



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1024IN-1 for Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provided a sound and convincing reform vision that articulates an approach to accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity. Noted that CSCC aims to improve high school student achievement; increase rates of college matriculation, entrance in STEM degree fields and success in college and STEM degrees; increase principal and teacher expertise; and create scalable and sustainable results. Did not see clear evidence of career readiness; details are missing. Evidence supported more of the AP course aspect. Evidence: The vision will be implemented by developing one or more college success clusters (CSCs) that will consist of one high school and one middle school. This model will accelerate student learning by increasing access to AP and preAP courses; increasing qualifying scores in AP for low income and minority students; personalizing the AP experience through web based system that combines formative assessments, online tutoring, individualized learning plans, college counseling, progress monitoring. (The objectives mentioned are achievable and demonstrates the applicants understanding and awareness of student achievement and learning). Additional evidence that demonstrates a credible approach: CSCC "proposes to leverage the successful five year track record of gains produced through the Mass Math and Science Initiative's AP program and expand the pipeline of low income and minority students prepared to take and succeed AP math, science, and English courses. No mention of how it would turn around low performing or persistently low schools. Applicant provided supporting details and the research based initiatives that will guide the project: Massachusetts. Math and Science Initiative; Pre AP Initiative: Laying the foundation; Online instructional and student centered platform; changing conditions and building capacity. The approach to implementing the vision also includes the development of leadership teams; the implementation of a blended technology approach. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided evidence that shows a clear support for high quality LEA and school level implementation. The list of schools that will participate in the grant activities were identified as Evansville Van. School District (Cedar Hall Community School; Lincoln School; McGary Middle; Plaza Park International Prep Academy; Thompkin Middle; Central High and Harrison High) and Syracuse City (Lincoln Middle and Henninger High) School District. Table 3 provided each schools demographics and participants and educators serving through the CSCC. The demographics show Henninger High and Central High have the most # of participating educators (43) and Cedar Hall and Lincoln School have the least (8). The data also show that Central High, Harrison, and Henninger High have the most number of student participating (each over 1000); the most # of participating high need students; while Henninger has the most students participating and labeled as low income. A description of the process that the applicant used to select schools to participate was provided. Evidence was limited but provided. Schools were selected based on the following: schools have a current STEM focus; middle school contain 40% or more free and reduced lunch status (what about high school); school leadership has strong turnaround competencies; current AP programs need to be strengthened; and a portfolio that represents a mix of needs based on SEA academic standards." 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:		

- Limited evidence was provided to demonstrate how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district wide change beyond the participating schools.
- Applicant noted that after the initial evaluation of the program, proven quality program components will be expanded across each of the districts and implemented in all district schools. This will be led by a key staff person in each district. No further details were provided to support.
- Also noted that with discretionary funding, each district will use the funds to support district specific infrastructures. Mentioned that fund would be used to hire a college and career coordinator for each cluster; to hire a supervisor for innovative learning. Provided limited details to demonstrate how scaling up will specifically take place. The latter hire would be responsible for scaling up products throughout the district. Lacking supporting details to justify claims.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant provided a table (appendix) with the goal areas by subgroups for the following areas: Performance on summative assessments; Decreasing achievement gaps; Graduation rates; and College enrollment.
- The college enrollment chart was divided into Evansville and Syracuse. In Evansville, the baseline data (2010-11) noted individuals with IEP and LEP were the lowest (27.5, 18.8 respectively) with American Indian had 100. Females were more likely to attend college, with 74.4 and males 64.30. High risk data was not provided. In Syracuse, baseline data came from 2010-11 and show students with IEP (52.6) and American Indian (62.5) were the lowest and Asian Pacific Islander was the two highest with 88.5. High risk student data were unavailable. The annual goals appear to be achievable.
- Graduation rate evidence noted that in 11-12, the subgroup with the highest was LEP and Asian Pacific Islanders (n =16, n=11 respectively) for Evansville; Syracuse data show that multiracial students had the highest baseline data (82.1) while LEP students (21.8) had the lowest. The goals per year for both schools are attainable.
- Lacking data to show if these annual goals equal or exceed that of the State. No descriptions were provided to support the charts.

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	8

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant provided clear evidence of success within the last four years. Evansville evidence: receiving and managing large scale local, state, and federal grants including Safe schools/healthy students; Readiness and Emergency Management for schools; 21st Century community learning centers, an Equity Schools model; grants to reduce alcohol abuse, Carol White Physical Education; Even start; and Title I School Improvement grants.
- Evansville highlighted the Equity Schools Model as the primary piece of evidence for demonstrating a clear record of success in advancing student learning and achievement. The union and the district developed the Equity Academy with teacher input. The applicant provided a chart of the academic growth from the Equity Schools (ISTEP assessment 10-12). The table overall showed improvements in ELA and Math scores on the ISTEP among three schools: Delaware (3-5); Evans (3-5) and McGary (3-5). The data provided convincing evidence that the Equity model improves students academic growth. Independent studies were summarized to show the evidence of narrowing the achievement gap of Evansville youngest students. According to one study, special education students' scores increased from Fall 07 to Fall 08 to a greater extent than general education students' scores increased from 07 to 08; Evidence to show improved student learning at the high school level was not provided.
- Evansville data to show improved graduation rates: applicant noted that from spring 1990 to spring 2005, graduation rates increased from 72 to 92% (surpassing the state's rate). Even after the change in graduation rate and method of calculation, 06-09- rates increased by 8%.
- Syracuse Evidence: Applicant noted the following accomplishments as evidence of success in improving student learning and achievement and equity: initiating a web based portal with access for students and parents; designed a collaborative Transformation Model; received 1st round state approval of APPR plan; developed a cooperative union/management teacher induction program;
- Applicant also provided evidence of success for MIE (primary nonprofit partner) which includes success (increases) in college attendance; enrollment into AP classes; program management and execution. An independent evaluator notes "high and mid need schools are successfully increasing the number of African American and Hispanic students enrolling

in AP classes while maintaining success rates that are on par with similar schools that have not increased student participation"

- The lead Lea (Evansville) did not provide as much evidence as Syracuse. Evidence that clearly highlighted significant reforms for low achieving or low performing school was not visible.
- Evidence that supports the applicant's ability to make student data available was insufficient. Evansville noted that "data days" would be implemented for teachers to analyze and use data, but the applicant did not provide any evidence to show how data would be made available for students and parents. Syracuse City School District noted that the web-based portal provided student performance data to students and parents. More details are necessary to make the evidence more convincing.

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

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provided some evidence for Evansville and Syracuse to demonstrate its level of transparency. The following evidence was provided for Evansville: annual budget is published in the local newspaper, on the district website, and posted in three public places (did not provide where); budget is sent to the Dept of Local Government Finance; budget is presented to the County Council; investments are presented to the board of finance in January; monthly reports are made to the board on tax levy funds; financial year end report is made to the board.
- Syracuse makes salary, investments and expenditure info available in the following ways: monthly reports presented to open Board of Education meeting; all of the districts collective bargaining agreements are posted on the district's website; all annual salaries are submitted to SeeThroughNY for posting on their public website.
- It is clear the applicant is aware of the various transparency processes and practices, but there were no supporting documents found in the appendix or narrative to support the claims.

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

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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provided the following details as evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements. Evansville evidence included: IDOE fully supports their school turnaround endeavors and differentiation strategies; support for the district to create a Transformation Zone "with the mission to establish a subset of five schools with increased autonomy in such ways as working through systemic barriers that may exist; creating competitive funding opportunities to reward educators; and providing on site technical assistance for district and school staff.
- Convincing evidence to support the autonomy aspect of the question is vague. Further details are needed for Evansville.
- Evansville has also received support from the IDOE on technical assistance and implementing the Transformational Models.
- Syracuse evidence included details about the website devoted to providing teachers, administrators, and parents with educational resources to support the agenda of "implementing common core standards and developing aligned curriculum and assessments; building instructional data systems that measure student success ...; recruiting, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals; and turning around the lowest achieving schools."
- Applicant provided several key initiatives at the SEA level support in Syracuse for creating conditions and autonomies needed for personalized learning environments. These included the approval of NY's ESEA regulatory flexibility waiver eliminated ineffective and costly mandates, providing the schools with more flexibility in the use of funds and more discretion and decision making capacity; NYState has built and is enhancing a data portal; the district is developing its personal data dashboard.

