



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0489NC-1 for Iredell-Statesville Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is one of the largest districts in its state and includes a mix of rural and suburban communities. It has a rich history of growth over recent years due to is receiving funds from the Race to the Top state competition and the Investing in Innovation (i3) grant. These monies have been used to make substantial gains in student achievement, but now the district is ready to move forward again. They have adopted a new mindset, from "improving the system we have" to "innovating the system we need." This includes moving beyond the centuries old model of assembly line education into a new learner-centered model.</p> <p>In order to achieve this transition, the district has proposed four areas of concentration: increasing teacher and principal effectiveness, providing excellent curriculum that meets the new standards, establishing a data system to track and report progress, and turning around schools with the greatest achievement gaps. These four areas of focus contribute together to provide a learner-centered model which includes personalized instruction based on student needs and backgrounds, which can be accessed anywhere anytime. This new learning modality will extend the impact of highly effective teachers by enabling all students to have electronic access to lessons taught by the best teachers in the district. Students master a concept and move on when they are ready, and likewise a student who needs extra time to understand a topic will not hold the rest of the class up or be expected to move on. The use of these technology-based learning techniques will further allow teachers to serve as mentors, coaches, and tutors, instead of lecturer, giving each student more individual time with the teacher who uses the database to access all of the student's records and achievements.</p> <p>The vision set out by this district is based upon 21st Century learning tools along with instruction in the mindsets needed by all students: problem-solving skills. Because it combines a model that provides access to the best teachers in the district for all students, increased individual time with teachers with access to all of the student's data and records, and the ability for all students to learn anytime, anywhere, its potential for success is very high. This section has scored a high mark.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district looked at the records of student growth along with levels of the highest poverty rates to begin the selection of participating schools. Next the administrators looked for readiness for reform that they determined by the level of teacher and leader buy-in along with a successful implementation of the earlier reform strategies. This process reduced the 36 schools to 15, including 4 high schools, their 9 feeder middle schools, and 2 non-traditional middle-high schools. These schools represent 44% of the district enrollment and 81% of the middle and high school population, along with 788 teachers. 44.37% of these students are identified as low-income, making this district's proposal eligible for funding.</p> <p>The application includes a table that describes the population of each participating school, including number of high-needs students (8,068 total), low-income students (4,136 total). This percentage of low-income students ranges from 5% to 88%, but averages at 44.37%.</p> <p>This district used a combination of data, past performance, and teacher and leader attitudes to choose the participating school. All of these factors indicate that each school has a high potential for success, and grouping these schools together will enable all of these schools to assist each other. This district's approach to implementation is carefully considered and provides a high mark in this section.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

To implement its plan, LEA-side reform, the district has created an IMPACT (Innovative Methods for Personalizing Academics, Complemented by Technology) management team to provide direction, management, accountability, development of the sustainability plan, and district-wide scale up. This team will be led by the Project Director and include district administrators, independent evaluators, learning coordinators, along with parents, partners, and teachers. This wide variety of stakeholders will help ensure that all viewpoints are considered and that the community's viewpoints are represented. The plan also includes personalized learning teams at each school to guide the project and also measure its success and report back to the project management team.

The implementation plan includes four phases of development before the project is begun at the school level and later scaled up. Each phase includes a schedule and action plans. Unfortunately the graphs included in the proposal are especially difficult to read, but the table provides more detailed information. Each phase takes several months of careful planning and reflection to ensure the project's successful launch in January of 2014. Following the first three years of the project, the district plans to take the project to all of the schools it serves.

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

The application includes lengthy tables that describe current levels of success on the state end-of-grade reading comprehension and mathematics tests for grades 6-8, and the end-of-course Algebra I and English I tests for high school, along with achievement goals for the life of the project and beyond. These goals are divided by goal area - subject and grade level, along with each student subgroup compared to its complement. The plans are to decrease the achievement gap by placing a focus of personalized learning approaches for all students and an immediate and intensive remediation as needed. Current graduation rates have improved markedly over the last few years due to earlier projects, but they still need improvement. The current subgroup with the lowest graduation rate is English language learners at 48.1%. The goal is to increase their graduation rate to 66% following the life of the grant. College enrollment numbers are closely related to graduation rates, but the subgroup with the lowest rate is the students with disabilities, at 43%. The goal for their improvement is to increase to 60.7%, an increase of over 17%, and the highest college enrollment goal of all of the subgroups. The goals listed in these tables could be achieved with careful implementation of this project and continuous focus on the goals. This section received a high mark for its carefully considered and achievable goals.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This district has a very clear track record of success, as proven by its achievement gains following each of its earlier reform efforts. Prior to the reform efforts, students had a graduation rate of only 61%, a 7% dropout rate, a 23% gap for blacks and 43% for students with disabilities, and was rated the 57th worst district in the state according to SAT scores. Significant reform work has taken place since then and now over 96% of the district's teachers are highly qualified. Since the first year of the reform the district as scored above the state and regional averages in student learning outcomes. The result of this hard work is that the district is now the 14th highest rated district in the state for achievement, while remaining one of the lowest districts in funding and expenditures. This year's statistics show a graduation rate of 87%, an increase of 26%, with academic growth by subgroup over the past four years as follows: black students increased math scores by nearly 25%, English language learners increased math scores by 27% and reading scores by more than 10%, and low income students increased math scores by 22% and reading scores by 16%.

The district currently supports EdMatters, which are educational forums held during the school year for parents, staff, and community. Attendees can learn about student performance and district issues. The superintendent and other administrators seek feedback, identify potential solutions, and continue an on-going discussion. Parents, students, and teachers have access to school report cards, the annual report, and student-led parent conferences. Parent Assist is a web application that helps parents track their children's progress with real time results available in English, Spanish, and French. With the implementation of this project, the focus will move toward tablets and applications for the same information. Future plans also include increased availability of student performance data to measure participation, instruction, and student services. Quarterly project meetings will be hold to engage stakeholders with the evaluation results and student data.

These achievements are remarkable and deserve recognition. This increase in skills and transparency in reporting will continue its momentum successfully with Race to the Top-District funding.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district involves the staff in making finance, personnel, and building decisions. The district website includes information that is available and easy accessible by all community members, parents, and staff, including personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, personnel salaries for instructional staff, at the school level for teachers, and non-personnel expenditures. The district also provides this information at parent and community meetings, through press releases, and with hard and digital copies. The new project will also develop a family app that will make this information easily accessible via smart phones. This section is scored high for the high degree of transparency.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This district has a history of success on many levels. The Smaller Learning Community grant provided over \$6 million for 5 high schools, which was used to begin the reform efforts, resulting in improved student performance, graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment. The district won the Baldrige Award in 2008 which was based upon its implementation of the Plan, Do, Study, Act program that brought reform to the classroom level. They also won an i3 grant from the US Department of Education which was used to organize a cross-functional team to support high-needs students.</p> <p>The state department of public instruction provides the flexibility to implement personalized learning environments, including the ability to hire the most experienced and educated certified personnel without exact budget limitations, the ability to determine the criteria for subject and grade advancement, cross-grade and flexible subject grouping, online courses, along with a waiver of restrictions on the use of state funding and other state laws and policies.</p> <p>This section has received a high score for its autonomy and successful conditions that will promote the success of this project.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This proposal was written after a large number of stakeholder groups were engaged in its development. During a professional development day the teachers were presented with the project summary, and after their feedback was taken into account, nearly 80% of the teachers demonstrated their support of the project. An appendix shows the signatures of many of the supporters of this project. This state does not have collective bargaining. Letters of support were received from two of the three mayors of the involved communities. EdMatters, the educational forum, provided opportunities for parents, students, and the community to provide feedback and join the discussions in the formation of this project. The design team includes administrations and parents from the middle and high schools. The district has also gained an enormous amount of community partners who have pledged their assistance in many ways.</p> <p>This section received a high score because the entire community was involved from the beginning in the formation of the plan, and has had constant opportunities for feedback that has resulted in changes being made. The district has the support of many local companies, organizations, and religious affiliations, along with the backing of two mayors.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>From the background work for earlier grants, the district has several years of statistics regarding identified needs and gaps. Despite the work from these grants, some gaps still exist with 17% of black, 23% of Hispanic, 22% of low income, and 26% of students with disabilities who do not graduate from high school. Similar gaps are found in standardized testing with 35% of black, 25% of Hispanic, 28% of low income, and 47% of students with disabilities performing below grade level. Nearly 56% of black, 48% of Hispanic, 46% of low income, and 76% of students with disabilities did not pass both the reading and mathematics end-of-grade tests. Because of these glaring needs, this project is specifically designed to fill these gaps and provide equity in instruction, with the inclusion of the personalized learning plan that integrates a variety of best practices that were developed from research and analysis of district needs.</p> <p>In creating this project, other factors taken into consideration included demographics, perceptions of the stakeholders, student learning achievements, and the necessity of school processes. The culmination of all of this input resulted in the change of approach from "improving the system we have" to "innovating the system we need." This section has scored high because of the depth of research and analysis that was conducted to produce this project, which adds to its potential success.</p>		

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The district understands that for students to succeed in college and the workplace they will need a combination of academic skills and social skills to deal with the complexities of their world. The result is the personalized learning project which gives ownership of learning to the student. With multiple enrollment and graduation options, students find that learning is now available all the time, that classrooms are only one of many learning locations, and that students are empowered to direct their learning in ways never experienced before. The learning pace is up to the student, and they can progress as quickly as they are able to master the material, through a combination of technology, digital content, and direct instruction. Students will also learn that other non-cognitive factors are equally important, such as self-regulation, persistence, and motivation. Students use intrinsic motivation rather than relying on teachers to provide it extrinsically. Students have a voice now in their choices of collaborative opportunities, and engagement. Interventions are available as needed for all students to address specific needs. All of these learning and developmental goals are directly linked to college and career ready standards. An new emphasis on creating a college-focused culture will bring about changes starting in middle school, with university tours, college entrance exam preparation, college admissions and financial aid workshops, and personalized assistance in completing the forms. For those students for whom college is not a choice, beginning in middle school students will participate in career exploration activities, such as job shadowing and work study programs.

