performance-based pay systems. As a result, state policies and procedures will not restrict the applicant districts from implementing such systems. Arizona has also passed legislation that allows students to progress at their own pace without regard to grade level. Some information about specific provisions that allow early graduation are provided in the proposal, but information about how elementary and middle grades students are affected was not provided.

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

**10**

**6**

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The application discusses stakeholder involvement in all three districts. However, there was little specific information about how any comments from stakeholders were used to inform the development of the proposal.

The information that was included about teacher votes in support of the proposal was ambiguous. It seemed specific to the implementation of the TAP program rather than for support of the broader RTTT requirements that include the four core areas.

Letters of support were provided from union representatives, civic leaders and community agencies/organizations. However, many of these again were specific to the TAP program rather than to the implementation of the broader RTTT requirements. Additionally, there were no letters that were specifically identified as representing support from civil rights organizations or Native American tribes/organizations.

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

**5**

**2**

**(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

The proposal provides some information about activities that will be implemented to analyze current status in implementing personalized learning environments and to further promote personalized learning. However, the following elements of a high quality plan were not evident:

- key goals,
- the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities,
- the timeline,
- the deliverables, and
- the specific parties responsible for implementing the activities.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The proposal presents a statement of the consortium's philosophy about personalizing learning, "While teachers can customize a student's curriculum content and pathway, only the student can 'personalize' that path." The use of that personalized path presents a sound mechanism to assist students to monitor their own learning and to understand what standards they must master for success.</p> <p>Arizona has adopted the Common Core Standards. The customized curriculum content and pathway to be implemented in this project will be based upon those standards. This will support participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and</p>		

career-ready standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements and accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs.

The project presents a sound approach to use the National Learning Registry to locate resources that will enable teachers to provide the differentiated lessons necessary to help ensure deep learning experiences in each student's areas of interest. These resources will also expose students to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives. Additionally, master and mentor teachers will be charged with researching high-quality strategies for providing accommodations to students that need them.

As an effective strategy to use data to inform assignments that are targeted toward student needs, assignments will be linked to standards such that as students complete assignments, the digital learning platform will update the student's progress toward the standard and make that information available to teachers, students, and parents. All three districts currently provide training and support to students to help them understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

While the applicant has described the implementation of the learning management system the proposal does not offer sufficient detail to show that such a learning management system can accomplish support the personalized learning needed to achieve the learning growth required to meet the goals that were established.

The proposal specifies a key goal, the general activities to be undertaken, and many deliverables. However, the plan does not detail a timeline, and the party responsible for implementing each activity.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The State of Arizona has adopted the Common Core standards that are designed to provide students with the learning needed for them to graduate college and career ready. As LEAs in the State of Arizona, the three districts in this consortium use these standards as the basis for their curricula.

The proposal describes an extensive plan of professional development that is research-based and job-embedded and includes one-on-one coaching from master and mentor teachers. The targeted follow-up coaching provided by the mentor and master teachers will help ensure that teachers can effectively implement the strategies that were the topic of the professional development sessions. In addition to professional development sessions and coaching, the project will implement the "TAP System Training Portal" an interactive web tool to provide individualized teacher training and support. The results of the comprehensive professional development system should improve teaching; however, it is unclear how the improved teaching skills will equip teachers to personalize the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college and career-ready.

The proposal describes feasible plans to restructure the school day to provide time for groups of teachers to collaborate on analyzing student data and learn new instructional strategies to address identified needs.

To provide data to inform the use of assignments that are targeted toward student needs, assignments will be linked to standards such that as students complete assignments, the digital learning platform will update the student's progress toward the standard and make that information available to teachers who will make instructional decisions for whole classes, groups, and individuals. Master and mentor teachers will assist by researching high-quality strategies for providing accommodations to students that need them.

The applicant presents an achievable plan for teacher evaluation that focuses on two equally important objectives. One goal is to produce sound summative data on teacher effectiveness that can be used to make performance and personnel decisions. The second goal is to provide individualized and intensive support to teachers to help them improve their performance over time. Those two goals for evaluation translate into two potent levers for raising the overall level of teacher effectiveness. The project plan also specifies that the leadership team in each school will meet weekly to monitor the fidelity of implementation of the TAP System. Examination of the implementation data will help to inform the delivery of the professional development.

