



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0401GA-2 for Fulton County Board of Education

### A. Vision (40 total points)

|   | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)  | 10        | 10    |
| <p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a comprehensive and detailed description of the vision of change and new direction for students and staff that has been built over the last two years. This vision of change includes the implementation of integrated and differentiated instruction, more interactivity and problem-based teaching, and increased flexibility in pacing. The implementation of a charter school system that will allow for greater flexibility and innovation was greatly supported by community stakeholders, parents, teachers, and school administration (as evidenced by the letters of support from a wide range of stakeholders) and supports the vision and new direction. The buy-in by multiple partners (i.e., teachers, students, parents, administration) is a strength of the proposed project as it is clear that a change was needed based on significant gaps in achievement between various sub-groups (i.e., disabled, Hispanics, African-Americans).</p> <p>Moreover, the vision articulates the four core educational reform areas mandated by the Race To The Top proposal requirements (e.g. the adoption of the Common Core Standards and Assessments), and details how they will reform low-performing schools through the implementation of a performance-based teacher and school leader program, through the movement of decision-making to the local school level, and through empowering School governance Councils to request waivers and manage resource allocations specific to their schools.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant has done an excellent job of articulating the vision and demonstrating a detailed plan for implementation of the proposed project. The overall rating for this are is very high.</p> |           |       |
| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)   | 10        | 9     |
| <p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a detailed description of their plan to implement a strong and comprehensive reform model as the Fulton County School District has moved from a traditional school district model to a charter school model. Moving into a Charter School model will allow the applicant to institute Governance Councils that will ultimately implement reforms that are specific to the target population, and create personalized learning environments.</p> <p>Support for the project design is strong as all schools in the district will participate in the proposed Race to the Top district plan. Additionally, the applicant indicates that Georgia is a right-to-work to state, and teachers do not participate in a union or have collective bargaining rights. However, there is tremendous support for the proposed project as evidenced by the endorsement letter signed by teachers representing each of the targeted schools. There is a a detailed list of schools, status of students (i.e., low-income, special needs), and the number of educators who will be participating in the project further demonstrating a strong and detailed plan for implementation. The applicant will allow for scale-up as all the schools in the district will be participating in the overall process.</p> <p><b>Weakness:</b></p> <p>While the applicant indicates that all schools will participate in the project, it is not clear what process was used to determine that all schools would participate. More details are needed on the vetting process as it relates to school selection.</p> <p>Overall this section is ranked high and provides detailed numbers on the number of students and status (i.e. low-income).</p>                                    |           |       |
| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)   | 10        | 10    |
| <p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>  |           |       |

The applicant provides for a high quality plan as evidenced by the detailed logic model outlining the priorities, inputs, outputs, and impact. The Logic Model clearly aligns with the four core assurances (i.e., building data systems, turning around lowest performing schools) in the Race to the Top District program. The outputs of targeted support to at-risk students, blended learning, alternative compensation models, and targeted professional development for teachers and administrators are just a few of the outputs that will ultimately impact the long-term goal of a 90% on-time graduation for students who are college and career-ready. The applicant does an excellent job of highlighting the goals, deliverables, timelines, and key personnel associated with implementation of project goals.

The applicant has designed a project that has the ability to scale-up and result in meaningful change in the district and across the country. The applicant has already partnered with the Broad Center (noted for their Superintendent Academy program, a national initiative to train Superintendents). Moreover, seven key personnel for the proposed project are either currently enrolled or have matriculated through the Broad Residency and/or Superintendent program which is an asset for the proposed project design.

The creation of an online Knowledge Management System of effective practices to address specific student achievement issues will be implemented, which will provide data on lessons learned, implementation issues, and effectiveness of local school innovations. This type of knowledge base will be useful and provide opportunities for sharing of effective practices at conferences and during site visits to other schools.

Overall this section ranks very high and presents a high-quality plan for reform.

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| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 9 |
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provides sufficient information on the new organizational structure that has been established to decrease achievement gaps that include creating four distinct Learning Communities in addition to reorganizing central office division staff to support these communities. The goal was to improve focus specific to the unique characteristics of the different communities served as some of the more high-performing communities masked the challenges faced by low performing schools. As a result, the applicant conducted an analysis of their current schools and created an administrative infrastructure that would address areas with the greatest need including the implementation of specific instructional strategies (i.e. blended learning) and the implementation of the Common Core Standards.

The applicant presents an overall goal of increasing graduation rates to 90%, which is quite ambitious, yet attainable based on the personalized learning environments and enhance technology programs that will be implemented. More importantly, parents will be engaged and challenged to become involved in the ensuring students are college and career-ready through a collaborative leadership model that includes teachers, parents, students, and administrators. The implementation of the My Graduation Plan program targeting at-risk middle school students is just one of the many programs that will be implemented in order to raise college enrollment rates.

Weakness:

The data provided for math and science proficiency levels for school year 2010/2011 shows higher numbers than 2011-2012 with no explanation for the sharp decrease in achievement overall and among sub-groups and for how this will be addressed in the overall vision for improved student outcomes.

Overall, this section scored in the high category.

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        | 14    |

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant does an excellent job of demonstrating past success in the area of reading and language arts for students in grades 3-5. The data cited indicates that the overall percentage of students who are meeting state standards in core subjects has increased or remained stable over the past two years. More importantly, students in the sub-groups (i.e., disabled, Limited English Proficient, economically disadvantaged) have shown a steady increase, and while not at the level of all students, there

is evidence indicating improvement in reading.

The proposed program design has a strong focus on implementing goals and objectives that are ambitious, yet achievable as evidenced by the initiatives that have been started and that will be continued in the proposed project. Some of the initiatives include: talent management systems that will recognize and reward effective teachers and administrators based on student performance on state mandated tests, professional development activities around the Common Core Standards, and interim assessments to ensure that the curriculum standards taught across schools are aligned. The applicant has identified ambitious and significant reform efforts to address the lowest-achieving schools that include flexible learning programs that provide alternative or supplemental instructional interventions that will be monitored through the Checkpoints system that will include interim assessments throughout the school year.

The applicant provides a detailed description of how they will ensure that data is available through the student information system, which allows students to be matched with specific teachers. Additionally, the data system provides information on diagnostic assessments that provide information on student's mastery of specific content as they receive instruction.

Weakness:

While the applicant indicates that performance data will be available to parents through a parent portal on the student information system, there does not appear to be any other mechanism for parents and/or students who do not have access to technology outside of the school.

Overall, this section ranks in the high range and is well developed.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provides sufficient information on the average salary for teachers in the target school in comparison to salaries statewide. Moreover, the applicant indicates that as they transition into a charter school model, that the shared governance model will provide opportunities for stakeholders to engage and drive opportunities for innovation in this area.

Weakness:

The applicant fails to adequately address this sub-criterion as there are no details on actual salaries at the school-level and non-personnel expenditures. The information provided is generic and lacks specificity. The information provided appears to provide only teacher salaries for the last 10 years based on a salary schedule for a minimum and average salary. It is not clear that actual salary information as it relates to the target schools will be provided. Additionally, it is not clear that the data currently provided on school-level expenditures is provided on the district website.

Overall this section ranks in the low medium category.

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant continues to demonstrate a prior record of success and sufficient authority and autonomy to implement the proposed project design. The legislature in the state of Georgia passed a law in 2008 allowing school districts to change their operating model to allow flexibility as it relates to state education laws. As a result, the applicant has chosen to address the unique needs of the target population by moving to a charter school model, which will allow for greater flexibility and increased accountability to community stakeholders.