(b) As part of the implementation of this project, each participating school will assess their students to determine which variations and components of this project fit each individual student and help to form a personalized learning plan. Students will alternate between live teacher and digital learning time, varying from up to 50% of in school learning time. The flex schedule will provide times for digital learning, and small and large group work, and will frequently change to adjust to the needs of the student. Specialization allows the most effective teachers in high priority subjects to rotate among students in this fluid schedule. These teachers have been selected because of their demonstrated ability to provide high quality and engaging lessons that meet the needs of their students. Instructional teams of teachers and paraprofessionals will report to the highly effective lead teacher who provides digital instruction, resulting in a much larger number of students served by the most qualified and effective teachers. Lectures will also be provided online so students can access them at any time. Students will be providing feedback digitally each day to demonstrate their learning and to provide important data for the lead teacher to form plans for the following day, both in class and online. High needs students will have many accommodations available to them, including the Student Assistance Program designed to provide services and support to meet students' emotional and social needs, academic intervention for all subjects, and an early warning system that will inform counselors which student might be at risk to drop out so they can provide early and effective interventions.

(c) A variety of integrated activities will be available to support and compliment student learning goals to helps students manage and track their learning. These activities include the College Readiness Institute, which provides college tours, test preparation, and admissions assistance in collaboration with a local university and community college. Students will be required to complete graduation projects to demonstrate integrated knowledge with a real world application to help students manage and synthesize their learning experiences. Each participating school will have a Student Technology Summit at the beginning of each school year for both students and parents where technology pieces will be assigned, guidelines given for their appropriate use, training on how they work, trouble-shooting hardware and software issues, and integrating the device into the student's life, goals, and objectives. Other examples of student assistance include grade transition activities, summer academic enrichment camps, community mentoring, advisories, and internships.

This section has received a high score because of its many student support systems currently in place and others planned to be implemented to support all student needs. Students will now manage their learning in unprecedented ways and can now accent their own learning preferences to learn content that is most meaningful to them for their future goals.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) This project brings a new way of looking at education, changing from an assembly line approach to one of high quality personalized learning experiences supported by teams of educators working together. Teachers' roles are changing from lecturer to facilitator, coach, and mentor. All teachers will be provided extensive training and support to help them adjust to these new roles. Teachers in each school will begin with a baseline self-assessment to identify their own personal and professional learning needs. The Project Director and Digital Learning Service Technicians will work with teachers to demonstrate the technology infrastructure that will support the new learning platforms. Curriculum Resource Specialists and

the Blended Learning Coordinator will support teachers as they redesign their existing structures with a realignment of instructional time and roles. This support will include assistance to ensure that the relevant and rigorous standards and assessments are being met, data systems are being properly utilized, and services are targeted to student needs. All teachers and leaders will receive at least 10 full days of professional development throughout the school year plus additional opportunities in the summer.

(b) Part of the responsibilities of the Curriculum Resource Specialists and the Blended Learning Coordinator are to assist teachers in the formation of curriculum and assessments that accurately measure student growth. Beginning this last school year, all teachers and principals are evaluated annually which includes a measure of student success, in addition to other measures of teacher effectiveness. Teachers will be instructed how to use data from assessments to measure student growth and determine areas for improvement. These formative assessments will result in individual learning plans. Teachers also have on-demand reports at the individual, classroom, subject, grade, school, and district levels. They can access their own professional learning opportunities anytime and anywhere through online resources, including lesson plans, articles, and external opportunities.

(c) The results of all educator effectiveness evaluations are entered into an online platform, where principals can view identified teacher weaknesses to give immediate feedback and support for improvement. The Blended Learning Coach's responsibilities also include working with teachers to build their skill sets in identified areas. The state's educator evaluation system is aligned with the Framework for 21st Century Learning to create and support more effective leadership, enhance the practice of teachers, and improve instruction. Aggregate data will identify common issues and information regarding school climate and culture. Principals will be provided the training to pull reports for every school, grade, teacher, and class, including demographics, student achievement, at-risk analysis, enrollment, test results, and quarterly assessments. Leaders can use these reports to quickly obtain data indicators they need for school improvement.

(d) The district has done a remarkable job of increasing its number of highly qualified teachers to 97.88% last year, and are now working at increasing the number of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders, especially in schools with lower performance data and high needs assessments. A number of strategies are planned in this project to increase the number of students who receive instruction from highly effective teachers, including a rotation model in which students rotate between digital and live teaching to enable highly effective teachers to reach double the number of students, class size shifting for larger class sizes for highly effective teachers, specialization in high-priority subjects on a fixed, rotating schedule with frequent groupings to enable high quality teachers to reach up to 400% more students, and multi-classroom leadership in which highly qualified teachers will serve as the lead teacher with other teachers. This plan is very unique in its ability to provide each student with instruction daily from highly effective teachers, and those teachers then have the support from others to enable them to focus more of their time on teaching. These highly effective teachers are also training other teachers in their best practices, which is an effective way to provide training for those teachers to improve their practice. This new model of teaching is very ambitious and promising in its ability to provide all students with individualized, quality instruction.

This project includes a vast array of opportunities for professional growth for teachers and leaders with special programs in place to meet problems that haven't even been considered yet. Teachers and leaders will use immediate data to base their instruction to provide a planned personalized learning experience for every student. Teachers and leaders will be held accountable for the results. More students than ever will receive instruction from highly effective teachers, and these same teachers will be assisting new and experienced teachers in better practices. For these reasons this section has earned a high rating.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This district has already undergone extensive changes in the way it operates to improve learning in every school. It plans even more changes as this new project is implemented. The district has embedded the "Learning Triangle" and "Operations Triangle" as the approaches used to improve services at every level. The Learning Triangle uses formative assessments, standards-based instruction, and collaborative teams to improve student instruction. The Operations Triangle uses collaborative teams, customer requirements, and performance measures to ensure that operations support the schools as needed. The Board of Education performs a "Systems Check" as part of their mid-year and end-of-year reviews and is used to identify areas of improvement, including needed resources and policies to support the district's goals. These recommendations become part of the district's annual improvement plans.

A key component of this project is personalization and the district believes that schools should have this same freedom to get

the job done. The targeted schools will have autonomy in choosing appropriate strategies, scheduling, calendars, personnel, staffing structures, and identification of key roles and responsibilities.

One of the biggest strengths of this project is the ability of students to manage their own learning and progress at their chosen speed. Students will have opportunities to progress based on mastery, which can be demonstrated in various ways including online, teacher provide assessments, group work, and student projects.

The use of technology in this proposal makes it especially appropriate for special needs students. Students with disabilities and English language learners can receive instruction through a variety of formats, and have special materials such as audio, magnified, and large print versions of documents. Assessments are planned which will allow students with special needs to demonstrate skills in a way that best suits their needs.

The needs of all learners, including, students, parents, teachers, and leaders have been carefully considered in this proposal. The design of the district office provides support to schools without dictating policy, enabling school leaders to make decisions that are best for their schools. Students will have more tools and opportunities than ever before to learn material in new and exciting formats and demonstrate mastery at their own times and on their own terms. Accommodations are easily made in this structure to meet the various needs of students with disabilities or other special needs. For these reasons, this section has been given a high mark.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In this project, schools will have appropriate internet connectivity for each classroom and will provide 1 to 1 technology for each student. Students may bring their own devices to school or borrow a tool from the school's lending library, including tablets and netbooks with broadband mobile cards for home internet access. Four technicians will also be hired to ensure that all devices are running and that the infrastructure support learning at all times. These technicians will also provide professional development sessions to teachers, students, and parents on how to use the devices and trouble-shooting. Students, teachers, and leaders will have access anytime anywhere to their materials. Each school will host a project web site which will include frequently asked questions on devices and learning platforms. This will also include a digital chatroom moderated by technicians for immediate assistance.

The online system will include a parent portal where parents can access their child's performance data, contact teachers or principals, current assignments, and storage of student work. Parents can also access instructional videos or digital learning content to assist their children as needed.

The district will maintain a centralized data warehouse connected to all computer systems that will provide information on productivity, amount and content of teacher and leader knowledge, assessments and results, feedback, evaluations and observations, assessment results, and other key pieces of information. Each tool will be made available to the appropriate parties and will be available anytime, anywhere.

This district has planned the technology pieces to be adaptive to the many student, parent, and teacher needs that might arise. Technicians will be hired to constantly monitor and trouble-shoot any problems to ensure that the system works continuously and well. Use of one centralized data system ensures that information can be shared between teachers, leaders, and schools. This section has received a high rating.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has programs in place that will provide constant feedback from all stakeholders in the project. The administrators are of the mindset that feedback is critical if they are to make informed decisions that provide the best program possible. An independent third party evaluation firm will be hired to solicit unbiased feedback quarterly to assist administrators in monitoring progress, identifying potential adjustments, and providing positive outcomes. The district will develop a web-based data dashboard to monitor and evaluate performance, with targets, benchmarks, and actual performance. These dashboards create easy to read charts, tables, and data processing to assist participants with visual representations. A fidelity index has been provided to score each component of the program for an overall score. This index will be derived from four key measures: quality, dosage, reach, and reactions. This plan includes both in-district and independent evaluations to continually monitor and improve the process of the grant and has received a high score.

The proposal features many avenues for stakeholders to provide feedback and the district is open to improving its operations based on this feedback. This section has received a high mark.