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

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- Evidence of letters of support were document in the appendix. Support from the following stakeholders were provided: IDOE (Marcie Brown); The State Dept of Education/NY (John King, Jr); Cedar Hall Community School's Site Council-Parent Community Outreach Coordinator; Harrison HS Site Council Coordinator and Principal; Mayor of Evansville (Lloyd Winnecke); Principal Browder of Plaza Park International Prep; Plaza Park Intern Prep PTSA president Kathryn Roache; David Broderhausen-stakeholder with Thompkins Midde School; Henninger School leadership team; Lincoln Middle School Leadership Team; Mayor of Syracuse (Stephanie Miner).

- There were no letters of support of the LEAs collective bargaining representation (NY) nor a minimum of 70% of teachers from participating schools buy in.
- Descriptions of how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal were provided. In Evansville, the school leadership team within each cluster met with school leader and disseminated the information to their staff through several venues (faculty meetings; written notification; newsletters). Feedback from family and community stakeholders was sought by speaking to the site councils which comprise of community, parent, and other school stakeholders). Key stakeholders in ETA (the local union) were approached.
- No evidence was provided to detail how the proposal was revised based on any engagement or feedback. Details are unclear as to how Evansville and Syracuse connected.
- Syracuse's description of how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal involved first the reviewing of the needs of individuals schools followed by conversations with principals of Lincoln and Henninger. Principals met with the leadership teams at each school; No other details were provided to further describe the engagement in the development.

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

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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

- Clear evidence was provided that highlights the needs and gaps that the plan. "The project will increase the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM, including minorities and women..." Low income and minority students have historically low participation and achievement rates in AP. This need will be addressed in this plan.
- Additional details as it relates to career readiness need to be highlighted.
- Other evidence...Four of Evansville's highest poverty and persistently low achieving schools fall under Tier I guidelines for School Improvement Grants, one falls under Tier II and 10 fall under Tier III. "To address the academic needs to increase capacity for teachers, principals, and lowest performing schools, Evansville recognizes the need to increase capacity for teachers, principals, and district administrators to train with and use data."
- In Syracuse, 80% of this year's entering 9th graders district wide performed well below grade level in math and ELA and lack the requisite skills for high school readiness and success. This project will address identified needs and gaps by "1-providing intensive professional development in pre-AP strategies to the middle school teachers will ensure that students leave middle school with the skills needed for success in AP coursework; 2-professional development in AP courses in the STEM fields will fill existing gaps in course offerings in these areas and will increase student participation and success in AP STEM courses; 3- the creation of Individual Graduation Plans for each student...4-changing conditions and building capacity at both the school and central office levels will allow for increased flexibility for the targeted schools to successfully carry out reform efforts."
- The Syracuse City School District provided the following gaps: 1) assessment, data analysis, and intervention systems are not fully developed nor clearly connected to SCSD's core instructional program; 2) there is both a general lack of high expectations for student learning as well as a lack of instructional rigor; and 3) student performance is among the lowest in the state. Syracuse provided a logical approach to reform. "The project will address identified needs and gaps in the following ways: 1) providing intensive professional development in pre-AP strategies to the middle school teachers...; 2) professional development in AP courses in the STEM fields...; 3) the creation of Individual Graduation Plans for each student...; and 4) changing conditions and building capacity at both the school and central office levels..."
- Based on the evidence provided, it is clear that the LEA has demonstrated some evidence of a high quality plan for an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal as it relates to Syracuse. Supporting details are needed for Evansville Vanderburgh School to make the claims more justifiable.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Evidence to support that all students understand and value their education was presented as a three prong approach: Individual graduation plans; increased students level support and engagement of parents and other family members.The

individual graduation plans are sound and clear evidence that demonstrates the applicant's focus on ensuring students are college- and career-ready. This plan "will help students identify learning and development goals linked to college and career readiness standards and graduation requirements."

- Additional evidence to demonstrate the applicants focus on ensuring students understand that what they are learning is key to their success. The online formative assessments will "provide teachers students and parents immediate access to specific standards that students continue to struggle to master, designing an individual online learning module for the student to access and immediate teacher reports to customize and refine small group instruction, and administrator and other school staff the power to differentiate after school support which may include critical academic content and skills ...such as goal setting, team work, ...problem solving."
- Evidence supporting access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning was lacking.
- Evidence that supports students access to improved educational content involved enhanced student supports and individualized online learning tools. The Enhanced Student Supports involved increasing student AP enrollment with focus on strategies that encourage underrepresented students to enroll in AP courses. The Online Learning Tools included real time math, ELA, and science assessments aligned to AP exams; individual graduation plans; and "near 24 hour" math, ELA and science tutoring that included live tutors and tutoring programs.
- Evidence of a strategy that focused on ongoing and regular feedback involved the early warning system provided through individualized graduation plans. This system will begin in middle school and frequently updated to determine progress toward mastery of college and career ready standards or graduation requirements.
- Strategies focused on high need students includes the individual graduation plan in addition to one on one tutoring, and educational support. All students will be provided with an orientation and overview of the tools provided by the project. In addition, the project will provide one on one support in the use of the new technologies and tools and ongoing support in understanding their assessments and individualized. plans.

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

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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provided evidence that demonstrates educators' efforts to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. This evidence involves the following provisions: curriculum alignment across vertical clusters; teacher training and support; professional learning communities; classroom materials and teacher resources; frequent teacher and principal assessments; teacher and administrator awards; and an online platform with real time information about student performance.
- Provided were detail descriptions of each provision. "Across each school cluster, teachers will implement the same curriculum in each subject area and plan collaboratively within vertically integrated, content area strands." This will allow teachers to build "practice upon one another and further differentiate the needs of their students in a more meaningful and intentional manner."
- Teacher trainings and support will consist of the AP preparation component in which MIE will provide up to 72 hours per year of "comprehensive teacher training which includes content focused professional development and ongoing support." Teachers will also get a four 2-hour vertical team session each year which support curricular alignment by connecting AP teachers with teachers in earlier grades. it is not clear if this training completes the teachers' obligation. Further details are needed to justify.
- Actionable information that helps educators identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests was identified under the classroom ready materials and teacher resources provision. Here the applicant notes that teachers are provided with online access to activities, skill progression charts, and assessments linked to AP courses and exams, common core standards. "These tools provide actionable information that helps educators identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests."
- The applicant provided limited information and evidence related to the incorporation of district evaluation information into protocols and program elements. Noted this would be seen through the online curriculum, ongoing professional development, vertical clusters, and professional learning communities. Specific details as to how school leaders and teams will assess and improve their effectiveness and school culture were missing.
- The plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals involved a teacher observation component-which allows for real time assessment of teaching practices. Supporting details were not provided.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

