



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0330NY-1 for Middletown City School District

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 building on recent successes and has shown the impact of the improvements focused on the core educational assurance areas: Standards and assessments, Building data systems, Effective teachers and leaders, Turning around lowest-achieving schools. The applicant has succeeded throughout the application to create a coherent and comprehensive plan which moves forward with goals to improve student achievement through personalized learning environments focused on technology, professional development, deepening the learning experience for students and providing students with 1:1 devices. Student achievement is impacted through increased instructional time, quality of instruction, and increased use of technology for differentiated learning strategies and use of data. Strategies are supported with budget and evaluation to assess the value and outcomes. The applicant has presented a very strong application that is supported with detail and program outcomes that are measureable and reform measures that will continue to make a difference in student achievement, teacher performance.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has elected to serve all schools and all students with this application. A list of the schools is provided complete with breakdown of high need and low income students. The schools collectively meet the criteria for high need and low income. Total number of educators is included.</p> <p>Narrative supports the rationale for including all students and all schools. Rationale includes research into other reformed districts and a whole district reform initiative that promotes success rather than a single outcome strategy .</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has chosen and supported a gap reduction model for reform and change. All schools have been selected and each grade span level has an initiative that will provide reform for specific strategies. Projects specify the strategy and outcomes measure for each toward the goal of college and career readiness. The applicant has detailed the project and the funding that is required that will set the foundation for the reform with the district supporting the sustainable and effective measures at the end of the grant. Ongoing progress monitoring and mid point corrections are built in to provide outcomes.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has supplied data showing achievement and growth data reflective of sub populations based on State goals. Goals are ambitious and appear attainable based on the strategies in the plan except for questionable first year goals based on the short first year of funding and implementation plan.</p>		

The 4th grade ELL 2011-12 baseline is 2.9% and the 2012-13 goal is set for 27%, a highly significant jump. Significant gains are identified in the "Competitive preference priority" based on the UCLA Center X work for 2006-2009 for ELL population on the ELA assessments. The 2011-12 data is not reflective of this work, and the gains made for the ELL population.

Baseline and goals for high school graduation seem confusing until the difference in the diploma process is explained. No data available for ELL and high school graduation goal.

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
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has described multiple examples of a strong track record for success including math and English Language Arts achievement for elementary and secondary, high school graduation rates and college enrollment dates. Applicant is moving forward based on reforms already in place that have shown an increase in student learning outcomes in a low achieving school. Other significant initiatives showing improvement include dual language program, expanding co-curricular activities, and a college/career center. Implementation of a bold initiative to place instructional leaders in schools vs. principals is an example of a significant reform strategy. Building on the data systems that will inform parents, students and teachers will be an integral part of the districts improvement plan although not funded through this grant.</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 transparency of salaries for all instructional staff, faculty, school and district level administrators in budget documents individually or within department budget document line items.</p> <p>Lists all salaries above \$123,000 through a salary disclosure notice, for all school level staff and administrators on a website.</p> <p>Website provides details of salaries and discloses all district employees by name and compensation. No reference to school or function is noted for this listing.</p> <p>No reference is made to school level budgets which is optional. In addition to the website reference, narrative is provided about the increased transparency for board policy, board minutes, feature stores and program information.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant discusses the State of New York initiatives that allow the foundation for this grant centered on reform. Referenced is the teacher/leader evaluation system, charter school cap and transparency, allowance of educational partnerships, and a longitudinal data system. The state RTT plan and initiatives provides foundation for the RTTD application based on the four assurances: standards and assessment, data systems, teachers and leaders, turning around struggling schools. The District has taken the initiative to roll out the K-12 Common Core State Standards (as part of the PARCC consortium) ahead of the state to prepare students for college and career. Professional development to increase teacher effectiveness is addressed in the ePD program to be established for new and aspiring teachers, and students will benefit from the development of specialists in math and literacy.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant has exhaustive support from stakeholders at the state and local level for the implementation of this plan as defined by support letters. It is reported that teachers, staff, administrators and parents were included through a variety of forums to have input into the plan. Although no letter of support is included from the teachers association, the application is signed by the president of the teacher's association as a measure of support for the plan and teachers had opportunity to provide feedback. It is indicated that the local board of education was instrumental in reviewing data, had input into its design and is supportive of the plan. Documentation of the communication with state and local officials is included.

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

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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan for the analysis of student data is outlined and multiple measures are included based on local and state data to support the plan and its multiple projects. An analysis of data has revealed gaps in the number of students graduating with a Regents Diploma and the number of students graduating and going on to college, as well as the number of students that require remediation when attending college. All strategies support college and career ready at graduation. The high quality plan is to address/analyze performance index scores to address achievement gaps.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has a high quality plan building on previous success and continuing to focus on identified needs to support improvement in achievement gaps. The plan incorporates strategies along the K-12 continuum to prepare students to be college and career ready. The proposed personalized learning environment includes blended learning, 1:1 initiative and high quality approaches that are competency based.

The plan includes the two year kindergarten to give the at risk students a firm foundation for learning before they enter first grade. Promotion check points are embedded in 2nd, 5th and 8th grade that will provide students without proficiency to benefit from a summer program to give them an extended learning opportunity. School minutes will increase daily for elementary and secondary levels to provide additional time for learning. This helps to support the increased time for literacy and math subjects.

Applicant has focused student learning strategies aligned with developing an interest in college at an early age, providing connections to college and career through increasing the number of career academies, providing college learning classes that teach success strategies and connecting kids to college before they leave high school.

Applicant additionally has focused on a personalized learning environment through data rich communication, establishing short term goals, using formative assessments, and improving communication with parents. High need students are addressed through the 1:1 technology, blended learning and personalized learning programs available with use of the technology.

The District has in place successful programs that have increased the graduation rate but are not necessarily funded programs for this grant including expanded bilingual/ESL program, summer institutes for at risk students, extended learning day through the afterschool program, an increase in opportunities to take college level classes and an increase in co-curricular classes. The high school will increase the high school academy structure to provide students a context for learning and will be connected to the community for opportunities connected to business such as job shadowing and internships.

Students will have an expanded opportunity for earning college credit while in high school through a partnership with Syracuse University. Teachers will become qualified to teach necessary core classes for college credit. Middle school students will be preparing for college with a class or workshops through the career center.

Students receive the individual support they need to be successful toward college and career ready graduates through blended learning, 1:1, competency-based classroom, early learning opportunities and promotional markers in addition to increased high school rigor. Ongoing feedback for students is accomplished through a new data system and a parent portal that is tailored to the needs of the student and parent showing goals to graduation and college. Online support will be available through technology based programs that provide individualized learning. These new programs will be available in multiple languages to support non-English speaking families. Parents will be better able to track their students academic pathway and successes through the technology enhancements.

Technology support will be provided through an enriched technology staff and trained teachers with funding from the RTTD grant and vendor support.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has a comprehensive plan building on previous initiatives and introducing new strategies that are aligned with multiple partners and higher ed institutions. Included in this plan are initiatives for 1:1 technology, blended learning and learning management systems to support personalized learning environments. An attempt has been made to support the 2 year Kindergarten but applicant has failed to provide feasibility for this strategy rather than expanding Pre-k program.

