Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0414NJ-1 for Elizabeth Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Elizabeth Public Schools (EPS) set an ambitious vision where every student graduating from EPS prepared to pursue post-secondary education. EPS's vision is to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning and increase equity through personalized student assistance. The district also plans to increase 21st century skills and instruction through technology and personalized instruction leading to preparing every child for college and careers.

The applicant is citing research to supports its argument that mathematics education is a critical indicator of student success in school and college, the district also indicated that the phenomenon described in the literature (correlation between student achievement and drop out rates) was true in EPS. Based on its self-evaluation EPS plans to reorganize the ways in which mathematics is taught district-wide. RTT-D funding would be used to expand the AVID program, develop a program to assist students at the lowest performing schools and reinforce partnerships with Montclair State University to hire new teachers ready to teach at the elementary level with a mathematics endorsement. The district also indicated that it will provide students with rigorous individualized learning experiences driven by data, however the applicant does not provide information on the ways in which data will be collected, disseminated, and used for instruction.

Overall, the district provides a comprehensive and coherent reform vision based on improving mathematics instruction throughout the district to reduce drop out rates, strengthen existing partnerships with a local university to hire highly qualified new teachers. The district could have been more specific about how it intends to use data to drive decisions regarding instruction. The district indicates that its goal is to implement innovative practices to closing the achievement gap and turning low performing. Based on the evidence it provided, EPS has made a convincing case to support its vision.

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

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The EPS indicates that it underwent a process to selecting schools. Ten schools were originally identified, central office personnel, the supervisor of mathematics and school principals were also involved in narrowing down the list of participating schools to 7. Teachers and school leaders were also involved in deciding if they were willing to participate in the program. EPS has demonstrated effectively how it selected schools that would participate in RTT-D funded activities. The district has listed the schools that would be participating as well as the number of students being served, as well as information about all sub-groups that would be served if RTT-D funding were received. EPS has presented a well-documented plan for its approach for implementation.

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

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

EPS offered a detailed plan of action once funding is received. The district described the process by which students, teachers and school leaders will get critical information about the new programming and curricula. The district presents a convincing plan involving on-going need based professional development sessions for teachers and school leaders. The district articulated effectively the types of instruction students would be experiencing in the newly created math centers. EPS also provides a realistic scaled up plan leading to increased student achievement in mathematics over several years. The district also offers a meaningful plan involving teacher candidates from the neighboring state university serving as classroom mentors, becoming full-time residents by the following semesters therefore gaining valuable experience teaching in innovative classrooms. The district also indicated that it would continue and expand using Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) at the middle school and high school levels to promote college and career readiness. Overall, the district presented an interesting and credible plan for LEA-wide plan and reform.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district appears to have set ambitious, yet achievable academic growth on summative assessments (New Jersey Assessment of skills and knowledge over the next 5 years for Grades 3 to 8 in Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and the High school proficiency assessment for grade 11 in language arts and mathematics. The district projects a steady growth for all subgroups White, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, students in Special Education, students with Limited English proficiency (LEP) and economically disadvantaged students. However the applicant does not provide a narrative detailing specific goals by subgroups. The district has set ambitious yet achievable goals in its attempt to close the achievement gap, increase high school graduation rate and college enrollment rate. Overall, the district has set achievable LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes; a narrative detailing goals for specific subgroups would have strengthened 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	11

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district presented evidence of reform in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement. Elizabeth high school was recognized at the national and regional level for its commitment to college preparation and pursuit of post-secondary education. The district highlighted several broad ranging initiatives to develop policies that support student growth, a district wide curriculum aimed at promoting equity among all students across the district. The district highlights its commitment to teacher education through its partnership with Teach for America and Montclair State University. The applicant also details its partnerships with National Academy foundation, the Center for reform of school system. It detailed its extensive use and expansion of AVID and the expansion of the availability of technology to more students in the district (IPads, Whiteboards, notebook computers). The district noted that it would use IPADS to meet the needs of Special education students. The district also partnered with the Harvard Strategic Data project to provide quantitative analysis of student data.

The list of achievements, former and current partnerships and initiatives are impressive, however the district does not specifically address weaknesses that appear in the data provided. The district does not speak to the lack of student achievement specifically in Grades 5-6 and 7 in Language Arts. The district does not specify how it will make student performance data available to all stakeholders (it only describes how the data will be shared at the district level), and does not implicitly adresses how it plans to close the achievement gaps and achieve significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Overall, the applicant only partially demonstrates a clear track record of success.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Elizabeth Public School explained that all district personnel are appointed by the EPS board of education. All appointments are published in board minutes that are available to the public. Other salaries are available in the district's collective bargaining agreement, other information is available in school budgets available at central office. School leaders share school budgets with all stakeholders through committees. All school board meetings are videotaped and broadcast live on a public access television channel. Overall, The LEA has demonstrated evidence of high level of transparency in 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.

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The school district has identified two areas of concerns regarding the implementation of the grant, the first has to do with the "Highly qualified Teacher" requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) /No Child Left Behind Act, the district has indicated that it is currently researching the issue. The district also indicated that the State on New Jersey has also requested a waiver from the ESEA and its LEAs in regard to Highly qualified teacher requirement. The applicant also indicated that the calculation of the student growth percentile to be used in teacher evaluation may only attribute student success to one teacher instead of a group of

teachers. The district indicated that it would file a waiver with the State of New Jersey upon funding.

Overall, the district has indicated the limitations of the proposal under NCLB and State regulations and has clearly detailed the steps it will take to gain approval from federal and state entities upon funding.

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

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has demonstrated strong stakeholder engagement in development of the proposal. The Elizabeth Public Schools indicated that the proposal was discussed with at the district level. The proposal was also discussed by school leaders during the school selection, teacher were surveyed and overwhelmingly supported the application. The district indicated its willingness to present its plan (upon funding) to the community through presentations at board meetings, information on the website, community newsletters, involvement of the PTOs.

The district has received letters of support form current partners (National Academy Foundation, AVID, Montclair State University) and the local community (Jefferson Park Ministries, Gateway Regional Chamber of Commerce, Proceed, The YMCA Eastern Union County, The Elizabeth development Company) as well as the Elizabeth Education association representing teachers and support staff employed by the district.

Overall the district has demonstrated ample evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement.

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

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Elizabeth Public Schools recognized that it has been experiencing significant achievement gaps between schools and students noting that students in magnet and gifted programs out-performed students in traditional K-8 schools. EPS indicated that past strategies implemented in the district (aligned curricula, professional development, technology centered interventions and the creation of learning centers) did not produce the results they had hope for. The applicant explains that student achievement cannot be accomplished with a traditional approach. The district highlighted an ambitious and comprehensive plan based on students' individualized academic needs. The district's plan is to reorganize the ways in which mathematics is taught, the plan makes sense since the district will be using different teaching strategies aimed at meeting the needs of all students, instruction will be based on regular assessment and daily progress. The district will also provide teachers with data they will be able to use to make instructional decisions based on individual students' needs. The district also intends to follow the progress of the students in the program over several years.

