



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0946TN-1 for Metropolitan Nashville Public 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 vision statement is well-articulated and, importantly, includes essential elements of a reform vision that may contribute to increased student achievement. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A clear embrace of aligning curriculum, improving professional development, improving teacher quality through effective teacher evaluation, the Common Core Standards adoption, among others. The CCSS are, by definition, linked to college/career ready standards. Thus, the vision's link to these is important with respect to connecting to the core assurances.</li> <li>- Commitment to personalized learning and continuous improvement.</li> <li>- Creation of a particular office (Office of Innovation) to oversee and implement some of these initiatives to facilitate and implement its vision.</li> </ul>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a clear and concise plan with respect to its participation and implementation processes. One distinguishing feature of the plan is that identifies schools that already have demonstrated leadership capacity (e.g., the principals are exemplary school leaders) and uses this as a primary selection means for schools that will participate. Furthermore, the applicant extends the reach of these effective principals through the incorporation of Network Schools. In sum, the quality of the plan greatly benefits when it starts its selection process with effective leadership -- one of the most important variables in improving student outcomes.</p> <p>Participating students and educators are identified and satisfy the requirements to this section (low SES).</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application scores high in this regard because of its relatively simplistic (but likely effective) framework that will enhance its ability to scale up successes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This logic model begins with the connections the plan proposes between Lead Schools and Network Schools. If these connections are established, as the plan anticipates, they will be powerful mechanisms to scale up reform.</li> <li>- The district has a solid plan for recovering data on personalization, analyzing it, and feeding it back to implementation reform efforts at Lead Schools at the direction of a District Team that is comprised of multiple skills sets, including researchers. These researchers will likely have the methodological skills to capture and analyze data in an effective way.</li> <li>- Finally, the applicant has a plan that demonstrates a clear commitment to building capacity of educators through teacher self-assessment and peer evaluation/review. The research suggests these are critical seeds to improving teacher quality.</li> </ul>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The application has set forth ambitious and achievable goals that are closely aligned to the state targets for student outcomes. Its vision is very likely to contribute to improving student learning and increasing equity because of the following reasons:

- Again, the linchpin of the district's vision is the use of "Connected Communities of Practice" that begin with a Lead School. Developing these exemplary seeds and then allowing for the diffusion of the lessons learned create the conditions for improvement on a larger scale.
- The goals are tied to the state targets with respect to decreasing the achievement gap, as measured by summative assessments. The goals are realistic and call for closing the achievement gap by 6.25% on an annual basis.
- Likewise, the goals are realistic with respect to the graduation rate. Interestingly, the district has (although it is not required) attempted to close the achievement gap in the graduation rate area. Here again, the district calls for a 50% gap closure in graduation rates over an 8 year period. Given the time it would take for their RTTT program of personalized instruction to have lasting impact, this 8 year goal seems realistic.
- Here again, the district's vision is likely to lead to the results in the college enrollment rate for similar reasons as discussed above. Its rate of improvement 1.5% increase annually is realistic. The long-term goal (for 2016-2017) of 66% is also ambitious (it would be a 7.5% increase over a five year period) but realistic in the sense that it would account for the effect of changes that are being implemented at the lower elementary levels through this grant.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>(a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The district has demonstrated steady improvement in 3-8 tested areas of core subjects. Moreover the growth has occurred while students have been instructed under new academic standards regimen. This is particularly telling because it demonstrates the district's ability to improve student performance as the stakes get more rigorous and higher. It also should be noted that these gains have occurred while at the same time the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch as grown (2007=38.6% 2011- 55.7%).</li> <li>- However, with respect to subgroup achievement <u>gap</u> issues, the district remains flat. It seems every group has improved on test scores in core areas between grades 3-8 and generally at the same level. This preserves the achievement gap because, relatively speaking, significant difference remains between subgroups. Notwithstanding this fact, achievement has been made in an absolute sense. But, given that there is a focus on the <u>achievement gap</u> in the regulations, the district's track record on this area is not as accomplished as one would hope.</li> <li>- Graduation rates have improved steadily over time and the achievement gap has narrowed in some instances on this metric, particularly within the Hispanic populations (e.g., graduation rate increase of 14% increase from 2008-2012, compared to 4.2% increase for white students).</li> </ul> <p>(b) The district has undergone ambitious reform efforts, although the fruits of these efforts are not yet known. Specifically, it has engaged with an outside organization to run several of its underperforming schools. The district has employed perhaps one of the more innovative reform mechanisms - value added models -- to try to capture whether its reforms are working. Thus, in this regard it has at least <i>embarked</i> on aggressive reforms, but the results are not yet in.</p> <p>(c) The district's efforts here are above satisfactory. A host of stakeholders have access to student data that the research suggests is helpful in predicting academic success. The district has positive movement here in a few schools where data dashboards are used at the team level to make instructional decisions concerning a child. However, the extent to which sudden performance data is available to parents is insufficiently explained.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

The application lacks a sufficient discussion concerning how it already makes available the information discussed in this subpart, such as school level personnel expenditures. The district does suggest that it will do this. It notes that the transparency being called for will "be implemented."

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The state has adopted a number of education recommendations/programs that promote the creation of personalized learning environments. Thus, the regulatory framework is suitable for the district to exercise autonomy. These include:

- CCSS (innovative standards designed to promote deeper understanding of core subjects and critical thinking)
- PARCC (assessment system intended to provide multiple ways for student to demonstrate aptitude in subject areas and these are connected to college and career ready standards)
- The district has apparently also established links to teacher education programs that will attempt to integrate the innovations that relate to personalized learning promotion (e.g. value added scores) to the training of its future teachers.
- A teacher evaluation system that is closely linked to student performance.
- The state has also provided the district with the ability to realign resources for lower performing schools.

High

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

10

10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(A) The district has engaged in a comprehensive effort to involve stakeholders in the process because of its use of focus groups. The district effectively did this because of the following:

- Importantly, the district appears to have used this feedback not simply to get "buy-in" but to actually advance the development of the application.
- Several instances are described in very specific detail with respect to how feedback informed the application and the district's direction.
- The union was directly engaged in the process as evidenced by the particular focus group that the grant-writing team had in collaboration with the teachers union. What is telling about this collaboration -- and what makes it strong in this application -- is that the focus of both management and the unions was on professional development and enhancing such opportunities.
- Principals also played a central role in this process. For this application -- which places such emphasis on school level leadership -- incorporating their concerns and ideas is particularly important.
- The district captures letters of support from a variety of stakeholders. These appear to have come from a variety of organizations with different and perhaps competing interests (e.g., MNEA and Teacher for America) and concerns. Indeed, it is a credit to the application that so many *different* interests coalesced on the grant.