Monitoring of student progress is embedded in the promotional markers and interim assessment. Measurement to college and career ready is embedded in the increased rigor as supported by the partnership with ACt, the SUPA and students taking AP courses at the high school level.

Increasing teacher and leader effectiveness is embedded in the new evaluation system and the use of the new ePD system to be established built on simulations of best practice and using the ePD as a monitoring tool for new teachers.

The applicant has described how educators will have access to and instruction in how to use tools being made available through vendor training, train the trainer programs.

Teachers will receive feedback on their personalized learning plan through data assessment, assessment teams, leadership feedback and individual learning. Teachers will have the opportunity to become effective or highly effective with ePD and students will have the opportunity to be taught by highly effective teachers through the development of specialist in ELA and math at the elementary level. Principals will have support from strong leadership support.

The applicant has produced a high quality plan based on these elements of partnership, professional development, teacher and leader evaluation and supported with technology.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has supported this coherent plan with the identification of practices, policies and rules that allow for personalized learning environments. The reconfiguration of the district and school leadership supports personalize learning through district teams, grade level schools and instructional leaders dedicated to improving teacher quality.

School teams have autonomy to create the environment to support the school improvement and personalized learning environment planned in the application.

The applicant is piloting a mastery concept at the elementary school level as well as the blended learning environment with online resources, and 1:1 learning with technology. Increased learning assessments will provide multilevels of feedback to

teachers to make teaching and learning decisions. Plans are in place to increase the technology in the classroom through blended learning, 1:1 initiative, and technology support for teachers and students.

Although the 1:1 initiative will allow individualized learning and mastery based on student needs, the plan does not address how students progress/accelerate their credits with the mastery approach. Plan alludes to mastery but seems to still be based on seat time for progressing in credits. Showing mastery in multiple ways is demonstrated with the stop gap measures of promotional markers, summer extended learning.

Technology is the foundation for the differentiation and resources that this applicant identifies for English learners and students with disabilities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant presents a plan that allows for participation by students, parents, educators and other stakeholders in school and access to data for most parents out of school. Lacking in evidence that the access is available to parents without technology in the home. Parents will only be able to choose their mode of receiving information if they have access to personal devices to receive information or use public/school based technology to access data.

Students will have teachers as trainers, as well as vendors for 1:1 devices. Technology staff will be hired with funds from RttD to facilitate student and teacher training for technology.

New system will allow more access to information and programs for personalizing the learning environment. Improvements being made to interoperable data systems.

Plan articulated an increase in data supported to parents and students through systems that can talk to each other.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a high quality plan for continuous improvement utilizing external and internal means of evaluation. The performance measures have built in components of review in order to make mid course corrections. The applicant will use adaptive measures to monitor student performance. The grade promotional markers at 2,5th and 8th will provide an additional assessment period to indicate the number of students prepared for promotion and compare over time. Monitoring graduation status will provide another opportunity to monitor improvement, determining if students are prepared for graduation. Each point of monitoring allows for success or mid course correction. Multiple measures will be assessed through feedback and monitoring. The superintendent has a quarterly update planned and annual report for sharing information with the key stakeholders. Applicant has a high quality plan for continuous improvement.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has supplied detail for the ongoing and new engagement strategies for increasing parent involvement through Bring your Kids to Kindergarten day, involvement in the college and career centers to understand the college process and what the center has to offer, strengthening families parent training, parent information nights and increased access to data..

Parents are participants in the ongoing review process as stakeholders and are involved in many processes. The big data initiative is the expansion in the district that will support better communication with parents as more relevant student data will be available and able to be accessed by parents. Parent engagement is aligned with the family engagement strategies as put forth in the research based framework by Epstein.

Students will have the opportunity to understand their status with tools and data available to them.

The updated webpage will be a key element to keeping external stakeholders updated with information. Opportunities are available for parent involvement through PTO and committees.

The applicant has addressed the communication and engagement with a high quality plan.

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

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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided extensive performance measures for each targeted group based on project, and grade span. Performance measures are designed to exceed the minimum of 12 and has addressed all of the requirements for performance measures. Attention was given to the anticipated growth of subpopulations based on the baseline numbers with plan showing differences in the subpopulations. Rationale was provided for each performance measure and plans for mid course corrections. Performance measure 1 and 2 are not broken out by subpopulations but is addressed as "all students".

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

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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is proposing outcomes measures for evaluating effectiveness of investments. Engaging in interim evaluation from stakeholders is included to drive the evaluation measures and the use of the contract service for validation studies is included.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has prepared a comprehensive budget required for these RTTD projects to be successful and indicated one time funds and other sources for funds which is district budget. The budget is prepared as a total and then for each project. The narrative is included for each budget that explains the rationale for the needed funds.</p> <p>The budget is sufficient to support the development of the plan and implementation of the plan. For these few areas: Professional development for students for IPADs, costs for additional staff for the mastery classrooms, annual increase in vendor contract to build blended classroom curriculum content, difference in the cost of the contractual PD for HS teachers in content each year for the same number of subjects, the rationale is weak but overall the budget is reasonable and adequate.</p> <p>One time costs are identified and those that will need to be sustained are identified.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Sustainability is build into the District budget supported with state and local taxes for those projects that require ongoing support. The applicant indicated that the projects are designed to provide the foundation and that minimal support will be required to sustain the projects past the end of the grant which is a strong plan for sustainability. Projects that provide the personalized learning and those having the best results will have priority for sustainability with District funds should continued funding become an issue.</p>		

The hardware purchases will continue to be funded with district funds, as well as the tuition costs for students in college classes. Newly hired teachers for the mastery program will continue to be funded by the district. There will be no recurring costs for the University project that trains highschool teachers to teach university level course, and there will be no new costs for the ePD program for increasing the effectiveness of teachers.

This high quality plan for the budget was built with sustainability in mind and the need to budget for the development of foundational skills and technology that could be sustained after the life of the grant.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has described partnerships that support three coherent and sustainable partnerships with agencies in the community. Through these programs outcomes are developed that align with the RTTD grant including academic as well as social/emotional support. Through the three programs students at various levels are engaged in learning, leadership and community service.

A partnership has been ongoing with UCLA to support the learning of ELL students that has shown results through a change in culture as well as professional development for teachers. This focus on ELL has allowed the district to turn around its success for ELL students.

In addition, a summer leadership camp was been in place for the last two years with the Park and Recreation Department for the city. A selection of activiites and programs has allowed students to improve attendance, improve behavior and increase their involvement in the community. In addition, they become better prepared to make successful plans for college and careers.

The third partnership addresses the extended learning day through the afterschool program for 2-5th graders. As a member of a coalition, after school activiites are addressing the needs of students to be engaged in academic achievement, and results have shown they are more involved in school activities, and have more regular attendance with decreased disciplinary referrals. An increase in accountability for academic success will be addressed throughj the data college in the RTTD application to show scores, activiities and discipline referral reduction. An increase in the program is planned to include middle and highschool students.

Each program is tied to performance objectives in the overall plan.

The partnerships programs address the ELL population primarily and are targeted to specific grade levels with plans to expand the programs to additional students and to improve results over time. Measure are in place to make corrections. Programs based on social emotional growth. Programs are results driven. Research is documented how investments in social emotional support improve academic performance.

