



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0373VA-1 for Fredericksburg City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The goal of FCPS is to serve all district students well with an all-encompassing approach to increase literacy and math proficiencies and to ensure the related professional development of teachers to facilitate advanced learning and to accelerate achievement. The plan is aggressive with hopes of yielding great gains, fairly quickly.</p> <p>The proposal provides for the challenges associated with the lowest performing groups and the lowest performing schools. The plan includes academic enhancements from preschool to graduation, academic support services (i.e. supplemental instruction and interpreters), technological advancements (i.e. classroom on wheels), and social supports (i.e. case managers and mentors) in every K-12 building.</p> <p>These initiatives make for a comprehensive and coherent plan that maintains a keen focus on learning. Although the proposal speaks to personalized learning it does not clearly define how it will be uniformly operationalized throughout the district.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>One of the strong points of this proposal is that it clearly elucidates the significance of the building administrator. What is more, all principals were involved in the discussions on reform and their feedback influenced the proposal. The principals understand their role in implementation through ensuring consistency and equity, supervision of data collection and analysis, and disseminating results. They also have the authority to modify the plan as needed for success.</p> <p>The applicant did not specifically describe a process for selecting students but all 3,372 students from 5 schools will participate in this reform plan to ensure all children have the opportunity to meet their full learning potential. With over half of the students receiving free/reduced meals, 16% who have limited English proficiency, and almost 10% identified as special education, FCPS plans to serve all district students with this initiative. With over half of the students receiving free/reduced meals, 16% who have limited English proficiency, and almost 10% identified as special education, FCPS plans to serve all district students with this initiative.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has scaled up its efforts on several fronts. For instance, a variety of academic supports such as remediation and enrichment as well as afterschool and summer programs will be in place. STEM areas will be brought to the forefront.</p> <p>New teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluations are forthcoming. Having evaluation tools for all groups of employees that connect their work to student achievement strengthens accountability and keeps everyone focused on the outcomes of their decision-making.</p>		

Specific positions will be responsible for particular units and outcomes. Besides, school leadership teams, including those from central office, will provide oversight for the plan. This demonstrates not only collaboration within the schools but also between the schools and central office. Having shared leadership which allows varying perspectives and contributions makes the plan more attainable and affords ownership from all parties.

Partnerships with higher learning institutions so that college can be imagined as a viable option and an array of focused activities will be occurring on each campus. It is notable that each campus will be fully engaged in a flurry of activities to bring about student success. It may be said, however, that without identical efforts on each campus or least some of the same ones implemented consistently on each campus, each site could become a silo and/or work at cross purposes with the outcomes difficult to measure.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Although all students will be served, FCPS will target low-income and high-risk students for the most interventions and greatest gains. For certain, the plan is ambitious in that the district hopes to see double digit improvements, over four years, in literacy, in math, and in graduation rates.

This section of the proposal does not speak to whether their specific goals will be equal to or exceed State ESEA targets but it does speak to the performance on summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, and graduation rates. However, in some cases only grade levels were reported and in other cases subgroups were reported. All subgroups were not reported for every category.

Also, the high school had not collected college enrollment data and without a tracking system to verify college attendance. Although there is no valid data on actual college enrollment, students at James Monroe received 211 documented college acceptance letters in the spring of 2011 and 242 documented college acceptance letters in the spring of 2012.

With organization, trusting team work, due diligence, persistence, and dogged commitment to the vision, such results are possible. Without these, the plan will not be attainable.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has shown improvement, as a whole, and among its most troubled populations. The district reported having made strides towards closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, English language learners, African-American and Hispanic students. For example, the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Pre-K, indicate that, on average across the ranges of skills, 81% of students fell into the expected or exceed range by the end of the school year. In the current year, FCPS met or exceeded the Federal Annual Measurable Objectives in all subgroups for math and all subgroups for reading except one, special education. Limited English Proficiency achievement increased by 7.81%. All schools are accredited and made Annual Measurable Objectives in all subgroups for participation in English and math. James Monroe High School and Walker-Grant Middle School achieved all Annual Measurable Objectives in both English and math while the elementary level achieved Annual Measurable Objectives in math and all subgroups in English except Gap Group 2 (black students). High school graduation rates have increased slightly over ten percentage points from the 2008-2009 school year to the 2011-2012 school year based on the graduation completion index formula. Annual drop-out rates have decreased from 4.94% in 2008-2009 to 1.14% in 2011-2012. There is also stated growth in attendance and increased student achievement based on students earning honor roll (3.0 GPA) and principal's honor roll (3.5 GPA). All of the aforesaid improvements were attributed to comprehensive academic interventions and the development of students' social-emotional intelligence. Documentation of the gains in graphs or charts was not provided.