High

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

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The application benefits greatly on this criteria because the district has engaged (already) in comprehensive analysis of its needs. In addition:

- The district has already implemented a longitudinal data system. This is key to continuing its analysis of personalized learning environments because educators and students must know how students are doing so they can adjust instruction accordingly.

- The district has effectively employed this analysis and geared resources and instruction accordingly. For instance, based on its data analysis, the district determined that college readiness rates were not improving and, therefore have devoted resources to parents and families in this regard. This is a *good sign* in that the district has demonstrated that it has the capacity to collect data, analyze it, and improve instruction accordingly.

- Importantly, the district recognizes that it has gaps in the area of taking the data and using it to drill down and improve instructional level on an individual basis. It is a credit to the district that they recognize this gap and aim to rectify.

High

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the district's application is quite strong in this regard. It is well organized. It incorporates many promising features with respect to learning innovations. Representative examples are discussed below.

(a) The district has demonstrated a high-quality plan on this particular subpart for the following reasons:

- The instructional tools it is promoting are student-centered (e.g., student dashboard where the student can retrieve their own data). The use of personalized instruction plans are both innovative and ambitious. Regardless, the important point is that these are important in investing the student in their own education and, also, facilitating their growth, This is especially important as students prepare to make the next steps beyond K-12 education.

- The district's proposal leverages existing resources to extend college-career readiness to the lower grades (e.g. CollegeforTN.org). Beginning this readiness is especially important in student populations that may not have parents that have attended college. Thus, this exposure must begin at an early age.

- The district's use of Project Based Learning is a sound instructional approach. This is a cornerstone of individualizing instruction. The district proposes to effectively weave PBL with the different lessons about cultures and races, something particularly important for this diverse district. Moreover, this is a unique way to integrate effective instruction (PBL) and attentiveness to cultural diversity that will personalize instruction. The application would have benefited from a more precise discussion concerning the timeline of other pieces of the proposal beyond PBLs.

(b) Likewise, there are several distinguishing features that make this a high-quality application through this subsection. In particular:

- The district's application has been enhanced by its apparent commitment to "blended" learning. This is at the cutting edge and, research suggests, it is one of the most effective ways for teachers to structure their time so that they are engaging students.

(c) The district represents that it will contract with outside providers to satisfy this subpart. However, it is unclear the extent to which these mechanisms are in place and how effective the use of student ambassadors will be in ensuring that the requirements of this subpart of the application are met.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district's proposed approach to effective instructional and leadership practices is based on sound principles. First, the recommendations contained in the plan are generally accepted in the education research literature as effective ways to build instructional capacity. Second, the approach to learning is connected to the ultimate goal of personalizing student learning to improve college/career readiness.

(a)

- The district calls for instructional leadership at the building level -- through establishing communities of practice or

professional learning communities (PLCs). There are important means to make these important reforms.

- The district's efforts support college and career readiness because they are aligned to the CCSS. Importantly, the district has proposed using data coaches to help teachers effectively utilize data. The underlying framework of the PLCs and these efforts is the districts adoption of the CCSS. These standards - by definition - are intended to help districts prepare students for college and career.

(b) The application has set forth a number of steps that are consistent with best practices and effective Professional Development models to assist with its goals in helping its educators.

- The district's use of embedded PD and Communities of practice has promise in terms of assisting educators translate data into instructional improvements and identifying best practices. Moreover, the district is making the positive step of aligning its resources to the CCSS, which by design are supposed to prepare students to for college or post-secondary work.

- The district proposes to share these resources through an online portal which has promise of being an effective means to transmit resources to faculty. The district's use of vendor in this regard -- to develop a blended-learning resource -- is a wise use of outside expertise. This is also ambitious. Effective training of these resources is essential, however. The district appears committed to front this training in year one of the grant.

(c)

The use of individual professional learning plans is also an extremely effective means to link curriculum reform to instruction through the evaluation process. The implementation side of this can be problematic. Administrators need to be skilled and committed to making these connections. The district suggests it can address these issues through a few mechanisms (e.g., the Skillful Observation and Coaching Lab), use of Lead School principals.

(d) The district's recruitment strategy recognizes the need for high quality teachers and is ambitious, however, the plan lacks a thorough discussion regarding its approach to staffing the high-needs subjects that are specifically mentioned in the notice (math, science, SPED) in it high needs schools. It is unclear what "benchmarking" other programs like TFA means. That said, developing relationships with the local university and extending the reach of high quality teachers is one means with which to approach the problem.

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

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a)-(b)The District has a high quality plan with respect to providing the infrastructure to deliver resources. It has satisfied all the subparts of this section of the application. The transformational leadership group is beneficial; it provides oversight and also includes non-district employees (e.g., community leaders). This can provide an unbiased eye to the district's assessments of its own programs. The district's approach to leadership -- giving more responsibility/flexibility at the local level such as giving more budgetary authority) -- is consistent with best practices. Of course this shift places a great deal of emphasis on the Lead Schools and the district's ability to develop and scale up quality building level leaders.

- The district's adoption of "student-based budgeting" is an exceptional way to give schools more control over their educational dollar and resource allocation. It is cutting edge.

(c) The district is headed in the right direction regarding how it awards graduation credit. It stipulates that at least some of the schools in the grant network have shifted to graduation based on mastery, not credit accumulation. It does not seem that the district has yet to embrace this process district-wide, however. Notwithstanding this, the district intends to replicate this model so it appears to be in the process of shifting on a larger scale.

(d) Again, the district appears headed in the right direction with respect to using a grading system for students by allowing students to use multiple assessments (projects, summative, formative assessments) to demonstrate knowledge and mastery. Although this is not district-wide, it does reflect a commitment to the requirement in this subsection.

(e) The district satisfies this subpart based on its past actions and demonstrates it has efficiently spent past grants on sound educational practices intended for these students (e.g., use of ARRA funds for specific interventions for ELL students).