Available

Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	4
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provided limited evidence to justify its plan 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. • Evidence about the organization of the central office or the consortium governance structure was weak. Claims were not supported or justified. • The applicant commented that "MIE works with partner schools to develop cooperative relationships between schools and districts that include annual performance targets." MIE and schools enter into a letter of agreement which establishes shared goals and accountability for those goals. • The vertical cluster approach allows schools to improve their own productivity, coordinate curriculum materials across grade levels and create a pipeline of students in AP and STEM courses. • Details provided do not clearly or convincingly address the practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning by giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic; giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways; and providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides some details/evidence to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. • Details included a description of the high school 1 to 1 program in Evansville that allows the students to create, collaborate and communicate with peers and teachers. The investment of e-learning coaches has provided model classroom technology integration and support. • As far as Syracuse's infrastructure, the plan involves the following goals: Goal 1: provide all students with equitable access to rigorous curriculum with aligned instructional materials and assessments in all subjects and all grades levels; and Goal 3: develop an infrastructure to support student success. • Applicant mentioned the consolidated technology based student supports such as PLATO and Read 180 as evidence of information technology systems. Evidence provided was vague and supporting details were limited. • Evidence to support the use of interoperable data systems included the newly awarded systemic supports for district and school turnaround grant which "allows the SCSD to secure expert consulting services, technical assistance and district capacity building support from experts in school and district transformation." 		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provided extensive details related to the plans' continuous improvement process. • Applicant noted that the improvement framework is a common approach that will allow for the sharing of information across districts and the organizing of the evaluation. It will include the following components: co-constructing a district specific RTT improvement plan; meaningful and effective continuous improvement process (facilitated monthly and quarterly RTT improvement sessions; annual review of progress; learning as a consortium; and public sharing of data. • Each of these components were explained in greater detail. 1. Co-constructing a district specific RTT improvement plan- involves a series of planning sessions in which each district will envision how the CSCC will be implemented in their district. "Specifically each district will construct a customized logic model ...and identify implementation obstacles and related contingencies;" 2. Meaningful and effective continuous improvement processes- each month district and school leaders will meet to review the timeline and actions specified in the district RTT plan. In addition, every three months district leadership and key school leaders will meet to review progress in meeting implementation benchmarks. In May or June, the cluster leader will facilitate a district wide event to share data and successes from the current year 		

and develop 3-5 priority strategies and subsequent actions, timelines, and implementation benchmarks for the coming year; 3. Learning as a consortium-in August of each year, district and school leaders and other stakeholders will attend a two day meeting to share successes and challenges with partner districts. The event "achieving college success" will provide an opportunity for individuals to celebrate efforts and learn from one another-to engage in continuous improvement as a consortium; and 4. Public sharing of data-the applicant noted that each district will share an internal monitoring report with the school board during a public session and release the monitoring report to the public.

- Details on the public sharing of data component were vague. Evidence on the next steps (after the report is shared and released) is missing. How would this mechanism allow for ongoing corrections and improvements?

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

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3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant commented on the following methods of engagement and communication with internal and external stakeholders: meeting with parent teachers associations, community stakeholders meetings, Board reports, school wide faculty meetings, principal advisory council meetings and business advocacy councils.
- Additional evidence included CSCC leadership providing regular reports regarding program progress and districts and schools providing ongoing updates regarding their own outcomes; the evaluation team providing regular reportings to each school and district. Stakeholders such as families and community partners will be involved in the evaluation process via surveys, site visits, and evaluative tools.
- Evidence was appropriate but was not justified and convincing. Details were limited. Applicant did not provide a clear approach as to how the plan would use these communications to adjust and revise the plan.

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

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2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant provided charts to identify the performance measures with subgroups. The charts did not provide annual targets but predicted gains. A narrative of the charts would have been helpful to understand the baseline and supporting data.
- The rationale for selecting that measure; How the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress were not provided; insufficient evidence.
- The first two performance measures were unreadable (page 75). Predicted gains were to be developed per baseline, with minimum target established to meet state requirements.
- Performance measures on the charts included: on track indicator of college and career readiness (8th grade) focused on low income; AA and Hispanics; measure-academic leading indicators of successful implementation of plan (8th) focused on all students and low income. Performance. measure- social emotional leading indicators of successful implementation of plan focused on all students, low income, AA and Hispanics; student completion of FAFSA forms focused on low income, AA, and Hispanics.

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

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4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- Evidence to show plans to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology, and to more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results, through such strategies as improved use of technology, working with community partners, compensation reform, and modification of school schedules and structures involved an Implementation Evaluation and an Impact Evaluation.
- The implementation evaluation includes data collection and analysis of how districts are implementing the CSCC effort.
- The impact evaluation involves an interrupted time series using comparison schools (to assess impact on AP participation, AP success and college success) and a longitudinal cohort analysis (to provide in depth information on factors related to students' success in college).
- Applicant provided key evaluation questions. Impact evaluation questions included what is the impact of the CSCC initiative on graduation rates; what is the impact of the CSCC initiative on students' matriculation to, persistence, and completion of 2-4 year college; etc. Sample implementation evaluation. questions included how and to what degree are schools personalizing instruction and support for students; how and to what degree do districts and school vary in their implementation of MMSI program components and use of resources?

- Evidence was presented in the form of a table entitled overview of CSCC core initiatives and key strategies. This detail falls under the implementation evaluation. Core initiatives included AP math and science; pre AP initiative-laying the foundation; online instructional and student centered platform; and changing conditions and building capacity. Key strategies included common scheduling; teacher observations; early warning systems; cluster wide systems of care; data collection and common assessments; and common pre-AP and AP curricula and collaborative planning.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget (presented in the form of a narrative and charts) appears to be reasonable and appropriate. The charts include an overall budget for Evansville that shows no funds from other sources used to support the budget. Funds from other sources is lacking. The bulk of the budget is contractual costs (15,529,321) with the least is training stipends (60,000). The justification in the narrative is missing. Training costs is the same (15,000) all four years- no rational provided to support this claim. Another chart provided the projects with their total budget. The bulk of the budget goes toward the college success clusters- online instruction followed by the college success clusters-cluster staffing and services. The least amount of funds goes to college success clusters-professional learning communities. The narrative broke down each of the seven projects and provided a clear description as to what the funds would be used. For example the contractual services section involved three online learning tools including real time math, ELA and science assessments; individualized graduation plans; and near 24 hour math, ELA and science Equipment costs indicate a one time use but there is 0 dollars allotted for its maintenance for years 2-4. This amount appears to be unreasonable for 4 years. 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan for sustainability was limited in evidence and supporting details. Claims were made but not supported with clear and convincing details. For examples, "all tools and resources created and refined within any cluster school will be shared with all schools in the LEA and scaled." This statement was not supported. Another example, "teacher leaders in schools will share practices learned in schools with teachers and then expand to other schools to scale school components of the cluster." No supporting details were provided as demonstrate a more complete picture of how this will take place. For long term sustainability, the applicant mentioned, MIE staff "will work with the district central office staff to build conditions in all schools and build capacity in specific functional areas." This means integrating best practices happening in the clusters related to any of these functions and sharing across the district. Other activities included "curriculum/content directors will work with district academic office staff to build curriculum writing and development skills; all tools and resources created and refined within any cluster schools will be shared with all schools in the LEA." No evidence of a sustainability budget or description that provides plans for three years after the term of the grant. Budget assumptions, potential sources such as title 1 or title 2 funds were not mentioned. 		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provided evidence to support the following statement, <i>Provide a description of the coherent and sustainable partnership that it has formed with public or private organizations, such as public health, before-school, after-school, and social service providers; integrated student service providers; businesses, philanthropies, civic groups, and other community-based organizations; early learning programs; and postsecondary institutions to support the plan</i> 		

described in Absolute Priority 1. The evidence included the partnership with the EVSC center for family, school, and community partnerships. The center supports social, emotional, and health needs and provides the infrastructure to support an integrated service delivery system for Community Schools. In addition, the center supports family services: a-student supports; b-after school and summer programs; c-extended day care; d-health and wellness; e-homelessness; and f-early childhood. (Evidence was clear and convincing for the Evansville District; No evidence of the partnership extending to Syracuse).