Overall, the district has provided a clear assessment of its current needs and gaps and the ways in which the plan will address these specific areas that promote student achievement.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has drawn up a plan aimed at strengthening mathematics skills at the middle school level to ensure that students are prepared for high school. The district is again using previously cited research on the correlation between mathematics achievement and drop out rates. The district offers a very detailed plan that provides a plan that engages and empowers all learners through a complete reengineering of the ways in which mathematics is taught in the district. Through this plan students will be able to receive a personalized learning experience based on their current skills, the activities in this new model will allow students to understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. Based on the evidence provided students will be involved in deep learning experiences through hands-on activities and a variety of instructional approaches and environments, they will also have numerous opportunities to receive feedback on their progress.

The plan is comprehensive but provides students with opportunities to be in charge of their learning experiences through the completion of performance-oriented tasks and access to a playlist of activities and skills through their individualized portal. The district's plan is aligned to Common Core State Standards, breaking down tasks over two week periods. The plan will offer students multiple ways to learn (small group, peer to peer, Multi-day tasks). Students will also be able to meet one on one with their math advisor during the two-week period for ongoing assessment. Parents would also be involved in the process and would be able to monitor students' progress and have access to instructional tools through an online portal.

However, there are several areas of concern with this model, first the district does not identify the organization they intend to work with to implement their very ambitious plan. The applicant explains that part of the plan is patterned after New York City's School of One but does

not provide additional information about this model, how successful it was and how it may be beneficial to students in EPS.

Another major concern is the fact the district did not provide any research to back its innovative redesign of the ways in which students receive mathematics instruction in EPS. While the district's goal is to offer an array of quality instructional approaches, the environment in which instruction will be delivered (one large open space with several learning stations) may not be suitable for high needs students. The district provides a comprehensive rationale for using such a model but fails to provide data of past success elsewhere or why it believes it would be successful with its student population.

Again, the plan proposed by EPS is very ambitious but the fact the applicant has not yet identified its partner in implementing the plan and the lack of evidence that a similar plan has worked elsewhere is problematic.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	17

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district has a good quality plan in place to improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment through the use of technology. The applicant intends to also use professional development to provide a personalized learning environment for students. In this section the district described a comprehensive implementation plan to support participating educators in developing the skills and competencies needed to succeed in the new model. The 5 phases for implementation (Pre-launch program simulation, Pre-launch teacher orientation, Practice Round, Common Planning, Ongoing Professional Development and Targeted Instructional Support) are comprehensive and provide a blueprint for success based on the information provided. The district also indicated that teachers will receive extensive professional development to assist them in using the technology that will be utilized by/with students. This plan is sound and allows teachers to gain valuable skills in preparation for plan implementation. The applicant has a good plan in place to familiarize teachers to their new roles in this model (modality, structure, teacher role and instructional resources are clearly mapped out). The district also explained how teachers will be gathering data indicating that its model is aligned with CCS standards.

The district intends to gather information from students, parents and teachers through regularly administered surveys. The district indicates that it will use a database of 40,000 math lessons and an algorithm to determine the best lesson and schedule based on students' current level of achievement, the teacher will also be involved in the process. More information regarding the third party provider of instructional tools would have been helpful in earning a higher rating.

Overall the district presented an innovative plan that will help educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The EPS has a high quality plan in place to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator (as defined in this notice), and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. The narrative provided details the individuals and offices involved in program implementation (Special Education, Bilingual Education, Staff Development, and Elementary and Secondary Education). The district also indicated that students will have several opportunities to learn in a variety of modalities. The district also highlighted the ways in which students will special needs and bilingual students' needs will be served under the new implemented teaching model. The plan in place is comprehensive and will support project implementation at all levels.

Overall the evidence presented in this section is strong.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district presented evidence that students and their families will have access to technology (IPADS) as well as the ability to connect to the internet ten hours a day at school and on Saturdays when the district will hold specific programs. The district is also currently looking at the feasibility to offer WiFi access to community rooms in housing projects around the community. The district also indicated that parents are able to keep up with students' work using their personal computers or the IPad provided by the district. Stakeholders will receive technical support from district personnel. The district is also currently working oncombining data systems.

The district has demonstrated that it will support personalized learning effectively through access to technology, a high level of technical support, the availability for parents to check students' progress and the combining of existing data systems.Overall the evidence presented in this section is strong.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

EPS has provided a strategy for implementing 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. The district has developed a protocol for assessing continuous progress at schools involve din RTT-D funding and across the district, the district will evaluate effectiveness in 7 categories: Capital Improvement, Student Assessment, Teacher Assessment, Leadership Assessment, Professional Development, Professional Development and Stakeholder Engagement. Based on the evidence presented by EPS the district has a good plan in place for continuous improvement.

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

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

EPS explained that it will communicate with internal and external stakeholder through different means; district employees will use a variety of technology tools (MyLearning plan, Iobservation and PowerSchool). The district also plans to adopt Blackboard in the future. The district will continue communicating with community members through board meetings, community newsletters (sent quarterly), and school newsletter distributed each month. The district indicated that it also uses the social networking site Facebook. Overall the evidence presented demonstrates a strong commitment to ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

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

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district plans to use a wide variety of data to drive instruction and measure student achievement. The district indicated that it would use formative and summative assessment throughout the schools year to gauge student progress and make instructional decisions based on students' performances. The district also indicated that it will rely on several performance measures while funded through RTT-D. The district will gather data from New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK), assessed yearly in grades 4-8, the Developmental Reading assessment (to determine students' reading levels, fluency and engagement) and other diagnostic measures including social/emotional measures to assess students progress. The district also indicated that it would collect other data such as Behavior referrals, detention and suspension rates, attendance an the number of students enrolling in Advanced placement courses. The evidence provided by the district is compelling, the district selected performance measures that will provide critical information on student progress.

Overall the plan described by the district is strong.

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district indicated that it is currently using the MylearningPlan web-based professional development tool to track and communicate with staff about professional development activities. This tool is also used with faculty, the district is in the process of administering teacher and principal surveys through the New Jersey Principal Evaluation pilot. The district explained that it has a plan in place to assess teachers pre and post program pedagogical practice. The district has also developed an observation tool to evaluate teacher performance. The plan detailed by the district in this section makes sense and shows that the district has a high quality plan in place to evaluate RTT-D funded and activities and to make appropriate changes when needed.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score

(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided a detailed budget identifying all funds that will support the project. The narrative accompanying the budget tables provide a clear explanation and justification of the ways in which the funds will be spent. The district provided detailed information on the redesign of the physical space of the 7 sites to implement the program. The applicant also explained that each student (2,088 total students) will receive a laptop to enhance career and college awareness while teachers will receive an IPAD (60 teachers) to support students. Overall the budget presented is sound.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district indicates that it will solicit funding from diverse funding sources to support service after the expiration of the grant award. However the district does not identify if it will rely on funding form state and local government. The district hopes to create awareness for the program by opening the personalized learning program to visitors such as business leaders, education policy makers and funders. The district intends to rely on the Elizabeth Public schools budget to sustain this project long term. Overall, the district has a sustainability plan in place, however this plan has does not currently include support from State and local government. For these reasons the district cannot earn a high rating for this category.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant detailed its relationship between the Elizabeth Board of Education and Trinitas regional Medical center. The medical facility delivers behavioral heath services. Elizabeth Public schools explains that the population being served is students ages 5-8 (the district recognizes that this population will not participate in the RTT-D funding activities). However the partnership serves the needs of students who come from homes where English is not the primary language. Students served through this partnership deal with the challenges of poverty. Students are enrolled in school and receive services in the afternoon.