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The plan is high quality with this subpart because it addresses the technological needs on both ends of this equation - home and then school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It identifies the need to ensure that low income families have access to the technology required and develop plan with outside providers and groups to provide technological devices at discount rates.</li> <li>- In addition, using "cloud based " technology appears to be an effective means to permit students to access materials from home notwithstanding their device.</li> </ul> <p>(b) - The district's proposal has promise in terms of providing technical support to parents. Interestingly, the use of school leaders (students) as part of this project is an innovative harnessing of human capital to feedback into the community. Such efforts have the potential of getting the required buy-in and involvement from community members who might otherwise be disengaged of the district relies exclusively on an outside vendor.</p> <p>(c) (d) The proposal stipulates that it has the technical capacity and interoperability and has already packaged data for parents and students.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's approach to continuous improvement is relatively solid because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It relies on external researchers</li> <li>- It filters formative feedback on six month intervals.</li> <li>- The plan's ultimate feedback is student performance measures.</li> <li>- At each step of analysis, the district is engaged in an attempt to triangulate the data. This is important given the multiple data points that are out there.</li> <li>- Its markers for analysis of effective PD are consistent with best practices (e.g., assessment of PD is based on embedded, consistency, sustainability, etc.).</li> </ul> <p>The extent to which the continuous improvement process could be shared with the public could be elaborated on a bit more.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan's communication plan allows for both communication to stakeholder groups (advisory meetings) and direct communication to the public at-large (portal for questions/concerns available on the website).</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The district's plan is high quality in this regard because of its use of a sophisticated evaluation system that includes ratings based on student test scores and observations. Because teacher effectiveness is the most important in-class contributor to student performance, the logic of using this system here is quite sound. The proposed target levels are certainly achievable but perhaps could be more ambitious given the level of resources the district intends to use to improve teacher quality. Over the 3-4 year period, the district is proposing that approximately 41 % of participating students will receive instruction from highly qualified teachers (HQT). The current level is 29.11 (2012-13).</p>		

(b) The district also uses the most prominent and reliable measures of student performance, such as the state's standardized testing as well as the growth rates. The Tennessee state standardized tests are well-regarded in the field. Moreover, by virtue of the district's connection to RTTT (state) they are linked to college and career ready standards. They are reported on an annual basis and the district has represented that these data are reviewed and used to improve instruction. However, the reasoning behind the use of the interim benchmarks on reading and math for the first semester could be clarified.

(c) The district's use of a school climate survey in multiple grade levels leverages existing mechanisms to address the requirements of this subpart. This speaks to the subparts requirement that the district understand student health/wellbeing. The district represents that this data will be available and used school-by-school and adjustments made accordingly.

The application states the required number of performance measures.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district has adopted innovative research methods in an effort to monitor improvements. In particular, the plan's proposal to use a control group will assist in determining if its efforts in the RTTT funded areas have an impact. Obviously, it is statistically impossible to make any direct link. However, the use of the control group against the district increases the validity concerning the impact of the RTTT funds are having on school/student performance. What is difficult to discern however from this plan is how the district proposes to assess the impact of particular activities mentioned in this grant (e.g. PD, technology).

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget priorities in the grant are closely aligned to the core principles of the proposal.

The proposal appears both reasonable and sufficient in developing and implementing the plan. The most important indicator that supports this is the fact the district is making significant investment in human capital (e.g., PD). The proposed amount in the grant represents an increase of 1/4 of the total district's budget spent in this area. Additionally, the proposed investment in the Lead Network -- again a linchpin of the success of the district's plan -- is approximately an increase of 1/3 of the current budget in those schools. The budget invests the most in the areas that most impact student performance, such as improving teacher quality.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan is of good quality with respect to sustainability. The district has already leveraged state RTTT funds for many of its reform (e.g., teacher evaluation). It is building off of initiatives already in place. In addition, the district has demonstrated its ability to increase local and state funding even in a time of recession. Thus, the local support is a recognition of the district's steps in the right direction. The sustainability of the plan would benefit with more thought given to transitions of services from outside vendors to the school district.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

(1) The district's description includes many partnerships that it has created and provides some explanation of how these relationships function, or will function. There is a focus and coherence to these relationships as they relate to this grant. Indeed, each intend to focus on transitions for students (e.g., Elementary Middle School). These partnerships include

organizations such as Head Start, YMCA, and college network organizations. Because the district has existing relationships with these groups, these initiatives stand a good chance of being sustained.

(2)-(6) However, the application would benefit from a more through discussion of how data would inform the impact of these partnerships. For instance, a deeper discussion concerning how its resources would be targeted on particular subgroups would be achieved through this partnership. Likewise, a similar analysis of how the partnerships would be scaled up would have added to the section.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The district has proposed an innovative reform model (Lead Schools). It has linked its proposal to building leadership capacity. Building educator capacity is the crucial step to ensuring that teachers use data and modify instruction on an individual basis. Moreover, the district has a careful plan to build on this and spread its innovations across the district. It has significant promise.

Total	210	193
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0946TN-3 for Metropolitan Nashville Public 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 demonstrates a strong vision for accelerating student achievement and heightened student learning through personalized learning.

- Adoption and implementation of Common Core State Standards supported by extensive teacher training.
- Creation of K-12 longitudinal data system (Data Warehouse).
- Provision of real-time data to students, educators, and parents through dashboard style data system.
- Strong evidence of Value-added Assessment system and Teacher Evaluation System to retain and attract highly effective teachers and staff.
- Significant evidence of addressing low achieving schools through an innovative redesign format called iZone.
- Clear, articulate plan for addressing personalized learning through a three prong approach: Personalizing supports, personalizing approaches, and personalizing relationships. Strategies within each of these areas include goal setting, use of data dashboards, blended learning environments, and transformation of advisory, guidance, and mentoring programs.

Overall this applicant describes and sets forth a clear and comprehensive vision to accelerate and advance student learning.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:  
 The applicant executed a concise plan of the selection of schools through the identification of locations which demonstrated exemplary school leadership, successful academic gains and a commitment to gains, culture of distributed leadership, and a sense of urgency to meet the needs of high-need students. Applicant also selected, based on these same criteria, schools to include in a phase-in process of the reform initiatives. A collective mix of elementary, middle, and high school locations are identified as participating schools and number of participating students for each of the required areas is clearly identified. Data indicates there is a variety of schools (traditional, non-traditional, and charter) identified for the grant process. Applicant clearly articulates the process for identifying participating schools and the identification of participating students.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:  
 The applicant clearly identifies a Phase-in model to implement reform and how this model will continue to district wide implementation. Applicant detailed a focused plan for analyzing implementation and adjusting accordingly through the establishment of the District Design and Implementation Team (DDIT) and research/evaluators. The establishment of the DDIT is a sound approach to analyzing achievement of goals through personalized learning which directly impacts student learning outcomes. Applicant also denotes the utilization of Lead Teams and Lead Schools to provide guidance to schools during the phase-in process.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:  
 The applicant's vision of creating personalized learning through personalizing supports, approaches, and relationships is supported by exhaustive data of current achievement and goals set for achievement well beyond the state's average and standards.

- Annual goals of raising mean student achievement across subject areas 3.0 NCE's (Normal Curve Equivalent) above the state average.
- Closing achievement gaps by 6.25% annually.
- Increasing graduation rates to 90%.
- Increase of college enrollment by 1.5% annually.
- If schools achieve beyond target for one year, subsequent targets are raised each year to accelerate and exceed results.