The applicant has addressed the competitive preference priority for aligned integrated services that support the social/emotional needs of students and families. Each program is tied to an annual performance objective. Annual performance measures for the afterschool program include academic level achievement. The Leadership program is tied to graduation and college ready plans.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has comprehensively and coherently addressed personalized learning plans at all grade spans through a variety of strategies and plans to increase achievement. The plan includes increasing teachers and principal effectiveness through professional development, use of data with the new data management system, and focused toward college and career readiness with increased outcomes for high school graduation and accumulation of college credit. The plan utilizes technology for increased access to individualized learning tools.

Total	210	201
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Technical Review Form

Application #0330NY-2 for Middletown City School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This district's vision as presented by the applicant is very impressive, the formation of which builds on the recent progress it has made - a district with no district-wide curriculum, high drop out rates and attendance ranked in the bottom 10% statewide - to one that has demonstrated that it's possible to make progress in all these areas. The quality of it is attributable to new leadership and the need to move to the much more rigorous Common Core State Standards, recently adopted.

This vision is complete, clear, well-laid out and effectively combines altruistic goals with realistic approaches.

The programs planned are directly tied to the four assurances; regarding:

- **Standards and Assessments**

Over the past two years, the district has invested the necessary time and effort to align its curriculum with the new Core standards, began phasing them in last year and students will be tested on all of them this spring. In addition to annual state tests, the district is taking the further step of administering individual adaptive, year-round assessments for all students that are web-based and can be scored instantly, making it possible for teachers to regularly identify where students are and more effectively intervene and individualize instruction. The programs used to close the gaps in students' skills that are pinpointed have the added attraction of being enjoyed by students as they are viewed as computer games.

- **Building Data Systems**

- Data is currently used to drive instruction for whole classes as well as various groups and individual students who receive formative feedback, enabling them to set goals for their own learning. With teachers' data at their fingertips,

principals are able to engage staff members in how to expedite improving results. In addition, data walls are displayed in all buildings showing a range of findings to facilitate discussion and collaborative problem solving.

- What is planned is the creation of a stronger, multi-tiered approach that will combine their instructional learning system with assessment management resources to manage “Big Data” – the exponential growth, availability and use of information – so that working with a named world leader in business analytics software, they will be able to develop a new predictive modeling program. This program is one that can identify future student performance and project achievement gaps, thereby enabling the district to design appropriate interventions. These interventions can be recommended, delivered and evaluated on a continual basis resulting in more effective teaching and students moving toward much greater rates of college and career readiness.
- The district also plans to move to a more dynamic management system that will allow the integration of online education, classroom management and social networking by connecting students and parents to educators and learning resources anytime, anywhere. A central technological location for all the tools and resources used by teachers and students will be provided and accessible in multiple languages, helping to further close the gap for bilingual students.

• ***Effective Teachers/Leaders***

The district employs several methods to find and retain effective teachers, e.g., tapping colleges with strong education programs to actively recruit highly qualified teachers for hard-to-staff positions such as STEM instructors. It has set up one of the state’s six Teacher Centers to better provide professional development and has a nationally recognized evaluation system. It plans to develop its own teacher specialists in math and literacy who, in turn, will work with K-5 team teachers to deepen student learning and will set up a simulation program that will improve the recruitment and placement of teachers. The proposal did not address administrators.

• ***Turning Around Lowest-achieving Schools***

In addition to its very low student attendance rate eight years ago, the

district’s dropout rate was 29%. At the same time, some high-needs populations greatly increased. Even so, Middletown managed to increase its graduation rates by 32 percent; these rates included 82 percent economically disadvantaged students and high percentages of individuals from ethnic groups. These increases were due to several district initiatives:

- adding more time to the school day and school year in a variety of ways;
- curriculum changes such as establishing Literacy as an additional core subject for grades 6-9;
- adding more arts education and pre-engineering courses in grades 7-12;
- and
- expanded counseling programs including a full-time College and Career Center.

A validation study confirmed the positive impact of these programs.

The district also plans to address their remaining low levels of literacy comprehension; that most students are not prepared to take algebra; and its female students from homes of poverty. It will expand on several of its successful programs in a high-quality plan that includes:

- a two-year kindergarten program for high-need students;

- moving identified students into a 12-month program;
- moving to a personalized student acceleration system; and
- implementing a “1-1 personal device for learning” program so that students are not technologically challenged.

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

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant will not have to develop a process of selection as the district will involve all its schools. The district wisely studied districts that successfully turned around schools vs. those that did not and found that system-wide change met with greater success than did incremental change and that focusing on steady improvement worked better than attempting "silver bullets". With 73% of its students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch, the district exceeds the required 40%.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has included a high-quality district-wide plan that will provide the reforms leading to improved instruction and learning resulting in its students being college and career ready. Its logic model is sensible, understandable and provides clearly stated and achievable Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Short and Long-term Outcomes and the Impact of all.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The goals presented in this proposal were taken directly from New York State’s RTTT LEA submitted and approved documents and either meet or exceed state goals. Additional goals were set for the years that extend past the grant years. The summative assessments listed include results for all sub groups and overall for English Language Arts and Math, grades 4 and 8. The Regents Exams will be used to measure progress toward the goals. Decreases in achievement gaps and graduation rates will be defined by the number of students granted a Regents or Advanced Regents Diploma with Designation within four years of entering grade 9. With the New York State standard of 80%, the 2016-2017 graduation goal was set at 90% for all students with the exception of those with disabilities – an ambitious but achievable goal. The college enrollment goal was calculated based on New York State’s most recently published data.

The proposal includes a very detailed timeline with clear and specific deliverables to put into place the initiatives and programs outlined in the proposal.

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
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In addition to ample evidence of raising student achievement already presented in the proposal, the applicant provides numerous other indicators of improved performance, reduced achievement gaps, increased graduation and college enrollment rates as well as making data available to those involved to to improve intstruction.</p> <p>The proposal is especially strong in regard to the significant reforms that it has carried out under challenging circumstances. For example, it worked with three federal agencies in adopting a Safe Schools/Healthy Initiative that produced positive results. It instituted a dual language program wherein instruction alternated between English and Spanish for entire days. This program resulted in increased achievement and also helps to prepare students for the global market place. The stringed instrument program that it instituted had 200 students sign up who had never previously been involved in any other club or activity, 73% of whom were economically disadvantaged, and after two years, they have turned around academically and reached proficiency on state exams. The district reorganized its administration, eliminating the high school principal and other traditional positions and replacing them with discipline/building managers and instructional leaders who work every day with teachers to improve instruction. The "high-school tracker " reports, graphical representations of where a student is in progressing toward college and career readiness, is an example of the district's sharing data with parents.</p> <p>Middletown has been very pro-active in identifying barriers to success, thinking outside the box and evaluating its initiatives. The evaluations have validated the district's efforts.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant makes available a great deal of information and has no compunction about being transparent.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant points out that it is a district in New York State that, by putting into place all the necessary laws, policies and regulations for RTTT (and examples of these are given), qualified to receive Phase 2 funding. While no piece of legislation or policy is offered that specifically permits personalized learning environments, sufficient efforts have been made and conditions created that make it possible.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Middletown shared its ideas and proposed plans with numerous community members and in meetings and work sessions with staff, incorporating the feedback received into the proposal. A further step of asking national experts to review it was taken, and before finalization, a draft was sent to many stakeholders for additional feedback, which was then again incorporated. The other requirements were met, i.e., the 10-day notice to the Mayor and the State Department and the signatures of the teachers association and board of education.</p>		