- Applicant provided seven desired results for students that align with and support the applicant's broader Race to the Top – District proposal. The population group was all; the type of result ranged from family to community to educational. Four of the seven were educational and focused on 1-a reduction in the number of students retained in grades; 2-an increase in the number of individualized graduation plans completed by the end of the 8th grade; 3- an increase in the number of students demonstrating annual progress in achieving goals as outlined in the IGPs; and 4- increased percentage of students who meet benchmark or demonstrate progress on formative assessments during beginning, mid and end year assessments.
- In describing how the partnership track indicators and incorporate into overall CQI process, the applicant notes that data will be collected via parent surveys and the review of goal attainment and other scales. Teacher surveys will be administered annually and student surveys will be administered bi-annually to 8th and 11th grade students. A post high school student survey will also be administered as part of the longitudinal tracking of students through college. Two day site visits will be conducted at each school.
- Commented that the continuous improvement process will improve project results over time. The following will provide the data and check points to ensure the results are improving-monthly bench mark checks; quarterly improvement reviews; and annual district level taking stock session
- Scaling strategies will involve the program manager and his or her efforts to work with the district central office staff to build conditions and capacity in fundamental areas. Teacher leaders will share practices learned in schools with teachers and then across the cluster. Scaling evidence was a bit vague.
- Applicant provided clear and justifiable evidence in the areas of integrating education and other services ("all student facing, non academic services-particularly those driven by community providers-will be integrated throughout the CSC); building staff capacity; and CSCC performance measures and desired results for students. Other measures were not addressed in part 5.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provided a sound and convincing reform vision that clearly articulates a credible approach to accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity. Evidence: CSCC aims to improve high school student achievement; increase rates of college matriculation, entrance in STEM degree fields and success in college and STEM degrees; increase principal and teacher expertise; and create scalable and sustainable results
- Applicant provided clear evidence of success within the last four years. Evansville evidence: receiving and managing large scale local, state, and federal grants including Safe schools/healthy students; Readiness and Emergency Management for schools; 21st Century community learning centers, an Equity Schools model; grants to reduce alcohol abuse, Carol White Physical Education; Even start; and Title I School Improvement grants
- The applicant provided evidence that demonstrates educators' efforts to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. This evidence involves the following provisions: curriculum alignment across vertical clusters; teacher training and support; professional learning communities; classroom materials and teacher resources; frequent teacher and principal assessments; teacher and administrator awards; and an online platform with real time information about student performance.

Total	210	123
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	9

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provided evidence for each of the three areas: the rationale for the specific area or population; implementation of activities that would be co developed and carried out over two or more districts; and a proposed budget for each supplement.
- The request for optional monies (2,000,000) comes from Syracuse. "Serving as the lead fiscal agent and in partnership with the North Syracuse Central School District, SCSD will contract with the Achievement Network to build each district's internal capacity to implement effective data driven instruction." What is the rationale for only Syracuse requesting the optional monies?
- The implementation plan was clear. It included the following goals: creating high quality assessments for grades 2-8 in ELA and math; building capacity at the school and district levels to implement data driven instruction and creating a culture of data driven instruction at all levels. The evidence provided was not convincing; further details in narrative form would have been more helpful.
- Additional evidence of the plan appeared in the form of a table (proposed work and timeline) and highlighted the proposed activity, key responsible party; milestones/deliverables, and timeline. Year one involves facilitating early vision of DDI excellence at school and district; develop real time interim assessments aligned to CCLS in grades 2-8 for math and ELA; conduct district strategy workshop; and implement ANet interim assessment. Year 2 will involve the coaching model; support services to on intensive schools; and hosting of regular forums.
- Applicant included a proposed 5 year budget (budget was incomplete and did not provide convincing evidence); Applicant provided a description of costs: personnel 74,600; employee benefits 16,898; contractual services 1,875,000.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1024IN-2 for Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a clear and comprehensive vision that partially addresses the four core educational assurance areas. The vision provides a credible approach to their major goal, which is to increase academic rigor so that student participation in pre-AP and AP course taking will increase. Successful implementation of their program has benefits that include accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning. They also intend to close the STEM achievement gaps for low income and minority students through the use of Individualized Graduation Plans that make use of an interactive online tool beginning in the 6th grade. Their stated intention to increase students' academic capacity and performance in STEM courses, rather than generating interest in STEM career pathways, is laudable and would more likely lead to positive academic outcomes. Teachers will be provided rigorous training to build their skills to use the new systems; training will replicate a nationally endorsed research-based AP training program. Several gaps appear to exist in this vision. The clear attention to academic preparedness required to take pre-AP and AP courses is certainly appropriate for increasing the pipeline into college success; however, the applicant makes only passing comments on career readiness, stating that the academic rigor will have a positive impact on non-AP taking students and that this will increase preparedness for STEM-related careers. The latter, though, appear to be addressed only through college course taking. No mention is made of how the vision will facilitate turning around the lowest performing schools. This lack of attention to important aspects of the core assurances qualifies this response as low mid-range

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes the process that was used to select schools. As a consortium, the two districts made selections in different ways with all schools meeting the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a current STEM focus • Minimum of 40% low-income students in middle grades • Local educational leaders have strong turnaround capacities • A need to strengthen current AP programs • Portfolio represents a mix of needs based upon SEA academic standards. <p>No specific examples or explanations were provided on the capacities of the educational leaders nor what the mix of needs is that either qualified or disqualified a school from inclusion. The applicant provided a list of schools and the demographic data on students that demonstrated these schools qualified for the competition. They also provided the number of participating educators in the initiative disaggregated by school. Overall, this response merits a high mid-range score</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a high-quality plan for project activities that will support the implementation of the grant within the participating schools (see pp. 124-5). They also state their intention of scaling up the reform to schools in each district once the evaluation identifies high impact components. Each district has identified a key staff member responsible for leading the efforts and they provide a theory of change that identifies specific project activities that will address the reforms they propose. This theory of change includes having early warning systems for students off-track in middle school, increasing common scheduling that will facilitate PD and vertical planning, and forming Professional Learning Communities (PLC) among principals and teacher leaders. The lack of a high-quality plan, including specific timelines for scaling up to other buildings and the potential deliverables, qualifies this response as a high mid-range</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides several charts that identify both baseline information and targets through and beyond the grant life. The narrative, however, does not explicate the rationale for the targets nor does it identify whether or not these meet or exceed state targets. Without such explication, one is left to ponder the ambitiousness of the goals. For example, grade 7 IEP students in Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation performed at 26.47% proficient or advanced in 2010-11. In the proposal that will focus on increasing rigor in STEM courses, the proposed target for the third year of the grant is still below the baseline year. Though achievable, it is not clear how this is an ambitious goal in a proposal that is presumably focusing on increasing preparation in math. The applicant does provide charts on decreasing achievement gaps that show targets for reducing gaps disaggregated by subgroups that show steady and differential goals for reducing these gaps. These goals appear to be achievable; they could also have benefited from some explication of the rationale behind the choices on one or two exemplars. Graduation rate goals show a steady and also differential approach that has most subgroups equaling or surpassing district averages by the end of the grant. This is especially ambitious for IEP and LEP students who, if they meet the targets, will have accelerated graduation rates significantly. The lack of specificity on the areas just mentioned qualifies this as a low mid-range score.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has two LEAs in the consortium and the narrative in their response sometimes begged the specifics of the question. Data, both in narrative and tabular form, were provided for one of the two districts. Table 6 provided the last three years of data for three schools, only one of which (McGary) served the population of interest (grades 6-8) in the proposal. In that school, gains were sometimes impressive (16% increase in math performance at 8th grade) and sometimes inconsistent (ELA scores in 6th and 8th grade hit peak scores in 2011, then regressed in 2012). No explanation was given for the lack of</p>		

inclusion of data from 2009. The schools who were profiled were involved in the EQUITY Academy that increased the amount of time of instruction for students and PD for teachers. They then tout results of studies comparing 2007 and 2008 data that show improvements in scores for all students with small (.16 in 7th -8th grade reading) to large (.90 5th-6th grade math) effect sizes. They provide information on subgroup performance for those same years. Without additional context, including ensuing years of data, there is little support for a pattern of success over the most recent four years. The other district provided a narrative of successfully implemented initiatives (e.g., developing new CCSS-aligned assessments for ELA and math in grades 4-8) and funded programs (e.g., STEM grants, High School Graduation Initiative). They also cite their partner, MIE, as having a track record of increasing access to and performance on AP exams in the past four years, referencing several evaluations that also stated that MIE schools reduced the gap in performance relative to race in a controlled study. No information was provided on making student performance data available in ways that inform or improve participation, instruction or services. While MIE appears to be a strong partner, there is little evidence provided that the LEAs have a clear record of success in the past four years on increasing achievement, especially in the targeted populations. This is a low range response.