Based on the narrative provided the programs are helpful in providing students with behavioral support, it meets the needs of the broader community and improves education since families are involved. The partnership's goals are to allow students to be able to attend school full time and improve behavior issues.

The district has another partnership with International Rescue Commitee aimed at helping students transition into an american school system and a foreign language (English). This program will enhance the educational of refugee students.

The district should be commended for these initiative, however the population receiving services from Trinitas is not in the grant target population but supports families in the district, the partership with IRC may affect students in RTT-D funded activities.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Based on the evidence presented Elizabeth Public Schools has met absolute priority 1. The applicant intends to implement a plan that will create personalized learning environments, improve student achievement in mathematics, reduce drop pout rates and improve college and career readiness of students. The district has presented a comprehensive an innovative plan, the EPS is to be commended for its efforts to improve students' learning experiences and future.

Total	210	185

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	11

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Elizabeth Public schools is applying for additional funding to address the social-emotional needs of targeted students. The application is for additional funding is divided in two parts. The first deals with serving the needs of students in one of the district's lowest performing K-8 school. The district intends to provide supports to 12 students at each grade level, students would stay at school 3 days a week until 6 PM, one hour of the program would be dedicated to academics while the second hour would include school counseling, mentoring and a recreational element.

This plan is ambitious and the district is well intentioned, the district is to be commended for wanting to make a difference in students' lives. However selecting only a limited number of students out of the 1300 attending the school may not be the best way to use RTT-D funding. Furthermore the initiative would not be carried out at more than one LEA. The district also intends to hire school psychologist and interventionists to serve a larger student population the rationale for hiring this personnel makes sense since the psychologists and interventionists would serve students on eight campuses.This proposal makes sense and should be approved if RTT-D funding is awarded. The budget presented by the applicant is reasonable and appropriate to complete the tasks presented in this request.

Overall the optional budget request while imperfect would serve the needs of students and should be approved.

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0414NJ-2 for Elizabeth Public Schools

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 applicant details a desire to deepen promising approaches already in place in the district while leveraging new opportunities a focus on personalized learning provides. As required in the selection criteria, the applicant describes current and proposed work around the four core educational assurance areas:

- adoption of board policy to establish a data dashboard to monitor data across operational and instructional systems;
- adoption of a rigorous teacher and principal evaluation system;
- institution of graduation requirements that far exceed those set by the state; and
- development of an accountability plan that recognizes elements such as attendance, college enrollment, rigorous curricula, and value added teaching data.

The application provides a clear approach to accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interest. Specifically, the applicant describes a vision of classroom innovation modeled after the School of One model that uses technology to meet individual learning needs of students in middle level mathematics. The proposal states that students will become more autonomous in their learning by making decisions that impact how they learn, as well as what, when, and where they learn. In addition, the applicant proposes an expanded partnership with an institution of higher education to build a highly effective teacher corps.

The proposed vision is certainly coherent in that it provides a clear model for targeting a specific goal of improving achievement in middle level mathematics. While the proposed expanded partnership with an institution of higher education to build a highly effective teacher corps expands the scope of the project, the proposal cannot be considered fully comprehensive with its very narrow focus on middle level mathematics achievement. Overall, the applicant provides strong to moderate evidence of a comprehensive and coherent reform vision.

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

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application provided strong support for the extent to which the applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal will support high quality LEA level and school level implementation of that proposal, including:

a). The applicant described the process used to select schools to participate. The process described included:

- Identification of ten potential schools by central office leadership based on need and facilities,
- Review of the ten schools by the Supervisor of Secondary Mathematics based on student performance and staff capacity,
- Meeting with principals of identified schools,
- Visits to schools identified by principals as potentially interested, and
- Discussion with and feedback from school leaders and teachers to determine willingness to participate.

The process ensured that the participating schools collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements.

b). The applicants provided a list of the seven schools that will participate in grant activities as required by the selection criteria.

c). The applicants provided the total number of participating students and the number of students participating from low-income families, the number of participating students who are high need students, and the number of participating educators as required in the selection criteria.

These factors, along with a clear plan for professional development and program monitoring represent strong evidence for the extent to which the applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal will support high quality LEA level and school level implementation.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan includes goals, activities and rationale for those activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties. When considered overall, it is credible and likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

The applicant's goals can be inferred from a list of impacts aligned to activities. For example, activities related to professional development are aligned to the following impacts:

- Teachers will lead innovation across the district, grade levels, and curricula;
- Leaders will support innovation at the classroom level;
- Teachers and leaders will lead implementation at new Innovation Schools throughout the district; and
- Teachers and Leaders will take ownership of learning experiences.

Similarly, there is no clear, overarching goal statement for the proposed work. The applicant does state a belief that successful implementation will serve as a model of hybrid learning environments, and will provide examples of using multiple modalities that will have an impact on other curricula, but the goals of the plan are implicit at best.

The proposal lacks a clear and specific timeline and neglects to identify clear deliverables and responsible parties for the proposed actions. The lack of clarity in each of these areas detracts from the quality of the proposed plan.

The proposed plan draws both concerns and confidences:

Concerns:

- Lack of clarity and depth around the expected changes in math teaching and learning beyond integration of technology.
- Narrow operational definition of personalization – the plan only addresses learning modality and neglects to address students' academic interests.

Confidences:

- Strong plan for professional development.
- Teacher residency program to create a corps of teachers into the future.
- Teacher collaboration and shift from a model of direct instruction to one where teachers are facilitators.

- Focus on mentorship and support for college enrollment in the middle years.

These concerns detract from the overall credibility of the plan.

Overall, the applicant demonstrated moderate to high evidence of a high quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support change beyond the participating schools and will help the applicant reach its outcome goals.

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

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes significant gaps between overall proficiency status and the achievement of some subgroups across the district. The gaps are generally largest between students with disabilities and all students.

The included data provide the benchmark year and projected goals for future years. Goals for the largest gap – between students with disabilities and all students – are aggressive, but reasonable. The applicant aims to reduce the gap by more than 50% at the end of a five-year improvement journey, which offers a set of incremental goals that appear attainable.

The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable goals for:

a) Performance on summative assessments (proficiency status and growth),

b) Decreasing achievement gaps,

c) Graduation rates, and

d) College enrollment

as required by the selection criteria.