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents copious details about the gap analyses that have been undertaken, including an extensive validation study conducted by a nationally known evaluator, the results of which form the logic behind this reform proposal, and implementing personalized learning <i>opportunities</i> is included. However, the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning <i>environments</i> does not seem to be, e.g., examples of strong outreach to families to engage them in school activities.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	19
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This applicant has done a great deal to meet the criteria for preparing students for colleges and careers. The plan can be so ambitious and still achievable because the district is already a highly achieving one. It has greatly increased graduation rates even though there has been a significant increase in impoverished families and it has managed to create a \$12 million technology enhancement program that ranks the district in the top 5 percent of technology-investing districts in the United States.</p> <p>Building on that program, the district will greatly enhance what it can make available to its students to enable them to take more rigorous and targeted courses so that they will be college and career ready upon graduation. A few examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent portals that will make vast information available to families, even period-by-period attendance; • High-school tracker reports that graphically illustrate where a child is on a continuum toward reaching college; • Assessments of younger students' cognitive readiness for learning followed by individualized lessons aligned with the new Common Core standards that develop memory, attention, sequencing and processing skills; and • Making the new technology-based programs and activities accessible in multiple languages, important to a district where a dozen different languages are spoken in the homes of its students. <p>The plan contains more than technology. The district will extend the school day and offer a summer institute for at risk students for grades 1-8, offer a rich array of courses in its dual enrollment program – 40 courses in 22 academic disciplines - and make available an on-campus program in the summer between the junior and senior years, giving students regular contact with Syracuse University professors. It will expand parent and student programs originating from its college and career center that will allow more opportunities for students to explore career options related to their skills and interests. If anything is slighted, it is evidence of students' understanding that their learning is key to accomplishing their goals and that the tools and resources provided allow them to track and manage their learning.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	19
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Middletown considers Professional Development crucial if the district is to move to personalized learning. It has a multi-faceted approach, much of which was covered earlier in the proposal:</p>		

The district employs several methods to find and retain effective teachers, e.g., tapping colleges with strong education programs to actively recruit highly qualified teachers for hard-to-staff positions such as STEM instructors. It has set up one of the state's six Teacher Centers to better provide professional development and has a nationally recognized evaluation system. It plans to develop its own teacher specialists in math and literacy who, in turn, will work with K-5 team teachers to deepen student learning. It will also set up a virtual simulation program to extend professional development opportunities to support participating educators in the effective implementation of strategies to help ensure that students have their academic needs met in order to graduate on time, college and career ready..

The district plans to fund an electronic professional development project to improve teacher effectiveness and to help teachers learn more about adaptive and cognitive-readiness assessments so that they can use data gained from these and other efforts to accelerate student progress. Covered earlier in the proposal is the district's plan to make even more extensive the availability of data to the staff and their use of it. A recent survey showed that more than 80 percent of teachers and school leaders thought that they were receiving ample training and resources to be successful. Even so, while the importance of administrator evaluation is noted, the proposal does not seem to offer much detail regarding it.

Middletown's approach to improving instruction also includes providing time for a 30-minute planning period each day and day-long, grade-level meetings quarterly. It will also provide full-time replacement teachers to allow teachers to attend these meetings and do the weekly class visits that are part of the teacher-mentor program in place.

Its approach to creating more highly effective teachers is to replace general education teachers with instructional specialists at the elementary level and research is cited that shows students in schools with mathematic specialists for three years scored significantly higher on a standardized achievement test. A renowned mathematics professor with a history of working with low-achieving, high needs schools will be brought in to develop the math specialists. Offering teachers the opportunity to gain a specialist reading advanced degree will create literacy specialists.

As to individualizing instruction, in addition to the use of adaptive assessments, school leaders meet with teachers individually and discuss strategies for their students, e.g., how the top performers can be moved further and how approaches can be used to help the low performers get to grade level.

Perhaps a stronger emphasis on responding to students' academic interests would have strengthened the proposal.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not list any rules or policies, but as mentioned earlier, the district reorganized its administration, eliminating the high school principal and other traditional positions and replacing them with discipline/building managers and instructional leaders and these leaders, in conjunction with several teams and committees, have flexibility over school schedules and personnel decisions and input into budgets.

While students are allowed to demonstrate mastery, the proposal is silent on their being able to gain credit by doing so. They do have the chance to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways throughout the school year and the district plans to implement promotional markers at grades 2,5 and 8 so that rather than retaining students, they can be placed in a 12-month program where they will be frequently assessed to determine their level of mastery of skills.

In addition to all the adaptable resources that are available to all students, to further meet the needs of students with disabilities and English learners, the district provides sound amplification and an IP phone system in every classroom and a 1:2:1 computing initiative with iPod Touch devices in five classrooms.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In addition to the wide use of technology – website, video programming, a parent notification system - to give parents and other stakeholders access to the system, the district holds parent meetings to inform parents/guardians and increase their awareness of student progress..

Part of the district’s plan is to train teachers in how to make optimal use of all the systems so that they, in turn, can serve as turnkey trainers for students and parents in accessing parent portals and sharing information. Tutorials about how to access what is available will be posted online. The district realizes that it needs to do more and will do so, including using interoperable data systems to share extensive student data, when its new learning management system is launched.

However, currently, the district admittedly takes a passive approach to communicating with parents regarding their children's education.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

As part of its continuous improvement process, district staff will continuously examine specific achievement data to determine which classroom instructional approaches are working and just as importantly, if not more so, which ones are not yielding success. They will look at adaptive assessments, the promotional markers, and a detailed analysis of graduation rates and types of diplomas earned. The district will work with a national evaluator from outside the district and contract with at least three professionals to track the effectiveness of instructional programs and analyze the impacts of affective programs and the district’s instructional leader model. Progress reports will be made at least monthly. In short, all of the measures and goals outlined in the application will be tracked, analyzed and widely reported. In addition, various meetings will be held with stakeholders to share results and seek feedback. The district will also conduct surveys.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district will continue to work under a research-based framework that relies on six types of school-family-community engagement and with the advent of the grant, will greatly expand on current efforts: Bring Your Kids to Kindergarten Day, the activities of the College and Career Center, Strengthening Families Program and Parent Information Nights. Under the

RTT-D grant, the district's "big data" initiative will make available myriad details about student and district progress and make all sorts of communication and engagement possible.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides 12 commendable performance measures that are ambitious and achievable with the requisite growth measures and a logical rationale for its selections.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district will evaluate the effectiveness of the RTT-D-funded activities by closely analyzing 10 major areas of its plan to determine how well specific goals are being implemented and reached. The perspectives of various stakeholders will be reported through confidential surveys and an external evaluator will conduct a validation study to directly measure the effects and impact of the initiatives.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
The applicant fully meets the criteria regarding budgets and presents this budget with clarity. It seems complete – even including funds to manage the grant.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
The applicant points out that the district has a long history of managing large federal grants and sustaining the most effective initiatives of them after the funding period. The district reasons that for some of the initiatives, capacity will be built among staff who can then continue to share what has been learned.. Other initiatives are one-time expenses and the rest can be covered in the district's budget.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		