Goals are clearly ambitious but not out of reach. Goals support the the vision of personalized learning, and achievement of these goals will demonstrate a clear increase in student learning and performance through not only high achievement but a significantly narrowed achievement gap.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:  
 Applicant demonstrates a clear record of success for improving student achievement and has a solid foundation for additional gains.

- Over the course of two years proficiency percentage increases were recorded for three specific areas: Reading--7.2%, Math--12.5%, Science--8.3%.
- Subgroups have each seen increases in proficiency.
- Results of End of Course (EOC) exams are inconsistent, however Algebra EOC has shown improvement.
- Student achievement (percent proficient and advanced) has seen positive growth over the course of four years in

grades 3 and 7 in reading and math.

- Student achievement (percent proficient and advanced) has seen positive growth over the course of four years in Algebra I and English II.

Although achievement has increased across the board, achievement gaps remain relatively consistent.

- Increased number of graduating lower-income students.
- All subgroups have demonstrated growth in achievement thus gap remains constant between subgroups.
- Tracking of gaps among subgroups over the course of three years shows very little decrease in gap.

Applicant has appropriate measures in place to address under achieving schools.

- Partnership with Inspirational Schools to improve performance in 34 schools.
- Converted one school into a charter school.
- Implementation of Innovation Zone to offer intense intervention in schools which are identified as a Priority due to achievement.
- Though these measures to address under achieving schools are described, there is insufficient data provided to determine if these reforms have been effective.

Applicant describes availability of data to teachers through a user friendly data warehouse; however, currently only limited data (grades and attendance) is available to parents. Applicant does note that one measure of this proposal is to increase the transparency of all data to all stakeholders but acknowledges transparency is currently limited.

Applicant makes all achievement and data available through a transparent, user friendly data warehouse to teachers. At present, limited data (grades and attendance) is available to parents and students. Applicant does describe a goal of this proposal to expand the data availability to parents and students.

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

Applicant has limited transparency of actual salaries for its employees. Currently, transparency is available for school board meetings, budget processes, accounting, and enrollment options for parents. While applicant does present plans for transparency, through the funding of this proposal, to publish the salaries of its faculty and staff, that information is not currently available. Current data is primarily at the district level and not disaggregated by individual schools.

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

Applicant demonstrates exhaustive research and assurances that personalized learning can be implemented and successfully achieved under current regulations.

- Use of virtual schools according to State Board Rule.
- Flexibility in awarding of course credits through multiple formats.
- Use of School Improvement Grants to turn around low achieving schools through a conversion process.
- Use of Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) to measure student growth and joint endeavor with state to create P20 Data System for longitudinal achievement data.

Applicant clearly described successful conditions under which this proposal can be fully implemented with flexibility and autonomy.

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

Applicant presents strong evidence of support for proposal from numerous and varying groups.

- Student focus groups which provided suggestions resulting in a revision of personalized learning environments to afford individual schools with more flexibility in order to meet the needs of its students.
- Teacher focus group which provided information regarding the school structure at each of the levels (elementary, middle, and high) to set the standards for participating schools. Suggestions allowed the addition of personalized strategies which include peer support, looping, and community partnerships.

- Teacher focus group organized by local Education Association recommended the inclusion of professional learning communities which was added to the proposal.
- Parent focus groups reiterated a desire for personalized learning and demonstrated strong support for the proposal.
- Principals were an integral part of writing the proposal. This group identified areas of concern which were addressed through a revision (i.e. time management concern addressed through use of DDIT).

Applicant has substantial artifacts to document support of of the proposal.

- Signatures of nearly 100% of educators in participating schools.
- Numerous letters of support from community and business stakeholders.
- Letters of support from government officials and leaders.

Applicant clearly identified and described the support and engagement of all stakeholders in the development and implementation of the proposal.

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

Applicant has a strong foundation upon which to build and demonstrate progress toward personalized learning environments. Applicant has successfully implemented a comprehensive reform agenda which has built the foundation for personalized learning through transformation of district wide systems, policies, and processes.

Applicant has clearly identified a logical plan to build upon previous successes to address gaps and needs.

- Implementation of district wide reform through a three prong approach of personalized learning: Supports, Approaches, Relationships.
- Provision of support to schools for implementing personalized learning through the Project Support Team and DDIT.
- To address Personalizing Supports: Teachers are currently using data to inform decision making, however decisions are not designed to personalize the learning in specific content or areas of interest for the student.
- To address Personalizing Approaches: Training and professional development has been provided to educators, however a disparity remains of students who have access to a highly effective teachers. Professional Development aimed at Professional Learning Communities and implementation of Problem Based Learning to individualize instruction and increase the number of highly effective teachers.
- To address Personalizing Relationships: While the investment in distributed leadership training has improved and shaped positive learning environments, this has not translated into every student having the personal support to achieve and proposal aims to bring school wide changes to the student level.

Applicant has implemented a high quality analysis of needs and identified areas of weakness. Applicant proposes strategies to address these weaknesses within the scope of the goals of this proposal.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	19

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant details a specific and comprehensive plan for learning which engages all students through a three prong approach to personalization (supports, approaches, and relationships) to ensure students progress toward mastery of college and career standards.

- Students will set their own learning goals and monitor their learning through a comprehensive data base and student dashboard.
- Learning experiences which are self-directed, collaborative, and relevant will be co-developed between parents, students, and teachers.
- Middle and high school students will plan a course of study based upon interests and student data toward mastery of college and career readiness standards.
- Student dashboard will include early warning of when students are off-track toward mastery of standards. Early warning signs to include indicators of attendance, suspensions, GPA, and college/career ready standards.
- Development of interactive social media platform to provide students a voice and vote on topics and trends relevant to

their education.

- Development and enhancement of current Problem Based learning to allow student choice and student led learning; minimum of one per grade in elementary; minimum of one per quarter in middle and high school.
- Diversity encourage through use of diverse community partners and student and parent ambassadors.
- Additional training of educators on high quality individualized formative assessment and how to use data collected to inform course of learning through feedback.
- Development of blended learning to allow self-guided learning, small group learning, collaborative learning and digital learning so as to meet the needs of all students in a variety of formats.
- Revision of time and schedule assignments through time-technology swapping to engage students with digital media and allow teachers more one-on-one time to personalize learning for individual students through conference, feedback, goal setting, and formative assessments.
- Continuation of distributed leadership and incorporation of model into the classroom environment.
- Creation of catalog of resources for parents, teachers, and students which will be made available through the district website.
- Development of enhanced advisory program, student ambassador program, and peer-to-peer mentoring program to personalize relationships for all learners.

Applicant demonstrates a clear description of goals and evidence of activities to achieve goals; however, there is is not a clear timeline for implementation of all components. Applicant provides a timeline only for the implementation of Problem Based learning.