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

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5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan for this project includes constant communication between stakeholders and project managers. The project management team, school improvement teams, and expert consultants have many meetings and forums scheduled to discuss progress and listen to feedback for improvement. Each quarter evaluation reports, management team meetings, and sustainability planning will take place. Both internal and external stakeholders are invited to attend scheduled meetings to offer feedback, and the district's approach to inviting feedback to potentially improve its performance will add to the effectiveness of this proposal. This section is scored high.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district has identified and described seven performance measures for the grade levels served by this proposal, 6 - 12. These performance measures include disciplinary referrals, disciplinary actions, absenteeism as it related to proficiency on tests, and other assessments. Each performance measure includes a description, an explanation of why this performance measure can directly improve student performance, a measure of the ability to provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information, and quarterly meetings scheduled to assess performance and make suggestions for improvement. While there is no task assignment list, it can be assumed that ultimately all of these responsibilities belong to the Project Director.

This section has received a medium rating because of its limited number of performance measures and the duplication of ideas from several performance measures, for example separating the disciplinary referrals and suspensions as two categories, when one is the action based upon the other. These non-academic measures have not been developed or discussed in other portions of the application. Other measures have been discussed in detail in other portions of the application and it would be appropriate to include them here as well.

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

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5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district plans to assess each core activity for its effectiveness and productivity on an ongoing basis. The earlier assessment options will be used here to measure the results against the intended outcomes. The management team will look at each core activity to specify the expected targets according to the four criteria of implementation described earlier, measure the results against the expected outcomes, and compile and report these assessments. Quantitative data will include test scores and administrative data, while qualitative data will include interviews, focus groups, surveys, meeting minutes, and documents and artifacts. Combining qualitative and quantitative data will provide a depth of information to enable the district to make mid-course corrections in a timely manner. The district will also be assessing productivity using business-based practices to align staff, structure and supports. This project will have a return on investment process that will measure the amount of learning for every dollar spent. The goal is to identify problem areas, modify short and long term goals, and identify cost-effective interventions. At the beginning of each project year the management team will consult with an external evaluator to view the plan to identify investments dedicated to implement each core activity, review the overall plan, and assess indicators. A table is included with identifies specific activities for continuous improvement evaluations, the time, and responsible parties. This section has score high for its thorough use of internal and external measurements and plans to adjust the program accordingly.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget includes job descriptions for each employee hired as part of this project. There are questions about the pay scales given. For example, the Curriculum Resource Specialists will have 10-month assignments to provide professional development in designing standards aligned with digital content and instruction, with an annual pay of \$33,000 per year. It would be challenging to hire two professionals with the appropriate credentials and experience at this pay rate, even with considerations

for a lower cost of living index for the state. Digital Learning Service Technicians would have 12 month positions to supply all of the training, updates, infrastructure, and technology support for the entire digital portion of this project, one of the key components. These 4 professionals would be paid \$44,000 per year, which is also extremely low by industry standards for technology experts. These technicians have the potential to be drawn from other businesses, where a much higher pay scale is given, and to hire the best personnel for this position the pay scale must reflect a high regard for the skills and experience needed. The budget does not have a high enough percentage given to personnel and it raises concerns about the project's ability to succeed when so little pay is provided for these vital positions.

Conference and travel expenses have been limited to two leaders attending the annual Race to the Top Grantee Meetings and four staff members to attend national conferences. It would be imperative for such a leading-edge project as this to stay on top of all of the latest developments and to compare results with other districts. For this reason it would seem appropriate that all project administrators be expected to attend at least one national conference per year.

The other budget items are inclusive of anticipated needs and reflect appropriate costs. Additional funds are identified and listed by source and the amount per year. This section has been rated medium for its disproportionately low budget for key positions that would ensure the success of the project.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district has written a high-quality sustainability plan that emphasizes its dedication to personalized learning pathways for all students. A large portion of the budget will be spent on training for the coaches in each school and it is expected that four of these fourteen coaches will continue to train and assist teachers for the years following the funding period. There is no mention how the attrition of the other ten employees will be handled. The use of state support for technology is planned for future years to maintain this project, with between 20% and 80% of the funding to come from state sources. The district will continue to utilize its Return on Educational Investment rating to calculate the amount of learning per dollar spent, and will continue to make project improvements as needed.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

(1) The district has formed a number of partnerships with community organizations to provide social services, tutors, health care needs, behavior intervention supports, and online tools. These partnerships are expected to continue through the funding period and beyond. The appendix of the application includes letters of support from these organizations.

(2) Five population-level results have been identified, including students graduating college and career ready, reduction in discipline referrals, reduction in in-school and out-of-school suspensions, appropriate services for social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, and family support from schools and outside organizations. The district plans to work as a team with its outside organization partnerships to provide services that might not be available in the school setting.

(3) The district currently uses several software programs to track selected indicators and measure results. The new project will provide an integrated data system that will incorporate all of this information and allow principals, counselors, and teachers to have secure mobile access to vital student information. The district currently uses the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework to increase academic performance and behavior for all students. PBIS is preventative in nature and attempts to identify and mentor students when problems first arise. The district uses outside evaluators to analyze the data collected from school databases, student focus groups, and parent surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of this program.

(4) The school partners with outside organizations for services in four categories: mental health, mentoring and tutoring, technological support, and professional development. All services are integrated throughout the entire district. PBIS is implemented at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels to provide different prevention strategies to support healthy behavior and improved learning.

(5) The district's use of PBIS provides a structure for assessing the needs of students to provide interventions at the early onset of issues. If a student's needs are chronic, further assessments and interventions are provided by school counselors and support staff, and if tertiary level services are needed the outside partnerships are utilized. The school needs and assets are measured through the Teacher Working Conditions Survey and student focus groups. The community's strengths and needs are identified through the parent and student surveys, student focus groups, partner meetings, and feedback from students

and parents. The PBIS framework provides a structure and procedure for addressing student needs. Administrators, teachers, and school counselors receive regular training in the use of PBIS which allows these professionals to select, implement, and evaluate necessary supports. The district enjoys a 91% participating rate for parent teacher conferences throughout the district. Parents are actively involved in district problem solving and decision making by serving on the School Improvement Teams and participating in Town Hall meetings. The implementation process undergoes assessment on a continual basis through quarterly meetings with school and district level staff and community partners. Formal assessments occurs on an annual basis led by outside evaluators.

(6) The district's goals for this project are very ambitious but the plans in place, including job descriptions, responsibilities, and checks and balances, ensure that the project will be successful, both in the grant period and beyond. This section was not directly included in the narrative section of the application, but it has been adequately addressed throughout the other sections of the application. The included tables list the performance measures and the anticipated outcome for each year of the project and for the first year following the grant period. These results are achievable and reflect the emphasis on closing achievement gaps among low income, English language learner, and other student groups.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

This project provides personalized learning environments for high school and middle school students in low income and low achieving schools throughout the district. Through the project, students will have access to technology so they can manage their own learning anytime anywhere, by the use of online lessons and tutorials designed and assigned by the student's teachers. As the student completes each assignment his/her performance is measured and the next lessons are based upon performance of the prior topics. Students spend about half of their school hours in technology based learning and, according to their needs and preferences, spend the rest of the time in direct instruction, small and large group activities, and other learning projects. Student advancement is based on mastery of subject matter so students can progress at the rate that most suits their individual needs, learning styles, and preferences. Throughout this project, the emphasis is on college and career readiness, with additional resources and focus on each of these pathways to enable students to make their own choices for their futures.

Total	210	201
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0489NC-2 for Iredell-Statesville Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in four core educational assurance areas. Those four core educational areas include, "increasing teacher and principal effectiveness, supporting student learning with relevant and rigorous internationally benchmarked curriculum standards and assessments, establishing

and using robust data systems that measure student success and inform educators about how they can improve delivery of services and activities targeted to students' individual needs, and turning around schools that have persistent student achievement gaps." Evidence of this work includes the development of a learner-centered blended learning model that includes individualized content, project and group learning experiences, and teacher instruction. This model will move the district beyond the mass-production model to produce learner-driven approaches.

The project is defined by its title, "IMPACT: Innovative Methods for Personalizing Academics Complemented by Technology." That title is supported by the district's vision to ignite a passion for lifelong learning by creating personalized flexible pathways for students to learn anytime, anywhere.

The applicant's reform vision is built on the previous work that has been accomplished in the district. For example, the district reform efforts in 2003 included implementing the core components of the Model of Performance Excellence. This is a successful systems-based continuous improvement approach because this learning triangle is based on best practices and provides a strong support for the next steps for the IMPACT proposal.

The applicant has provided strong support for a comprehensive and coherent reform vision as indicated in the comments above,

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

The applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation. This is supported in part by the fact that the decision-making regarding school selections was based on schools indicating readiness for reform and success in implementing other reform strategies. The district determined this readiness by identifying teacher and leader buy-in.

The applicant provides a research-based rationale for selection of schools. For example, the applicant indicates that the decision to select the high schools and middle schools with the highest poverty rates and lowest achievement rates would be part of the project due to the research that supports the indication that economically disadvantaged students are far more likely to fall behind in school and drop out.

The applicant provides a list of the schools that will participate in the grant activities. The applicant includes in Table A.2, the total number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students and number of participating educators.

The applicant's approach to implementation is highly effective as it provides for high-quality implementation as defined by the comments above.

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

The applicant provides a high-quality plan which includes key impact goals: "Individualize Student-Driven Learning, Revolutionize Instruction, Cultivate High-Quality Educators, and Infuse Cross-Cutting Data-Driven Decision-Making." These efforts will result in improved learning by providing personalization strategies, structures and supports for students and educators. The learning will be deepened for all students. The educators will become more effective and more students will have access to effective and highly effective teachers. The decision-making will be data-driven to support continuous program improvement.

The applicant provides a high-quality plan which includes the parties held responsible for implementing the activities. For example, the IMPACT Management Team will provide for overall direction for operations management, program accountability and development of a sustainability plan.