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

5

1

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The lead LEA states that they operate in a transparent way and cite a number of examples (e.g., annual budget published in newspaper, presented to City Council). They do not state, nor is there any evidence in the appendices, of publishing personnel salaries for instructional staff or teachers, as well as non-personnel expenditures. The collaborating LEA makes salary and investment information available to the public on their website, and all salaries are submitted to the state website. No information was provided about actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level. This is a low-range response

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

10

9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Because each LEA is under a different state context, each provided ways in which they believed that they met this criterion. The lead district cited a strong relationship with the state department of education that has allowed it to create a *Transformation Zone* for a subset of five schools that increases their autonomy and provides additional support through the state's providing technical assistance in transforming schools. They also cite state support in transformation efforts through School Improvement Grants (SIG). They do not state whether the participating schools have received these funds or are part of the subset of schools with increased autonomy. The other district cited support from the state's Board of Regents in providing resources to facilitate district adherence to the four core assurances of RtT. They cite several SEA level supports for increasing personalized learning in the district. For example, the Board of Regents is encouraging districts to use technology to expand learning beyond the school day and the state already has a data portal through which educators can access student information that will inform and complement the district's building its own data portal. With a combination of state support and creative use of opportunities, it appears that the proposal has sufficient autonomy and the conditions necessary to personalize learning environments. This is a mid high-range score

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

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium provides multiple artifacts to support that they have incorporated feedback from parents, educators and the community. Included are letters of support from mayors, PTSA members, instructional staff from participating schools, etc. The narrative states that the teachers' unions were approached early in the conversation and representatives signed off on the application, indicating their support. The narrative also states that these groups were sought out to seek their support; no evidence of how the proposal may have been affected by feedback was provided or stated. There was also no mention of any type of meaningful input sought from students. This qualifies the response as a mid-range response

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

5

1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The partners are able to identify specific gaps (e.g., lead LEA notes student scores fall below state averages, and partner 80% of entering 9th graders this year were well below grade level in math and ELA) and they cite their collaborative partner's (MIE) success in increasing participation in AP course taking and passage of AP tests as evidence that they have capacity to implement the personalized learning environment. In their high-quality plan, however, there is no mention of MIE and they discuss contracting with Achievement Network (ANet). On ensuing pages, the chart entitled *Table 1: Proposed Work Plan and Timeline* provides elements of high-quality planning by identifying activities to be implemented by ANet prior to implementation

of the grant. The major activities to support the personalizing of learning environments for students has vague timelines (October 2013 and ongoing for all) and is not disaggregated so as to provide a clear picture of what steps will need to be taken and in what sequence once the grant funds have been awarded. This lack of specificity does not meet the definition of high-quality planning and this qualifies as a low range score.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium offers a compelling plan that addresses many of the components of personalized learning contexts. These include providing individualized learning plans aligned to college and career ready standards that can help students to understand how what they are learning is key to their success. They propose to engage families in contextually-dependent ways (e.g., home visits), as well as engaging more participation through the use of the online data portal.</p> <p>The online portal will also increase student level support by providing them with formative assessments (e.g, Real Time Math and Science Assessments aligned to AP standards) to track their progress in meeting academic goals. Data gathered from these will be used by educators to differentiate after-school supports and may help students with some of the soft skills (e.g., perseverance, communication). The portal will also provide online tutorials for deepening student learning. The dashboard home page for each student will provide access to real time information on assignments, current grades and performance data, and will be accessible by both teachers and students in order to increase communication and act as an ongoing feedback loop.</p> <p>The online assessments will also provide adaptive accessibility to accommodate high-need students. In addition, high-need students will receive one-on-one tutoring and educational and emotional support, including having program staff work with the students to ensure coordination of community services to address additional needs.</p> <p>All students will be provided with user-friendly technology tools, as well as an orientation and one-on-one support for initial use. The applicants, without offering specifics, state that their initial technology resources will be simple to use and that the evaluation will help them to determine how to evolve in more integrated but potentially complicated applications in the future. In a formative way, staff will monitor student use of the technology and blended learning strategies and contexts and will provide additional support as needed to meet individual challenges.</p> <p>The general plan has a clearly stated approach to increasing personalization of learning for students. That said, the concerns raised earlier about the lack of specifics that will qualify this as a high-quality plan limits its value in leading the reform. There is a lack of specific information and some contradictory or, at least, confounding information as to the entities responsible for engaging the plan. For example, it is still not clear the separate and collaborative relationship of ANet and MIE. The former is mentioned in the high-quality plan table and the latter in the narrative on this section. There is also no clear timeline for engaging in specific project activities. As cited previously, there is some delineation of activities leading up to the full implementation then all implementation activities appear to take place between October 2013 and the end of the grant. This qualifies as a low mid-range score.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	4
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a multivariate approach to PD for educators. MIE will provide teacher support in a variety of ways, including access to summer institutes for AP and pre-AP course teachers; specifically, AP teachers will have a minimum of 7 days of training and all teachers will have a minimum of 4 2-hour vertical team sessions facilitated by MIE. Lead teachers and principals will engage in professional learning communities to discuss challenges and problem solve ways to address these. From these meetings, highly effective teachers will be encouraged to share their skills and talents in weekly PD sessions and by engaging in Skype or other online meeting platform to share information and strategies within the consortium. In addition to PD, MIE also has classroom ready curriculum materials, including exemplary lessons, that can be integrated into the redesigned curricula. MIE will also work with the districts to revise observation protocols and the applicant states that more frequent observations with feedback will improve practice. The plan also calls for incentivizing collaborative performance by providing awards for teachers who hit student performance goals. Ultimately, the increased PD, combined with resources and support, is posited to increase the number of effective and highly effective teachers. No mention is made of plans to have this</p>		

increase in effective and highly effective teachers apply to hard-to-staff schools.

As in previous sections, the general plan has a clear logic to it. The lack of specificity keeps it from being considered a high-quality plan. For example, the applicant states that teachers will attend 4 days of training/year and that MIE will provide 4 2-hour vertical training sessions throughout the year; this is written into teacher training and it is unclear that, if teachers attend these whether that completes their obligation. Yet, in another portion of the narrative, it states that AP teachers will have 7 days of training/year and that the pre-AP teachers can access a 4-day summer institute. Nowhere in the narrative does it reconcile these different time frames. As in the previous section, no specific timetable distinguishes how the trainings will be phased in. For instance, while the AP and pre-AP intensive workshops are identified as summer offerings, the timetable indicates that no specific training (outside of an overview of the project) will take place until October of 2013. It would appear from this that teachers would not be able to access summer workshops until nearly the start of the second year of funding. There are other inconsistencies and lack of specifics that qualify this as a low range score.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	4
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: As has been established, the consortium has failed to provide a high-quality plan that supports project implementation. That said, the central offices appear to have a structure that will support SEA implementation. It also appears that each LEA will be working independently as there is no stated governance structure for the consortium in the way of equitably allocating resources and services outside of meeting the needs of the individual schools. In both of these cases, however, the lack of explicit narrative reflective of these contexts requires one to infer that what appears to be true will in actuality be true. It is also stated that school leadership teams, in the form of professional learning communities, have sufficient flexibility and autonomy over school schedules as they support the vertical planning. Not as clear is to what extent SEAs have flexibility in staffing and personnel decisions. It is also stated that students will have multiple opportunities to master content at different rates but it is not stated as to whether this will in any way help them with earning credits outside of traditional seat time or that there is availability of credit recovery or acceleration for individuals. Little has been said in the narrative about adaptability and accessibility of resources and instructional practices, though the online resources and blended learning contexts can be inferred to be accessible and adaptable. This is a mid-range score		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: The lead district has already provided netbooks and other online tools for their students that is supportive of a personalized learning environment. Both districts cite their development of data portals, IT departments that provide ongoing support, and training and modeling of successful strategies as evidence of their having an infrastructure in place to support their grant implementation. Both districts' data portals allow parents and students to access some information and this will be enhanced with grant funds. There is no mention of having an open data format, either currently or in the future, that would allow parents and students to export data; this may already be enabled in the current systems. Of greater concern is the lack of information about how parents and students, regardless of income, will be ensured that they can access the necessary content and other resources. The applicants cited the high levels of poverty of their students and families but do not mention how they ensure that students will have internet access after school hours, nor how parents who may not have internet access at home will be able to interact with the resources. The collaborative district does state that they recently had an independent review of their IT department and services to determine how effectively their assets and resources served key stakeholders across the district. They further stated that the recommendations were fully implemented but do not provide any additional information to determine what these recommendations were nor how implementing them could improve the district's response to personalizing learning environments. Also silent in this narrative was whether parents, and not just educators, were considered key stakeholders. As with other sections, the lack of high quality planning is problematic in this response which is a low mid-range score.		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium presents many aspects of a high-quality plan for engaging in a continuous improvement process. These include key activities that have some timelines attached to them (e.g., monthly and quarterly RTT improvement sessions involving the use of district data to monitor implementation). In many of these key activities (e.g., annual district-level *Taking Stock* meetings), a specific individual (the Cluster leader, in this example) is identified and, in whole, this example meets the definition of high quality planning. Contrary to these clear high-quality elements, the applicant also states that it will design a logic model to help in monitoring implementation and that they will be supported in this effort: there are no specifics provided about who will support these efforts, the timeline upon which it will be completed or the key activities in doing this. The consortium also identifies specific performance measures that will help them to measure progress and will provide some of the information that will be reported to the public in formal reports to both school boards and the communities. The model is well-articulated and clearly modeled off of effective improvement processes with attention paid to important measures and protocols available to address timely and regular feedback. The annual attendance by staff of the two partners to share success is also a model that can increase the effectiveness of implementation activities. In sum, this is a high mid-range score