Overall, the application scores high in the likelihood of its vision to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals.

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:

Overall, the extent to which the applicant has demonstrated evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching is strong to moderate.

a). The evidence provided by the applicant to support its record of success in improving student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps is moderate. The district outperforms all other urban districts in New Jeresy and boasts assessment results above those of districts with similar demographics. While proficiency gains across the district are apparent in recent history, there is no specific data offered to support a closing achievement gap.

b). The evidence provided by the applicant to support its record of achieving ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest achieving schools or in its low-performing schools is strong. The applicant provided descriptions of many reforms, including:

- comprehensive, district-wide curriculum system;
- implementation of six career and academically themed high schools;
- work to invest in a corps of future teachers;
- partnerships to offer an industry-focused curricula that offers work-based learning experiences and business partner expertise;
- implementation of the AVID program;
- improvements to technology integration and access;
- new evaluation systems for the superintendent, principals, and teachers; and
- in-depth, quantitative data analysis

Considered collectively, these reforms appear both ambitious and significant.

c). The evidence provided by the applicant to support its record of making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction and services is moderate. The applicant described use of the student information system PowerSchool to make data available, but did not offer descriptions of ways this informs and improves participation, instruction, and services.

Overall, the applicant provided strong to moderate evidence of clear record of success in the past four years.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates strong to moderate evidence of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, including.

a) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's classification used in the F-33 survey of local government finances;

b). Actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only;

c). Actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and

d). Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level (if available)

However, while the data are available, they appear dispersed and not easy to access in a seamless manner.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates a high to moderate level of transparency in processes, practices, and investments by maintaining financial documents as public documents presented to the public at a meeting where comments are allowed. Additionally, they are available in board minutes, at the public library, and through the Secretary/School Board Administrator’s office. The applicant’s description includes the expenditure categories required in the selection criteria.

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the proposed plan can meet State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements. However, the applicant describes two possible areas that may require state waivers for implementation. The applicant describes favorable conditions within the state, such as support through an ESEA waiver request for using student learning and achievement when measuring teacher effectiveness in favor of ESEA’s Highly Qualified Teacher requirements.

The two areas of concern and their proposed resolutions are as follow:

- Concern: The requirement for a teacher providing direct instruction in a core area for four or more weeks to be qualified in the subject area.
- Resolution: Request a waiver from the state to allow all teachers in grades 5-8 to work with all students in grades 5-8 in a 90–minute math block where the teacher of record is grade and certificate appropriate.
- Concern: The calculation of the Student Growth Percentile (SGP) used for the purpose of teacher evaluation may only attribute success to a single teacher of record.
- Resolution: Request a waiver from the state to afford attribution of SGP data to multiple teachers.

While waiver approval is not guaranteed, by identifying potential issues and offering reasonable resolutions, the applicant provided sufficient evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant’s proposal.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants have provided evidence to demonstrate meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal through the following steps:

- Extensive meetings of the central administrative team;
- Central administration’s reports to school level leaders to share the proposed model and gauge support levels;

Evaluation of interested schools in terms of staffing, student performance, facility, and leadership;
- Meetings with schools identified through the above process—including union representation; and
- Teacher surveys and feedback, which was used to refine the proposal.

The applicants indicate an intention to share plans with the community through board meetings, websites, newsletters, PTOs, and social media. Multiple letters of support – including from Montclair State University – have indicated support for the proposal. However, there was no evidence to demonstrate meaningful engagement from the critically important student stakeholder group in this process.

Because of these factors, the applicants demonstrated moderate to strong evidence to demonstrate meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan includes goals, activities and rationale for those activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties. When considered overall, the plan is credible and likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

The information provided by the applicant does not fully address the selection criteria. There is a brief, surface-level description of the process that led to identification of gaps present in the system that will be addressed by the proposed model. This explanation includes:

- Comparisons between magnet and traditional K-8 schools in the district,
- Mention of research support for the connection between the quality of classroom instruction and student success,
- Evidence of varied teacher quality among the seven selected schools – as determined by teacher value-added data, and
- Evidence of gaps in the system as identified through examination of student assessment and teacher practice data.

At the same time, the applicant clearly recognizes what isn't currently working within the system and present this case well.

However, the application is notably missing goals, rationale, deliverables, and responsible parties for actions related to analysis of current status. Because of this, the applicants have demonstrated moderate to weak evidence of a high quality plan for analysis of current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan includes goals, activities and rationale for those activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties. When considered overall, it is credible and likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

The application offers the following **goals**:

- Build a personalized learning model focusing specifically on middle grade mathematics.
- Provide all students access to personalized learning experiences designed to prepare them for 21st century college and careers.

These goals support the requirement to demonstrate an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students, in an age appropriate manner. However, further clarification related to how the district will leverage student academic interest is warranted.

The application offers the following **activities** and **rationale**:

- Redesign the traditional classroom to enable true differentiation.
- Begin the year with a diagnostic assessment; surveys of students, parents, and teachers; and generate a comprehensive profile that is updated daily for each student to ensure each student is working on material that is customized to their academic learning needs and preferences and is aligned to college and career ready standards.
- Use a scheduling algorithm to match students with lessons that are likely to be successful for them.
- Daily assessments of student learning, as well as bi-monthly cumulative assessments and performance-based tasks to

track whether students are mastering assigned skills or need further support.
- Use one instructional period every two weeks for students to meet with their Math Advisor to review progress, so they can better articulate their personal learning goals and reflect on how their progress and learning plan is critical to their long term success.

While there are some time-based elements alluded to in the proposal, the application does not provide a specific **timeline** as required in a high quality plan.

The application describes the following **deliverables**:

- A personalized learning model that integrates multiple modalities into a classroom space, uses customized learning plans for each student, provides access to a comprehensive lesson bank, leverages a dynamic scheduling algorithm to match students and lessons, and frequently assesses students to refine and tailor their learning plans.
- A bank of 10,000 unique lessons aligned to Common Core State Standards, including those that measure discrete skills and project based lessons.
- A skill map aligned to CCSS to serve as an anchor for the personalized learning program.

The application does not specify **responsible parties** – other than references to a third party vendor in some instances -- as required in a high quality plan.

The applicant's plan as described adequately addresses requirements related to:

- Personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development and personalize learning recommendations,
- A variety of high quality instructional approached and environments,
- High quality content, including digital learning content aligned with college and career ready standards, and
- Ongoing and regular feedback.

The application is strong in its plan to address accommodations and high quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure they are on track toward meeting college and career ready standards with the proposed personalized learning model.

While the elements of a high quality plan that are present are strong, there are missing elements of a high quality plan. Overall the applicant demonstrated moderate evidence of 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.

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

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan includes goals, activities and rationale for those activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties. When considered overall, it is credible and likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

The goals and actions described clearly support requirements to help educators improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college and career ready standards by enabling the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching for all students. The applicant describes a process that will take teachers from a traditional environment to one that is characterized by collaboration to meet individual student needs.