The applicant provides a high-quality plan which includes the activities, inputs and outputs as well as timelines for four phases of the project. These efforts are clearly supported by the Logic Model in Appendix A. That model includes both short term outcomes as well as long term impact. By scaling the model in the four step process including kick off, design, prototyping and model launch, the applicant's district has a great opportunity to produce successful student results.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Although the applicant includes a comprehensive list of performance measures, the applicant does not indicate a direct connection between the vision which is, "to ignite a passion for lifelong learning by creating flexible pathways for student to learn anytime, anywhere," and the performance measures. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if this vision and the performance measures will result in improved student passion for learning. However, the applicant does provide for strong, ambitious, and achievable annual goals that will provide for improved student learning and increased equity.</p> <p>The applicant does include in the plan, performance measures on summative assessments. These appear to be ambitious yet achievable goals for both the overall population and for the subgroups. For example, in Grade 8 Math Proficiency the overall population's proficiency is targeted to rise from 90.5% to 93.6% in 2017. Also in that area, English Language Learners are targeted to move from 76% to 82.1% in 2017.</p> <p>The applicant includes ambitious yet achievable outcomes regarding graduation rates and college enrollment rates. For example, the overall graduation rates are projected to improve from 85.1% to 92.1% in 2017.</p> <p>The applicant provides to a strong extent that the vision is likely to result in improved student learning and increased equity as supported by the ambitious and yet achievable annual goals.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides demonstrated evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years. For example the 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rates showed a marked increase from 2006 to 2012.</p> <p>According to the proficiency percentage increases by student subgroups and End of Course tests' percentage increase in achievement, the Local Educational Agency has demonstrated success in closing achievement gaps.</p> <p>The applicant has engaged in a variety of significant reforms across the district and in the lowest-achieving and low performing schools. One of those reforms was called the Learning Triangle which provided focus on raising achievement and closing gaps. Another reform was the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) with a focus on high-yield instructional strategies. There is an indication that the district did achieve ambitious and significant reforms using these tools. For example, the 4-year Cohort Graduation Rates in Figure F indicated a positive group trend for all students as well as subgroups. The district has also demonstrated improved percentages of proficiency in reading, math, and science over the past two or three years for all students as well as subgroups.</p> <p>Although the applicant does have a plan to make student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve instruction and services, that plan does not include specific communications regarding individual students and parents and a focus on improving participation.</p> <p>The applicant provides an overall clear record of success for the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. The annual report that is shared with many of the stakeholders includes several elements of transparency. Those include expenditures and revenues. The applicant identifies in Table 6 such shared items as audited financial statements, budget resolutions, district funding</p>		

sources and district and school report cards.

The applicant includes data and information about the availability of personnel and non-personnel expenditures at the school level.

The availability of this information is through web-based instruments and print data such as Connect Ed, and EdMatters.

The ample availability of information provides a high level of transparency of the district's expenditures.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that the district has had a variety of successful experiences and conditions to position their district to implement positive learning environments. Those include the Smaller Learning Community grant, the Baldrige Award, and i3 grants. In addition to these grants, the district was connected to the Race to the Top Grant in 2010. These grants have enabled the district to address several identified needs in their district such as supporting the district's reform strategies to address high-needs students and to provide the beginning steps of personalized learning environments.

The applicant does provide support for sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments. For example the state provided resources are based on the specific needs of the student population, Also the cap on class sizes has been lifted to provide more flexibility. North Carolina also operates an initiative for promoting innovative public schools.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that the LEA has demonstrated evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement to support the proposal. The applicant indicated that extensive time was spent with teachers and administrators to engage in feedback regarding the proposal. The teachers were presented with the IMPACT model summary and then were given time to process the model with instructional facilitators and principals available for questions and for feedback. That feedback was then taken into account as the model was refined. The applicant indicated that nearly 80% of the teachers demonstrated support for the grant activities.

The applicant indicates that EdMatters, educational forums for parents, students, staff, and community, are provided during the school year and are used to provide feedback regarding grant proposals and model development. This provides meaningful stakeholder involvement as the stakeholders were provided with opportunities for discussions with school leaders on these issues and designs.

Letters of support from parents and community-based organizations were included in the grant application. These letters indicated support for the projects outlined in the grant.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrated evidence of a high-quality plan for the analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments. In Table 9, the applicant defines the plan to analyze needs and gaps. This includes activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsibilities.

The plan includes Personalized Learning Teams at each targeted school. Those teams then explore with surveys and data collection support for the analysis of needs and gaps.

Although the applicant has a plan in place to identify needs and gaps, the applicant does not identify the specific needs and gaps that the plan will address at this time. The applicant does not include the results of any analysis that indicates what the current needs and gaps are and how those needs and gaps will be addressed by the planned activities.

Even though the applicant has one area of omission in this area, the over-all plan for analysis is of high-quality.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant outlines an approach to learning that engages and empowers learners by providing for highly effective classroom learning experiences based on the theories of self-determination, extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, student voice, and high expectations. These approaches provide for the support for all students to understand that what they are learning is key to their success.

The applicant provides for learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards. The applicant provides information on how their plan will provide support to parents and educators and provide all students with strategies to understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals and measure progress toward those goals. An example of this effort is the student interest inventory used to produce a World to Work map to move the student toward career choices and develop plans for achieving the successful path to those choices.

The applicant provides a high-quality approach to support parents and educators so that all students are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest. That plan includes such strategies as Academic Pathways and Early College. The Academic Pathways program includes providing rigorous core content for all students and the offering of diverse programs and specialized courses of study based on student interest. The Early College program provides for valuable post-secondary credit while students are still in high school. These processes will provide for improved graduation rates as well as increased attendance to post-secondary training. This plan includes the role of counselors and advisors in this process.

Although the applicant does attempt to provide support of parents and educators so that all students have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepened individual learning, the applicant only addresses the deepening of individual deepening of learning and not the area of exposure to diverse cultures.

The applicant does provide a high-quality approach to provide support of parents and educators so that all students master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving. This is supported by the learning experiences defined in Table 11. Those include teaching with examples and cases such as engaging learners in challenging tasks while providing them essential scaffolding, guidance, feedback and encouragement to reflect on their own learning processes.

The applicant has provided a high-quality approach to ensure that students have access to personalized sequence of instructional content and skill. For example, the district will use in-person time-technology that swaps framework to provide students highly differentiated learning experiences. These experience will include a rotation schedule that will alternate between live-teacher and digital learning time This type of schedule will not only provide students with opportunities for individualize personal learning experiences, but increase the students exposure to more effective and highly effective teachers.

The applicant defines in Table 12, five Personalized Student Learning Framework Components. These include Personalized Sequence of Instructional Content, Variety of High-Quality Instructional Approaches, High-Quality, Aligned Content with Digital Learning, Ongoing and Regular Feedback, and Accommodations and Strategies for High-Need Students. These Components will assure that students are provided with a flexible, hybrid learning paths that include opportunities for online courses, project-based learning, tutoring, small group instruction, formal courses and community-based learning. These components will provide personalized learning experiences that will promote improved student academic success as well as increased graduation rates.

The applicant provides mechanisms to provide student training and support that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. One of the mechanisms that will provide support is Student Technology Summit scheduled at the beginning of each school year for both students and parents to acquaint them with the new devices that will be used during the school year. This experience includes training in access to

individual student performance data to assist students and parents in improving student success.

Although the applicant does have one omission, the applicant provides a high-quality approach to all areas of the learning plan. The applicant provides a high-quality plan as identified by the above comments.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant developed a well-defined, high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate high school and be college- and career-ready.

The applicant includes professional development activities that support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments. Those include Professional Learning Communities to be used to collaborate on analyzing practices and developing strategies on issues relating to curriculum, assessment and instruction. The applicant also defines educator access to online professional development modules including topics on flipped or blended instructions and creating a personalized learning environment. The applicant includes a high-quality plan outline for teaching and leading in Table 20. That table includes activities, timelines, and responsible parties.

The applicant provides a high-quality plan for providing support to educators to adapt content and instruction. The focus of those activities include curriculum planning aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and school and district leaders professional learning aligned with the Common Core Standards.

The applicant provides a high-quality plan for frequently measuring student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards. This includes using a newly designed student assessment system aligned with Common Core standards designed to keep students on track to graduate from high school and be college- and career-ready. The applicant also includes assessment activities such as EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT as well as a P-20 longitudinal data system that includes unique student and teacher identifiers matching students to their core subject teachers. The high-quality plan includes timelines and responsible persons in Table 20. Also the applicant identifies the roles of the counselors in interpreting the scores and providing student support.

To improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation, the applicant includes an online platform for flagging teacher weaknesses and identification of specific need areas for professional development. The teachers develop and refine their individual learning plan. These efforts will promote increased effectiveness and in turn improve student performance. Persons responsible include Curriculum Resource Specialists.

The applicant provides a high-quality plan to provide all participating educators with access to and knowledge about the tools, data and resources needed to accelerate student progress. This plan includes actionable information to identify optimal learning approaches to meet individual student academic needs and interests. The applicant provides an overview of activities that will include accessible learner profiles and work samples available to teachers for planning purposes.

The applicant does provide a high-quality approach to provide all participating school leaders and school leadership teams to have training, policies, tools data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs. This plan includes the use of the NC Educator Evaluation System that is aligned with the Framework for 21st Century Learning.

The applicant provides a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. This plan includes goals, as well as a well-defined matrix for calculating educator effectiveness. This plan includes several strategies including the rotation and flex model that will increase student time with more effective educators. The timelines, deliverables, and responsible persons are included in Table 20.