The applicant demonstrates evidence of sufficient autonomy as it relates to achieving the vision of greater school accountability. This is evidenced by the proposal to create School Governance Councils that will include parents, students, teachers, school employees, principals, and community members. The proposed model allows for a greater voice by the individuals who will most benefit from the change (i.e. parents, teachers, and students) and ensures that the personalized learning environments that will be created is inclusive and comprehensive. Moreover, to ensure a fair and equitable process, the applicant has developed a process called Request for Flexibility, which each school can use to ensure that their restructuring efforts align with the school strategic plan and stakeholder input.

Overall this section ranks very high.

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)  | 10 | 10 |
| <p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p>The applicant does an excellent job of describing their strategies for ensuring significant stakeholder engagement as evidenced by the letters of support from a variety of stakeholders (i.e., mayors, commissioners, parents, teachers, city officials, teachers) and the feedback received on how to improve the strategic plan. The applicant provides information indicating that seven community forums with over 1,000 parents and staff members and focus groups with 70 students at four middle and high schools were conducted that informed the charter petition and strategic plan. There is clear support by teachers as evidenced by the signed letter of support documenting a large percentage of teachers from each of the schools.</p> <p>Moreover, the superintendent sent a letter and the grant proposal to the mayors of 13 cities located in the school district attendance zone requesting feedback on their proposal. A detailed list of comments is provided demonstrating a strong commitment by community stakeholders in the design of the proposed project.</p> <p>One area that further demonstrates a commitment by the business community is the sponsorship of a community town hall meeting by AT&amp;T to introduce the strategic plan and to share the proposal for Race to the Top. The detailed program outlining a "who's who" of the county further demonstrates evidence of strong community and school support. The Teacher of the Year emceed the event and has provided a strong letter of support for the project.</p> <p>This section scores high and is well-developed.</p> |    |    |

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|---|---|---|
| (B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)  | 5 | 3 |
| <p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides sufficient information on the current gaps and weaknesses as it relates to students in the area of achievement on state mandated tests. As evidenced by the charts provided on how students are performing in grades 3-12, it is clear that sub-groups (i.e., disabled) are not performing at the same level as their peers. As a result, the applicant is proposing to implement a high-quality personalized learning environment that includes asking stakeholders for feedback on the areas that worked, and those that are in need of improvement. The applicant provides for some elements of a high-quality plan that focuses on goals, activities, timelines, and deliverables.</p> <p><b>Weakness:</b></p> <p>The applicant fails to adequately describe the logic behind the reform proposal. While the applicant indicates that through analysis they discovered an opportunity to increase the percentage of students exceeding the state standards at all levels (particularly in math and science starting at 5th grade), no details on why the identified subgroups have been declining was provided. The applicant indicates that the gap in meeting/exceeding standards between those in poverty and not in poverty is 23.1% for the district, however, no details are provided on why such a significant gap exists.</p> <p>Overall this section scores a medium.</p> |   |   |

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

|   | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points)   | 20        | 19    |
| <p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p>The applicant has implemented a comprehensive and well-developed learning system that aligns with the four core educational reform areas in the Race to the Top District program. During the charter exploration process the applicant recognized the need to revamp and restructure its educational system to align with the individual needs of the students. The typical stand-and-deliver classroom structure has not been successful in the target school and as a result the applicant will implement several initiatives that will reduce the achievement gaps outlined in the narrative and better support their diverse student population. In order to accomplish this goal, the applicant will develop customized programs of study (i.e. Blended Learning Labs) with flexible schedules that allow students to access virtual, distance, and blended learning offerings to assist high-need students. One of the key aspects of this strategy will allow for small group settings that will enhance understanding and mastery.</p> |           |       |

Another strong area of the plan is the leveraging of existing resources (i.e. Communities in Schools) to support students who are most at-risk of dropping out by providing case management services, introducing Summer Bridge programs, and collaborating with community programs (i.e. Computers for Youth) to provide support outside of the regular school day and at home for parents. The applicant does an excellent job of describing the goals, activities, timelines, and responsible parties that are clearly aligned to a comprehensive strategic plan.

**Weakness:**

The applicant fails to provide details on how they will ensure that the personalized learning environment will ensure that students have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that will motivate and deepen individual student learning.

Overall this section rates high.

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

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:**

The applicant does an excellent job of describing their strategies for ensuring highly effective teachers in the classroom, and administrators on campus. During the analysis of their strategic planning process several of their initiatives revealed that across the district first-year elementary teachers were placed with their lowest-performing students, and experienced teachers with their best-performing students. This revelation was particularly troubling to the applicant as they recognized that the district only retained 3.9% of its most effective first-year teachers and those teachers usually begin working with high-performing students. As a result, the applicant piloted a differentiated evaluation system to better assess the performance of teachers and leaders to ensure that students have the most effective teacher in the classroom. The applicant provides evidence of a high-quality plan as evidenced by key goals, timelines, activities, and responsible personnel.

Moreover, the applicant has developed a system (with the support of new tax revenue) to retain and reward their most effective teachers and administrators that is directly aligned to professional development and student performance. By hiring a consultant that will develop a competitive staffing and compensation plan, the applicant proposes to build their internal talent pool to a level that will ensure students have the most highly effective teachers in all classrooms. The detailed action plan highlighting activities, timelines, and responsible parties will ensure that the goals and objectives of achieving quality staffing is achieved in a reasonable time period.

Overall this section is rated high.

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

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a well-developed and detailed plan for ensuring that a strong emphasis is placed on supporting schools. As a result, the superintendent reorganized the Academic Division by moving key staff positions out of a central office location and into four learning communities (similar to a Smaller Learning Communities model) in order to provide immediate support and assistance to schools that are in close proximity to each other. This strategy allows decentralization of resources and puts the focus on providing direct support and help to the schools. To ensure that high-level leadership is immediately available, each area has an area superintendent, executive director and staff as evidenced by the detailed organization chart showing how each area supports a well-developed governance structure. The applicant provides for a high-quality plan that includes all the elements (i.e., key goals, personnel, activities) as evidenced by the implementation plan.

The applicant provides a detailed list of activities that will be implemented in order to provide students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. Some of the activities include adjusted time for subjects and/or courses within the system calendar, blended learning (i.e., online, virtual, field experiences, internships), use of non-certified teachers, restructuring of remedial services to better differentiate instruction, and modifying class sizes to focus on instructional needs.

Moreover, one of the significant and important strategies the applicant has implemented is School Governance Councils that

have been empowered to propose reform efforts such as adjusted time for subjects/courses; blended learning; online and virtual classes; field experiences; and the modification of class sizes to focus on instructional needs.

Overall this is a superb and well-developed plan and ranks under this criterion as very high.

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

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant presents a well-developed and comprehensive high-quality plan that supports the overall vision of reform as required by the Race to the Top District core educational reform efforts. To ensure that all students, parents, educators, and stakeholders have the necessary tools to implement the proposed project design, the applicant will utilize the division of Information Technology to support and promote student achievement through the integration of technology resources into the instruction and administrative processes. There is significant support from the State and local resources as evidenced by the letters of support outlining commitments to the project by the various stakeholders.

Additionally, the applicant cites the recent passage of a sales tax bond that will provide an additional \$912 million for school improvements over the next five years, which will be dedicated to school-level and system-wide technology enhancements in the districts. The implementation of a robust data system that provides teachers, administrators, students, and parents with instructional materials and digital content that can be incorporated into lesson plans is another example of the policies and infrastructure that will be used to meet the stated objectives outlined in the Logic Model. More importantly, the applicant will ensure compliance with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and provide multiple methods for exporting data in user friendly formats.

Overall, this section rates very high.

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

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provides a detailed plan that includes all elements of a high-quality plan (i.e., goals, timelines, key personnel, and activities) to ensure that the project is meeting its stated objectives. The importance of this project is well-documented as each of the strategic initiatives will be assigned an Executive Sponsor (who is a member of the superintendent's cabinet) who has subject-matter expertise that aligns with the work being done in the project. Moreover, the Executive Sponsor will report directly to the superintendent and provide monthly updates on the project as the applicant has indicated that studies show that 90% of all plans fail to achieve original goals and objectives due to lack of clear accountability. To ensure success, the applicant has built in a process for status reports to the public that includes quarterly and annual reports that are posted to the website and that are presented through facilitated discussions.