The applicant's plan to create personalized learning environments with collaboration for educators is promising as outlined and provides high quality learning environments for teachers. Beginning with a pre-launch simulation and orientation for teachers, supported by practice rounds, common planning, an ongoing professional development and targeted instructional support, the applicant describes a credible plan for supporting teachers to implement personalized learning environments for students.

The proposed plan supports all participating educators having access to and effectively using tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college and career readiness standards. The applicant describes program components that enable teachers to configure the educational program to the unique needs of students based on ongoing quantitative and qualitative data in a collaborative environment.

The proposed plan outlines training, tools, data, and resources that enable leaders and leadership teams structure effective learning environments. The applicant describes use of instructional rounds and participation in statewide teacher and principal evaluation pilots, which are likely to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. The district's highest need schools are included in the plan.

Overall the applicant demonstrated strong evidence of a high quality plan for improving teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college and career ready.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants have demonstrated sufficient evidence of practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning through organization of the central office structures and the roles of grant coordinator school leadership teams of participating schools.

The application describes how the proposed third party technology and curriculum will enable students to earn credit based upon mastery rather than seat time and practices for providing students multiple and comparable opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Overall, the application provides strong evidence of practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants have provided strong evidence of their readiness to ensure all students, parents, educators and other stakeholders, regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the proposal. The applicant proposes to provide an iPad for each student an provide WiFi access for 10 hours each day. Some locations will provide WiFi access on Saturdays, and the local public library provides free WiFi access six days a week. Additionally, students and parents have access to technical training and support.

The selection criteria require readiness to ensure appropriate levels of technical support, use of information technology systems to allow open data and electronic learning systems, and ensure use of interoperable data systems. A combination of PowerSchool, Blackboard, student math portals, and in-progress development of shareable, accessible achievement resources provide strong evidence of this.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	3

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided some evidence of a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and provides opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant.

Specifically, the applicant details:

- a system of student assessments,
- professional development with an evaluation component,
- how the role of the third party vendor will the leveraged toward monitoring and evaluaton, and
- plans to monitor technology usage and reliability.

However, there is no clear plan for tying these things into a cohesive monitoring and evaluation process that reflects ongoing continuous improvement included in the application. The applicant weak to moderate evidence to support these selection criteria.

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

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided little evidence of clear strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders through a variety of means, including dialogue among individuals, teams and units within the district, as well as formal district communications.

For example, the applicant states that ongoing corrections and improvements will be driven by a clear stakeholder communication strategy, but does not provide any detail to support the present existence of that strategy.

Similary, the applicant states an intent to measure and share information pertaining to student achievement, student performance, outcomes of professional development, use and impact of technology, and transformation of staff, but fails to provide any detail that lends confidence in the applicant's ability to carry this intent out.

Finally, the elements of a high quality plan, as required in the selection criteria -- goals, activities and rationale, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties--are missing, which detracts from the overall credibility of the plan.

As a result, the applicant has provided weak evidence evidence of a high quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders through a variety of means, including dialogue among individuals, teams and units within the district, as well as formal district communications.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an appropriate number of ambitious, yet achievable performance measures – overall and by subgroup – with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. The proposed goals represent incremental growth that make them achievable; they also results in significant gains by the end of the grant period, which make them ambitious.

However the applicant is missing the following required criteria:

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

In the absence of these requirements of the selection criteria, the application has provided a weak response.

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application provides strong evidence of plans to evaluate effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities. The application specifies multiple, ongoing methods of gathering effectiveness data for professional development, use of technology, parental involvement, community involvement, scheduling, and infrastructure. These methods include:

- continuous improvement of the student program as embedded in the student assignment process;
- walk-through observations, reviews of multiple data points, formal and informal meetings, and student and parent surveys;
- quantitative analysis of student performance by student, classroom, grade, and school;
- tracking college and career readiness indicators: Algebra I grades, High School Proficiency Assessment results, SAT scores, and participation n Advanced Placement courses;
- analysis of formative and summative data disaggregated by classroom, subject, ethnicity, gender, poverty level, and teacher; and
- inspections of capitol improvements.

Together, these methods represent the scope of the varied goals of the proposal and offer a valid way of evaluating effectiveness of the proposed activities.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application provides a strong budget summary that details all funds that will support the project. The applicants propose to fund the

project solely with Race to the Top - District grant funds. The application includes the required break-down by budget categories.

The budget summary narrative describes an effort to contract with a third party vendor to supply and manage a personalized learning program. These costs include start-up fees and yearly operational costs, as well as training costs associated with the program. The budget also includes funds to support, continue, and expand the AVID model already in place in some parts of the district.

In addition, the budget includes infrastructure improvements at seven sites, including removal of walls, construction and installation of dividers and student workstations, new flooring and furniture, and the fulfillment of necessary technological requirements. Further, the budget includes technology purchases to equip students and teachers in a 1:1 setting.

The narrative describes a budget that is reasonable and sufficient to support the proposal within the context of an urban community where technology can level the playing field for students and their families. The budget narrative provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. Overall, the applicant provides a strong budget summary.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan includes goals, activities and rationale for those activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties. When considered overall, it is credible and likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

The proposal has several elements that will require funding and support after the grant period. These include ongoing support for operation of the third party personalized learning program, support for the AVID program, and sustainability of hardware purchases. The applicant describes a desire to solicit support from other funding sources, establish links with other agencies, and freeing up local funds from textbooks and materials no longer needed. The proposal also states a desire to create a written sustainability plan, but provides no details about the plan. Overall, the plan as for sustainability of project goals as submitted is weak. It is missing essentially all of the elements of a high quality plan.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The extent to which the applicant proposes to integrate public and private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family support to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students is strong. The plan focuses on providing these integrated services for high-need students and their families – specifically, serving students in grades 5-8 with significant behavioral challenges that keep them from tolerating a full school day.

The applicant submitted a plan that is built on a coherent partnership with community-based services through a partnership with Trinitas Regional Medical Center, but the application lacks a plan for sustainability of the partnership. Similarly, the application proposes a coherent partnership with the International Rescue Committee that also lacks a plan sustainability plan.

The following are the stated goals of these partnerships:

- Attend a full day of school,
- Exhibit appropriate classroom behaviors and be able to stay in class,
- Demonstrate a 10% improvement in scores on the district or state proficiency assessment,
- Socialize appropriately with peers during non-classroom activities, and
- Be able to transition successfully.

While these goals are not in conflict with the applicant's RTTT-D application, they are not directly in support of its goals.

The applicant has provided ambitious, yet achievable performance measure for the students in the program:

- English language mastery,
- Grade level academic mastery,
- Social emotional integration,
- Understanding of the school system and supports available, and
- Participation in a full school day with appropriate social, emotional, and learning behaviors.

The applicant has not provided a credible plan for tracking and using indicators of progress, scaling the model, or building capacity of district staff in participating schools to support the partnership as required by the selection criteria.