Based on the above comments, the applicant does provide a high quality plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant develops a high-quality approach to support that the district has practices, policies, and rules that will facilitate personalized learning by organizing the LEA central office to provide support and services to all participating schools.</p> <p>Although the applicant indicates that school leadership teams will be provided flexibility and autonomy, the applicant does not indicate that that flexibility extends to school-level budgets that include all types of expenditures.</p> <p>The applicant is working on a high-quality approach to give students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery and is exploring the possibility of opening more options for students or a case-by-case waiver.</p> <p>The essential design factors of this project is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple time, in multiple, comparable ways. The plan that the applicant has set for this element is of high-quality. It includes goals, activities, timelines, and persons responsible.</p> <p>The applicant does provide specific information on how they will provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, The applicant does indicate that technology adaptations will occur for students with disabilities and English Learners.</p> <p>Based on the above comments, this applicant has developed a high-quality plan to provide the support and resources they need.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
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<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a high-quality plan for supporting personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators have access to necessary content, tools and other learning resources both in and out of school. These tools include access to the Learning Object Repository which is part of the district's Instructional Improvement System. This will provide access to materials that are key to the IMPACT initiatives. This will provide students, parents and educators access to data that will ensure student success that is built on current and past performances.</p> <p>This plan includes mobile cards for students without home internet access.</p> <p>The quality of this plan is illustrated and supported by Appendix I's "A Day in the Life" of a student, parent, teacher, and administrator. This model makes it clear that the proposed plan will provide appropriate access.</p> <p>To assure that stakeholders have appropriate technical support the district will provide a digital chat room staffed by technicians to provide technical assistance,</p> <p>The applicant details a plan to allow sharing of data in a user friendly manner and provides interoperable data systems. Although the applicant does state that a portal will be provided to allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format, the applicant does not specifically address the open data format as defined: "Open data format means data that are available in a non-proprietary, machine-readable format such that they can be understood by a computer." The plan includes in Table 22 the goals, activities, timeline, and persons responsible for this plan.</p>		
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E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan by providing a rigorous, continuous improvement process.</p> <p>This plan includes the role of a third-party evaluation firm to provide ongoing quarterly feedback to the key informants and decision-makers. The plan also includes monitoring, measuring and publicly sharing information on the quality of its investments. For example the IMPACT Project Director and other key informants will use a Logic Model that provides an organized strategy to outline, analyze and communicate assumptions about the program activities and positive outcomes. This model has a built-in feedback loop emphasizing useful feedback to stakeholders for informed decision-making.</p> <p>The applicant also uses a clearly defined Fidelity index that will be used as a feedback tool for the key components of the project and will be shared through a dashboard approach.</p> <p>Due to the comprehensive approach to this feedback , the IMPACT project will have an opportunity to find continued success.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan by providing strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Figure N in the application provides clear support for input from stakeholders including administrators, families, management team, teachers and community. The plan includes periodic ongoing activities for maintaining quarterly reporting.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroups with annual targets. For example, one of the proposed measures is the number and percentages of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and alternative school placements by subgroup and the rationale for that selection is that a consequential indicator clearly linked to student behavior and improved social-emotional health; provides a project-wide indicator of success in improving student's social-emotional health. The applicant also includes how that performance measure supports the ability to provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information. For example, for this measure the common district wide metric compiled and reported quarterly and clearly aligned with the IMPACT logic model. The plan to review and improve if necessary, is also addressed for each proposed measure. For example, for this measure, the quarterly review will ensure continued cross-district consensus that aligns offenses with consequences. The Quality check to consequences are correlated with indicators of aggressive or violent acts.</p> <p>The applicant includes 12 performance measures for grades four through 12 and includes sub groups as well.</p> <p>The applicant does include ambitious yet achievement performance measures. For example for the decrease in the number and percentage of suspensions, the applicant uses a baseline of 30.3 and decreasing to 19.3 percent by 2017.</p> <p>The applicant presents ambitious yet achievable performance measures that support the overall plan for the IMPACT project.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a comprehensive plan to evaluate effectiveness of investments. The applicant clearly defines how quantitative and qualitative data will be used to increase the depth of the information and provide feedback that will enable the educators to make critical mid-course corrections and program adjustments.</p> <p>The applicant indicates that by leveraging digital technology to save time and produce more, results will improve. The</p>		

applicant also indicates that each of the core activities will be assessed for effectiveness. This assessment includes the Management team's application of the logic model defined in Section E2. This model includes collecting, compiling, and reporting on changes and determining effective next steps.

The applicant provided a high-quality plan to support continuous improvement that includes goals, activities, timelines, and persons responsible. This plan provides positive support for the credibility of the plan.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant identifies all funds that will support the project. For example the applicant identifies that the funds that will be used will include i3 federal funds, state Race to the Top funds, district general funds, and funds from local foundations.</p> <p>Although some of the personnel expenditures are somewhat limited, for example, the four Digital Learning Service Technicians are to be paid only \$146,667 for the first year of the project, the overall budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal. The applicant indicates that the breakdown of the budget amounts to \$494.60 in annual program costs per participants including teachers and students. That appears to be both reasonable and sufficient to support the programs proposed.</p> <p>The applicant identifies the technology and equipment that will be purchased in years one and two of the grant cycle and the staff members included in all four years of the project.</p> <p>The applicant includes a clearly defined overall budget summary project list for the four major components of the plan. Those include: cross-cutting data driven decisions, cultivate high-quality educators, revolutionize instruction and individual student-driven learning.</p> <p>The applicant provides thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities and supports those goals with appropriate funding streams.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides for a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. That plan includes goals, strategies, deliverables, activities, timelines, and persons responsible.</p> <p>The applicant indicates that an IMPACT Sustainability Committee will be created to study reports from the independent program evaluator and other sources to identify the most cost-effective interventions.</p> <p>The applicant provides a high-quality plan for long-term sustainability the efforts of Blended Learning Coaches that will be utilized to promote Teacher Reach. This effort is proposed to provide for more teachers to be highly-trained and therefore will add to the resources of the district. The plan indicates that four of the fourteen positions will be maintained after the completion of the grant. This should be adequate to support the Teacher Reach after the grant period has ended.</p> <p>The applicant has indicated that Federal, State and local foundation funds will be used to assist in the sustainability of this plan. Also the applicant indicates that the sustainability committee will be responsible for developing a long-term financing plan.</p> <p>The applicant presents a high-quality sustainability plan that appears to be financially supported.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
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Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a well-defined description of the coherent and sustainable partnership that has been formed with seven organizations from the community. Those include Barium Springs Home for Children, Boys and Girls Club, Partners Behavioral Health Management, NC Department of Public Instruction, South Yadkin Baptist Association, Teachscape, and the Cove Church. These entities provides services for family support, provides volunteer tutors, offers services to address mental health needs, provides staff professional learning in Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), and provides online learning resources.</p> <p>The applicant includes the desired results for the students by addressing five performance measures that will be addressed by this competitive preference priority. One example is to increase the number and percentage of needy students and families receiving supportive services. This is an ambitious yet attainable measure as the baseline data is 671 students and a desired increase to 1,184 students by 2017.</p> <p>The applicant indicates that the partnership will use expanded integrated data system (data dashboard) to incorporate information from the results of these efforts.</p> <p>Although the applicant does indicate how the data regarding Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports program will be used to improve results, the applicant does not include clear delineation of how other community partnerships' activities will be part of that effort.</p> <p>The applicant does have a strategy developed to scale the model beyond the participating students. This includes quarterly meetings that allow the district and partners to make data-driven decisions to expand services if needed.</p> <p>The applicant describes how the services provided by the partners would be integrated across the district. This effort is outlined clearly in the Table 30, PBIS Framework.</p> <p>The applicant describes how the partnership and the LEA will build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports to assess the needs and assets of students, identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community, create a decision making process, engage parents and families, and routinely assess program progress.</p> <p>The applicant includes a high-quality plan to continue, expand and refine community partnerships to serve high-need students. This plan includes deliverables, activities, timelines, and persons responsible.</p> <p>The applicant provides a high level credible plan to address the needs of the students.</p> <p>This well-developed plan is likely to be successful because it builds on previous partnerships that have been established as well as strategies that have worked in previous settings such as the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports Program.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has met the personalized learning environment absolute Priority I The applicant coherently and comprehensively addressed how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization strategies, tools, and supports for students

and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements; accelerate student achievement and deepened student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

For example, the applicant addresses the four core educational area of "increasing teacher and principal effectiveness, supporting student learning with relevant and rigorous internationally benchmarked curriculum standards and assessments, establishing and using robust data systems that measure student success and inform educators about how they can improve delivery of services and activities targeted to students' individual needs and turning around schools that have persistent student achievement gaps."

The applicant also provides a clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan by providing a rigorous, continuous improvement process. This plan includes the role of a third-party evaluation firm and key informants and decision-makers.

Total	210	197
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0489NC-3 for Iredell-Statesville Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work and articulating a clear and credible approach to deepening and personalizing the learning experience. Iredell-Statesville Schools (I-SS), one of the largest districts in North Carolina, is just north of the Charlotte metro area with a mix of rural and suburban communities serving over 21,100 students in 36 schools. Their reform vision is to ignite a passion for lifelong learning by creating personalized flexible pathways for students to learn anytime, anywhere. Their proposed project, IMPACT: Innovative Methods for Personalizing Academics, Complemented by Technology. The proposal supports bold innovations in learning and teaching that should directly improve student achievement and educator effectiveness, building on their successful implementation record and educational reforms that have dramatically improved student outcomes.

Their operational plan ensures alignment of administrative and operational practices to support implementation of their learning plan. The vision aligns with the four core educational assurances, (1) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and career; (2) use data systems that measure student growth and success; (3) recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals; and (4) turning around lowest achieving schools.

Although they report significant gains in academic achievement, closing achievement gaps and increasing graduation rates, they now want to move from a mindset of "improve the system we have" to "innovate the system we need" to enable students

to take on the challenges necessary for success in the dynamic workplace of the 21st Century's global, knowledge-based economy.

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for approach to implementation.

Based on research and analysis of district needs and priorities, I-SS's Design Team decided to focus efforts on middle and high schools with the highest poverty rates (collectively meeting the eligibility requirements) and lowest achievement rates. They also looked for schools with qualities indicating readiness for reform including teacher and leader buy-in, and success implementing other reform strategies. 15 of the 36 schools were chosen to participate, including four high schools and their 9 feeder middle schools. They also included two non-traditional middle-high schools. Schools are listed in the application.

The 15 schools serve a total of 9,321 students, with 4,136 students (44.37%) identified as low-income. These students represent 44% of the total student enrollment and 81% of the middle and high school population. The program will also target the 788 educators at these 15 schools.