This sub-criterion is rated very high.

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

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provides a comprehensive and detailed plan for ensuring ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders, parents, students, teachers, principals, and community leaders that includes monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual Council meetings led by the superintendent. Additionally, the applicant will establish a Race to the Top Advisory Team that will include internal and external experts who will provide advice and counseling as it relates to effective practices. The Advisory Team will provide presentations and formal reports to stakeholders as part of the Council meetings that will be held throughout the year.

Overall this section rates very high.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)  | 5 | 5 |
| <p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p>The applicant does an excellent job of identifying performance measures that are both ambitious and obtainable. The rationale for each of the measures is clearly described and includes information as to how the stated performance measure provides rigorous and formative information aligned to the four core educational assurances. For example, when deciding on the percentage of students overall and by subgroup whose teacher of record is considered effective or highly effective, the applicant reflected on historically how teachers were rated, and wanted a measure that would allow them to differentiate teacher performance and human capital decisions based on performance.</p> <p>Each of the stated objectives has a formative and summative aspect that will allow for a high-quality and comprehensive project evaluation with results reported quarterly and annually.</p> <p>Overall this section is rated very high and provides an exceptional approach to implementation.</p> |   |   |

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|---|---|---|
| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)   | 5 | 5 |
| <p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p>The applicant does an excellent job of describing their plan to evaluate effectiveness as it relates to reaching project objectives that includes hiring an external evaluator who will work with an internal evaluation analyst to track and report on progress towards meeting the stated objectives. The use of an internal and external evaluation model will provide an external view in which the project can be assessed. Additionally, the applicant will collect quantitative data that will be used to track retention rates of participants, growth and achievement of students, and to determine if students are college and career ready. There is a comprehensive plan for evaluating with clearly delineated reporting timelines.</p> |   |   |

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

|  | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)  | 10        | 8     |
| <p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a sufficient budget that fully describes the commitment by the district and other stakeholders. The local option sales tax dollars that will be leveraged to fund capital and technology projects and infrastructure improvements has been well documented throughout the narrative. Additionally, the applicant will leverage Title I, IIA, III, and IV funding to staff the Blended Learning Labs and fund digital content for student subgroups. There are ample resources committed to the project that will support professional development and the piloting of the Alternative Compensation Model. The detailed budget narrative outlines how funding will be disbursed to support critical initiatives outlined in the proposal.</p> <p><b>Weakness:</b></p> <p>While the applicant provides for a sufficient budget, the costs that are in-kind and the costs that are being requested are not clearly delineated. The applicant is proposing to dedicate a variety of funds to the project, however, it is not clear if some of the funds are being requested or being provided in-kind.</p> <p>The overall rating for this section is high.</p> |           |       |
| (F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)   | 10        | 10    |
| <p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><b>Strengths:</b></p>  |           |       |

The applicant has devised a high-quality plan for sustaining the project, which includes leveraging existing federal funding through the various Title I, II-A, III, and VI-B. Additionally, the applicant will leverage funds from a local tax initiative that has been dedicated to the project during the grant period and beyond. There are a number of community and corporate stakeholders who fully support the project that can be leveraged as an additional resource to sustainability. The design of the project will inherently build in opportunities for embedding a number of the strategies into the overall school culture, which will allow the applicant to leverage existing district funds.

Overall this section is well developed and rated very high.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

**Strengths:**

The applicant does an excellent job of summarizing their commitment to partnering with government agencies and local organizations to provide support to at-risk students and their families. The overall program design is geared towards building and developing partnerships that will prepare all students to graduate college and career ready. The partnership with the Fulton County Juvenile Court will allow the applicant to provide social and emotional supports for at-risk students in the juvenile court schools. Additionally, the applicant will partner with the Truancy Intervention Project and the Attendance Intervention Module Parenting Program to expand services to parents of elementary, middle, and high school students. The applicant identifies 12 population-level results that include students graduating on time.

The overall program design includes a detailed action plan with timelines, deliverables, and activities that include designing and developing modules, creating project plans for training and delivery of health education curriculum, creating marketing plans to reduce the number of out of school alternative suspensions. This wraparound approach to meeting the needs of families is another example of the applicant's ability to engage families and communities in implementing and sustaining a system of prevention and intervention services.

This section rates very high.

### Absolute Priority 1

|                     | Available   | Score |
|---------------------|-------------|-------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | Met/Not Met | Met   |

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does an excellent job of comprehensively addressing the absolute priority. Throughout the narrative the applicant has identified strategies for building on the core educational assurances by creating learning environments that will significantly improve how students are educated in Fulton County. The detailed charts outlining the gaps in achievement will be addressed through multiple strategic initiatives that include preparing students for college through virtual and online learning courses. As stated previously, the proposed program design has a strong focus on implementing goals and objectives that are ambitious, yet achievable as evidenced by the initiatives that have been started and that will be continued in the proposed project. Some of the initiatives include, talent management systems that will recognize and reward effective teachers and administrators based on student performance on state mandated tests, professional development activities around the Common Core Standards, and interim assessments to ensure that the curriculum standards taught across schools are aligned.

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|-------|-----|-----|
| Total | 210 | 199 |
|-------|-----|-----|



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0401GA-3 for Fulton County Board of Education

### A. Vision (40 total points)

|  | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)   | 10        | 7     |
| <p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Reading across all sections of the proposal provides a comprehensive and coherent reform vision linked to the four core educational areas.</p> <p>When the State provided the option—and after two years of community meetings—FCS and its stakeholders choose to become a system of charter schools. FCS is staying true to the components of its strategic plan, "Building our Future, strategic plan for 2012 – 2017" which includes the tenets of advancing instruction, enhancing people, integrating technology, ensuring effective schools, and managing resources.</p> <p>While "personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks" is part of FCS's plan of action, it seems to be a minor element rather than central to the work. It is often referenced, but never fully developed. FCS is committed to "flexible, integrated, and differentiated instruction....including more interactivity and problem-based teaching, increased flexibility in pacing...more utilization of the internet and web-based tools." FCS is definitely creating an environment wherein personalized learning can occur, but doesn't create a system to ensure it does occur. Nor has it specified a way to monitor the degree to which it does occur beyond doing so for students who do have access to FCS's 20 Learning Labs</p> <p>High points in the medium range are awarded to this category. Although it is a comprehensive plan and a credible approach, there is no certainty that personalized learning will be available to every student.</p> |           |       |
| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)  | 10        | 10    |
| <p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) All 94 schools in FCS are included in this proposal. Over the next 3 years all schools will become charter schools and elect School Governance Councils. Each Council will write a strategic plan for its own school. School Councils will be able to apply to the district for flexibility related to seat time, staffing and schedules. The proposal states that over the next 5 years all schools will be impacted. It does not explain the difference between three-year implementation and five-year impact.</p> <p>FCS surrounds the city of Atlanta, a separate district. The area north of Atlanta has only 5% of the districts low income students, while the area south of Atlanta is 95% low income. As discussed in other sections of the proposal, central office has been reorganized creating four "learning centers" -- Northeast, Northwest, Central, and South -- to better serve different the different populations that live in the "subdistricts".</p> <p>(b) Appendix A-6 provides a list of schools organized by learning center.</p> <p>(c) FCS provides districtwide data for low-income and high-need students by school type: elementary, middle, and high. With 45% of students across the district categorized as low-income based on their free and reduced lunch status, FCS meets RTT-D requirements.</p> <p>FCS receives full points.</p>  |           |       |
| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)  | 10        | 8     |
| <p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>   |           |       |

It is clear that FCS intends for every school to become a self-governing charter school. It is also clear that FCS will implement and scale some of its initiatives across selected schools (e.g., August 2013: Learning Lab pilot sites are operational in 5 schools; August 2014: Two new career pathways are operational; September 2013: My Graduation Plan middle schools identified).