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies multiple avenues to communicating with and engaging internal and external stakeholders. These include meetings with PTSA and business advocacy groups, presentations to faculty and staff, and board reports. In addition, they state that families and community members will be surveyed to provide them with information that could be used for making programmatic adjustments. Through the data portals, families and students will be provided ongoing access to information. No specifics are provided on the frequency of some of these meetings, though the applicant states that many of these stakeholder groups are already in place so it can be inferred that they already have specific timelines for their meetings and that those meetings have a predetermined frequency. This lack of explicitness qualifies this as a mid-range response.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies specific performance measures and target goals (when these are available) that provide clear indicators of the potential success of their grant activities. They do not provide a clear rationale for the choice of each measure (some are identified as "required" and that is certainly a reasonable response; others (e.g., grade retention) make logical sense within the parameters of their application but would have benefitted from their explicitly describing the importance of the indicator). They also provide a clear rationale for their choice of their targets as being based on the Performance Measure Formula, a commonly accepted and generally rigorous metric, especially for the high-need and low-income populations in the grant. All but two of the measures are academic ones. The use of attendance as a social-emotional measure would have benefitted from a rationale. No metric is provided that indicates career-readiness for high school students. This is a mid-range response.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant will contract with an evaluation firm to evaluate the effectiveness of its investments. The plan provided by the evaluator indicates a clear and reasonable methodology for evaluating the impact of grant activities on academic outcomes and key questions related to the core assurances and the personalizing of instructional contexts. It is not clear from the evaluation plan that a cost-benefit analysis is part of the plan or that the plan will get to how time, money and resources are used to impact student outcomes. It was stated that evaluation will sample parents and community members. No mention was made of questions specific to compensation reform or modification of school schedules, although the latter point may be uncovered in addressing qualitative questions on implementation of the personalized instruction and support for students. This is a high mid-range response.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The funding seems appropriate in supporting the positions required to manage and implement the grant. The flat funding across

the years for most personnel costs, however, does not take into account COLA adjustments for personnel and no explanation is provided as to whether these positions lie outside of bargaining agreements that would allow for no raises over 4 years. The contractual services for MIE and INSTILL appear appropriate for the services that they will deliver and the roles they will play in delivery of the program elements. There is a greater investment in one-time only purchases for equipment and a larger contract provided in year one to create the online learning environment; these are both appropriate and necessary to carry out the plan as described. There is no listing of funds from other sources to support the project. This does call into question the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments planned for in the grant as there is no description of strategies or (and limited explanation of funding sources) that will be used to ensure the reforms continue. This is a high mid-range score.

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

10

4

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As with other sections, the applicant lacks a high-quality plan for sustaining the major activities. On the positive, the applicant identifies most of the reforms as being low- or no-cost activities that will be easily integrated into each district's general operating funds. The exception is the online learning component and they state that they will seek support from state and city governments to support this element. In addition, their partners (e.g., MIE) will work with the districts to build capacity in specific financial areas (e.g., human resources, academic affairs) that will help them to change practices during the course of the grant funding. The capacity of curriculum directors and coaches will also increase the capacity within the district to continue driving instructional improvement. Tools and resources developed by the target schools will be shared among other district schools. Most importantly, the key activities in the grant are aligned with the districts' strategic plans, so these will be integrated into operations rather than layered on top, making them more likely to be sustainable. No budget for ensuing years nor specific outside funders (other than city and state governments) were provided so no information was available on any specific ways in which districts plan to continue key activities. While it is true that the capacity being built for staff and leaders will be low or no-cost investments that will pay off in sustainability years, the lack of specific planning for aspects (e.g., how will technology hardware be replaced in ensuing years) provides little confidence that the necessary planning has been done to sustain beyond the grant period.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a current partnership that provides services to children through a collaboration with the EVSC Center for Family, School and Community Partnerships (CFSCP) to support integrated service delivery in community schools, several of which are identified as participant schools in the initiative. They state their intention to scale this model up through both districts and all the participating schools to provide comprehensive family engagement policies, school based mentoring and coordination of college access services. They provide 7 population-level desired results that are a combination of family, community and educational goals.

The partnership has committed to collecting all data necessary to track selected indicators through a variety of data collection procedures (e.g., surveys of teachers on educational outcomes; student surveys on the use of IGPs, etc.). The partnership will use their previously described continuous improvement plan protocols to inform its use of resources (e.g., data will be discussed in their monthly benchmark check meetings to track progress on meeting interim goals on indicators) and adjustments will be made to keep or get on track to long-term outcomes as identified in the grant.

As described previously, high-need students will be provided integrated services that will be informed through attention to and monitoring of their IGPs. These services include tutoring and individual study sessions, as well as using the CFSCP structures to assist with social-emotional needs.

Ongoing PD for teachers will improve their abilities to address educational needs of students. No mention is made of how the staff will build capacity to identify and inventory the needs and assets of the community or formalize a decision-making process that will support individual needs of students, outside of their educational needs.

They propose using PMF formula for their annual goals. This is appropriate for the educational goals but appears not as easily useful to the community and family goals. This is a high mid-range response.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a commendable idea that could benefit students, especially those from minority and low-income homes, by increasing access to college-preparation courses, both pre-AP and AP, that will better prepare them for college. No real attention was paid in the application to career readiness, nor was there more than passing comments made about high-need students who may not be prepared or successful in pre-AP or AP courses outside of their being a *trickle out* effect of more rigorous course taking. In too much of the narrative, the specifics necessary to fully determine how effective the plan might be were simply not provided or did not have credible corroborating evidence.

Total	210	98
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1024IN-3 for Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation

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 has articulated a clear vision supporting student achievement through the development and implementation of pre-AP programs and providing an individualized learning plan program - utilizing technology. Furthermore, the applicant identifies a non profit partner to provide technical support as the consortium utilizes a framework to support their turnaround efforts.

The vision includes a focus on STEM education across the 6-12 grade continuum utilizing a school cluster approach intending to vertically align efforts across and between feeder programs. The vision also incorporates technology through the development of an online portal designed to contain individual plans, assessments and tutoring support.