The applicant does meet the criteria for this priority. For example, it describes three partnerships that address students' social, emotional and behavioral issues that lead to discipline problems, low achievement and dropping out of school. The various partnerships target different age groups and populations, are cleverly planned to entice students to participate and are showing impressive results. One program resulted in no middle- school student scoring at the lowest level on a state exam whereas 26% of them had just two years before. The other programs show similar impressive results. Two of these are held in the summer months when many high-need children fall even further behind their peers due to lack of resources and opportunities others have. A third program is in collaboration with the City and various youth programs and is an after-school program for grades 2-5 that is half tutorial and half recreational and involves high school students as counselors. It tracks math scores, extracurricular participation, attendance, behavior and drug and alcohol use. Last year 474 students participated and showed academic growth, increased attendance and fewer discipline referrals. The district plans to expand on these programs. Performance measures were provided.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant does indeed meet this priority. The district has not only already adopted the new core content standards but is in the process of implementing them. The planned adaptive tests and the new predictive modeling program that will warn of future pitfalls so that appropriate interventions can be put into place to forestall failures will go a long way to personalizing instruction and improving students' chances of success. The robust data system that they will build will also greatly contribute to improving and individualizing instruction, greater learning opportunities, and parental involvement through better communication capabilities.

The district's plan to build capacity among their own reading and math teachers by giving them intensive learning opportunities and its regular, constructive evaluations will increase the likelihood of students having highly effective instructors. These efforts along with many other strategies and ambitious yet achievable goals that will be expertly evaluated and openly reported will surely lead to closing achievement gaps and ensuring that all the district's students are college and career ready.

Total	210	204
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0330NY-3 for Middletown City School District

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 district articulates a clear and comprehensive vision. It provides thorough background information on its student population, change in demographics, student achievement needs, and a clear explanation of why it applied for the RTT grant. It makes clear connections to the district's standards and assessments and how they are used to promote high expectations. The alignment to the State Board of Regents expectations and Common Core Standards is clearly explained. The use of data analysis to monitor student progress toward district and state goals is clearly explained, along with how all staff especially teachers and principals, are held accountable. A bulleted list of initiatives is provided that provides the overall focus of the grant along with a clear plan for addressing its lowest achieving schools. Most remarkable is its explanation of how the districts graduation rates increased from 51 to 83 percent over the past few years; and this aligns with its vision of improving performance and holding high expectations for all students. It clearly articulates specific initiatives that have supported the district in closing the achievement gap; the initiatives target English Language Learners (ELL); literacy; extended day programs; the arts; college level courses; and a student counseling program. The district is very transparent about its student achievement foci (ELLs, students from poverty, literacy and math) and how it will use the RTT funding to meet a variety of students' needs. The district addresses accelerating learning and equity through the use of adaptive assessments that identify students' current skill level and data that teachers can use to create individual tasks for students. The district will also use an analytical software program that uses a predictive model for determining expected student progress and identify student achievement gaps; thus, this information will be used to design individual interventions focused on personalized learning. As a result, it is clear that its vision is centered around student achievement and the district addresses all four core educational assurance areas as defined in the RTT grant.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provides a clear description of the participating schools and selection process. All seven schools, K-12, in the district will participate to focus on system-wide change. A systematic plan will focus on closing the gap for 7,000 students and 572 teachers. 73 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced priced meals. The plan provides a breakdown of students that fall into two categories: low-income and high-needs. As a result, the district plans to demonstrate system-wide dramatic results, as opposed to one-shot results for one school.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's application includes a plan that describes how it will support district-wide change. The plan states that its K-8 population will increase its proficiency so that they are prepared for grades 9-12 to be college and career ready. A RTT model (graphic) that is included shows the activities that will occur as part of the grant; goals; expected results; and impact on student performance. The model is a good format for sharing an overview of the focus of the grant with stakeholders that includes students, staff and parents; however, an explanation of the model and its components to result in meaningful reform would make this section stronger.</p> <p>This section also lacks evidence to support the two-year kindergarten program as a meaningful reform method for ELL and other students identified as high needs. The district is devoting RTT funds to increase its support and quality instruction for preschool students to ensure kindergarten readiness; and plans to implement specific interventions to target specific skills for personalized learning. Thus, it seems that their goal is for students to complete Kindergarten successfully; therefore, students would not need to complete another year of kindergarten. An explanation that connects a second year of kindergarten as a meaningful reform method, in light of the other resources and support that are being devoted to personalized learning at Pre-k and K would make this section receive a higher score.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district ties its vision to high expectations by including explicit targets for improvement. Clarity of the targets is provided by stating proficiency level expectations for the all student category and then subgroups (English Language Learners; Hispanic; Black/African American; students with disabilities; and economically disadvantaged). English/Language Arts and Math proficiency statements with specific percentages are provided for grades four (75 and 77 percent) and eight (74 and 75 percent) for all students. The subgroup goals are stated clearly since they articulate current performance and the desired increase. For example, the ELL subgroup at grade four is expected to increase from 2.9 percent to 35 percent and the Hispanic population from 38.9 percent to 66 percent. Overall, the annual goals expect an improvement in the subgroups of about 30 percent. A goal for the graduation rate is provided (89 percent) and a college enrollment goal (81 percent). The district's plan includes charts that provide specific raw data and percentages of the demographics for each school. Proficiency status and growth targets are articulated for each school in a chart that provides baseline data from 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, and then goals for 2012-2013 through 2016 to 2017. The goals are aligned and taken directly from its state's RTT application and an explanation of how the goals were determined is provided; a breakdown of performance expectations is provided for overall student performance and individual subgroups. Even though the district has identified ambitious goals, there is still a question as to whether or not the goals are achievable. For example, English Language Learners are expected to progress from 2.9 % to 27% in one year as well as students with disabilities from 13.3 % to 25%; this is a large amount of growth for one year. There is no explanation provided to know if these ambitious targets have been set by New York State or by Middletown District.

The New York State's regents exams are identified as the tool for monitoring and measuring the decrease in the achievement gaps. A clear explanation of how baseline data was used to set goals through 2016-2017 is provided along with a detailed chart showing overall and subgroup goals. A clear description of how the district defines graduation rates is provided along with a detailed explanation of how it was determined. A chart is included of overall expectations along with graduation rate expectations for each subgroup through 2016-2017. A clear explanation and detailed breakdown for overall students and subgroups is provided for calculating college enrollment rates. To further clarify how the district-wide goals will result in improved student outcomes, a very detailed and descriptive RTT grant timeline is included. The timeline includes the month/year for implementing specific activities; a description of the activities; the person(s) responsible; and what the expectations will be for a variety of staff at the central office and local school levels. The timeline concludes with a clear explanation of how the RTT programs will be analyzed and evaluated over the course of the grant period. As a result, the district's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity through ambitious 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:

The district provides a very clear and thorough perspective of its record of success. It clearly provides an overview of the student population and demographics and then explains how it has improved achievement regardless of its increase of students of poverty and second language students. A chart provides a good overview student growth based on the state's performance index. Data trends are clearly explained using specific numbers and their is evidence of analysis to drill down to root causes. Gains in improvement were demonstrated through the increase in performance index scores of close to thirty points. An explanation of the changes in the districts performance index based on changes at the state level, provides clarity on the changes in the minimum criteria expected for students to achieve on the state assessment; comparisons are provided from 2005 to 2010 since the performance index scores were the same during this time period. Another explicit example of students achievement gains are clearly explained that include: increases in graduation rates from 51 to 75 percent, most notably for disadvantaged students to 81 percent in 2012. A key aspect of the districts dedication to closing the achievement gap and personalizing student learning is the fact that it was removed from the New York State's "needs improvement list". The district's plan articulates and thoroughly explains other programs that were key to students' success and the programs focused on the following areas: safe and healthy schools; 21st century learning; a dual language program; co-curricular activities; and the use of a college and career center for students and parents. An

ambitious move and significant reform measure on the district's part was to request a waiver from the state of New York on the requirement that each public school have a principal. The high school principal, special education director and assistant director positions were eliminated and replaced by a "Dean" whose focus is on disciplinary matters. Instead, instructional leader positions were created and focus on working with teachers to improve their daily instruction. A clear explanation of the research that was done to make this decision is included. The district also restructured the school environment of its elementary schools through a pilot program, by having classroom teachers change classes instead of the teachers; the focus is on team teaching and empowering teachers to take ownership for the students. To measure its progress and success of the initiatives, the district utilized the services of two outside consulting firms to provide feedback which is quoted in the plan and also part of the appendix. Finally, the district provides a clear explanation of how it shares data in a variety of ways with students, teachers and parents that include: progress reports; high school tracker reports toward college-readiness; State and district websites; computer based adaptive assessments that provide real-time data; and data walls in each school. As a result, the district's plan provides clear evidence on its focus of advancing student achievement.

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

The district has a high level of transparency. It has an already established culture of open communication regarding personnel salaries for all positions (school level, central office, executive level and superintendent). Budget documents (hard copies and on the district's website) have been developed that articulate financial information by line-items and salary disclosure notices are prepared for salaries above \$123,000. Seethroughny.net is website that is used to disclose the employees names and their compensation, along with copies of administrators contracts and all labor contracts. Board of education policies, agendas, meeting dates and notes are also posted on the districts website. The district also has a unique way of sharing information with all stakeholders through the creation of Middletown TV (Middie TV) and high tech communication tools such as apps for iPhones, Android phones, and Blackberry devices for receiving messages and school news. As a result, the district has clear processes, practices and investments devoted to the transparency of information.

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

The district articulates evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy of specific requirements to ensure personalized learning for students. Legislation at the state level required a new evaluation system for teachers and administrators; increased accountability for charter schools; allowed flexibility for districts to partner with organizations to work with and support their lowest achieving schools; and allocated funds for a longitudinal data system. Middletown school district supported this legislation along with other robust initiatives from leaders in New York that are clearly explained in its RTT application. All of these initiatives align with closing the achievement gap and personalizing learning. Its alignment to the states expectations will be less burdensome on the district and its staff to develop practices beyond what has been developed.

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

The district provides clear evidence of stakeholder engagement for the RTT application and the district's initiatives. Officials held a variety of meetings and work sessions with teachers, principals and parents to gather ideas for programs, initiatives, strategies. District committee meetings that included principals and other administrators were also held to gather input, along with the consultation of school board members. Recommendations were utilized from education experts and are named in the grant. Most noteworthy is the fact that all stakeholders had an opportunity to review a draft of the RTT grant and provide feedback and further recommendations; and their input was included in the plan. Letters of support from a variety of community members including the mayor, parent organizations, and community organizations are included in the appendix section of the grant, along with the required signatures in the front of the grant. Even though the district does not specifically state how it gathered input from students, it does state that it reviewed student data with

parents, staff, administrators and the school board to assist with determining goals for the grant. The variety of support that is explained and included in the grant provides clear evidence of engagement and support.

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

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The district provides a detailed plan that is aligned to its student achievement needs. It provides a clear and comprehensive analysis of its student performance data and area for improvement. Its explanation is transparent and clear in terms of where it has fallen short of meeting students academic needs. It articulates a system-wide plan, K-12, for dealing with some of its students lack of progress with earning a diploma and being college-career ready; and for dealing with its achievement gap among subgroups. Charts of student performance over a two year period related to graduation rates and state assessments provide detailed information about student achievement needs. On-going data analysis of proficiency gaps is stated as the means for ensuring students are making progress and to identify interventions for students not making progress. It has set a high expectation of 100 percent for the expansion of the personalized learning environments based on the systems and structures detailed in the RTT grant. The district did not however, include an adequate analysis of its current status in implementing personalized learning environments. There is an explanation of the lack of remedial coursework at the high school level and how personalized learning would address the achievement gap for high school students; however, there is not an explanation of the current state of personalized learning at the elementary or middle school levels.

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 provides a plan for ensuring that all students are college and career ready. There is evidence of how they plan to engage and empower all students within this section of the plan. The district will use RTT funds to institute programs that target ELL and bilingual students; a summer institute for K-8 students who are at risk; an extended learning day for grades 1-8; and college level classes for advanced students. Data for the substantial increase in students graduating is reported, from 51 percent in 2004 to 80 percent within the past three years. An increase in students' attendance at two and four year colleges, 40 percent and 30 percent is reported, followed by a clear explanation in the contributions to these increases. Successful initiatives are clearly explained such as an increased focus on cultural diversity through bilingual programs; a summer institute, K-8, for at risk students; extended learning days in grades 1-8; and offering more college level courses. Its high school academy will be expanded to include additional career options and cross-discipline approaches to accessing curriculum and instruction; along with further connections with local businesses and organizations. High school literacy classes will be taught with a focus on enhancing students' technical writing skills. As part of the the RTT grant, the district will engage in a partnership with Syracuse University to offer an advanced program focused on college-level content at the middle and high school levels.

Explicit and detailed information is provided as to how the district will provide personalized learning sequences, high quality instructional approaches, and high quality content. The district has developed its own curriculum that includes a scope and sequence, and it is aligned with the New York State adopted Common Core Learning Standards. A description of instructional models that have been or will be instituted are described including: blended learning classrooms; a 1-to-1 program; competency-based classrooms; early learning opportunities; and increasing high school rigor. The majority of these programs also include technology integration which is one of the 21st century skills that supports college readiness. Evidence that the district is supporting students with understanding that what they are learning is key to their success is demonstrated through the expansion of its high school academies where students can focus their learning in a specific career area. Students will be able to make connections to what is being taught in the classroom to authentic situations beyond college.

The district's plan articulates how it will provide ongoing feedback for individual student data and personalized learning environments by providing data on: attendance, discipline, achievement, demographics, and extracurricular participation

through a real-time data application system. The data is "real time" so this meets the criteria for the ability to provide frequent information. Their data initiative also includes a program that develops prediction models that will be useful to predict achievement gaps and support back-mapping instruction to support individual student needs. Another resource for providing feedback that will be instituted as part of the RTT grant is the use of a parent portal that provides info to parents about their child's progress or other school related news through email, text messaging, phone calls, etc. High school tracker reports will also provide parents with detailed information about their child's progress toward reaching the college and career readiness standards. A computer based assessment program will provide data on students' cognitive skills and this information will be used to make personalized learning recommendations, along with a variety of services/support offered through the establishment of a College and Career Center.