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

10

9

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for LEA-wide change. The proposed reforms are targeted at rethinking teaching and learning to transform the culture, thinking and priorities of the district.

To impact teaching and learning at the district-level, I-SS galvanized a diverse team of stakeholders to identify the skills essential for post-secondary education and employment success using a learner-centered model. They describe their learner-centered model as cutting-edge, next-generation blended learning with multiple modalities that include: (1) individualized content (adaptive, engaging, diverse content, embedded assessments); (2) project and group learning experiences (critical thinking, evaluating concepts, communication, teamwork); and (3) teacher instruction (higher order thinking skills, differentiated mini lessons). Utilizing these approaches, which are based on the latest education research on 21st Century learning, school reform, teacher professional learning, information and communication technology, education leadership, and technology integration, will move the district beyond the typical mass-production mode to a learner-driven one.

The district has explicit plans to expand successful reforms throughout all middle and high schools, so reforms will eventually impact all students who go through the district. There was no specific description of how reforms would eventually be extended to elementary schools.

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

10

10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for LEA-wide goals. Building on years of past improvement and reforms, I-SS has set out ambitious goals for proficiency status and growth, decreasing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates and increasing college enrollment rates, overall and by sub-group. They have put in place a high-quality plan to help them achieve the goals, including transforming the learning environment to support a new, personalized learning framework, rethinking staffing structure, reallocation of instructional time and student schedules, intensive professional development in professional learning communities and modifications to teacher evaluations.

Performance goals include increasing reading and math proficiency, Grades 6, 7 and 8, using value-added measure of performance on North Carolina End-of-Grade Reading Comprehension Test, Grades 6-8; NC End-of-Grade Mathematics Test, Grades 6-8; NC End-of-Course Test, Algebra I; NC End-of-Course Test, English I. The target is to have the number of students proficient in reading by Grade 6 growing from baseline of 79.4 to 84.4 overall, and economically disadvantaged subgroup from 66.1 to 73.1, thereby increasing the number of proficient students in all groups while simultaneously decreasing the achievement gap (Table A.4.A, for years 2011-12 to 2015-16).

The district has set goals to increase graduation and college enrollment rates for each subgroup, while simultaneously decreasing the achievement gap. For example, district wide goals for improved student outcomes as measured by graduation rates targets growth from 87.1 to 90.6 overall, 78.1 to 86.1 for economically disadvantaged sub group, and 48.0 to 61.0 for ELLs (Table A.4.C, for years 2011-12 to 2015-16).

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:

I-SS is receiving a high score for their record of success. Since 2003, when implementation of the core components of their reform efforts began, their graduation rate has improved to 87% (up from 61% in 2002), and the dropout rate has decreased to 2.27%--the lowest in the district's history.

Student achievement before 2003 was: 61% graduation rate; 7% dropout rate; 23 percentage point gap in reading for black students and 43 for students with disabilities; and 57th worst in the State for SAT. Although the district continues to be characterized by high-need students, they have made significant gains in student achievement, closed reading gaps, increased the graduation rate, reduced the dropout rate, and increased the number of highly qualified teachers. The students have also made significant gains in academic achievement including closing the gap between academic subgroups (detailed in Section B1). The district has seen significant increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students. Student data was provided to support this.

These reforms have been achieved in an economic climate that limits per-pupil spending in the district (ranking 113th lowest out of 115 LEAs in NC) indicating that the reform approaches are not only effective, but also cost-effective.

I-SS has engaged in a variety of ambitious and significant reforms across the district and in the lowest-achieving and low performing (Statesville Middle School) schools and has achieved positive student outcomes. They have implemented ambitious reforms including nationally recognized process for gap analysis and performance management and creating focused learning communities.

The Management Team will provide project direction and ensure student performance data is available to students, educators, and parents. This process will ensure that data is used to improve and inform participation, instruction, and services via: (1) Program Evaluation, (2) Response to Intervention (Rtl), and (3) frequent school-wide planning cycles. As these are part of the grant proposal, it does not sound like they have been in place in the past.

They have made good progress in making student performance data available to students, as well as educators and parents. They provide access to a variety of performance data such as NC Report Cards, Annual Report, parent conferences, and student-led conferences. The Professional Learning Community (PLC) teams meet weekly to collaborate, analyze, and develop strategies on common issues related to curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies. Sample PLC activities include creating standards-aligned lesson plans and units, using data analysis to inform instruction, providing differentiated instruction, and planning and providing progress monitoring and assessment. They have a parent web application, Parent Assist, to help

parents track their student's progress, which provides real-time progress reporting in French, English, and Spanish. It was not noted whether making this data available improved parent participation.

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

5

5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

I-SS is receiving a high score for increasing transparency.

Transparency is built into their continuous improvement strategies. This process ensures: staff are empowered to make decisions that impact instruction and assessment; staff are involved in using data to make decisions, not only about student learning, but also about finance, personnel, and building decisions. The district provides a variety of avenues to demonstrate openness and accountability. Expenditure information is made available and easily accessible to all community members, parents, and staff through the school website, parent and community meetings (e.g., school improvement team, school board), press releases, and hard copy and digital reports. School-level expenditures from State and? local funds are available on the district website with? data from: Work 4 NC Schools, Civil Rights Data? Collection, and American Recovery & Reinvestment? Act. This information includes: (a) personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff based on the US Census Bureau's classification; (b) personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff; (c) personnel salaries at the school level for teachers; and (d) non-personnel expenditures at the school level.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

I-SS is receiving a high score for State context for implementation.

Building on a variety of successful experiences and conditions, such as their Smaller Learning Community grant (totaling over \$6 million for 5 high schools) and their i3 grant supporting reform strategies to organize a cross-functional team to support high-need students at all schools in the district, the district is positioned to implement high-quality personalized learning environments. In the 2012-13 school year, all schools in North Carolina are implementing the Common Core. This process began in 2008 with a total revamp of the State's Standard Course of Study as the State developed its own Essential Standards that incorporate the Common Core Standards and align teaching and learning to career and college readiness.

Focused on career and college readiness, NC has also developed a new accountability model that went into effect this school year. To measure readiness, five new indicators were implemented: math course rigor (percentage of students taking and passing high-level math courses); ACT performance (percentage of students scoring well enough to have 50% chance of getting a B or higher in their first credit-bearing college course); WorkKeys performance (percentage of graduates who were awarded a Silver Level Career Readiness Certificate based on WorkKeys assessments); graduation rates (percentage of students who graduate in four and five years); and graduation project (schools receive credit if they require students to complete a project).

NCDPI recently received a \$3.64 million US Department of Education grant to design, develop, and implement a statewide P-20 data system. This system will allow educators across NC's education-workforce continuum to develop a "big picture" view of trends in student performance and help better prepare students for college and careers. Once in place, I-SS will integrate with this longitudinal data system.

In addition to Race to the Top, NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) provides a variety of pathways to ensure they have the flexibility to implement personalized learning environments through IMPACT. This includes: (1) Funding is distributed to local boards of education, (2) NCDPI lifted the cap on class sizes which provides flexibility to implement strategies beyond

the traditional classroom model, (3) North Carolina operates a vigorous initiative for promoting innovative, autonomous public schools. Innovative programs can create a school within a school, a technical high school, or a high school or technical center located on a college campus. Once approved, the district obtains waivers that release the school from restrictions on the use of State funding and other specific State laws and policies. (4) The North Carolina Window on Student Education (NC WISE) assimilates all facets of public school life from the classroom to the central office and assists in personalizing the learning environment using the following tools: Electronic Student Information System enables schools to manage student information; Electronic Data Interchange presents the capacity to electronically transmit student instructional records and demographic information between districts, schools within a district, and to NC universities and colleges; and Uniform Education Reporting System transfers information from the local district to the NCDPI.

Additionally, they submitted their application to the State for review and received positive support from the state: "It aligns strongly with the State's work. We applaud your ambition and creativity on behalf of the students of I-SS..."

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

10

8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

I-SS is receiving a High score for stakeholder engagement and support. They have demonstrated meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal and have received numerous (11) letters of support from the community.

I-SS describes that a myriad of stakeholder groups were engaged in the development of this proposal and larger reform efforts, including Teachers, Principals, Families and Students. As one example, during a district professional development day in September 2012, teachers were presented with the proposed model summary for review (see Appendix G). Teachers were given time to process the model, and instructional facilitators and principals were available for questions and feedback over the next week. After feedback was taken into account, nearly 80% of educators demonstrated their support of the proposed model (NC does not have collective bargaining representation). The Summary, it should be noted, provided a 2-page overview of the highlights of the vision/model but did not include the entire proposal. It is therefore hard to gauge whether teacher stakeholders had full engagement and support.

Two of 3 Mayors responded with a resounding endorsement of the proposal, including one who added, "The superintendent and his staff are highly respected by the town's residents, pupils and staff. I am very impressed by and supportive of this request and respectfully urge your support of the I-SS application."

Students, a key stakeholder in Middle and High Schools, were involved in the development of the plan, as well as families. The Student Council initiates methods of change, upholds student achievement, provides teacher recognition, and supports the implementation of student-centered, personalized learning. Students have access to a variety of performance data such as NC Report Cards, Annual Report, parent conferences, and student-led conferences and there are many opportunities.

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

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

I-SS is receiving a High score for the analysis of needs and gaps.

To personalize learning in I-SS, changes in structures and systems are critical. This includes bold transformations in platforms, class structure, instructional time, teacher roles, and competency-based student learning. I-SS has laid out a bold vision to transform teaching and learning in the district and provided a well-thought out plan to implement, including activities, deliverables, timelines and persons responsible. Their first strategy is to develop a consistent process to assess the current status in implementing personalized learning environments. Through this process they will engage the site stakeholders and create school-based analysis of needs/gaps for each target school; district-based analysis of needs/gaps for all combined. Their second strategy is to address potential barriers to create highly personalized learning environments. The deliverable will be a comprehensive analysis of school, district, and State level barriers; action plan to address barriers. This demonstrates evidence of the autonomy given to site stakeholders to be problem-solvers, engaged in the success of the program.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

I-SS has a comprehensive and focused vision supported by a high quality plan to transform and personalize the learning experience and is receiving a high score for its high-quality plan for personalizing the learning environment, aligning with college- and career-ready standards and empowering all learners, especially high-needs students.