Overall the applicant outlines a well-thought out high quality plan for personalizing learning inclusive of varied methods to reach all learners, particularly identified high need or at risk learners; support to all stakeholders to insure personalized learning through a variety of mechanisms; and training to all parties in the implementation of the tools and resources for personalized learning. Applicant outlines clear key goals for personalized learning through the supports, approaches, and relationships. A clear, succinct rationale is provided for the implementation of each these three goals.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant provides an innovative plan and evidence to improve personalized learning through personalized supports, approaches, and relationships.

- Continuation and expansion of distributed leadership model to provide job-embedded, on-going collaboration among educators to develop leaders at all levels.
- Strong networked learning opportunities within buildings, across campuses, and online platforms for educators.
- Utilization of instructional coaches to provide training, feedback, development and delivery of professional development, data analysis for teachers and administrators at the individual and school level.
- Creation of summer institute to provide intense staff development delivered in conjunction with vendor, school leaders, and coaches.
- Development of smaller communities of practice within established large community of practices to address data analysis, use of data, goal setting, and support.
- Use of needs assessments to individualize the professional learning plans for educators and schools. Professional learning plans will include enhancement of established digital learning to further the goals of blended learning and project based learning.
- Goal setting strategies for students and teachers and how to monitor progress towards those goals.
- Development of personalized learning plans for each educator which will include: evaluation rubric, feedback from observations, goals for continuous improvement, action steps, data, and implementation of the proposal's goals.
- Implementation of electronic professional learning portal aligned to evaluation system which aggregates a variety of professional learning tools in a central location for use in professional learning plans.
- Use of teacher peer review process to ensure alignment of curriculum to standards.
- Use of established PLC's to align curriculum across content areas inclusive of high quality digital content.
- Administrator training on all aspects of grant's goals and implementation for year 1.
- Continuation and enhancement of administrator communities of practice.
- Redeveloped recruitment plan for new educators to include branding focused on the mission, recruitment early and often from high quality institutions, and simplify application process.
- Build on current partnership with Vanderbilt University to identify exceptional teaching candidates.
- Utilizing model of Public Impact, currently in place, to expand this program to allow highly effective teachers to extend their reach to a greater number of students and reward efforts through additional pay.

Applicant does not address how hard to staff areas/schools will be addressed through these measures though it does

acknowledge this as a weakness.

Timeline for the implementation of these components lacks specificity.

Overall the applicant outlines a quality plan for the process of improving personalized learning through teaching and leading. A large portion of this plan encompasses training and professional development for all levels of educators and specific components to address and monitor progress of the three primary goals of the proposal are clearly outlined. Activities which address the components of personalized supports, approaches and relationships are defined, however a timeline for the implementation of these activities is lacking.

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	15
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant describes a focused reorganization of its central office to support the proposal's goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shifting of resources from central office to the local school level.</li> <li>Implementation of proposal will yield additional changes including a revision of budgeting formula to prioritize participating school to support blended learning and use of technology, additional flexibility for schools with schedules and allocation.</li> <li>Transformation of central office toward a servant leadership model to provide assistance to local schools.</li> </ul> <p>Schools will be provided increased autonomy and flexibility in decision making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leadership teams decide schedules, course offering, and class schedules.</li> <li>School administrators execute personnel decisions (hiring, firing, plan of improvements).</li> <li>Budgeting to move toward student-based funding principles allowing funds to be allocated based on need and creating equitable resource distribution.</li> </ul> <p>Students in selected participating non-traditional high schools currently earn credit based on mastery and not time spent on topic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant plans to replicate this model in additional schools.</li> <li>Applicant plans to create its own virtual school to aid in achievement of this model.</li> </ul> <p>Working with established protocols, applicant plans to enhance methods by which students demonstrate achievement towards goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating of new grading system in middle school based on multiple means to demonstrate mastery of standards; plans to expand this model to the high school level.</li> <li>Use of standards based report card for elementary grades.</li> <li>Partnership with TN Foreign Language Institute to assess proficiency of learning in one's native language.</li> </ul> <p>Several approaches to create adaptable and accessible learning for all students have been implemented and will be expanded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructional practices are supported through the use of Structured Observation Instructional Protocol (SIOP) to ensure effective practices are used with all students.</li> <li>Implementation of inclusion model and use of inclusion facilitator to assist with model for students with special needs.</li> <li>Reallocation of funds to ensure additional resources are available to create personalized learning.</li> <li>Online instruction to be provided in native and foreign languages.</li> <li>Weighted funding for high-need students.</li> </ul> <p>Applicant describes a high quality plan of the infrastructure and policies to ensure all students have access to quality instruction and are able to demonstrate mastery of goals in multiple ways with multiple supports tailored to their needs.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

Applicant describes several sound and feasible approaches to make access to resources available to all students.

- Creation of Anytime Access for All which will provide increased internet access, access to personal computing devices, and digital content. through use of proposal monies and additional outside funding.
- Partnership to provide discounted broadband services and discounted rates to make ownership of a computing device easier for parents and students.
- Increase and enhance broadband use in the participating schools.
- Parents and students currently have access to data, grades, assignments, and attendance through Gradespeed.
- Increasing use by students of data and digital learning through web-based learning and at-home venues such as Blackboard and Edmodo.
- Incorporation of bring your own device approach for access.
- Creation of cloud based virtual desktop so that regardless of which device a student is using, information is accessible.

Applicant outlines multiple measures to provide support to educators, students, parents, and the community.

- Utilization of a vendor to provide training and provide technical support.
- Identify and recruit students to assist in training.
- Continued use of IT specialists at the local school level to train and support the needs of participating schools.

Applicant currently has in place a specific plan whereby information and data can be exported in a variety of formats or imported into other systems. Additionally, IT support staff can create data packages based on identified needs by students and parents.

Applicant currently executes an interoperable system which automatically processes information between numerous systems in the district. Applicant proposes to increase this interoperable system to include the data warehouse and make additional information available and operational to parents and community partners.

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant clearly describes an comprehensive and exhaustive plan to utilize an outside evaluator to monitor, evaluate, and provide feedback on the implementation of the grant's goals and progress toward the goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation data will be provided every six month to applicant so that adjustments if needed can be made accordingly.</li> <li>• Measures will include student achievement, academic growth, and college and career readiness.</li> <li>• Multiple forms of data will be collected and analyzed from both a qualitative and quantitative view. These data will include surveys from parents, teachers, and students; usage of data dashboards; attendance at professional learning opportunities; site visits; interviews; and formative assessments.</li> <li>• Throughout the collection of information, school based leaders will also monitor data and adjust accordingly or address areas of need/concern through professional learning.</li> </ul> <p>Applicant clearly demonstrates a plan for monitoring and measure its progress to the proposal's goals, however there is insufficient information on how the applicant will share this information publicly. Evaluation measures are inclusive of only the internal education stakeholders.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant describes a sound two prong approach to insuring on-going communication and engagement.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quarterly meetings of an advisory group inclusive of stakeholder groups and students. Meetings will be published and public.</li> <li>2. Utilization of online communication portal for issues, questions and ideas maintained by RTTT Project Director. Information regarding portal distributed through newsletters and back-to-school events. Additionally, the director will maintain website with information and progress of project as well as available resources. Website to be easy to find and easily accessed.</li> </ol>		

Applicant describes a high quality plan that is inclusive of all stakeholders to continuously improve the implementation of the proposal. Applicant describes a quality plan to disclose this progress to both internal and external stakeholders.