Student performance data are, reportedly, available to educators, students, and parents alike via the district's technological

tools. The district also provides parental training. The best parts about this training are that parent needs are considered. Accommodations for meals, community locations, and childcare are offered. School liaisons are also in place to promote home-school synchronicity.

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

5

0

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

No documentation was provided with regards to transparency in district processes, practices, and investments.

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

10

9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

FCPS has demonstrated its autonomy to implement personalized learning environments. For example, a district-wide plan for Individual Learning Plans has been implemented. The evidence is surmised in that in order to execute individualized learning, autonomy is necessary. Each student is different and has unique needs that call for independent decisions to be put into operation at the school and classroom levels.

What is more, the district has also historically supported class sizes of less than 25 students. Both system-wide initiatives support the cultivation of strong teacher-student relations. Besides, the expectations for the Individual Learning Plans call for getting to know the students, being aware of their academic status, understanding and meeting the needs of students, and documentation of employing specific interventions and corresponding outcomes. These expectations provide a framework for personalized learning environments.

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

10

8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Internal and external support was solicited. The district engaged building level principals, teachers, and students in determining the types of interventions and initiatives that would be put forth in the proposal. External outreach included parents, parent organizations, community agencies, businesses, and the local university. This is a sound variety of perspectives and support although advocacy groups were omitted. All demonstrated their consensus by letters of support. Other letters were provided from the mayor, Chamber of Commerce, a local church, and several teachers/teacher leaders.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The district identified and analyzed its areas of needs in teacher competencies. It focused its attention, in this area, on the needs and gaps of elementary students. FCPS reiterated its 4-year plan to address the shortcomings. Middle and high school needs were not mentioned, however.

The plan offers its ideals for each of the 4 years. Although the proposal speaks to an aggressive approach, the plan is quite gradual in nature. For instance, Year 1 is dedicated to putting people and systems in place. Year 2 implements the summer and after school programs as well as the district-wide STEM program. Year 3 allows for additional interventions and corollary materials and supplies while Year 4 offers the promise of full implementation. While the plan should be applauded for deliberate and thoughtful steps, the grant funding will be coming to a close before enough meaningful data could be captured regarding outcomes.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The criteria in this section were addressed as follows:

Understand what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. Are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest:

- From preschool to high school graduation, children will have the expectation of being prepared for college or careers.
- Career explorations will be a part of the curriculum, even in preschool, to support this effort.
- Older students will have opportunities to become members of career-oriented clubs.
- Students will be made aware of the steps that must be taken to satisfactorily attain their goals of college or career.

Master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving:

- Students will engage in purposeful learning and corresponding activities with a focus on the requisite knowledge, skills, and behaviors for college and career readiness that include leadership, individual talents and interests, job shadowing and job readiness preparation.
- School Counselors ensure students' equal exposure to wide ranges of extracurricular and enrichment opportunities that build leadership, nurture talents and interests, and increase engagement within the school.

Identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals. Personalized learning recommendations.

- The high school offers internships, mentors, and specialty clubs such as Distributive Education Clubs of America and Future Business Leaders of America to support college and career ready experiences.
- School Counselors ensure students' planning, preparation, participation and performance in a rigorous academic program that connects to their college and career aspirations and goals. Counselors conduct class meetings and discuss academic plans with students and encourage students to enroll in Advanced Placement courses.
- School Counselors provide early and ongoing exposure to experiences and information necessary to make informed decisions when selecting a college or career that connects to academic preparation and future aspirations.

Accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements

- School Counselors build a college-going environment in our schools focused on early college awareness by encouraging students to believe that they can succeed in college despite challenges they face along the way.

Parent Communication

- School Counselors ensure that students and families have an early and ongoing understanding of the college and career application and admission processes so they can find the postsecondary options that are the best fit with their aspirations and interests.

Criteria that were not addressed in this section but touched upon in other areas of the proposal:

- A variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments.
- Training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.
- High-quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate.
- A personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time
- Frequently updated individual student data.
- An in-depth exposition of deep learning.
- Access to data.
- Ongoing and regular feedback.
- Have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning.
- The accommodation for high-needs students.