The focus of the proposal is on Pre-AP and AP with essentially no mention of career readiness. While kids participating in Pre-AP and AP programming would prepare students for career readiness - other types of programming and preparation should be considered and addressed.

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

The applicant provides a description of the process used to select participating schools and the collection of schools meets the competition eligibility requirements. The applicant provided a list of each participating school with associated demographics per individual school as required in this criteria.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states an intention to scale the grant across both LEAs and provides component parts of a plan within the supplemental budget section. The articulated plan includes partnering with MIE, building capacity in all schools as well as other areas of the district offices, and utilizing project teachers to support the dissemination of effective practices to teachers in other district schools.

Based on the proposed budget and the need to invest in further human resource, it is difficult to see how this project could be scaled. Further, it is difficult to assess the level of resource necessary to support a fully developed and fully implemented online learning platform.

Finally, there is not an articulated plan to expand pre-AP or AP professional development across the district. The proposed model for scaling does not include activities specific to pre-AP or AP.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants articulated vision holds the potential to result in improved student learning and performance. The 6-12 focus and the partnership with a non-profit who has demonstrated the ability to support districts with a similar vision is compelling.

The performance on summative assessments provided in Appendix 3 highlight a significant difference in achievement between the two LEAs in the consortium. The intended growth for the lower performing LEA is projected to result in a significant closing of the current achievement gap (i.e. math, grade 6 gap between white and black students is currently 19% and will be reduced to 11% by 2016-17). The intended growth for the higher performing LEA is projected to have a minimal impact on the achievement gap and in some cases the gap is projected to grow (i.e. math, grade 6 gap between white and black students is currently 38% and is projected to actually grow to 44% by 2016-17). The inconsistencies with projected growth specific to summative assessments and specific to decreasing the achievement gaps would suggest the applicant does not anticipate a differential impact on various subgroups. A similar pattern is seen in anticipated graduation rates.

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	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide compelling evidence that the LEAs within the consortium have a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement. The following statements are specific to the criteria a-c in this section. With regards to Syracuse City School District, no evidence was provided in support of a clear track record of success in advancing student learning and achievement.

The following statements are specific to each criteria:

(a) The data specific to ISTEP covers only two years. The detailed analysis of growth within subgroups between those two years suggests achievement gaps may be closing. This data reflects growth between two years that does not demonstrate a clear track record in the past four years. At least one other data point (year) would have provided more compelling evidence of a clear track record. Evidence could have included district data for ISTEP as provided for the Equity Schools. As stated above, no track record of success with regards to achievement or closing the achievement gap was provided for one of the two LEAs.

(b) The applicant described a clear and compelling strategy for turning around persistently low performing schools (the Equity School model) and provided data to illustrate the impact (ISTEP data from 2010-2012). No evidence or record of success in turning around low-performing schools was provided for Syracuse City Schools.

(c) Evidence specific to this criteria is limited to one sentence specific to school planning decisions being based on student performance. There is no evidence specific to making data available to students or parents from EVSC. There is, however, a statement specific to Syracuse City School District that a web portal has been designed, implemented, and is being used by both students and parents.

Finally, the information specific to MIE and INSTILL provided evidence as to why the consortium would want to partner with MIE. That said, the clear track record of success called for in this section is specific to *the extent to which each LEA has demonstrated evidence of success*. This section would have been strengthened considerably by providing more data from both district and more discussion of the Syracuse City School District.

The most compelling evidence provided in terms of a track record for success was that provided for MIE. Unfortunately, MIE is not the applicant.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant does not specifically address the four categories of funds (a-d) described in this section for EVSC. The budget information and processes described for EVSC reflect an intention to be transparent, yet no evidence and/or intent to provide information on actual salaries at the school level is presented. The applicant does address the four categories described in this section for the SCSD.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant provides evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy from the state of Indiana as well as direct support from the SEA. That said, specific legal, statutory and regulatory requirements are not referenced or identified (i.e. statute allowing for credit by proficiency rather than seat time - if it exists).
 With regards to SCSD, evidence is provided that supports the notion that successful conditions and sufficient autonomy is provided by the state of NY. Specifically, identifying the ESEA Regulatory Flexibility Waiver, the encouragement by the Board of Regents specific to instructional technology, and the statement specific to the 19 Syracuse Priority schools being required to undergo turnaround or redesign efforts.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The articulated process for EVSC includes school administrators being consulted and then being asked to disseminate information via faculty meetings. Parent outreach via site council presentations was identified as the only parent outreach effort. In both the staff and parent outreach, it appears the intention was to provide information and garner support. There is no mention that either faculty or parents had input regarding the development of the proposal. Collaboration with union is also cited and it is suggested that the discussion centered on alignment with other district initiatives. Evidence of support from individual sites and parent groups was provided.
 The SCSD outlined a process for engaging specific school sites that included conversations with school leadership teams (includes staff, students, parents and union representatives). High levels of support from each site are evidenced by the letters provided in Appendix 5.
 The letters of support provided were limited to parent groups or individual parents, the mayors of each city and the State departments. There appears to have been little outreach to community-based organizations, advocacy groups, institutions of higher education, etc.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant presents a compelling need with aggregate measures in EVSC reflecting current levels of performance below state averages as well as specific information regarding Title I schools. However, the applicant's key reform proposal includes the development of a pre-AP program and the expansion of supports specific to AP programming at the high school level. The applicant provides compelling information specific to the research associated with AP and advanced coursework (i.e. 8th grade Algebra) associated with the MIE work yet does not provide any analysis of current participation of EVSC students in AP coursework or in advanced coursework at the middle school level. Considering the reform proposal focuses on AP programming, the inclusion of an analysis of AP would have strengthened the proposal.

The applicant presents a compelling need with aggregate measures in SCSD reflecting current levels of performance well below state averages. However, the applicant does not provide specific information to the two schools that would be involved in the project.

The applicants inclusion of the Collier Educational Consulting audit is an excellent piece of evidence supporting the argument that an expectation gap exists for kids in SCSD and that the district as a whole needs to develop systems of support for students. The expectation gap links directly with the core reform effort focused on AP participation and a Pre-AP program.

Overall, the applicant does not articulate a high-quality plan for analysis.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) (i) The proposed three prong approach provides a quality, detailed plan for engaging students and families in such a way to support understanding of what they are learning and how it supports their individual learning plans. The second prong, increasing student-level support, is focused on the potential of online resources. While this resource sounds promising, identifying other strategies and structures for acceleration and *in addition* supports would have strengthened the proposal.

(a) (ii) The overall vision for reform incorporates vertical alignment linked to both Advanced Placement standards and the Common Core State Standards. Furthermore, the development of an electronic dashboard to provide immediate access to student performance data will provide the opportunity for students to understand how their goals and how to measure progress toward this goal.

(a) (iii) This specific criteria is not directly addressed through this proposal. There is no mention of specific instructional tools that may lead to deep learning experiences (i.e. Project-based Learning, etc.) or specific to student interests.

(a) (iv) This specific criteria is not directly addressed through this proposal.

(a) (v) The second prong (Increased Student-Level Support) of the three prong strategy identifies the intent to address this criteria though it is suggested that the online tool may (not will) include skills/traits such as goal setting, teamwork, etc.

Overall, the applicant fails to articulate a comprehensive, high-quality plan to address all five of the components articulated under C(1)(a). This particular section warrants greater than one page of discussion.

(b) (i) The applicant articulates a clear strategy or plan to design an electronic learning platform to include real-time, formative assessments; individualized graduation plans; and 24 hour math, science and English tutoring.

(b) (ii) The applicant proposes a few high-quality instructional approaches and environments including a homeroom structure, enhanced individual student supports, and online tutoring. While these approaches are unique and support this particular criteria, they are not directly linked to classroom instructional strategies or approaches that would support students within the regular classroom. Incorporating specific plans linked to improved instructional practices for teachers would have strengthened this section of the proposal.

(b) (iii) The proposed learning platform, though not developed yet, fully supports this particular criteria.