FCS has elements of a high-quality plan showing how the project initiatives will be implemented. Specifically, it has timeline/activity charts in sections (C)(1) and (C)(2) that specify topline activities and the position responsible. There is also a logic model for implementation in the appendix. More detail is needed to truly understand what is involved in its scaling efforts. For example, My Graduation Plan is described, but there is no detail on the criteria or process related to how schools will be selected.

FCS's approach to teacher and leader development is quite robust. It includes identifying strong teachers and leaders and deploying them to areas of need (although how that happens is not specified). Further it has a plan to disseminate school successes across the district via its online school management system. Other factors of note:

- FCS includes a thoughtful analysis of admission requirements of in-state universities and colleges; the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of students admitted had an average SAT score of 460 for math and 460 for reading. It has a goal of 85% of students achieving these scores.
- It will establish a baseline for achievement to certify students as “work ready” based on Common Core Georgia Performance Standards' nonfiction texts for literacy and ACT WorkKeys for mathematics. It is not clear why FCS choose to use the ACT WorkKeys for mathematics rather than the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, particularly since it is using the Common Core State Standards for ELA.

FCS earns high points because it has most elements of a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up. The lack of details and specifics causes it to earn less than full points.

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| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
|---|----|---|

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

FCS is to be commended for its high levels of student achievement across sub-groups compared to the state and the nation. It has clear data and clear goals that are based on Georgia's expectations. It appears to be a district that has been paying close attention to student data for some time and is quite thoughtful in its use. It applies sophisticated tools and analysis related to student gains as evidenced by its z score.

However:

(a) FCS sets modest expectations related to increased achievement. The target for the highest-performing students for some grade level areas are flat for the next three years, while the expectations for subgroups are (usually) about 1 percent per year.

(b) FCS aims to close the achievement gap slowly in some categories (i.e., reading proficiency grades 3 - 5) and not at all in others (i.e., mathematics proficiency, grades 3 - 5, ELL students). For example, the targets for Overall, Limited English, Students with Disabilities, Economically Disadvantaged, African American, and Hispanic have identical increases (e.g., in mathematics proficiency, grades 3-5 "overall" increases from 94% to 96% while Hispanic increases from 79% to 81%). Where there is a reduction in the target gap, it is achieved by leaving the targets for high achieving students flat for three years.

(c) FCS proposes an interesting methodology for tracking graduation rates, but the projected increases of 0.1 % per year, while attainable, fail to reach the bar of “ambitious.”

(d) FCS sets a target of increasing college enrollment from 72.8% to 73% over the next 5 years. Again this does not merit being considered "ambitious."

Medium points are awarded here. While FCS has a clear plan that is likely to be successful in increasing achievement and in reducing the gap for some content areas, overall the targets are modest and fall short of ambitious.

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

|  | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points) | 15        | 10    |

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

FCS is to be applauded for its past record of high student achievement compared to overall Georgian results and, for that matter, the country.

(a) FCS offers evidence that it has been closing the gap and raising achievement in some content areas, especially for students with disabilities. It does not offer evidence related to high school graduation. The data in (B)(5) show a decline in percentage of students enrolling in college in each of the past four years, which is counter to increasing achievement.

(b) FCS uses Georgia's College and Career Ready Performance Index to categorize schools. It is not clear how the designations of (1) Priority Schools which are the lowest achieving schools in the state based on the performance of all student, (2) Focus Schools which have the largest achievement gaps and (3) Alert schools which have under-performing subgroups relate to FCS's Flexible Learning Programs, alternative supplemental instructions interventions that allow schools greater flexibility. While the categories are clearly explained, it is not certain how each of these is affected by Flexible Learning Programs.

(c) Parents have access to student information via the parent portal. FCS also has an ambitious and worthy plan to create data dashboards and to support stakeholder use of the dashboard, but that is in the future.

Medium points are awarded because this section of RTT-D seeks historical evidence of closing the achievement gap and reforming the persistently lowest achieving schools. While FCS has had some success related to student achievement and reducing achievement gaps, it fails to provide evidence related to high school graduation, and the percentage of students enrolling in college have declined in each of the past four years.

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| (B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points) | 5 | 1 |
|--|---|---|

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

FCS provides salary information for all school district personnel to the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, which then publishes this data annually on its Open Georgia website. In the sample report provided there is information for the minimum, maximum and average teacher salaries in FCS as compared to Georgia as a whole. While it appears that teachers in FCS fare better than the state as a whole, it is not clear if these salaries relate to (a) all school-level instructional and support staff or (b) actual personnel salaries related to instructional staff. Nor it is clear if and how FCS distinguishes between instruction staff and teachers only.

No information is provided related to (c) actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only or for (d) actual non-personnel expenditures.

FCS receives low points because it provides little of the information requested.

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Georgia' Senate Bill 39 provides FCS all the autonomy necessary and includes the statement that "schools and school systems should be given high flexibility to tailor their educational programs to meet the unique needs of their communities... schools and school systems should be encouraged to use innovative educational programs including local management of schools and should be provided resources to help design and implement innovative programs."

FCS is creating a charter school system thus granting local control to each school and giving each school (via its School Governance Council) the ability to use a "Request for Flexibility" process to gain waivers from categorical expenditures, service delivery models, seat time, class size, courses, and staff allocations.

This opens the door to school innovation, including implementing personalized learning environments, but does not seem to guarantee that would happen. FCS will provide supports and will monitor results, there is no information about the degree to which schools might or will share FCS's vision beyond the three priorities identified and discussed in section (B)(4).

Still full points are given because the necessary conditions and autonomy exist, which is what is required in this section of RTT-D.

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

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

FCS documents extensive outreach (7 community forums that involved parents, focus groups of students, teacher surveys) in addition to its feedback period for mayors and the Department of Education. The community forums alone generated more than 2,873 comments that were summarized into three top priorities: "1) more rigorous, responsive and flexible instruction, curriculum, and staffing to meet the differing needs of students and communities; 2) performance-based retention and placement decisions for all staff, especially teachers, and 3) school flexibility grounded in research-based initiatives with evaluation and monitoring." These three priorities formed the basis for this proposal.

Also noteworthy is its high-visibility launch of the program and widespread effort to disseminate the plan to both educators and parents. The letters of support from parent, student and parent councils, teacher representatives, non-profit organizations are further evidence of involvement, support and knowledge.

Full points are awarded.

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

5

2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

FCS has extensive data related to student achievement, gaps, and national standing. It compared itself to other, similar, high-achieving districts and found there was room for improvement related to achievement. It had identified some of the root causes (e.g., less-experienced teachers are placed with lower-performing students). It describes the elements of current policies (e.g., students allowed to move through courses) that support personalized learning and it lays out the logic behind its reform proposal. It describes how it will create and support opportunities for schools to provide students with personalized learning environments.

While the proposal includes data relevant to student achievement, it does not provide a high-quality plan (complete with goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible personnel) to analyze its current status in implementing personalized learning environments and so earns low points.