Overall, the applicant has provided moderate evidence the support the selection criteria.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has submitted a coherent and comprehensive proposal that builds on the four core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators through the described third party solution for personalized mathematics instruction and the systems – data collection, collaboration, and professional development -- proposed to support it.

It is aligned with college and career ready standards and proposes to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning. The plan addresses both what students are learning – content, skills, and conceptual understanding of mathematics – as well as how they will learn it – through a variety of modalities based on students' preferences and performance.

The proposal includes plans to meet the academic needs of students, 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 student graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The applicant's plans to implement rigorous teacher and principal evaluation systems and target instruction specifically to students' areas of strength and weakness while building in a support structure through Math Advisors represent a coherent comprehensive approach.

The applicant has met Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

Total	210	153

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	4

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a clear, discrete, and innovative solution that can be replicated in schools across the nation. The applicant proposes the establishment of an Educational Enhancement and Support Center (EESC) that will address the social-emotional and academic needs of a targeted population within the district's lowest performing K-8 school.

The applicant also proposes the hiring of full-time school psychologists for seven schools to make proactive intervention services. While this is a clear and discrete solution that can be replicated, it is not particularly innovative.

The applicant has provided a strong rationale for specific population that will be addressed. The EESC is proposed to support the lowest performing K-8 schools whose students have a history of extreme poverty, high mobility, and minimal parent involvement. Similarly, the proposal to staff schools with school psychologists aims to impact prevailing behavioral issues.

The selection criteria require a high quality plan for carrying out the proposed activities. A high quality plan includes goals, activities and rationale for those activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties. When considered overall, it is credible and likely to lead to the desired outcomes.

The application states goals for each of the proposals:

- Improve academic and behavioral performances, as well as reduce grade retention and improve graduation rates.
- Establish a relationship between students and community members or cultural peers who are educationally successful.
- Develop student interest in recreation.
- Assess prevailing behavioral issues, identify interventions and build capacity within the school to do the same.

Proposed activities and rationale are provided, but less explicitly. For example, the proposal suggests offering workshops for parents on

helping with homework, parenting skills, managing behavior problems, gang prevention, pregnancy prevention, and similar topics because research shows having an adult positively involved with a child can make a significant difference in a child's life outcomes.

The applicant did not include specific information related to timelines, deliverables, or responsibilities.

It is difficult to determine if the proposed budget is adequate to support the development and implementation of activities that meet the requirements of the notice, because information related to the number of students who would be served is unclear.

Overall, the optional budget summary scores in the moderate to low range for the selection criteria.

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0414NJ-3 for Elizabeth Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows strong evidence of a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that is built upon the successful results of a 2006 Strategic Plan. By building off of existing efforts and incorporating primary and secondary research-based principles into its development, the vision shows a clear and credible approach to increasing academic achievement. Additionally, its holistic focus ensures strong support for student success in academic and non-academic areas.

The applicant's 2012 Strategic Plan vision is heavily focused on technology-driven, personalized instruction to develop Innovation Schools based on the successful School of One concept pioneered in New York City. Further, academic research and that of the applicant's own students shows a strong correlation between math achievement and high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates.

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

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows strong evidence of a well-conceived approach to implementation of the proposed plan in terms of the selection of schools. Not only did the applicant identify schools of need, but it also took into account the capacity of the individual schools to implement the plan, in terms of infrastructure, student math performance, and staff capacity. The LEA met with potential school leaders and teachers to discuss the plan, answer questions, and gauge level of commitment to the process. This approach suggests that the level of buy-in and investment in the program's outcomes will be maximized, ensuring better chances for success.

Through the use of meetings and anonymous surveys, the LEA was able to identify the optimal environments for the program to succeed. In fact, 47 of 48 teachers surveyed felt that the program would benefit their students.

The resulting schools display a high-needs and low-income population, with nearly 80% or higher of each subgroup coming from low-income families. The schools' need and their staff's commitment bode well for making a difference in student's lives with this implementation.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents moderate evidence of a high-quality plan for scaling up the reform proposal through a detailed logic model that shows how the initial focus on 5-8 Math education -- including professional development, individualized instruction, and college preparation -- will be expanded to other schools as well as other subject areas.

Teachers and ongoing professional development hold the key to the scaling-up of this proposal. For example, the applicant envisions that

teachers will share best practices and learning from the Innovation Schools project with other teachers throughout the district and assist in the implementation of similar programs throughout the city. The AVID pre-college program training will be offered to teachers in all subject areas. Further, tomorrow's teachers -- student teachers at a nearby university -- will be offered internships and potentially positions within the school system.

Because the Math Center, with its algorithm-based daily personalized math instruction, is at the heart of this proposal, the proposal would benefit from information regarding how this specific tool would be expanded to other content areas.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates strong evidence that the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity among student subgroups. The growth for all subgroups is significant, underscoring the belief that the individualized instruction has the potential to move all learners to a place of personalized achievement, no matter where they begin and at what pace they move.

The proposed goals for language arts, science, and math at the 7 different grade levels seem ambitious yet achievable, including continued growth after the grant period. With proficiency rates in the 70th, 80th, and in some groups, 90th percentiles, the project will have a meaningful and lasting impact on student learning. While pre-8th grade language arts goals for Special Education learners tend to peak at under 60%, they grow more steadily in 8th and 11th grades and appear ambitious.

The decreasing gap goals between subgroups are similarly ambitious, especially for narrowing disparities between "Hispanic and ALL" learners. The 7th grade Math disparities between Hispanic and black students still feels stubbornly high, but the two groups start at significantly different baselines.

Graduation rates are reasonable and ambitious, which also reflect the applicant's historical success in increasing district graduation rates. Though not broken out by subgroup, overall projected goals for college enrollment rates are solid, reasonable, and ambitious. The applicant proposes a solution to gather postsecondary degree information, despite the state's lack of collection of this data, which speaks to the applicant's commitment to understanding the effects of its programs on students far into the future.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	11

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown moderate evidence of a clear record of success in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity. The evidence presented includes longitudinal comparisons from the 2009-12 school years; significant reforms in lower-performing schools; and the accolades of national news organizations.

Overall, data suggests that student learning outcomes have increased over the last four years. The longitudinal data within Table B and the Appendix shows general Language Arts growth over the 2009-12 period for grades 3,4,8, and 11, with slightly downward trends in grades 5 and 6 and a more significant 19 point drop in grade 7. Looking at individual cohorts, (eg., 2009 grade 3 class, which would be grade 4 in 2010, grade 5 in 2011, etc.) with some downward movement in grade five. Three high schools have shown 25% proficiency gains in math from 2010-2012.

Graduation rates appear to have decreased slightly from 2010-11 to 2011-12, but they are generally high compared to the rest of the state, resulting in recognition by the Washington Post and Newsweek for some of its best-performing high schools.