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

5

4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant supplied extensive justifications for rationale in selecting performance measures and goals as well as how these measures will be adjusted and tailored over the course of the grant.

- Use of TVAAS for measurement of academic growth because it allows comparison data within the class, school, and district compared to students statewide.
- Use of the Off Track Indicator in grades 4-8 which will also be validated by the Department of Research, Assessment and Evaluation as well as user feedback. Such validation will be used to refine the proposed goals.
- Career Readiness CTE completion rate will be adjusted upon completion of collection of data on students earning professional certifications.
- Utilization of TN School Climate Survey to address relationship aspects of the personalized learning goal. Applicant justifies continued work on this goal through partnership which may require adjustment to the targets.

Applicant presents ambitious yet achievable performance measures and targets in each of the specified areas (all, PreK-3, 4-8, and 9-12). Sufficient evidence as noted above is provided to describe how targets can/will be adjusted according to implementation progress. Comprehensive rationale is provided in the logic of selecting the specific measures. It is unclear, however, how some performance measures identified as mid-term correlate with previously stated data regarding academic achievement and the narrowing of the achievement gap.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant describes use of an external evaluator to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the achievement of the grant's goals. Assessment criteria will include establishing pre-grant information to establish a baseline, monitoring of grant through interrupted time series, and comparative data through the creation of a "virtual" district that is comparable to the applicant using data from other large urban districts.

Processes for evaluating the effectiveness of investments is sound and reliable, however, there is insufficient information to determine how time, staff, money, or resources might be more effectively used based on information garnered from evaluation. The indicators for monitoring this process are not clearly identified.

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

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant clearly identifies appropriation of all requested funds and justification of funds to the proposed goals of the proposal. Majority of funds are explicit to areas which directly correlate to classroom instruction.

All fund requests are reasonable and sufficient to address the goals of the proposal. Applicant notes that 91% of all expenditures will directly impact classroom instruction.

Rationale of appropriations is limited but sufficient for understanding. Funds which are one-time expenditures are clearly denoted.

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

10

9

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant justifies sustainability of proposal beyond the proposal's term with convincing evidence for each of the proposal's goals.

- Leverage of state funds to establish strategic compensation system.

- Established partnerships to maintain connected communities.
- One time investments which can be maintained by current staffing like cloud computing and student dashboards.
- Transformation of instruction and learning approaches which can be sustained through the retention of effective and highly effective educators.
- Expansion and centralization of data warehouse which can be maintained by current staffing.
- Continued support from local agencies.

Applicant provides a limited explanation of how services from vendors will transfer to the district at the conclusion of funding or how the district will absorb these responsibilities.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant outlines a robust list of partnerships with numerous agencies to address four key areas: transition to Kindergarten, transition to middle school, transition to high school, and transition to college. Applicant describes the established working relationship with many of these agencies and plans to build upon this to concentrate efforts at these critical junctures to improve student achievement and progress towards the grant's goals of personalized learning which is targeted to the specific needs of each individual student. While the applicant does provide conclusive evidence of means to use data to assess needs at each of these junctures, there is limited information on how this information and partnerships will build the capacity of staff in addressing these needs. Performance measures for competitive preference are identical to performance measures outlined previously for the personalized learning plan. Proposal lacks clarity in a description of how the partnership will monitor progress and track the data to improve results.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has detailed a comprehensive plan to personalize learning through the personalization of supports, approaches, and relationships for students. In order to address each of these three areas, the applicant has documented successful practices and models within the identified schools and plans to build upon these successes to expand to all students. Practices and models include blended learning, project based learning, advisory councils, student ambassadors, peer-to-peer mentoring programs, data aggregation, and many more. At all levels the applicant has identified innovative approaches to support the implementation of the goals including alternative learning platforms, new grading systems, flexible scheduling, and means to have highly effective teachers extend their reach to a greater number of students. Through the numerous, positive relationships with established vendors, stakeholders, and community agencies, the applicant is well positioned to see tremendous growth and achievement during the implementation of the proposal and well beyond. Goals of the proposal address not only achievement gains for all students, but a targeted focus on closing the achievement gaps among all groups. Applicant has stop gap measures in place like an early warning data system to ensure students do not fall behind or off track, but rather complete their schooling ready for a career or college. With the increased rigor of the proposal along with the personalized learning proposed, the applicant will obtain its ambitious and achievable goals.

Total	210	190
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0946TN-4 for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district clearly explains a comprehensive reform vision that continues the work of the Office of Innovation's iZone schools as it focuses on the core areas of this proposal. This intervention has been successful in working with low achieving schools, but not sufficiently enough in the entire district. The district provides strong evidence meeting the criteria required in this section of the proposal. The weakness with this vision is the lack of clear milestones to mark progress in reaching the goal of having personalized learning experiences for both students and teachers.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district clearly outlines the plan used to select participating schools. This plan is operationally defined with clear requirements that needed to be met in order for the individual schools participating in the proposal to be identified. The clarity of the operational definitions should lead to ease in replication and continuation. Additionally, the district identified a total of 1798 educators working with a total of 27,203 students, 37% are economically disadvantaged and 85% are high need. The detailed explanation of the district's approach was a strength in this proposal as it met all the subcriteria in this section.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district met the criteria of this section by providing clear information about the goals, rationale, activities, timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible for the implementation through the narrative and other evidence found in the appendices. Through the creation of a District Design and Implementation Team as well as the research-based design of the implementation, the district has developed a proposal that can be scaled up beyond the participating schools. Overall, the plan presented is credible and should have a good chance to be successful.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provided a strong rationale and detailed process of developing goals that were both ambitious and achievable based on a thorough analysis of past performance and anticipating future trends. Upon first analysis of the district's goals, increasing achievement and closing achievement gaps was conservative. The increases were achievable but not ambitious. The district met state expectations, which require a 6.25% increase annually. The district provided a convincing argument that a 6.25% increase in achievement is above previous results and therefore is ambitious and meets the requirements of this section. The district met all subcriteria by providing ambitious and achievable goals; however, one weakness found in the details of the performance summary was the combination of the Racial/Ethnic subgroup without disaggregating the data further to show performance by Black, Hispanic, and other subgroups. The aggregate data provided for the Racial/Ethnic subgroup resulted in the deduction of a point.</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	7

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided a clear explanation of student performance rates for the past three years and justified not including 2009 figures on all performance data charts since the assessment changed. This change in assessment does not allow for accurate comparison between the 2009 and 2010 academic year. The lack of data for the 2009 academic year was explained, however there was no evidence of an attempt to provide a cross-walk of scores comparing the old assessment with the new assessment. The criteria required a four year record. The missing year's data resulted in a deduction of points in this section. Furthermore, while the district provided achievement gap data for the past few years, the data indicated the district had been unable to demonstrate a clear record of success in significantly reducing the achievement gap. This inability to demonstrate a clear record of success in closing the achievement gap resulted in a deduction of points in this section.