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

|   | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points)   | 20        | 12    |
| <p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>FCS has some elements of a high-quality plan for personalizing the learning environment. The charts at the end of sections (C)(1) and (C)(2) identify top line activities, timeline, deliverables, and the department responsible. But there is a lack of specificity related to who will do what and how it will be done.</p> <p>The plan identifies several programs and supports it will implement (Computers for Youth Digital Learning Program, Summer Bridge, Communities in Schools) to support low-income and struggling students. "My Graduation Plan" is particularly germane to this criteria because it gives students from selected schools the opportunity to create their own paths to career and college {(A)(i), (A)(ii), &amp; (A)(iii)}.</p> <p>However, it does not appear that this option is available for all students. In fact, it is never clear which students will have access to what elements of personalized learning. It is not clear that every student has "a personalized sequence of instructional content" [(B)(i)], nor is it certain that every student will have a variety of high-quality instructional approaches [(B)(ii)]. While opportunities related to personalized learning will exist within the district, it is not certain that every student will have access to the full suite of opportunities. For example, it is not clear how "digital learning content" is accessed or if it is only available in the 20 Blended Learning Labs.</p> <p>FCS does provide detail and support related to data including training for all stakeholder groups, including students.</p> <p>Medium points are awarded since some of criteria is met, some criteria is partially addressed, and some criteria are not clearly explained.</p> |           |       |
| (C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)   | 20        | 18    |

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

FCS has a high quality plan to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective teachers and principals. It has a comprehensive and ambitious approach to identifying teacher and leader needs and to provide multiple opportunities for educators to access individualized professional development in face-to-face and online collaborations as described in (A)(iv) based on new evaluations systems (Georgia’s Teacher Keys Effectiveness; Leader Keys Effectiveness; Professional Keys). These systems include new kinds of information, new levels of feedback, and development support for teacher and leaders.

FCS will develop an integrated performance management software system to track the information and use that information to deploy resources. It will allow employees to access resources related to their areas of growth and will eliminate “one size fits all” professional development. FCS will also use the data to identify its most effective employees and develop their leadership skills.

FCS is also creating Fulton County School University, which will offer focus areas based on student data, credential teachers in those areas, and be prepared to deploy them to schools with those specific needs. Many of the efforts described support teachers in implementing a personalized learning environment for students.

Additionally, FCS is redesigning its Instructional Improvement System to streamline access to multiple sources of data and to make that data available to teachers, students, parents, and administrators via data-driven dashboards. Although “instructional units, lesson plans, and pacing guides linked to the Common Core” is mentioned, the system may function more as a tool to monitor student progress across grades with a suite of assessments and benchmark assessments.

FCS’s approach to teacher and leader identification, evaluation and training is impressive. One missing element is that it is not clear how effective teachers are deployed to under-performing schools or the district’s neediest students. There is no mention of hard-to-staff subjects or specialty areas.

FCS receives almost full points because of the missing elements discussed in the previous paragraph.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

FCS has a high-quality plan to support implementation. Much of the necessary modifications to governance is already complete. Georgia provides the necessary flexibility related to practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning. In turn FCS will grant the necessary autonomy to individual schools.

(a) FCS has reorganized its central office in four regional learning centers equipped to provide support to its own region.

(b) As a charter school district, School Councils at each school have flexibility and autonomy. FCS has systems described and identified that provides schools with the ability to ask for district waivers to control such things as:

- Adjusted time for subjects and/or courses within the system calendar
- Blended learning to include online or virtual components
- Blended learning to include field experiences such as outside research, internships, job shadowing
- Additional elective courses at middle and high school or additional subjects at elementary
- Use of non-certified teachers for specific subjects and courses
- Restructuring of Gifted services to impact more students
- Restructuring of Remedial services to better differentiate instruction
- Modifying class sizes to focus on instructional needs
- Allocation of resources, including staff positions
- Innovative uses of technology for instruction.

(c) Students have the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on course content mastery. This is not a new development; FCS has long provided the ability for students to accelerate through courses based on mastery.

(d) Students can be granted the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways and at multiple times, depending on school-developed opportunities.

(e) The learning platform provides adaptable and accessible resources. FCS specifically speaks to accommodating students

with disabilities.

Full points are awarded because FCS has or will have all necessary practices, policies, and structures to support individualized learning.

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

10

8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

FCS has identified its goals, but does not provide all the details necessary for a high quality plan related to implementation. It does not provide details related to who will do what, when and how for each of the components within this criteria. Still, many of the attributes of a high-quality plan can be gleaned from the narrative provided.

(a) FCS is launching a new robust and rich Instruction Improvement System that includes parent (and student) login information. Computers are available at 34 libraries and internet connections are provided to parents of free and reduced lunch students at a deeply discounted rate.

(b) In 2013 a call-in desk and online help (e.g., electronic tutorials) will be available. In 2014 a more robust system of support will be available.

(c) & (d) FCS's Enterprise Information Management system is responsible for ensuring data systems are available and interoperable. It will present different dashboards to different users so that parents can see such things as student progress and assignments and teachers can see such information as classroom assessment data.

Almost full points are awarded here because some elements of a high-quality plan are missing and yet there is enough present to ensure implementation.

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

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

FCS earns full points for a well-developed and detailed approach for setting benchmarks, monitoring progress, and making adjustments using a system that includes multiple checks and balances. Procedures and systems are thoughtfully developed and well described. Specifically:

- The Office of Project Management and Strategic Initiatives has responsibility for RTT-D grant management and creating project plans and milestones for all initiatives funded through this grant.
- PMO staff are responsible for monitoring progress against these milestones.
- Each initiative is assigned an Executive Sponsor (a member of the superintendent's Cabinet), who is accountable to the superintendent. The Executive Sponsor designs a work plan with milestones and deliverables and builds a work team.
- An Initiative Manager oversees this work using project management and delivery tools to consult and advise each team.
- The recently implemented Strategic Initiative Management (SIM) process will track progress.
- Initiative owners and executive sponsors provide monthly updates to the full Cabinet. The proposal includes an initiative review schedule, created to accompany this framework.
- Cabinet members provide feedback on progress and recommend improvements for future actions.

Since milestones for each initiative will be developed, monitored, tracked on SIM and that the Cabinet will receive monthly updates and make recommendations for improvements, full points are earned.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

FCS earns full points here because of its approach to communicating with multiple stakeholder groups. Specifically:

- Superintendent Dr. Avossa will include RTT-D updates in his monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual meetings known in

the district as Superintendent's Councils. There are separate advisory councils of parents, students, principals, teachers and community leaders.

- FCS will establish a Race to the Top Advisory Team to review its implementation progress and to evaluate results. A key element is including frequent updates with groups of stakeholders and end users to test proposed solutions and consider additional, and often external, perspectives.

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points) | 5 | 4 |
|--|---|---|

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

FCS has a history of collecting and analyzing data related to student achievement. To track success on this proposal it will add some new measures (e.g., PreK-3, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Assessment) ensuring that all performance measures are addressed. Missing is any effort to determine the effect implementing a charter school system has on individualized learning. Given the intent of RTT-D, this is a serious omission.

One strength of this proposal is its intention to redistribute highly qualified teacher to high-needs students. This is an important strategy to closing the achievement gap.

Almost full points are earned because of the failure to monitor student involvement in a personalized learning environment.

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

In addition to contracting with an external evaluator, FCS will track activity related to its initiatives (e.g., teacher participation in the Instructional Improvement System and FCS-University; Computers for Youth; My Graduation Plan) and use that information to evaluate the effectiveness of various programs on student achievement.

They will track indicators of customized instruction from the Learning Labs program. It is important to note that the Labs will only exist in 20 schools and there does not seem to be a way to track personalized instruction in the remaining 74 schools.

For this reason slightly less than full points are awarded.

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

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Although the overall amounts of requested dollars are, generally, reasonable, a low score is awarded to this section because the FCS proposal, budget, and budget narrative contain conflicting and is missing information. Examples of areas that need clarification, include:

(a)

FCS identifies about \$97,000,000 in FY 2013 (and slightly smaller amounts in subsequent years) beyond RTTD funds that will be used to support the project, but only shows \$41,000 in the total budget and in the project breakdown budget. It fails to show how identified funds will support the project.