The schools strong strong evidence of implementing significant reforms over the last six years, including developing accountability plans, extending school days, expanding early childhood education, implementing school uniforms, and adapting rigorous teacher and principal evaluation systems. The applicant has also implemented meaningful partnerships, including developing an "Academy of Engineering" with one university.

The applicant has entered into partnerships with the Harvard Strategic Data Project to provide in-depth analysis of student data, and has added various student and teacher proficiency data points to its various data sets. The applicant lacks sufficient evidence regarding the availability of that data to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided moderate evidence of the transparency of school budgetary information. However, it appears that there is an opportunity for schools and the district to make information more easily and anonymously obtained through dissemination online or at the public library, where currently only Board of Education minutes are available.

For example, while initial starting salaries are available in board meeting minutes, subsequent salaries can be found in collective bargaining unit agreements, which would seem to require some calculations on the part of the public. School budgets contain non-personnel expenditures, and are available at the Central office, or the principal shares them with the Instructional Leadership team, which may include parents.

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows strong evidence of the necessary state statutory and regulatory support to implement the personalized learning environments, including explicit New Jersey statues that call for the establishment of a process to develop online, structured, and other learning experiences "based on student interest and career goals as reflected in Personalized Student Learning Plans." The state's official support for such personalized instruction, as supported by technology, bodes well for offering successful conditions for implementation of this plan. Further, the state statues do not require a minimum amount of seat time to "pass" a course, and thus students can move on after exhibiting mastery in a subject.

The applicant anticipates two potential areas of concern, including the state's waiver for High Quality Teacher preparation and the calculation of Student Growth Percentiles to take into account multiple teachers of record; however, these appear to be reasonably rectified, given the state's stated focus on personalized education.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows moderate evidence of including significant stakeholder engagement in the development and support of the proposal, through numerous opportunities for stakeholder input and buy-in. Such buy-in is critical to the success of such a significant departure from historical methods of delivering mathematics content.

Before including schools in the plan, LEA officials met with principals,teachers and union leaders of potential schools to determine their level of interest, willingness, and infrastructure to undergo the program. Teachers and administrators could ask questions, express concerns, and offer feedback anonymously through a survey. Forty seven of the 48 teachers impacted felt the program would benefit their students.

The application lacks sufficient information regarding how parental feedback was sought and incorporated into the plan. As parents are a key stakeholder in the project's success, evidence of parental input is important. The applicant plans to engage support further through board meetings, website info, newsletters, PTOs, and social media.

Key union, business, educational, nonprofit, and religious leaders offered letters of support to underscore their interest in the program's success, which suggests that the initiative will enjoy widespread community support toward the goal of helping all students achieve.

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

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has demonstrated moderate evidence of a high-quality plan to analyze the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments. In addition to the frequent socioeconomic issues leading to achievement gaps, the applicant has already identified causes that lead to a clear path of personalized instruction; as a result, its high-quality plan will delve more deeply into those issues.

An initial needs and gaps analysis suggests that, while differences clearly exist between the district's magnet/gifted and talented schools and the lowest-performing schools for many reasons, a key finding is that teacher-led instruction may not work for all students. The benefits of teacher-led instruction, the applicant believes, may vary by the quality of teaching but also by the student's individual learning style.

As a result, the applicant has planned numerous elements of a pre-assessment, including student, teacher, and parent feedback and a skills diagnostic, and frequent holistic assessments that will continually adjust as student needs change.

The plan would benefit from more discussion regarding the technological needs and gaps within the various school's infrastructures. The proposal doesn't address the technological gaps between the current school status and the implementation status.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown strong evidence of an approach to engage and empower all learners, as students, parents, and educators will:

- Understand why what they are learning is so critical to their goals, through the expansion of the nationally-successful AVID pre-college program;
- Understand and pursue college-ready goals, through their AVID learning, through their input into their personalized learning plans, through discussions with teachers and counselors;
- Are involved in deep learning experiences, through one of seven proposed learning models (eg., teacher-led, small group, virtual learning) that can change on a daily basis;
- The proposal doesn't address diverse cultures, but does provide for different perspectives through discussions of real-world examples and applications;
- Master critical content and develop 21st century learning skills through the completion of small-group, collaborative projects

Students will benefit from:

- A personalized sequence of content and instruction through the Math Center's unique algorithm, which updates student's daily lessons based on their skill levels and understanding of new content within seven different approaches/learning styles
- High quality content. The 3rd party vendor has identified 10,000 relevant and high-quality digital lessons from research of 40,000 potential lessons, which are aligned to college ready standards;
- Ongoing and regular feedback, on a daily, bimonthly, quarterly, and cumulative basis, to reflect and act upon
- Daily personalized learning recommendations from the Math Center's algorithm

The applicant team has anticipated and planned to make efforts to include special education students within the Math Center environment, working at their own pace. If the child would be too distracted by the busy environment, teachers will work to provide that child with individualized instruction in another setting.

The applicant will provide significant training and support to students to ensure their understanding of the new system.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown strong evidence of helping educators to improve instruction and improve their practice in developing personalized, college-ready instruction for learners.

Specifically, teachers will be given training to support their capacity to:

- Support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments through several weeks of training and practice time with the new system, professional learning communities, and the Institute for Teaching and Learning;
- Adapt content and instruction to individual learning needs. Teachers will provide their input into the algorithm's recommendations, and will also have the autonomy to adjust those recommendations based on their personal experience and knowledge of the child.
- Frequently measure student progress and use the results to accelerate progress and improve individual and collective practices by receiving daily, bimonthly, quarterly, and cumulative student data to adjust teaching practices. Additionally, teachers will greatly lead the efforts to expand the new system to other subjects and schools.
- Improving teacher and principal practices through evaluation feedback. The new system will include links to teacher and administrator feedback in order to create a seamless system of integrated data that measures all inputs on student achievement.

All participating teachers will have access to, and know how to use, tools, data and resources to further student achievement toward college and career-ready goals through:

- Actionable information to optimize educational approaches. Based on the feedback of students, parents, diagnostics, and the algorithm, teachers will have recommendations for individual student lessons and plans.
- High-quality learning resources which the vendor has developed through a review of 40,000 potential lessons to identify 10,000 college-path lessons;
- Processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches through the Math Center's algorithm recommendations, which will not only provide recommendations but appropriate lessons to utilize;

All participating leaders will have the tools, training, policies and data to structure effective personalized learning environments by:

District evaluation feedback will be available for principals to build environments that support teachers and students in college-ready personalized learning

Training, systems, and practices to continually improve school progress toward meeting student performance and closing achievement gaps. The district's leaders engage in professional learning communities to discuss new trends in leadership and education

The applicant has a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly-effective teachers, which includes significant investments in teacher development; working with student-teachers at a nearby university; and strong support of teachers through professional development, professional learning communities, coaching, and administrative support.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown strong evidence of supportive LEA practices, policies, and rules to facilitate personalized learning, by;

- Making the LEA central office a key partner in developing and supporting individual schools through four different offices, the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents' efforts, and a dedicated Race to the Top grant coordinator
- Providing school leadership teams with the flexibility to set schedules, personnel, and budgeting. The district has a history of providing schools with some level of autonomy to set schedules and other internal practices,
- State law and LEA practices will allow schools to set standards for students' "mastering" a course beyond traditional seat time measures;
- the Math Centers will offer multiples times and multiple comparable ways to show mastery of a skill or standard;
- The Math Center will provide individualized plans and lessons for learners at all levels, including special education students and English learners, who will at first utilize more visually-oriented lessons.