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

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Improving learning and teaching from highly effective teachers. Implementing instructional strategies. Improve instruction and increase capacity to support student progress:

- Vertical and horizontal leadership teams as well as mentors have been established to ensure that teacher effectiveness keeps pace with the expectations of school improvement.
- Teacher training extends beyond academic lessons to cultural understandings and social justice matters regarding disproportionality and achievement.

Personalizing the learning environment to processes and tools to match student need:

- The school system has adopted a national program to increase personalization of the school environment via the team approach in terms of teachers working in grade level teams and meeting on a regular basis to discuss student progress and strategies to improve instruction.
- The school is addressing teacher bias, classroom management techniques, and cultural mores as part of changing the way the school division serves this vulnerable population.

Frequently measure student progress:

- The same software that makes parents and students aware of student progress will secure similar benefits for teachers and school leaders. Additional technological amenities will streamline access to the data for the staff.

Teacher evaluation and teacher feedback:

- 40% of a teacher's annual evaluation is directly tied to student growth.
- Teachers will continue their specific training in working with underachieving student populations.
- Several data checkpoints are in place along the way to ensure that teachers are meeting their goals and students are progressing as expected.

Criteria that were not addressed in this section but touched upon in other areas of the proposal:

- Accelerate learning through support:
- High quality learning resources:

A high quality plan is presented in table format in E4 that includes justification of the plan's goals, responsible parties, timelines, and pathways to implementation.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Organizing the LEA central office, or the consortium governance structure, to provide support and services to all participating schools

- Central administration appears to be committed to providing support and services to the five participating schools.
- Governance board, seemingly, collaborate well with each other and support the innovations of schools.
- Key positions such as the Deputy Superintendent, the Director of Instruction, and the Director of Human Resources were mentioned as having primary roles of responsibility for ensuring and assessing the success of the work in schools.

Providing school leadership teams in participating schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets.

- The district works with schools which in turn work with their teams to ensure that the appropriate voices are able to provide input on important operational matters and to guarantee that proper equipment, materials, and supplies are obtained for differentiated instruction and the learning needs of students.

Providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners

- The ways in which special needs populations and English language learners are served is presented in B1.

Although a high quality plan was not offered in this section, E4 includes justification of the proposal's goals, responsible parties, timelines, and pathways to implementation.

Criteria that are not addressed:

- Giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. Giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district's infrastructure supports personalized learning as follows:

Using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems (e.g., electronic tutors, tools that make recommendations for additional learning supports, or software that securely stores personal records)

- The district, seemingly, is pleased and has confidence in its technologies and the transparency and efficiencies they afford educators for storing important student information, providing academic data, and ensuring access to data.
- Stakeholders who do not have access to technology will be able to communicate with school personnel through library services, cell phone access, parent centers in schools, and local area community resources.
- Schools will continually post notices on the internet and provide hard copies of flyers to parents to keep them abreast of the changes being made and to provide feedback on the progress being made with the program's development.
- Students have access to computer labs in each school building as well as student computers in each PreK-8th grade classroom.
- Beginning in 2012-2013 all 4th grade students and teachers are participating in a one-to-one computer tablet program that they will continue to use throughout their educational career.
- SchoolNet/Parent Portal is currently available to all parents.

Criteria addressed on some level in other areas of proposal:

- How educators would be trained and have access to the necessary content, tools, and other learning resources.
- Ensuring that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems (e.g., systems that include human resources data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data):

Criteria not addressed:

- How district would ensure that students and parents, and other stakeholders, who fall on the other side of the digital divide would have access to information if they were not able to physically visit the locations due to scheduling and other life factors that are frequent among low-income, high-needs families.

Although a high quality plan was not offered in this section, E4 includes justification of the proposal's goals, responsible parties, timelines, and pathways to implementation.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The strategy for continuous improvement is documented as follows:

Continuous improvement process:

- Effective Schools model of continuous school improvement has been adopted.
- The schools have assembled committees that help to advance the school improvement plan.

Timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements:

- The Division Leadership Team works closely with the division's central office instructional leaders.
- With representation on the leadership teams, there is great potential that this system will afford the desired change in terms of distributed leadership.

Monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff:

- One of the principles of the Effective Schools model is to frequently monitor student success and to provide an efficient mechanism to provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward the goals outlined in the proposed plan.
- Information will be shared with the public through monthly School Board meetings. The School Board meetings are also aired on the school division's local cable channel and are easily accessible to the community.
- Individual student performance is shared through a web-based database (schoolnet) that allows parent access to testing results and grades through a parent portal.

Information not included:

- Publicly sharing information on professional development or district processes, practices, and investments.

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

External Stakeholders:

- This section was missing from the application responses; however, the district spoke to reaching out to the community in A1, A3, and B4 although all were not necessarily strategies nor engagement.

Internal Stakeholders:

- Efforts to maintain ongoing communication and engagement with internal stakeholders are discussed throughout the proposal.

Although a high quality plan was not offered in this section, E4 includes justification of the proposal's goals, responsible parties, timelines, and pathways to implementation.

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

The applicant is to be applauded for including academic and socio-emotional performance measures. Expected gains in performance are uncompromising and tend to the whole child. They comprise cognitive, non-cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral.

However, the total was less than 12 performance measures. Information on performance measures was provided for students overall and by subgroup, with annual targets and expected improvement over time. Rationale for performance measures was offered. It is presumed that the theory of action is tantamount to the Effective Schools model, though not crystal clear.

All the same, the plan is determined and achievable although not necessarily ambitious.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

This section is also missing from the proposal.

However, some of the measures to evaluate effectiveness were noted in other sections of the proposal such as service delivery, school leadership teams, decision-making structures, school operations, and working with community partners.

The following evaluation measures were not explicated clearly in the proposal.

- professional development
- activities that employ technology or
- more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results schedules and structures.

Although a high quality plan was not offered in this section, E4 includes justification of the proposal's goals, responsible parties, timelines, and pathways to implementation.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget seems reasonable and sufficient. It identifies the necessary funds to support a variety of reform initiatives and a position for personalized learning. The district also linked spending to eligibility criteria, to their location in the application, and to their project level which was helpful and represented a spirit of transparency.</p> <p>Justification and thoughtful rationale for each major spending area in addition to summary narratives are provided.</p> <p>The district asserts that Title I, Title II, Title III, Head Start, and Virginia Pre-school funding will be used in conjunction with RTTT-D monies as their goals and efforts are consonant. Local or state funding is not mentioned and external foundation support is not guaranteed for long-term sustainability.</p> <p>One-time investments versus ongoing operational costs can be presumed by studying the budget but is not declared.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not preset a high-quality plan for sustainability although ideas are being generated. For instance, the district will seek funding from national philanthropic groups. During the second year of the grant, an education foundation will be established and partnerships created. A local resident has, reportedly, been quite generous to education over the past ten years. The district is hopeful that this might continue. However, there is no budgetary documentation to verify sustainability for 3 years after the term of the grant.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district reasonably addressed how it will build on the core educational assurance areas. FCPS appears determined to accept no excuses for its current plight. It is convening a dream team to collaborate around standards and assessments, timelines and agreements, as well as academic and social-emotional measures to move students ahead quickly. Key criteria are addressed as follows:</p> <p>Create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district supports small class sizes. 		

- Specialty clubs are in place based on student interests and talents.

Accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student:

- A district-wide plan for Individual Learning Plans has been implemented.

Increase the effectiveness of educators:

- FCPS is investing in teacher training and support in addition to the effectiveness of school leaders
- There are 272 certificated, highly qualified, classroom teachers in the system. The vast majority of them (over 70%) have expressed approval for implementing this reform plan.

Decrease achievement gaps across student groups and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers:

- The district has selected five schools for participation that have over 55. % of all students who are eligible for free and reduced lunch.
- A Drop-Out Taskforce is in place.
- Over 16% of students speak languages other than English.
- English language learners are supported with cues and writing in multiple languages and a dual language learners plan to support, not only the children, but parents in the acquisition of English.

There are data systems in place to keep educators informed as well as parents and community. Partnerships will be in place although additional ones for various reasons would be in keeping with the community's urgency to alleviate mass failure among children, especially those who have been traditionally underserved and those in low achieving schools.

The plan for personalized learning environments could be strengthened but a skeletal framework is in place. There is somewhat of a dichotomy in the slow yet deliberate implementation for ambitious results. In large measure, the plan could be successful with optimal collaboration and organization. With a district culture of collaboration within schools, among schools, and across the district, the results could be possible.