(b)

It is not possible to determine whether or not the budget is reasonable since the budget narrative fails to provide clarity and rationale for its expenditures.

- For example, there is no explanation of why \$250,000 per year is needed for transportation for students participating in career pathways.
- Similarly, there is a \$1,000,000 request for "change management consulting." This activity is not described in the body of the proposal or explained in the budget.
- Also, even though grantees must follow proper procedures and so do not need to identify contractors, much more clarity

around what contractors will provide is needed. For example, \$1,600,000 is dedicated to annual fees for four virtual courses. Missing is information about what kind of courses for what purpose serving what population.

(c)

As mentioned, the proposal identifies funds it will use to support the project. It is difficult to differentiate between one time costs and on-going expenditures.

The lack of clarity in the budget earns FCS low points.

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

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The FCS sustainability plan is thinly developed.

It identifies Title I and IIA funds that will be continue to be available, but without specificity or clarity as to how they will be used. It mentions that success of the initiatives may allow diverting general funds for support in the future. And it mentions it will continue to seek support from other partners and funders with whom the district has long-standing relationships.

So, while it identifies a pool of money that will be available and it identifies additional ways that pool could be enhanced, there is no clarity about the amount of money that will be necessary or how resources will be expended.

Since many of the expenditures are annual contracts that will not diminish, lack of a serious plan for future funding earns FCS low points.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

FCS earns full points for building on its established relationships with agencies (e.g., Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Juvenile Court, Department of Health and Wellness, Department of Family and Children's Services) beyond the school district. Although the Competitive Priority does not require FCS to address each of the elements in the criteria, it does include most [(a), (b), (c) and (d)]. Selected examples are listed below:

(a) FCS is partnering with Juvenile Court and "Communities" to build supports for an 'A, B, C' framework for dropout prevention. As described in the proposal, "A' represents attendance. 'B' represents behavior. And 'C' represents course performance."

(b) (d) FCS has already collected data related to this proposal component and includes targets for each year of the grant. For instance, it intends to reduce the number of students with 10 or more unexcused absences a year by 5% each year of the grant.

(c) FCS will train school staff in partnership with Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to implement the "Typical or Troubled?" behavioral health educational curriculum. It will scale its TIP program to 15 schools.

FCS's high-quality plan, along with its clear budget, earns full points.

### Absolute Priority 1

|   | Available   | Score      |
|---|-------------|------------|
| Absolute Priority 1   | Met/Not Met | Met        |
| <p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>FCS addresses the core educational assurance areas throughout its proposal and is dedicated to improving teaching and learning and to preparing students for college and career. It has a thoughtful and comprehensive plan to provide individualized professional development to teachers and leaders. It is creating new opportunities for personalized student learning.</p> <p>One concern is that it is never clear that all students will have access to all personalized learning learning opportunities. It is not clear that students from high-poverty Learning Communities will have opportunities to accelerate and that students from low-poverty areas will have access to career pathways.</p> <p>A second concern relates to FCS's inattention to closing the achievement gap and its modest targets related to increased student achievement.</p> <p>Nonetheless, FCS meets Absolute Priority 1, based on the overall strength of its proposal.</p> |             |            |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>210</b>  | <b>158</b> |



## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0401GA-4 for Fulton County Board of Education

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

|  | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)   | 10        | 10    |
| <p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Fulton County School system (FCS) is a school district located in the state of Georgia. The non-rural school district resides in a state that has previously been awarded Race to the Top federal funding. FCS is applying for Race to the Top - District (RTTT-D) funds to assist with education reform for its 89,308 student population and 94 schools. The district desires to restructure its current operational system and efforts to raise the standard instructional practices are ambitious. The comprehensive plan to reestablish into charter system will raise student achievement. The district has provided evidence that the sound plan to restructure into a charter system will allow for instructional innovation and increased academics in reading and math by incorporating common core standards and leveraged local autonomy. The comprehensive vision of the district includes measures to advance instruction and provide capacity building measures for the superintendent, central staff, principal and teachers. The vision also includes measures to increase technology with flexible learning opportunities. With RTTT-D funds, FCS desires to continue improvements on newly implemented teacher and leader effectiveness systems to ensure that all school stakeholders are collaborators that are being held accountable for increased student achievement. Resource allocations are clearly outlined in this applicant's vision. Full points have been assigned.</p> |           |       |
| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)  | 10        | 8     |
| <p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The detailed description on the Governance Councils' role in meeting the needs of students is sound. The plan to allow local schools to establish personalized learning environments will allow students interest and needs to be heard. FCS desires to have all 94 schools move into the charter model within the next three years but the applicant does not provide detailed</p>  |           |       |

descriptions on how schools will be selected to implement goals.

Within the grant application FCS states that it has over 89,000 students enrolled. Below is a demographic breakdown:

- 42,849 - low income
- 35,400 - high need
- 6,963 - participating educators

RTTT-D funding will allow FCS to service all students. 48% of the school districts' population is low income. The goals outlined in the proposal are feasible and ambitious. Criterion A(2) has been assigned a total of 8 points.

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

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

All schools will be included to implement key goals and objectives. The logic model included in the A8 of the appendix is a high quality plan that describes the priorities of the school district. A framework is included in the proposal that assigns responsibilities to key personnel is descriptive. Efforts to scale up will be adequately met after RTTT-D goals are implemented in all schools. The district justifiably compares academic performance with districts within the state and throughout the nation with similar demographics to ensure achievement targets are realistic. The district goals to increase graduation rates to 90% and increase SAT scores for students who desire to attend college are feasible. FCS's vision is for all students to learn to reach their full potential. FCS's desired outcome of assessing 100% of assessed students to be certified as workforce ready is ambitious but can be accomplished through maintaining its clear and focused vision. Through educational partnerships with the Broad Foundation, the district has committed to continuing its desire to be innovative. The district has documented its continued focus for academic improvement efforts in reading and math content areas. FCS's plan to have school flexibility analysts that will review data will support efforts for educational reform. FCS will receive full points for A(3).

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

10

10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district is part of a consortium of 23 states that works collectively to develop English and math assessments. Thorough data charts with z-scores for academic proficiency and exceeding achievement with increasing goals throughout the awarded grant cycle have been included.

The South and Central Learning Communities are noted to have the largest concentration of students with significant academic gaps. Math and science are academic content areas with emphasized need of improvement. Below is a list of student groups that FCS desires to decrease academic gaps in academic achievement:

- African American students
- Hispanic students
- Limited English students
- Economically Disadvantaged students

Baseline goals included in the proposal are feasible.

Appropriate goals to have a 90% graduation rate during the first year after the grant award money has been exhausted will ensure that students are prepared for college enrollment after completion of high school. The district's innovative ideas to provide blended learning labs, career pathway schools to meet student interest, and a plan to enhance instructional support by offering graduation plans and tracking programs will assist in efforts in increase graduation rates.

FCS application notes that student enrollment in college from the district is among the highest in the state of Georgia. 72.7% of the 2011 class enrolled in a post high school program.

The vision of FCS is aligned with the organization of learning communities will supports its efforts to decrease achievement gaps and increase academic performance for all learners. Full points have been assigned.