A few strategies to address the needs of high needs students are explained. The expansion of the literacy block to 90 minutes and 60 minute math block have contributed to the success of high-needs students at the elementary level. A dual language program has been instituted at the elementary level and an additional 45 minute literacy course is provided for middle schools students with high needs. Even though the district identifies the above strategies as addressing the needs of high needs students, they don't seem to be high-quality since these strategies have already been in place in the district.

To provide accomodations for high-needs students, as part of the RTT grant request the district is planning to increase its technology to support student engagement and provide information to parents in multiple languages. The grant also requests funding to hire math and literacy specialists; instituting assessments at grades 2, 5 and 8 to identify students performing significantly below grade level and then place these students in midpoint classes to recieve personalized instruction; and purchasing adaptive assessments where students progress through skills at their own pace based on their increase in skills. There is a lack of clarity about the mid-point classes because the district states that students will be placed into these classes to recieve personalized instruction, instead of being promoted to the next grade level; there is not an explanation of whether or not these classes are in addition to the students current schedule or if they repeat the same grade next year; the concept is not clearly articulated.

As part of its accomodations and turnaround strategy, the district has proposed an early learning strategy to promote early learning success. It explains that it would institute a two-year kindergarten program for students who are significantly below kindergarten readiness standard and non-English speakers; however, there is no research information included to support this initiative, nor an explanation of the process for making this decision. Holding students back does not seem to be an accommodation or high-quality strategy for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track for college; rather, it seems to lower expectations, especially since the district has placed a huge emphasis on its pre-k program to ensure that students are kindergarten ready. If students leave pre-k ready for kindergarten and the rigor and individualized learning continues in Kindergarten, then there should not be a need to retain students in the same grade for another year.

To ensure training and support to students, the district's RTT application includes a funding request to hire three technology integration coaches and three mobile device technicians to support the implementation of the 1-to1 devices. The vendors from which the technology will be purchased will provide training to students and staff at least once per year. Finally, university professors will provide summer training and regular contact through the Syracuse University partnership program.

Overall, the district has a plan for engaging students and supporting them with being college and career ready. However, a clearer explanation of the mid-point class initiative; two-year kindergarten program; and the inclusion of reform methods that are in addition to initiatives that the district already has in place would have helped the district to receive a higher score in this section.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district provides a detailed description for the use of RTT grants funds to support teaching and leading. The focus of this section is on the relationship between the students and teachers, and how it will expand its support structures. The district makes connections to programs and initiatives mentioned in earlier sections of the grant along with additional initiatives. The district plans to continue the following initiatives to ensure explicit teaching and learning:

- Peer collaboration that includes 30 minutes of common planning time each day

- Quarterly grade level planning meetings focused on the Common Core Learning Standards
- Access to the district's teacher center that provides professional development support
- Two year mentor training program for teachers
- Full-time replacement teachers to allow coverage for grade level meetings and weekly class visit

The district identifies specific initiatives that it plans to implement that are focused on teaching and learning:

- Teachers interaction on a 1-to-1 basis with students in grades 8-12 through the use of electronic tablet devices;
- Use of social media interfaces to provide user-friendly software platforms where teachers can share lesson plans and ideas;
- Blended learning classrooms that integrate on-line and face-to-face learning; technology support will be provided through a education technology company;
- Math and literacy instructional specialists to support K-5 teachers with differentiating instruction;
- Virtual training models which will provide web-based electronic professional development;
- Adaptive and cognitive reading assessments to increase student proficiency in basic reading and math skills;
- Extended Kindergarten as an intervention program for students below kindergarten readiness;
- Promotional Markers Program to provide professional development for teachers to prepare and motivate students for grades 2, 5 and 8;
- Competency based classrooms where students can be advanced based on their mastery of skills; and
- College prep courses focused on access to rigorous courses

All of the above initiatives are explained within the RTT grant and professional development to support building teachers' and students' capacity for these initiatives is explained. However, further clarity and information is needed on the extension of the Kindergarten program for ELL students and students below kindergarten readiness; and the Promotional Markers Program. Research to support these two initiatives and any other additional information would be helpful since the descriptions of these two programs do not seem to support motivating students to learn; instead based on the way the programs are described, the programs seem to delay rather than accelerate students' learning.

Ongoing local and state assessments will be administered and analyzed throughout the year to set benchmarks and monitor students' attainment towards meeting or exceeding proficiency. A detailed description of the assessments is provided in a bulleted format and along with an explanation of how leaders use this information when conducting one-on-one data meetings with teachers. The district explains how district data teams composed of various stakeholders from the school and central office, are used to support schools with on-going data analysis. These teams will meet monthly. A rigorous college preparation program will be instituted with support from ACT to prepare students for college; the program includes on-going testing and progress monitoring for students. Middle school students will also have the opportunity to enroll in college introductory courses and AP courses will continue to be offered in high school.

Annual teacher and principal evaluations will be used to provide feedback to school leaders and teachers. Constructive feedback focused on improving teachers' and principals' skills is the focus of the evaluations. A detailed description of the district's evaluation plan; how it supports and addresses underperforming teachers; and its recruitment efforts for selecting high quality teachers is explained. However, what is lacking is an explicit explanation of how principals (administrators) will receive feedback to improve their practices through the evaluation system; most of the information provided focuses on teachers. Explicit data is provided that highlights teachers level of agreement on receiving appropriate training and support, and if they have enough technology and resources (83 percent). The strengths and weaknesses of new and veteran teachers will be monitored through a teaching simulation program along with giving special consideration to hiring teachers with certification in working with ELL students, students with disabilities, and Science and Technology. Honi Bamberger, a renowned professor from Towson University, has been enlisted to offer educators the opportunity to earn a math specialist certificate.

As a result of the above, the district made a good attempt at articulating and describing initiatives focused on teaching and learning; however, including additional information to support the Kindergarten initiative; promotional markers program; and administrator evaluation system would have made this section of its plan stronger.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has described strategies to support the implementation of the initiatives in the RTT grant. The central office was reconfigured in recent years to include an assistant superintendent for instruction; chief technology officer; and coordinators of literacy, special education and ESL/bilingual education. Even though the district does not state specific policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning, it provides a detailed explanation of the roles and responsibilities of each of the central office areas and how they monitor district policies.

Traditional building principals were replaced with Deans who focus on discipline issues and instructional leaders were hired to provide daily instructional support to teachers. The district also plans to hire a full-time grants manager to ensure the consistent implementation of the grant. School leadership teams; inquiry teams; professional development and performance evaluation committees; mentor/advisory council; code of conduct; and safety teams provide leadership in a variety of ways at the school level and their level of input into decisions is explained along with how they will monitor the RTT grant. The technology initiative focused on the 1-to-1 classroom, a social media interface, and blended learning classrooms are described as the means for students to demonstrate mastery at their own pace. Students will be able to earn credit for completed assignments and then progress to a different module. Adaptive and cognitive readiness assessments will be established as part of the RTT grant to allow for multiple ways to learning and assessing student progress. A midpoint class will be provided to students who are not meeting proficiency standards to support the reteaching and reinforcement of concepts. The district has a 12 million dollar technology enhancement program that is ranked in the top five percent in the United States and this ensures greater access to teaching strategies and content for students. The blended learning feature is explained and part of this application.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district articulates and explains a plan supporting project implementation and access for all identified stakeholders. The details of the plan include:

- Partnerships and community projects focused on the use of technology to share information (website, district TV channel and parent notification system);
- How RTT funds will be used to support the new learning management system that will give parents immediate access to their child's educational information;
- Provide teachers with training on the learning management system and use them to train parents on how to access their child's information; and
- Building a data management system where a variety of databases can talk to each other to input students' information into one profile.