The applicant did not clearly indicate how the planned activities will increase student access to effective and highly effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools, and specialty areas and the plan did not specify key goals, the timeline for the activities, and the parties responsible for implementing some of the activities.

**D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The districts in the proposal are committed to arranging school schedules to provide the time needed for professional development and to allowing budget flexibility to meet project needs. While the proposal indicates that the project plans to build capacity at the central office no specific details or activities were specified.</p> <p>The proposal also indicates "Each district provides students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. [and] The learning resources and instructional practices described in the teaching and learning sections are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners." However, beyond these statements no specific activities or examples were provided.</p> <p>The proposal described a number of special programs that are available to students at the high school level. However, these appear to accommodate student needs/interests rather than allow for students to progress through school on an individual time schedule. Additionally, there was no discussion of how elementary age students might be able to progress based on mastery rather than amount of time spent on a topic.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal indicates that all three districts provide parents with some level of access to data about their student's performance. However, no information was provided as to whether this information is available in open data format as required.</p> <p>Discussions of technical support that is available focused almost exclusively on support for staff with little to no attention to tech support for parents and students. There was significant mention of bring your own device approaches with little recognition of the inequity that will result for those parents whose resources do not allow for the purchase of a device.</p> <p>The proposal also did not discuss any comprehensive efforts to make content resources available 24/7, especially supplemental content resources.</p>		

**E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The application has clearly specified a thorough continuous improvement process that includes plans at the consortium, district and school level. This plan will provide regular feedback on the major focus areas for the project. An array of communications strategies are currently in use in the three consortium districts and these strategies will be used to publically share information of the quality and effects of the project efforts.</p> <p>The proposal indicates that student data is analyzed to help determine whether instructional strategies need to be refined but there is insufficient detail as to the measures to be used for such frequent analysis. The DIEBELS is mentioned but there is no information on a literacy measure for the upper grades or for math at any grade.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p>		

An array of communications strategies are currently in use in the three consortium districts and these strategies can effectively be used to publically share information of the quality and effects of the project efforts.

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

**5**

**2**

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has indicated ambitious performance measures. However, these goals for some measures do not appear to be achievable, especially for the special education subgroup.

The application proposed an insufficient number of performance indicators. The applicant also did not indicate:

- How each measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and
- How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

**5**

**5**

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The evaluation plan will include a dual focus with implementation evaluation measures to assess the fidelity of program implementation and outcomes evaluation measures to assess growth in student learning, teacher attendance at professional development sessions, teacher perceptions, and retention of effective teachers. The applicant will involve the services of a university-based evaluation group to implement the comprehensive evaluation activities specified in the plan.

**F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The budget proposal has appropriately identified the federal dollars that will go to support the project activities as well as significant funds from other sources that will also support project activities.</p> <p>Nearly all expenditures have been identified as recurring with an amount budgeted for each of the four project years and the proposed budget from federal and other sources appears to be reasonable and adequate to support the scope of work specified in the application.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The application has addressed the sustainability of the TAP purposes and activities with a plan that appears to be sound. However, the proposal does not address the sustainability of a comprehensive plan that includes personalized learning.</p> <p>The plans for sustainability that are presented do not satisfy the required elements of a high quality plan.</p>		

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>No competitive preference partnership was proposed</p>		

**Absolute Priority 1**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>	<b>Met/Not Met</b>	<b>Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Throughout the application the applicant has proposed a strong system to improve human capital as a means to increase student achievement, reduce achievement gaps, and increase graduation rates and prepare students for college and careers through development of personalized student learning paths. A digital learning platform will be used to assist in developing and monitoring progress in the student's personalized learning path. Assignments will be linked to standards such that as students complete assignments, the digital learning platform will update the student's progress toward the standard and make that information available to teachers who will make instructional decisions for whole classes, groups, and individuals.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>132</b>
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