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

|  | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
|  |           |       |

|  |    |    |
|--|----|----|
| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)   | 15 | 11 |
| <p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The description of how the state rates schools low achieving in sound. FCS has made efforts to close achievement gaps, but student state data achievement did not consistently increase during the four years reported. However, past successes in reading/language arts are excellently presented.</p> <p>Below is a list of FCS's appropriate reform efforts included in this proposal to support efforts to raise achievement in low-achieving schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• placing students in classes dependent on ability</li> <li>• implementing the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards</li> <li>• Checkpoints(interim assessments to ensure that curriculum has been taught effectively)</li> <li>• Schools have been classified by specific criteria as a priority(lowest achieving schools), focus(biggest achievement gap among the highest and lowest performing students, alert (schools with needs of improvement with a subgroup) and reward school (highest performance and progress schools)</li> <li>• Flexible Learning Programs provide at-risk failing students additional learning opportunities</li> </ul> <p>Parents are provided access to the Parent Portal online student data system that tracks grades, program participation and discipline referrals. Teachers have access to student data and are required to provide feedback to students and parents. The district's documented availability of performance data to all stakeholders ensures that all have the ability to say informed. FCS's efforts will provide opportunities for continued progress monitoring by all stakeholders. Eleven points have been awarded due to lack of consistent data to support efforts to close achievement gaps.</p> |    |    |
| (B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)   | 5  | 2  |
| <p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Salary schedules are posted on the district website. The applicant has listed an average salary schedule for teachers in the application but fails to describe appropriate measures on how the applicant makes available personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff and teachers. Salary information and school expenditures for the district are reported to the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts where it is published by the state agency annually on an Open Georgia website. There is no documentation within the proposal on how non-personnel expenditures at the school level are available. Two points have been assigned for B(2). The applicant did not fully address this criterion.</p>  |    |    |
| (B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)  | 10 | 10 |
| <p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has provided sufficient evidence of autonomy. Establishing into a charter will allow schools to have complete local control. As noted in the application, Georgia's state legislator created Senate Bill 39 to allow for school district flexibility. According to the grant application a district that desires to become a charter would need to contract with the state. The charter contract allows for autonomy in funding, technology and designing of academic programs. FCS's establishment of School Governance Councils that create strategic plans for schools is a sound collaborative opportunity for parents, teachers, non-teaching employees, community members, high school students, and principals to work collectively to ensure adequate personalized learning environments. Full points have been assigned.</p>   |    |    |
| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)  | 10 | 7  |
| <p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Seven community forums were held in 2010 when the district introduced its initial desire to become a charter. Over 1,000 parents and staff members in attendance and the district conducted focus groups at four middle and four high schools engaging over 70 students. The district created a website and used social media to enhance communication. FCS has documented support from elected officials and the teacher of the year. The district also notes support from teachers, principals and parent advisory councils. The district has convincingly documented the support of teachers by including their signatures in the appendix.</p> <p>FCS has documented support from the Atlanta public library, CFY's Digital Learning Program, the State of Georgia, Communities in Schools, The Center of Education Policy and Research at Harvard University and the Broad Foundation. The organizations listed are groups that have a prior record of success in assisting with educational reform efforts. Ten points have been assigned for this application criterion.</p>  |    |    |

Although the district does mention that the Superintendent meets regularly with parents, students, teachers, principals, and leaders of the community the school district does not provide clear evidence of stakeholder involvement with creating the proposal. Seven points have been assigned.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

FCS provides adequate details on its desires to increase student achievement in math and science and increase the graduation rate. Local data analysis is compared with student state level performance. The district also compares SAT data with school districts across the nation. The district plan to continue to provide personalized learning and support to students is thorough. Remediation efforts will convincingly provide high needs students with appropriate interventions and instruction prior to enrollment in high school. Online and onsite flexibility in learning, accelerated classes and small group intervention will ensure the reform is achievable.

The timeline included in the application list project goals, deliverables and key personnel responsible for implementation. The timeline fails to fully address how and what procedures will be used to implement project activities. All aspects of the high quality plan's vision are not clear. Three points are assigned.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

FCS is committed to a plan that provides technology transformation. The timeline included in the application describes goals and deliverables adequately. The innovative plan mentions that students will be engaged in accelerated remedial and application skill programs. The district has provided ambitious efforts to ensure schools flexibility in creating programs of learning. Math and science are content target areas for the district. Below are projects listed in the applicants' proposal to address continued achievement:

- Blended Learning Labs to support and provide feedback high needs students
- Fulton institute of Technology - specialized career pathways for students in high school based of student interest
- Integrated Digital Content in all content
- Credit Recovery Opportunities in all contents
- Diversified Math Instruction that is engaging and relevant
- Accessible content where students and parents are able to download as needed
- Self-paced learning
- Distance learning classes
- Enhance instruction supports by providing assistance with graduation plans and 9th grade summer bridge transitioning opportunities
- Computers for Youth will be created to provide workshops for families and affordable internet for low income families
- Communities in Schools will provided case management support and feedback to at-risk 9th grade students

The plan for providing feedback is sound. Teachers will be responsible for gathering, analyzing, and using data to provide timely and constructive feedback to both students and parents. Teachers will also receive training through the Fulton County Schools- University on how to support students with learning and completing their graduation plans.

The district has included a clear timeline for achieving goals. Most goals will appropriately be implemented in the fall of 2013. Points have been deducted because cultural diversity components were not mentioned in the proposal. Seventeen points have been assigned.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

FCS has an ambitious plan to identify effective teachers. FCS has clearly outlined how their new evaluation tools, Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES), will assist in raising student achievement through effective feedback and documented observations.

The school district has designed a unique performance management tool that connects student achievement, employee

performance and professional development. The system described is designed to link employees with professional development based off of its strengths and areas of weakness. The school district has ambitiously created the Fulton County Schools- University (FCS) as a professional development project that will allow educational stakeholders to network and engage in instructional best practices virtually and face to face.

A clear timeline for training has been provided in the application. Within its high quality plan, the district has included partnerships with university to develop course work. Developing its own leaders is a goal of FCS. The applicant list details of a multi-tiered principal selection process. FCS also notes that outside applicants will still be included in search for new leaders. The district application describes its efforts to support teachers by creating leadership opportunities within their professional development timeline.

The district has adequately provided information on how it plans to support students to graduate college and career ready. Listed below are some of its ambitious efforts documented in the grant application:

- Request of Flexibility – so that each learning community can manage and create its own staffing allocations, class size and seat size
- Instructional Improvement System – creates common formative assessments, benchmarks, serves as a data dash board, manage curriculum and progress monitor Response to Intervention and Individual Education Plans.
- WorkKeys Assessments – Pre and Post assessments given in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade to measure careers and college readiness.

In addition to what is noted above, the district plans to transform how credits are earned through accelerated learning opportunities, innovative distance learning, face to face class opportunities and outside field experiences.

Although this ambitious high quality application presents teaching and learning initiatives, a detailed description of student outcomes, opportunities for collaboration and project-based learning experiences was vaguely noted in this application. A rating of 18 has been assigned.

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

|   | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)   | 15        | 15    |
| <p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's ambitious efforts to transform into a charter will provide needed support and services to all participating schools. Its efforts to create learning communities in the South, Central, Northwest and Northeast areas, if executed properly, will provide opportunities for increased collaboration, centralized focus and effective management. The timeline included in section A8 of the appendix appropriately address the goals and deliverables.</p> <p>Within the high quality plan, district notes that each area will have a School Governance Council in addition to a staff consisting of an area superintendent, executive director and numerous other support personnel that will assist with school reform efforts. The described reform efforts for each council allow for flexibility in scheduling, creating class schedules, and restructuring of classes to benefit the needs of all learners.</p> <p>FCS has a focus on creating opportunities for students to receive credits beyond traditional means. This high quality application places emphasis on the need for student mastery and deemphasizes the need for students to spend allocated seat time in a specific classroom. Virtual learning, community and project-based learning are examples of FCC plan to support students' needs and interest by creating unique learning opportunities.</p> <p>This application mentions that there may be a need to increase seat time for students with disabilities and limited English. Checkpoint assessments are also sufficiently described to be given multiple times throughout the school year so that adjustments to instruction may be made as needed. As stated previously, virtual learning, community and project-based learning are feasible ways in which FCS will provide opportunities to demonstrate what they have learned in content.</p> <p>The applicant is assigned full points for criterion D(1).</p> |           |       |
| (D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)  | 10        | 10    |
| <p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>  |           |       |

The timeline included in section A8 of the appendix appropriately address the goals and deliverables and adequately provides personnel responsible for implementing project activities. Instructional Improvement System (IIS) is a uniquely designed data base created to ensure transparency throughout the district. The district notes that the progress monitoring system will service all students and will provide all stakeholders (teachers, parents, and students) with access to individualized student plans and academic achievement. FCS has a Parent Resource Center and parents also have access to a school's media center. Also, access to student data can be obtained via the Atlanta Public Library System. FCS has mentioned in this application that qualified students on free and reduced lunch are eligible for the Comcast Internet Essentials program for \$9.95 a month.