As a result, there is evidence of access for all stakeholders. Even though the district clearly articulates how it manages parent access of information, most of its strategies require parents to have access to technology. The district should specifically identify other options for communicating information to parents that address the gap in access to technology; thus, this would strengthen their plan and make this section receive a higher score.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district identifies a clear high-quality approach toward continuous improvement. This is evident through the following:

- A clear explanation of how the RTT grant will allow the district to expand and revise its data analysis organization and analysis models, along with providing real-time data;
- The monitoring of state and local data to determine student growth and identify next steps; and
- Monitoring student performance within a specific school, grade level, classroom or for an individual student.

A detailed explanation of how the RTT grant will support programs to provide specific analysis and reporting is provided. A sample of the programs is provided in a bulleted list and explained. They include adaptive assessments; promotional markers at grades 2, 5 and 8; and an analysis of graduation rates. Evaluators outside of the district are stated as being used to work with the district to evaluate its progress on the RTT grant. A detailed explanation of their roles and responsibilities is provided. The RTT district program accomplishments will be shared, as well as improvement trends and areas of need through venues that include the districts' website, board meetings, media outlets, and district publications. The superintendent and other district leaders will meet with different stakeholder groups to share progress too, along with administering surveys two to three times a year to gather stakeholder input on other forums for sharing information.

As a result, the district clearly addresses how it will invest its resources to sharing a variety of information and gather feedback.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district provides a detailed and clear explanation of the strategies it will use to foster ongoing communication. Its plan is based on a framework developed by Joyce Epstein that focuses on school, community, and family engagement. These strategies include:

- Inviting parents to spend the day with their child;
- A College and Career center in the district that supports parents in understanding various aspects of college and career readiness preparation;
- A supportive parent and teen seven week program focused on substance abuse prevention;
- Parent information nights;
- Allowing educators and parents to participate in district-wide committees and teams;
- The development of a parent portal where parents have real-time access to their Child's' education information; and
- Expanding data walls in schools to an electronic format.

As a result, the district has explicit strategies for ongoing communication and engagement, and addresses the elements considered for a high-quality plan.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district provides explanations of its performance measures. A rationale is included followed by goals for each performance measure to address students in grade bands (K-3, 4-8, and 9-12, and each subgroup in the district); however, non of the performance goals include PK. A rationale for selecting each performance measure (13 total) along with charts for each performance measure to show expected performance from 2012-2017 provides some clarity on expectations for student performance. However, there is one performance measure -rating of teacher and principal as highly effective or effective-that does not include subgroup data; and it is unclear as to why this is the case since there is no explanation included. Also, the district seems to make an attempt at including measures that focus on non-cognitive growth and a health or social-emotional performance measure by focusing on student engagement in afterschool activities such as sports or music; however, the performance measures or explanations do not clearly state that they are addressing the non-cognitive areas; the methodology for determining baseline data and future targets is unclear; and subgroup data is not included for grades 9-12 and K-3.

Contracting with outside vendors as part of the RTT grant application will be used to assist with progress monitoring student progress. A description of how the plan will be measured is included. As a result, there is evidence of a focus on continuous improvement, but a lack of clarity on the inclusion of all performance measures.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district states how it will evaluate its programs and initiatives. A bulleted list with an explanation of its evaluation methods is provided. Reviewing initial goals and actual results will be a major aspect of evaluating the effectiveness of the district's initiatives. Data from surveys administered to parents, students, staff and community members will also be reviewed and analyzed to determine if the RTT district programs have been successful. A validation study will be conducted by an outside organization too.

A timeline of the evaluation process tied to specific evaluation activities would have added greater clarity to this section; and the inclusion of a explanation of a clear approach to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of all of the RTT funded activities would have made this section stronger.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district provides an extremely comprehensive and detailed budget plan that address each component of its RTT grant application. It identifies specific funds to support the project, reasonable funding allocations, and provides an extensive rationale for funding each component of its initiatives; it identifies and explains how funding will support one-time investments and other funding sources that will be used for on-going operational costs such as hiring teachers and upgrading equipment. A budget table provides an overall summary of the allocation of grant funds followed by a narrative that clearly explains the table. For each project that will be funded through the RTT grant, a detailed allocation chart is provided along with a detailed explanation of how the funding will be used. It is easy for any stakeholder to understand and know how the district will fund different aspects of the programs beyond the grant period too utilizing local or other funding sources; however, a rationale for why the district plans to add additional teachers each year (over a four year period) for its mastery of standards initiative would further clarify the need for funding in this area . Overall, this section will be very useful to the district in allocating and monitoring its funds.

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

10

9

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district provides a description of how it will sustain the projects goals. It provides a summary of costs that will be one-time during the grant period and costs that the district will cover through its operating budget once the grant has ended. It provides a few examples of how it will support a few of the initiatives beyond the life of the grant. However, an explanation of support from State and local government leaders and financial support would have made this description stronger. The use of a timeline in the form of a chart would have provided further clarity of estimated costs and funds necessary beyond the grant period.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district provides a very detailed explanation of its competitive priority focus. It states and clearly explains three programs that are implemented to integrate services and provide support to students and families. It describes the UCLA Center X initiative that focuses on ELL students. It began with a root cause analysis followed by recommending and supporting structures to address the needs of the ELL population. The academic gains of these students are clearly explained along with continued areas for improvement. The district's Summer Leadership Academy partners with the city parks and recreation department to provide additional support to 7th and 8th grade students to develop their social skills, promote academic skills, increase their communication skills, and assist students with making connections to the community. The After School Achievement Program (ASAP) partners with community partners to offer after school achievement programs for students in grades 2-5 (a list of the partners is included). Performance goals and measures are stated, along with information about participating students and their progress. The district explains that the overall impact of the competitive preference is to have a positive impact on the students social, emotional, and behavioral issues. The description of the goals in this section align with the local and state performance measures and evaluation processes explained in other sections of the grant.

In summary, the district provides a description of a coherent and sustainable partnership; identifies and explains desired results that align with the district's RTT proposal; describes how it will monitor students' progress and improve results over time for two of the three programs explained; explains how the partnership integrates education and other services; and describes how the partnership would build capacity of staff. Additional information on how the district plans to: identify and inventory needs and assets of the school community; create a decision making process and infrastructure to improve results and address individual needs; and routinely assess progress in all of the programs included in the competitive preference priority would demonstrate that the district has addressed all the required criteria.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The districts RTT grant application is clear and extremely comprehensive. The district did a thorough job of responding to each section of the grant and aligning it to closing the achievement gap and creating personalized learning for students. It clearly explained how it would build, enhance and add to its existing programs to ensure that its students are college and career ready. Its clear explanation of the programs that will be supported through the RTT grant allow one to understand how it will significantly improve teaching and learning, even though it has demonstrated progress over the past four year. Its transparency of its areas of need demonstrated a commitment to student achievement, along with providing clear performance measures.

Total	210	193
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