For achieving ambitious and significant reforms in low performing schools, the district hired a consultant three years ago to help turn around low performing schools. One school is being converted to a charter school managed by a state run agency and other schools have been placed into an Innovation Zone initiative which has replaced the least effective school leaders and teachers. The district has not provided data to indicate if these reform efforts have produced any effects, resulting in a deduction of points in this section.

The district has demonstrated an ability to make data available to all educators through current infrastructures but this data is not readily available to parents or students, unless teachers share the information with those two groups. The district intends to use grant funds to expand their ability to make data available to parents and students. While the district has stated that it intends to make data available for parents and students, the lack of availability over the past few years was the cause of a reduction in points for this section.

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

5

2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided details regarding the extent of the level of transparency for expenditures. Many of the expenditures are made available through the district website, including monthly school board meeting minutes and reports. The district supported the high level of transparency by referencing the Meritorious Budget Award received for the past three years from the Association of School Business Officials International. The weakness in the district's transparency is found in the lack of evidence regarding how this information is disaggregated by school. Additionally, the proposal lacked evidence of providing personnel salaries for instructional staff, support staff, and teachers disaggregated at the school level to meet the criteria found in (B)(2)(a), (B)(2)(b), and (B)(2)(c). The lack of evidence providing personnel salaries and expenditures disaggregated by school resulted in a reduction of points in this section.

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

10

8

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district cited the State's waiver from the accountability requirements of No Child Left Behind legislation, State Board of Education policies, and State legislation as evidence of conditions and autonomy necessary to successfully implement the proposal. The district also recognized that current legislation regarding class size is an obstacle but can minimize this obstacle through innovative staffing structures.

The weakness in this section of the application can be found in the lack of operationally defining what "innovative staffing structures" means nor was there an indication of a process that could be used to overcome that obstacle. Despite this weakness, the overall evidence provided indicated the district has the necessary conditions and levels of autonomy to successfully implement this proposal.

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

10

10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided an exemplary process and exceptional evidence of demonstrating engagement and support from all stakeholders, from educators who will be implementing the initiatives in the classroom, to the students who will experience the personalized learning environment, the parents who asked for more real-time access to their student's data, and the principals who outlined the autonomy needed to successfully implement the proposal at their schools. The district does not have a

collective bargaining agreement with the teacher union but received almost 100% of the teachers' support for the proposal, as documented in the letters of MOU provided in the appendices. Additionally, the district succinctly described the process of using a support letter to meet three mutually beneficial goals of collecting other stakeholders' ideas and obtaining support and commitments for the proposal.

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

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided clear evidence of a high quality needs assessment plan as well as specific details of a completed needs analysis. The needs analysis synthesized several years of evaluative reports on other district initiatives. The proposal addresses the district's ability to create a high quality plan and high performing team to conduct the needs analysis. The proposal outlines the team's first steps and the logic behind the reform proposal. Additionally, the proposal clearly identifies the creation of a district support team, including the members of the team. The district clearly demonstrated their ability to use the needs assessment analysis to determine the gaps the proposal will address such as significantly closing the achievement gaps and increasing the number of students who enroll in college.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided a strong narrative detailing most of the aspects of a high quality plan to improve student learning through the use of personalize supports, relationships, and approaches. The narrative provided sufficient evidence of meeting the subcriteria in this section. The strengths of the proposal included students working collaboratively with stakeholders to establish goals and improving the students' understanding of their own data to be able to self-monitor their learning, utilizing an interactive social media platform, and utilizing regularly scheduled student-led parent/teacher/student conferences to discuss academic progress, the implementation of project-based learning in all curriculum areas and levels, and the use of mentor programs utilizing both adult to student relationships as well as student to student relationships. Many aspects of the plan to improve student achievement were operationally defined, allowing for a clear understanding of the plan and improving the chance for successful implementation. The district has a high quality continuous improvement model that will be used throughout the implementation process to monitor success. A strong example of an operationally defined plan can be found in the clarity provided by the plan to implement project-based learning. However, there were aspects of the plan that could have been strengthened from the same clear, operationally defined explanations, such as the implementation of the mentoring program. The weak aspects of the other components included a clear timeline and clearly identifying the parties responsible for ensuring successful implementation of the proposal, resulting in a deduction of points. Despite these weaknesses; however, the overall plan to improve student achievement is grounded in recent research and is highly likely to be successful in achieving its goals if a clear timeline is developed for all the components and the plan is implemented by the right people who know what the critical success factors are and how to achieve them.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided a strong narrative detailing most of the aspects of a high quality plan to improve instructional practices through the use of similar structures intended to improve student learning. The narrative provided convincing details that indicated it met all the subcriteria for this section. The district intends to expand the current professional learning plan to include personalized supports, collaborative learning through both Communities of Practice among different schools, utilizing Professional Learning Communities within schools, and utilizing both Instructional Coaches and Data Coaches. The strengths of the proposal included educators using self-evaluations to determine their learning goals, using an online, on-demand professional learning portal that includes blended learning opportunities, archived video of best practices, and other resources provided by the district that met high quality standards as measured by an objective rubric. Many aspects of the plan to improve instruction were operationally defined, allowing for a clear understanding of the plan and improving the chance for successful implementation. An example of a clear, operationally defined timeline was found in the implementation plan for Project-based Learning. On the other hand, there were aspects of the plan that could have been strengthened. The weak aspects of the plan included the lack of a clear, operationally defined timeline for the frequency of the Professional Learning Community meetings described in the proposal, the implementation of the professional learning portal; and the lack of clearly identifying the parties responsible for ensuring successful implementation. Despite the weaknesses, the plan to improve

instructional practices is grounded in research and highly likely to be successful in achieving its goals of transforming professional learning and instructional practices.