To I-SS, this means completing the ongoing transformation from the traditional classroom learning environment to cutting-edge practices that empower students with multiple personalized pathways which capitalize on technology to ensure students are career and college-ready. I-SS will scale online, blended, and personalized learning to a district portfolio of options for student courses, modules, and career- and college- preparation. This includes multiple personalized pathways that revolutionize student access to learning content and ensure exposure to a variety of contexts and perspectives. The district and sites are rethinking Time, Place, Path and Pace so that they can personalize learning for each student. The have organized a cross-functional team to support high-needs students.

Their learning model includes developing self-determination, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, student-voice and high expectations. Their model is student-driven, competency-based, project-based, and supports anywhere, anytime learning. Students will have the support to (i) understand how what they are learning is key to accomplishing their goals, to develop; (ii) develop their own goals and structure their learning to achieve them, (iii) be deeply involved in areas of interest, (iv) have access to perspectives that motivate them. Additionally, they will use multiple modalities as part of their blended learning approach that will provide: individualized content (adaptive, engaging, diverse content; embedded assessments); project and group learning (critical thinking, evaluating concepts, teamwork, communication); and teacher instruction (higher order thinking, differentiated mini lessons).

Personalized Student Learning Framework includes (i) Personalized Sequence of Instructional Content, (ii) Variety of High-Quality Instructional Approaches, (iii) High-Quality, Aligned Content with Digital Learning, (iv) Ongoing and Regular Feedback, and (v) Accommodations and Strategies for High-Need Students. This framework provides a flexible, hybrid of student learning paths that include opportunities for online courses, project-based learning, tutoring, small group instruction, formal courses, and community-based learning.

Personalized learning supports will embrace individualized learning strategies (individual learning plans, flexible grouping, differentiated instruction, mentoring, counseling) and targeted interventions (content/credit recovery, wraparound family services, positive behavioral interventions and supports). Implementation includes College Readiness Institute, Graduation Projects, Technology Tools and Resource Support, Student Assistance Program that supports students in understanding how to use the tools and resources provided to manage their learning.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

I-SS is receiving a high score for having a high quality, bold and thorough plan to improve teaching and leading to develop and support a highly personalized learning environment focused on individual preparation for success in college and career.

The applicant has a well-developed approach to help educators increase their capacity to support each student's progress. All

educators engage in training and professional communities that build their capacity. Implementation will begin with leaders and teachers in each school completing a baseline self-assessment to develop individualized learning plans and identify personal and common professional learning needs. The new Project Director will work with Digital Learning Service Technicians to improve technology infrastructure to support bold transformation in learning platforms to dynamically track and manage student learning needs and provide a digital platform that can be accessed anywhere, at any time, beyond the walls of school buildings.

To successfully implement in the classroom, they designed an intensive professional learning plan to assist educators in making the critical shift to facilitator of learning. Teachers will engage in professional development grounded in creating effective content which include defining learning goals aligned with NC Standard Course of Study, selecting appropriate instructional materials, and designing learning activities including discussion questions, progress-monitoring, and mastery-based assessments.

In addition to new statewide measures based on SBAC, I-SS will provide students with a longitudinal monitoring of their college- and career-readiness trajectory using the ACT College Readiness Standards that align with the Common Core Standards.

Using Data to Inform Acceleration of Student Progress: NCDPI is in the process of launching a P-20 longitudinal data system in 2012-13 that includes unique student and teacher identifiers matching students to their core subject teachers. It will allow assessment data to follow a student throughout their P-20 educational trajectory in the State, information that will be imported into the state and district's new Instructional Improvement System (IIS), to provide "just-in-time" information to support and improve the teaching and learning process.

Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, educator evaluations in North Carolina will include a student academic growth component for teachers and principals, as measured by student End-of-Course, End-of-Grade, or other measure of student learning. The results of educator evaluations are entered into an online platform, and teacher weaknesses are flagged allowing for immediate identification of the specific area(s) educators need professional learning to refine. Teachers will have access to student learner profiles to assist in instructional planning, and details regarding student's current level of mastery on course standards, benchmarks, objectives, or skills for instructional planning and monitoring.

The student-centered learning model will use data from student assessments (e.g. formative, interim, summative) to provide information about curricula and instructional adjustments and assess student progress in mastery of key concepts.

NC has implemented use of a value-added student-growth model that ties student academic achievement growth to educator evaluations and aligns to State Standards using evidentiary-based items such as classroom artifacts, student surveys, peer-reviews, teacher portfolios, and a classroom observation tool. They have implemented data tools to support continuous improvement efforts that allow reports to be pulled for every school, grade, teacher, and class in the district.

I-SS identified strategies they will use to increase the reach of highly effective teachers and how teacher roles will be redefined, including rotation model, class-size shifting, flex model, specialization and multi-classroom leadership.

Their high quality plan includes detailed goals, deliverables, timeline and responsibilities to support implementation of their Teaching and Leading plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for LEA practices, policies and rules. Building on prior successful operational reform, I-SS has developed an implementation support chain that will support their targeted schools as they implement their personalization strategies.

The district has already put in place one critical reform element—creation of professional learning communities in each school. Each school currently receives ongoing professional learning, modeling, coaching, and feedback in key instructional strategies provided by their school's instructional facilitator.

I-SS will give participating schools autonomy in choosing which blended learning strategies are most appropriate for their students and schools. This will include customizing school schedules (hours per day, start/end times), calendars (9- or 12-month), personnel and staffing structures (use of a career leader, lab monitors), and identification of key roles and responsibilities. These options will be outlined in each school's Professional Learning Communities (PLC) meetings and voted on by the school staff to identify which option(s) they believe best meet the needs of their students.

Two years ago, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) lifted the cap on class sizes, which provides flexibility to implement strategies beyond the traditional classroom model and support a variety of approaches to personalize learning. Each district is allowed to determine the criteria for subject and grade advancement, which enable it to personalize learning sequence and pace per learner. These are important policies that will support the district in achieving its goals.

Another key strategy being explored by the district and State is elimination of seat-time requirements and use of assessments that gauge student mastery of required content as a means to earn course credits and advance to the next instructional level. I-SS will seek approval from NCDPI to pursue this option for all students or through case-by-case waivers, as recommended by the National Governor's Association. This approach has been implemented in 36 states, and they anticipate that NC will drive a similar phased-in implementation to facilitate transition to a competency-based system. Because this has not been passed by the state as of yet, there is some risk to actually being able to realize this goal.

Participating schools will implement 1:1 technology so that each student is paired with either a tablet or netbook to access online courses, use digital textbooks, and retrieve, collaborate, and complete assignments and assessments using their online student learner platform. This high-level of access to technologies aptly supports resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible.

Funding is distributed to local boards of education. Through what they describe as an intensive strategic planning process, the I-SS Board then develops a plan to distribute State-provided resources based on the specific needs of students. They argue this flexibility enables the district to be innovative and target schools with specific funding needs. They report that nearly 60% of the funds are provided in positions rather than dollars. However, site autonomy over school-level budgets was not specifically addressed, raising some question over the actual ability of the sites autonomy to restructure effectively to achieve these reforms.

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

10

9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for LEA and school infrastructure.

To support a move to personalized learning, the district will ensure appropriate internet connectivity for each classroom and will provide 1:1 technology for students via either bringing personal devices to school or borrowing from the school's lending

library of tablets or netbooks that will include the use of broadband mobile cards for students without home internet access.

They ensure that students, parents, educators, and stakeholders have appropriate technical support. Key strategies include use of a digital learning platform that is accessible by students 24/7, from anywhere, anytime. Each school will host an annual Student Technology Summit for students and parents. Technicians will be responsible for upkeep and maintenance of district-owned equipment.

Students will be able to receive instructional support to content-related questions by posting a question to their teacher through a class/subject specific webpage.

I-SS describes their existing data warehouse, which they say has centralized the existing but disparate computer systems to provide information on (1) productivity (i.e. staff characteristics, curricula); (2) teacher/ leader knowledge (i.e., accumulation of PD including amount, quality, and content; fidelity of curricula implementation); and (3) multiple assessment measures for educators and students (i.e., teacher/leader evaluations, observations, mentor/leader feedback, student assessment results, other measures of academic achievement). This system provides user-friendly access to high-quality data metrics from multiple sources, including producing student profile reports that provide detailed information for teachers and principals to support instructional decision-making. It also has analysis capability to explore trends and identify the relationship between student progress and school/district processes. They will include a parent portal that will assist parents in accessing their child's performance data and contacting their teachers or school leaders concerning identified issues. Although interoperable among the district's systems, they did not provide evidence that data will be made available in an open data format and for export and use by other systems.

I-SS ensures that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems. I-SS has an existing data warehouse that has centralized the existing but disparate computer systems to provide information. This existing data warehouse is designed to integrate with their other performance data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant is receiving a high score for Continuous Improvement Process.</p> <p>I-SS will contract with an independent third- party evaluation firm to provide ongoing unbiased quarterly feedback to key informants and decision-makers by monitoring progress, identifying program adjustments, providing information on accountability, and encouraging positive program outcomes. The firm will ensure that data collection, data analysis, and dissemination efforts are timely, relevant, and answer the questions most critical to enhancing performance. They will develop a web-based data dashboard to monitor and evaluate performance, including baseline, targets, benchmarks and actual performance. To monitor and measure program fidelity, the data dashboard will include a fidelity index that produces (1) a core component-level fidelity score, specific to each core program component being implemented in any given year, and (2) an overall-level fidelity score that combines the data across all core components. Based on the updated logic model and information provided through a review of the data dashboard, each quarterly meeting will conclude with a written action plan identifying the areas needing improvement and which actions to be taken, when, and by whom.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

The applicant is receiving a high score for ongoing communication and engagement.