(b) (iv) The proposed early warning system, formative assessments linked to college and career readiness, and the individualized graduation plans yield the potential to provide students with ongoing and regular feedback that is updated frequently and supports personalized learning recommendations for students.

(b) (v) The applicant identifies strategies to support high needs students to include additional guidance counseling, making links to community-based resources, as well as the resources that will be developed including the various online resources.

(c) The applicant states that students will receive hands-on and one-on-one support in the use of the new technologies. Furthermore, the applicant identifies the desire to keep the initial implementation simple, allowing for both students and teachers to get used to incorporating various aspects of technology as the districts move toward a blended learning model. These statements do not provide specific mechanisms for providing training and support to students. As an example, homeroom structures were discussed in a single statement in another section. Would the homeroom model be used for training and on-going support? Will the homerooms model be applied across the 6-12 continuum? This type of structure, coupled with a discussion of the training and support would be an example of a mechanism for training and support.

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

20

8

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not provide nearly the detail necessary to assess the quality of the plan proposed. The proposal would have been stronger if the applicant had committed more time and space to this particular section. The following feedback is specific to each criteria.

(a) (i) The focus of this specific criteria is the ability to support personalized learning environments. While the applicant identifies a number of strategies and structures for support and professional development, none speak directly to supporting teachers in meeting individualized needs of students within a personalized learning environment.

(a) (ii) The applicant intends to engage in on-going curriculum alignment work and professional development specific to teacher resources that allow for individualization (based on the formative assessments). The details provided are limited in scope and do not provide enough detail to ensure that a high quality plan is in place to provide support specific to this criteria.

(a) (iii) The utilization of Skype to bring professional learning communities together is one example of how the applicant proposes to support teachers in using data to make instructional decisions. This specific example provides sufficient evidence to support this criteria, though articulating other strategies would have provided further support in this area.

(a) (iv) The applicant proposes to develop observation tools to be incorporated into existing evaluation processes in each district. It is suggested that teachers will be observed more if they are in the CSD.

(b) (i) The proposed tools within the application, as well as the proposed online learning platform support the evidence that the proposal meets this criteria.

(b) (ii) The proposal identifies curriculum alignment strategies, curriculum resources, and the capacity to develop and disseminate new resources in this section.

(b) (iii) The proposal identifies the need to develop an online platform capable of providing the necessary information to match student needs with specific resources. The discussion specific to teachers working together within a virtual professional learning environment is a great idea though lacks specific details around processes and practices teams of teachers will regularly employ. This would have strengthened the response to this particular criteria.

(c) (i) This section calls for a plan specific to supporting school leaders and school leadership teams. Identifying the previously discussed professional and program development activities does not constitute a plan. While these activities would support leaders and school leadership teams, they do not inherently build the capacity of leaders or leadership teams to develop and ultimately support the implementation of personalized learning environments.

(c) (ii) As with (c) (i) details specific to supporting leaders and leadership teams specific to continuous improvement processes are not addressed.

(d) The focus on developing effective teachers through proposed professional development (AP training, etc.) and via the evaluation feedback system coupled with the intention to increase the access for students to AP coursework provides evidence of the applicant's intent to meet this criteria.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	0

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not specifically address (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) in this section. The proposal discusses the cluster structure and the benefits from such a structure. There is no mention to how the LEA central office is organized to support; what autonomy leadership teams will have; students ability to earn credit based on mastery; multiple means of demonstrating mastery of standards in multiple ways; or providing learning resources that are adaptable and accessible to all students.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identified an impressive infrastructure within the EVSD capable of supporting personalized learning environments utilizing technology. The only criteria in question are the level of access provided for all families outside of school (i.e. internet access) and the level of support provided to parents. Furthermore, the proposed digital platform development will further enhance the use of technology by students, etc.

The applicant identifies a less sophisticated infrastructure in the SCSD, though they have developed and deployed a web-based portal for all stakeholders. There is no evidence provided in support of parents receiving technical support and/or access.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant proposes to assume an <i>improvement mindset</i> and subscribe to an improvement framework with four key activities. The proposal clearly articulates each of the activities with sufficient detail to provide evidence that a high quality plan has been developed to support continuous improvement throughout the life of the grant. This includes how the quality of the investment is being monitored, measured and shared.		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides a quality plan, including a variety of stakeholder engagement strategies, for ongoing communication and engagement with both internal and external stakeholders.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides a rationale for each measure and the proposal as a whole reflects how the measures will provide rigorous, timely and formative information linked to the plan. The chosen measures are both appropriate and clearly linked to the proposed reform vision. The applicant failed to articulate how it would review and improve the measures over time if they are insufficient to gauge implementation progress.		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides a high-quality, comprehensive plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the investments in terms of both implementation and impact of the proposal. The level of specific detail with regards to the evaluation process is impressive.		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The score in this section is based on the following comments. In short, the proposal fails to provide a rationale for the level of investments and priorities. The requested budget seems to be unreasonable based on the comments below.

The proposed budget identifies all funds that will support the project and identifies that all funds will come from the Race to the Top District Grant.

The proposed budget includes almost 50% of the overall budget in the form of contracts with MIE, INSTILL, and a technology development group. This level of investment, coupled with the required cluster overhead (as reflected in the MIE job descriptions) represents over 65% of the entire budget. Considering this grant will impact 3 large high schools and 6 middle schools - the level of investment in contracts and new infrastructure is extreme. Furthermore, there does not appear to be an attempt to re-appropriate existing positions in support of this project.

The professional development proposed comes in the form of summer institutes and other types of either workshops or curriculum alignment activities. There does not appear to be any plans to support embedded professional development via professional learning communities or instructional coaching in support of the summer workshops that have been proposed. Further, it appears in EVSD that 2 FTE will be provided for Content Directors who will serve all 7 schools. This level of direct support for teachers and dedicated for professional development seems low.

In terms of technology, it appears that EVSD has sufficient hardware from the various 1:1 initiatives discussed in the proposal. However, there is no indication as to the level of investment in technology for the SCSD. Assuming they do not have a 1:1 initiative, the lack of budget for technology purchases for SCSD is of concern.

The amount of resource dedicated to developing the online learning platform assumes approximately \$1.875 million will be required for development. The remaining balance is budgeted evenly across each of the four years of the grant (over \$1,000,000) per year to support online administration, support, and hosting of the technology. The applicant does not fully articulate whether the annual operating/support costs could support more students and schools than are participating in the project.

The subcontract with SCSD does not add up based on the FTE and cost per FTE provided in the budget. Furthermore, the contract with SCSD does not appear to account for benefits for the positions to be added.

The stated salaries for various project personnel seem to be based on an MIE job description and not a job description specific to either district (this is interesting considering two different districts from two different states are participating). This is confusing.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has identified that most of the project's activities are designed to sustain themselves (i.e. development of an online learning platform, investment in pre-AP alignment work, etc.). The applicant does acknowledge that some components of the proposal would need to be sustained. With regards to sustaining the necessary components, the applicant states that each district is committed to identifying the resources to sustain.

This particular section would have been supported by identifying specific budget assumptions, sources and use of funds within both districts. The statement about each district seeking additional support from city and state governments does not represent enough of a strategy for sustainable funds.

Furthermore, the proposal did not specifically identify the expenditures they anticipate needing to sustain.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Criterion (5) asks the applicant to describe how the partnership and consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating

schools with tools and supports to address (a - e). The EVSC proposal does not address this specific criteria at all. It appears the applicant simply cut and paste from other sections of the grant and did not construct a response that is specific to the competitive priority. Considering the competitive priority requires the applicant to respond to each of the six component parts, the score for this section is a 0.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The intentional focus of the application on implementing pre-AP and AP strategies, coupled with the development and implementation of data warehouse tools capable of supporting personalized strategies to support individual students. Thus, the application meets the basic requirement for Absolute Priority 1.

That said, the strength of the overall application as it relates to Absolute Priority 1 can be found in the scores specific to Criteria C1 and C2. While I believe the applicant meets the absolute priority requirement, I believe the plan articulated in proposal could have been stronger.

Total	210	114
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