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provided many examples of current practices, policies, and rules that will facilitate personalized learning. The transformation of the central office, begun in 2009, was based on a needs analysis and recommendations conducted by the Central Office Effectiveness Transformational Leadership Group. The district intends to continue to refine the Central Office to provide the support necessary to successfully implement the reforms described in the proposal by providing the necessary autonomy to school leadership teams. Additionally, the district already has policies in place that allow students to demonstrate mastery through multiple measures which are based on both Common Core State Standards as well as the State's curriculum standards as described by the policies that are utilized by non-traditional high schools and the use of a new grading system in the middle schools. Finally, the district described methods that provide a viable curriculum for English Language Learners and students with disabilities as described by the use of IDEA funds to utilize inclusion facilitators. The fact that the district has identified the lack of performance by students who are ELL or who have disabilities and are also economically disadvantaged indicates an awareness that instructional practices need to be adapted further to meet the needs of these students. While the narrative is strong, and the district stated they were aware that ELL and students with disabilities who are also economically disadvantaged struggle more than other students, the weakness in this section was the lack of explanation of the policies and practices that had already been attempted to improve these students' overall academic performance.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provided a narrative that detailed the aspects of current district support as it related to the ability of parents, students, and other stakeholders to have access to the necessary tools, content, and resources both in and out of school for all students. In an effort to improve access for those families who do not have reliable access, the district has proposed an innovative idea of Anytime Access for All. The plan to implement Anytime Access for All effectively identified three goals, the method of achieving those goals, the parties responsible for implementation, and has a data-based rationale. The plan did not, however, provide a clear timeline or milestones for measuring success. Overall, the narrative provided strong indications that the district has a well constructed plan to ensure that data, instructional resources, and high quality instructional content is available with support to all students, families, community members and other stakeholders regardless of income.</p>		

#### 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 district described a thorough continuous improvement model based on four basic principles of plan, do, check, and act. The narrative provided details of a continuous improvement plan that will utilize an external evaluator along with district evaluation staff to conduct an unbiased implementation evaluation. Additionally, the district plans to use multiple measures ranging from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and site observations to collect data. The data plans to be compiled using a mixed methods research approach to provide a rich description of the implementation and to identify any areas that need immediate improvement. Furthermore, the district indicated the evaluation would be used as a formative assessment every six months. Additionally, the results of the evaluation will be made available to district and school leaders as well as educators; and, the district clearly explained how this information would be shared with parents, students, and other stakeholders in section (E)(2) of the proposal.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The district provided detailed information about how the communication process would make progress and results of the proposal available to the public and all stakeholders. The evidence can be found in the quarterly meetings, the use of a task force to ensure adequate information is reaching all stakeholders adequately if there is a breakdown in communications, and the use of an online communication portal that is maintained, provides prompt responses, and well publicized in all communication with stakeholders.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided a clear rationale for the multiple assessments that will be utilized through this proposal. The measures appear to be reliable and valid; however, the district provided information regarding how the continuous improvement model would be applied to improve assessments that are deemed unreliable, invalid, or does not provide information that can inform the implementation process. Furthermore, the district provided evidence of how the various assessments are linked to the concepts described in the proposal. The weakness of the proposed assessments was in the included table showing the Interim Benchmark goals. The table was unclear if the goals were meant to show Semester goals or annual goals, resulting in a deduction of a point.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district provided evidence of developing a high quality evaluation system through the use of an external evaluator who will employ mixed methods, quasi-experimental research methods. The ability to compare students participating in the proposal to a matched set of students from other urban school districts in the state should allow a credible evaluation of the impact the proposal has on student performance. Providing data from preceding years prior to implementation and during implementation will allow an analysis to determine if there were any statistically significant changes in performance trends. Using disaggregated data, the district should be able to determine if the implementation of this proposal has had any statistically significant impact on the achievement gap as well. The missing aspect in the description of the evaluation is the lack of operationally defined indicators that will be used to measure success.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district clearly identified the funds that would be use to support the project, ranging from equipment to personnel expenses. The overall expenditures that would directly impact classroom instruction represent 91% of all expenses. The district also identified other sources of funding beyond the grant funds from local and state funding sources. The budget provided appears reasonable and will provide the support necessary for successful implementation of the project.

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

The district provides specific evidence of how the proposal will be sustained. The district provided strong evidence of support from the local government including the Mayor. Most of the expenses are considered one time costs, and expenses for vendors are also designed to increase the capacity of district staff to continue to offer the support necessary to sustain the proposal beyond the grant funding. The district also provided evidence of budgetary increases in spite of a weak State and National economy. Additionally, the district intends to repurpose current resources to help sustain the proposal. Finally, the district provided clear evidence of being able to use existing structures such as the Information Technology department to continue concepts developed through the proposal. The weakness in the sustainability plan is the lack of a clear explanation of how responsibilities will turn over from a vendor to district staff. The plan would be strengthened if the transfer of responsibilities was operationally defined and a clear timeline were provided.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district's strengths in this proposal were found in the purposeful focus on personalized learning environments and supports for the students which were balanced by students' social and personal development as productive citizens. Evidence of support with the local community, business partners, and nearby colleges and universities has strengthened the proposal as the district strives to personalize the learning environment for its students who are taught by highly qualified educators who can meet the students' needs in this environment. Another strength can be found in the communities of practice and professional learning communities being utilized for the professional growth of the district's educators and leaders. The ongoing follow up provided by the district's instructional coaches and data coaches are also strong indicators that the proposal has high chances of success. Furthermore, the district has a good understanding of the continuous improvement process and has utilized it to conduct needs analysis, fully identify areas of concern, the root causes of those concerns, and has developed a highly specific, operationally defined plan to address many of those concerns. Furthermore, the district did not identify more than 10 desired results, keeping within the requirements of the Competitive Preference Priority.

The district's weakness was in some of the areas that lacked the same clarity and operational definitions that allow replication and a clear understanding of the goals and purpose of the initiatives being implemented. One example of this can be found in the sustainability plan where external vendors are going to transfer responsibilities to district staff. The proposal is not as clear about what responsibilities will be assumed by district staff, what duties may be taken off the district staff responsibilities list to allow the continued focus on the initiative responsibilities, or a clear timeline for implementing the change in responsibilities. Additionally, the district did not operationally define how to track indicators over time or utilize the data to target resources to improve implementation and student learning.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the district met the requirements. There was ample evidence of improvements in instruction, leadership capacity, and student learning through a variety of methods ranging from blended learning to project-based learning. Additionally, working with outside vendors and experts to continue to improve instruction will have a positive impact on student learning as well as professional learning. The weaknesses found in the lack of some operationally defined elements did not significantly detract from the district's ability to meet the requirements of Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	178
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