In all, the LEA, having developed this initial proposal and brought it to participating schools, is ready and willing to provide the autonomy needed to increase the chances of student success.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has presented strong evidence of its plan to support personalized learning through school and LEA infrastructure by:

- Ensuring that students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have access to content, tools, and other resources through each student being equipped with an IPAD, schools having wireless capability during regular and (some) afterschool and Saturday hours; iLeap Centers throughout the district; the public library; and potentially at Community Rooms of public housing projects.
- Ensuring stakeholders have appropriate levels of technical support, through 10 days of intensive student training; parental training at community learning centers, and written directions. Schools will also have on-site 3rd party technical support.
- Using information technology to allow exporting info into an open data source by working with the vendor and the current data providers Powerschool and Blackboard to find ways to make this data available and inter operable.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown strong evidence of a strategy for continuous improvement that includes timely feedback through the assessment of student progress, professional development, and technological effectiveness.

- Students will be assessed for progress at daily, bimonthly, quarterly, and cumulative points to determine progress, while allowing for daily changes to lessons and modalities of instruction depending on the student's needs.
- Professional development of teachers and administrators, and evaluation of their efforts, as well as that of LEA administrators, will ensure engagement in the successful outcome of the implementation;
- More critically, given the 3rd party vendor's huge role in the initiative's success, the LEA has a good understanding of how the vendor's implementation process must be evaluated, including technology usage and reliability; professional development tied to the technology and general pedagogy; and the progress and effectiveness of capital improvements.

The LEA seems strongly engaged in constant formative assessment and adjustments to the implementation of the project.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown moderate evidence of ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The team will communicate through many different electronic means, and will invite community members to learn more through Board meetings. Quarterly district newsletters and monthly school newsletters also provide information on the initiative and its progress.

The application would benefit from additional information regarding how community feedback is actively sought out and acted upon throughout the implementation process.

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

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows strong evidence of ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the 5-8 and high school populations.

The performance measures include:

- 100% of students have highly effective principals by 2014-15, a more easily-achieved goal whose success can accelerate other goals' attainment;
- at least 60% of all students have a highly effective teacher by 2016-17
- Over 90% of all students have at least 90% attendance by 2016-17, a critical element of student success
- Additionally, the applicant proposes reading and language arts proficiency, social and emotional diagnostics, and student behavior, to provide a 360 degree look at program effectiveness.

These ambitious goals will offer the applicant multiple chances to review and adapt the program as necessary.

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows strong evidence of a plan to evaluate the program's District funded activities through:

- A partnership with the Harvard Strategic data project to allow in-depth analysis of student data, evaluation systems, and diagnostic assessment of district and state policies on student achievement;
- Twice a month the team will review for program effectiveness as related to capital improvements, assessments of students, teachers, leadership, technology use, and stakeholder engagement;
- A review of the school board's policies through the CRSS Management Oversight Model.

Together, these complementary efforts will pinpoint areas requiring additional engagement or resources by the LEA and school in order to keep all students on-track to college and career ready math success.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown strong evidence of a sound budget that:

- Identifies all sources of funding, which includes approximately $2.2million in LEA funds for capital improvements and university partnership support
- Seems reasonable and sufficient to support the acquisition of appropriate technology and training to bring students, teachers, and parents into the integrated data-based system of personalized instruction.
- Provides a thoughtful rationale for the use of the LEA funds to ready schools and partners for the intervention;
- Provides a thoughtful rationale for the one-time cost of the implementation of the 3rd party vendor's system, as well as student licensing fees and technological support fees.

Although the vendor's share of the proposed budget is 70% of the requested funds, the vendor's system is at the heart of this proposal and is reasonable.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has weak evidence of a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant.

The applicant will take over the technological support function through the LEA's Division of Technology, and oversight for professional development will transition to the RttT District coordinator. There's no mention of training the trainer, or other specific practices to sustain the professional development over time.

Further, there's no governmental resources pledged toward the sustainability of this effort. The LEA will leverage information on the project and its success to the public, in order to build support for continued funding of the project. This is an ambitious but risky strategy in planning for an initiative's sustainability. It's unclear how the LEA will be able to pay the student licensing fees required after the grant period. For that reason, it's unclear how sustainable the project can be in the long-term.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown strong evidence of coherent and sustainable partnerships that will further the goals of the program.

Those partnerships are forward-thinking and holistic in their approach, with definite goals for individual and groups and frequent opportunities for progress updates and communications.

The partnerships, with a regional medical center and with an International Rescue Committee, will strengthen the services needed to equip families to confront the many challenges they face beyond the academic classroom. By doing so, they will engage parents, provide additional assessments of students, and create a decisionmaking process and infrastructure to select and evaluate supports to address individual needs.

By focusing on students' social/behaviorial abilities to work within a classroom setting, and acclimating refugee families to the demands of a new country and a new school, these partners will energize and encourage families to focus on the child's achievement. They include opportunities for frequent assessment and communication among the partners and families and are an excellent means of furthering the Innovation Schools goals.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not	Met

	Met	

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has demonstrated a coherent and comprehensive plan to improve student readiness for college and career through personalized math instruction plans for grades 5-8. The investment in the Math Center concept, with an algorithm that takes into account multiple stakeholder input, diagnostic tests, and daily changes in student learning, is a powerful tool for developing individual student learners. The course content, 10,000 lessons selected from potentially 40,000 lessons, offers diverse and deepening opportunities for student learning. Rigorous professional development, professional learning communities, and ongoing technical support will empower teachers to become highly effective and, ultimately, decrease gaps between all learning groups. The proposal is particularly exciting as it relates to special education and English learner students, who can, in most cases, be accommodated within the same classrooms as other students. This is a promising proposal.

Total	210	176

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 has presented strong evidence of a compelling case for an optional budget for an Educational Enhancement and Support center and School Psychiatric services.

The rationale for doing so, to both help students with family issues that may lead to behavioral concerns, is sound and well complements the goals of the Innovation Schools project. Aiding students with emotional or behavioral issues will help them to grow skills in perseverance, critical thinking, and other social skills crucial to 21st century success.

The proposal presents a high-quality plan for carrying out activities, utilizing existing school facilities and utilizing known behavioral intervention models. Beginning work with a small cohort of the neediest students will increase student and family confidence, which may extend to academic areas. Similarly, the year of psychological support will help schools to structure counseling programs to help families build confidence so that they may focus more on achievement.

The budget will be adequate to meet the goals of the two proposed pieces of this initiative.