The district has appropriately addressed technical support for IIS by providing stakeholders' with video, reference pages, email and phone support.

The grant applicant meets open data format expectations by noting that parents can export Excel and pdf reports once the district ensures that the parent is complaint with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Dashboards will be created in IIS to support principals as they manage student achievement, attendance, discipline incidences, and employee operations.

FCS has fully addressed in selection criteria in D2. A detailed description on the infrastructure used to support student achievement has been addressed.

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

|  | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-------|
| (E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)  | 15        | 15    |
| <p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>FCS documented improvement efforts are achievable. Shared ownership through multiple stakeholders will ensure that the project goals are successfully implemented. An executive sponsor will design a work plan and will design goals and deliverables. Monthly meetings with cabinet members are described to provide updates and to allow cabinet members the opportunity to offer feedback and recommended improvements. Public will have access to information via the websites, formal quarterly and annual reports.</p> <p>FCS has fully described its continuous improvement process.</p>   |           |       |
| (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)   | 5         | 5     |
| <p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>FCS superintendent conducts frequent meetings with a variety of stakeholders within the community and district. Communication efforts to include teachers, parents, and students are feasible. The applicant notes that there will be monthly, quarterly, and semi-quarterly council meetings to establish communication with stakeholders. The district plans to include RTTT-D project updates as a regular agenda item if selected as a grant awardee. Sound evidence is mentioned that a Race to the Top Advisory Team will be created to provide counsel on a continuous basis. Full points have been awarded for this selection criterion.</p>   |           |       |
| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)   | 5         | 2     |
| <p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has listed 15 performance measures. Below is a description of some of the performance measure goals:</p> <p>School with an effective and highly effective principal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant will link principal performance to student outcomes to ensure that our neediest students have access to effective and highly effective leaders.</li> </ul> <p>Teacher of record is considered effective or highly effective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant will differentiate teacher performance and make human capital decisions based on performance.</li> </ul> <p>PreK-3 students overall and by subgroup who exhibit academic growth in ELA, reading, math, and science as well as social-emotional development and physical well-being in fine arts, health and</p> |           |       |

physical education, and social studies as measured by their Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

- Fulton will create SLOs for non-tested subjects that are content-specific and standards-aligned

9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students deemed "Work Ready" in Reading for Information, Locating Information, and Applied Mathematics on the ACT WorkKeys Assessment

- Efforts will be established on career pathways and ensure that all of our students are career-ready

The percentage of students with a highly effective teacher and principal shows limited growth during the grant cycle. For example, information on students whose teacher and principal are highly effectively only shows yearly growth for less than 5% during and beyond the grant cycle. Retention rate of high effective teachers and principals has been estimated at +3%.

FCS's school academic growth goals for elementary, middle and high school students are realistic and achievable.

The grant applicant has noted performances measures but it is unclear how percentages in tables were formulated. Four points have been assigned.

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Evaluative measures are described in the grant application. The applicant desires to hire an external evaluator and research analyst to ensure goals are effectively met. FCS has also included measures for staff feedback.

Data indicators within FCS's data monitoring tools are noted to track student's college and career status and academic achievement.

FCS School Governance Councils roles and duties are described throughout the grant to ensure that schools are designed to meet the needs of students within the learning community.

This grant application will not receive full award points because FCS lacks a description of who will monitor money and other resources. Four points have been assigned.

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

|   | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-------|
| (F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points) | 10        | 8     |

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has done an excellent job describing approval of local sales tax (SPLOST IV) to fund capital, technology, and infrastructure improvement projects.

FCS's general fund, Title I, Title IIA, Title III, and TVI-B will fund aspects of the following programs included in the proposal:

- Blended Learning Labs
- Fulton Institute of Technology
- Instructional Supports
- FCS University
- Alternative Compensation Pilot
- Instructional Improvement System
- Dropout Prevention

The district has failed to fully identify one time investments but the district board commitment has been appropriately described beyond the grant cycle. FCS budget highlights that supplies and the blended learning labs will have one time investments but more information is needed on specifics. The applicant will not receive full award points. Eight points have been assigned.

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

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A monetary timeline included in section F(2) of the grant proposal gives an excellent description of leveraged funding that will

be used to sustain the grant beyond the grant cycle. Included in the application is a description that approximately \$61.5M in Title I Disadvantaged Students, \$5.7M in Title II-A Professional Learning, \$2.4M in Title III-Limited English Proficient federal funding, \$45.3M in Title VI-B Exceptional Children, and \$37.8M in SPLOST funding will be available to enhance the General Fund and maintain the strategic initiatives. The high quality proposal does an excellent job of describing the applicant's projects, goals, and assignment of key personnel responsible for implementing tasks. Financial stability has been soundly described. There is evidence of support from the school board. FCS has partnerships with the Broad and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation both foundations have been in the district for the past four years. The goals of this application are realistic and sound. Full points are assigned.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Fulton Family Care Network supports the district with students that have complex social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Several local government agencies are included in the grant application and a description of the varied support provided to FCS. An explicit table outlining tracked success is included. The table has a timeline for deliverable results. The applicant performance measures target goals are feasible. The applicant has fully addressed this criterion.

### Absolute Priority 1

|                     | Available   | Score |
|---------------------|-------------|-------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | Met/Not Met | Met   |

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The comprehensive plan to reestablish into charter system will raise student achievement. Fulton County has provided evidence that the sound plan to restructure into a charter system will allow for instructional innovation and increased academics in reading and math by incorporating common core standards and leveraged local autonomy. FCS's establishment of School Governance Councils that create strategic plans for schools is a sound collaborative opportunity for parents, teachers, non-teaching employees, community members, high school students, and principals to work collectively to ensure adequate personalized learning environments. FCS has a focus on creating opportunities for students to receive credits beyond traditional means. This application places emphasis on the need for student mastery and deemphasizes the need for students to spend allocated seat time in a specific classroom. Virtual learning, community and project-based learning are examples of FCS's plan to support students' needs and interest by creating unique learning opportunities.

The district goals to increase graduation rates to 90% and increase SAT scores for students who desire to attend college are feasible. Fulton's vision is for all students to learn to reach their full potential. FCS desired outcome for 100% of assessed students be certified as workforce ready is ambitious but can be accomplished through maintaining its clear and focused vision. Innovative ideas to provide blended learning labs, career pathway schools to meet student interest, and a plan to enhance instructional support by offering graduation plans and tracking programs will assist in efforts to increase graduation rates. Credit recovery opportunities have been uniquely designed in all contents.

The school district has designed a unique performance management tool that connects student achievement, employee performance and professional development. The system described is designed to link employees with professional development based off of its strengths and areas of weakness. The comprehensive vision of the district includes measures to advance instruction and provide capacity building measures for the superintendent, central staff, principal and teachers. The school district has ambitiously created the Fulton County Schools- University (FCS) as a professional development project that will allow educational stakeholders to network and engage in instructional best practices virtually and face to face.

Fulton County School has met the criterion for the competitive preference absolute priority 1.

|       |     |     |
|-------|-----|-----|
| Total | 210 | 185 |
|-------|-----|-----|