The district is implementing a wide variety of management and communication structures involving internal and external stakeholders that will be used to implement their high-quality plan and guide LEA-wide reform and change. These structures will be used to maintain ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders, which include: the IMPACT Management Team, Project Director, Blended Learning Coordinator, Blended Learning Coaches, Personalized Learning Teams, Accountability Coordinator, Curriculum Resource Specialists, Digital Learning Service Technicians, School Improvement Teams (parents, students, community, staff), and expert consultants (Program Evaluators, Design Consultants). Consistent communication on a quarterly basis include: evaluation reports, management team meetings, and sustainability planning.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for Performance Measures. They include a strong rationale for selecting each measure, how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information, and how they will review and improve the measures over time.

Reasonable performance measures are specified and supported by a clear rationale and reasonable growth targets, with a plan to improve as necessary. The targets were set using Fzirps Rationale Target Setting (RTS) methodology that appears to be a logical, justifiable approach and considers past performance (baseline) data in addition to operational and contextual factors such as resources, priorities, strength of the intervention and capacity to set an ambitious yet achievable trajectory of improvement. The district provides targets overall and for each sub-group.

For example, one key measure is the number and percentage of disciplinary referrals by subgroup for aggressive or violent acts. It is a behaviorally anchored indicator and provides a project-wide indicator of success in improving student's social-emotional health. The district-wide metric will be compiled and reported quarterly and clearly aligned with project's logic model to provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information. It will be reviewed quarterly to monitor and gauge implementation, and can be improved as needed.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for evaluating effectiveness. Their methodology is clear, looks and quantitative as well as qualitative data, and aptly looks at outcomes, productivity and return on investment.

Each core activity will be assessed for effectiveness (the extent to which to each core activity produces its intended outcomes) and productivity (the extent to which each core activity improves the efficiency of school-level instructional operations).

Sources of quantitative data include: End-of-Grade tests (grades 6-8), End-of-Course tests (grades 9-12) and LEA administrative data. Qualitative data include interviews, focus groups, open-ended survey questions, minutes from project meetings, and documents and artifacts such as teacher logs and lesson plans. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods will increase the depth of information and provide feedback that they will use to make critical mid-course corrections and program adjustments in a timely manner.

Program components and their effectiveness will be assessed using a basic Return-on-Investment (ROI) regression analysis that will produce a basic return on investment index rating (how much academic achievement the district received for each dollar spent, relative to other districts in the State). Use of these ROI processes will allow them to show a link between student achievement and cost of intervention and its effectiveness as well as identify areas for improvements and refinements.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>I-SS is receiving a high score for Budget planning for the project. It is thorough, clear and presented with a well-defined rationale.</p> <p>I-SS is requesting a total of \$19,999,703 to support the four-year Race to the Top District proposal. Table 32 outlines the expenditures they anticipate will be necessary to implement, broken in to the 4 main project areas that align with the four overarching program goals.</p> <p>The budget appears to be reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The project will serve approximately 788 educators in 15 of the district's 36 schools. These educators will receive intensive professional learning and related supports that will help implement blended learning strategies into the district. They will also serve approximately 9,321 students in grades 6-12 to cover the cost of implementing strategies that will improve their academic achievement and increase their college- and career-readiness. With a total four-year project cost request of \$19,999,703, this amounts to \$494.60 in annual program costs, per participant for both teacher and student participants.</p> <p>Federal funds: I-SS is in year 3 of their 5-year federal i3 grant. These remaining i3 grant funds, totaling \$2,733,378, will be used in alignment with RTT-D efforts as both grants contribute to district-wide reform efforts.</p> <p>Additionally, they are experimenting with cost-cutting, data-driven decisions that if proven successful, can increase the Return on Investment (ROI) and sustainability of these reforms. These are outlined in Table E of the application.</p> <p>Foundation Support: I-SS received donations exceeding \$570,000 in foundation funding provided as a match to their i3 grant project, which continue to be used to support the goals of this proposal.</p> <p>State funds: I-SS will also utilize funding from the North Carolina Department for Public Instruction (NCDPI). NCDPI was a Federal Race to the Top grantee and has used RTT funding to implement several initiatives which are incorporated into this Proposal, including use of the Instructional Improvement System (IIS) platform and the LOR (Learning Object Repository).</p> <p>The applicant estimates that approximately \$14,138,683 or 71% of the budget will be for ongoing operational costs, while \$5,861,020 or 29% of the total budget will be for one-time investments, which seems appropriate and sustainable to achieve the targeted outcomes. These are identified in the line items of the budgets.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is receiving a high score for sustainability of project goals.</p> <p>A large percentage of requested grant funds will be devoted to supporting high-quality professional learning through the use of Blended Learning Coaches in each of the targeted schools. It has been the district's experience that providing this type of</p>		

weekly intensive professional learning in the initial years of reform implementation builds long-term sustainability of the reform. The Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) help build and sustain educator capacity to support long-term implementation and institutionalize reform strategies throughout the district; a strategy that they state has proven successful for the district in prior reform projects. They anticipate once the four-year grant period is over that they will retain 4 of the 14 Blended Learning Coaches (1 per high school feeder pattern) to support continued professional learning, and the sustainability budget reflects this ongoing cost. Although more coaches might be preferable, after four years of intensive professional development, there should be significant capacity across the district to maintain the personalized learning environments with fewer blended learning coaches.

Additionally, the state provides support for technology. Funding from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (NCDPI) Federal Race to the Top Grant will provide several ongoing components of the sustainability plan including use of the Instructional Improvement System (IIS) platform, which includes portals for teachers, administrators, students, and parents, including the LOR (Learning Object Repository). NCDPI developed a cost-sharing model to support long-term implementation and functionality of IIS and LOR. This cost sharing for programs, services, infrastructure and devices is reflected in the sustainability budget.

One very positive component of the budget and the sustainability plan is the cost/benefit analysis to evaluate Return On Investment. They describe that a key component of their independent, third-party evaluation will be calculation of a cost-benefit analysis that will produce a Return on Educational Investment rating to calculate how much learning the district produces for every dollar spent through this grant. This evaluation will support them in making good trade-offs throughout the program to best allocate available funds to highly impactful programs, services and tools.

The only significant area not addressed in the sustainability budget is adequate funding allocated to device refresh after the grant term. The Technology and Future Spending Distribution chart indicates that 1:1 device program will be 80% funded by the LEA and 20% by the State. It is unclear if adequate refresh costs are included elsewhere, or if bring your own device option minimizes these costs over time.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for the Competitive Preference Priority.

I-SS has formed coherent and sustainable community based partnerships to support students and families in their efforts to ignite a passion for lifelong learning. The partnering organizations provided positive letters of support for the Proposal and the partnerships. This appears to be a credible plan that builds on existing, positive relationships and partnerships. The main concern is that it appears that many of the responsibilities for implementation lie with the overall RTT-D Project Director. With all the other responsibilities of the Project Director to implement and manage the internal program components, it may be inadequate to have this same person responsible for managing and seeking new partnerships.

To define the community partnership opportunity, first they identified the following needs: (1) greater support for students with mental health disorders and maladaptive behaviors; and (2) interventions to support the unique learning needs of students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL). To address those needs, they are enhancing partnerships with 7 public and private organizations detailed in the application, to form joint school and community intervention teams. They have both educational as well as population-level goals, including (1) Students graduate from high school college- and career- ready, (2) discipline referrals are reduced, suspensions and Alternative School placements are reduced, (3) Students receive supportive services to address social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, and (4) Families feel adequately supported by their schools and community.

The services provided by the partners are described in four categories: mental health services, mentoring and tutoring, technological support, and professional development. All services are stated to be integrated across the district to create a cycle of benefit for students. It is implemented via a tri-level approach offering primary (all students), secondary (students with low level, chronic target behaviors), and tertiary (students with intense target behaviors) prevention strategies to support healthy behavior and improved learning.

The mentoring and tutoring programs will be incorporated into their blended learning model, transition activities, and College Readiness Institute, and will further the work of the Project in personalizing education by providing one-to-one support in response to the unique needs of their most vulnerable students.

The partnerships are supported by the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports framework (PBIS), which provides a clear structure for assessing the needs and assets of students. I-SS will further measure and assess results by coordinating existing data systems currently used across the district through the development of a data dashboard that will be integrated with NCDPI's new P-20 Education Data System. This synchronization will allow for consistent and timely data management and ensure that evaluation results are effectively communicated to all stakeholders.

I-SS has a goal to assess needs and then align existing community partnerships with the new personalized learning environment model. Their implementation progress undergoes informal assessment on an ongoing basis through quarterly meetings with school and district level staff and the community partners. Formal assessment takes place on an annual basis, led by the third-party evaluation team and guided by annual performance measures. Data will be used to inform the ongoing development of the action plan to ensure continuous improvement of the services provided to both high need students and the entire student body in alignment with the PBIS framework.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

I-SS has met Absolute Priority 1, with exceptional measure. The Proposal provides for an ambitious extension of current reforms that are well-rooted in district and school operations and culture. The Learning plan is student-driven, with competency based progression, project-based learning, and everywhere, flexible learning. Professional learning teams are formed around specialization and multi-classroom leadership, providing access for both students and other educators to the districts highly effective teachers. They take advantage of Professional Learning Communities, coaches and access to highly effective teachers and use them to drive deeper, personalized focus on individual student learning opportunities, progress on learning and progress toward of college-and career-ready goals.

The district is making extensive use of the following tools to plan, measure, track, and drive continuous improvements rooted in student achievement at the district, site, classroom and individual student level: Electronic Student Information System, Electronic Data interchange, Uniform Education Reporting System. The district's plan also aligns well with the State's work, extending successful reforms that have been implemented at both the state and district level.

Total	210	201
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