Total	210	143
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0373VA-2 for Fredericksburg City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Key features of district's reform plan include:

- Cutting edge literacy programs, mentorships, technology, professional development for staff.
- Teacher professional development, additional classroom space, and increases in support services, such as

reading/literacy coaches, a STEM specialist for the district, translators, case managers for every building except pre-school, and expanded technology in order to provide more resources for a growing number of at-risk families and children

- Create learning environments to significantly increase personalized learning plans for all students in reading and STEM integration
- Attempt to close the achievement gap by using all means available to meet students where they are and where they live (e.g., Classroom on Wheels).

The narrative is broad and does not detail the depth of personalizing students' education. The narrative is limited also in linking its vision to the RTTD's four core educational assurance areas.

SCORE: M (6)

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

- a. All schools would participate in the initiative. School administrators and Building Leadership Teams would facilitate implementation. The proposal describes a reasonable implementation timeline by year.
- b. All participating schools are listed in proposal.
- c. Overall, all students enrolled in the district (3,372) will participate in the program. Over half the district's students are from low-income families. All 272 "certified, highly qualified" classroom teachers will participate in the program. Over 70% of teachers approved the district's school reform plan.

SCORE: H (10)

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

All schools would participate in the RTTD initiative from the beginning. The narrative in this section discusses the following elements:

1. New system that links the evaluation of teachers and principals to student outcomes (growth);
2. Development and improvement of student-level data systems (Schoolnet)
3. School-by-school description of school needs and proposed use of RTTD resources to address needs.

Presumably these uses will enable the district to achieve the goals listed elsewhere in the proposal.

SCORE: H (8)

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- a. Reading goals are generally set at 3 percentage-point increase per year. This is reasonable. An exception is grades 9-12 where the target is an increase of 1 percentage point per year, probably because the high baseline (96.38%) doesn't leave much room for growth. Math goals are set at an increase of about 8 percentage points per year.
- b. To help close achievement gaps, when applicable the proposal targets a higher rate of growth in performance for black students on Reading Achievement assessments. Data elsewhere in the proposal suggest that goals should have been set to close the gaps for other subgroups for both reading and math.
- c. Graduation goals for subgroups seem reasonable. In general, the lower the baseline graduation rate, the higher the annual growth target. These goals suggest the district desires to close the gap in graduation rates for the various subgroups -- economically disadvantaged, LEP, SPED, and Hispanic students. African American students are listed in "achievement gap" table, but they are not listed as a subgroup for graduation rates.
- d. No goals set for college enrollment.
- e. No goals set for college-degree attainment.

SCORE: M (3)

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In the current year, Fredericksburg City Schools met or exceeded the Federal Annual Measurable Objectives in all subgroups for math</p> <p>and all subgroups for reading except one, special education. Limited English Proficiency achievement increased by 7.81%. Data in the appendix indicate that achievement gap in English Performance has remained stagnant for all subgroups except LEP. (Change in math test renders analysis difficult.) Appendix data also show that the district's overall graduation rate (FGI 4 year rate) increased by about 5 percentage points over the previous year, with rates rising substantially for most subgroups. No data available regarding changes in college enrollment rates.</p> <p>Actions taken to promote improved student outcomes for low-achieving schools/students have included: block scheduling at secondary schools, new remedial programs, Saturday school, and revised attendance policies.</p> <p>SchoolNet is the primary software used to store and provide access to student data. Teachers use this data to develop independent learning plans, guide instruction and remediation, and establish SMART goals. Data are made available to parents through the "parent portal."</p> <p>SCORE: M (10)</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Application states that the district currently does not provide actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional or support staff. It is not evident from the application that the District provides non-personnel expenditure information at the school level.</p> <p>SCORE: L (0)</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this section, the narrative does not discuss the District's conditions or autonomy to implement its plan for personalizing learning environments. Rather it describes its personalization plan. Specifically, the District has developed and begun implementing a plan to develop Individualized Learning Plans for (all) struggling students. The ILP contains information on a student's attendance and academic performance along with a list and accounting (date and amount of time devoted to specific interventions, persons responsible, and monitoring dates) of interventions employed to help the student improve. Differentiation specialists aid schools and teachers in identifying interventions that meet the specific needs of students. Not clear why ILPs are not developed for all students.</p> <p>Not clear what other issues may be pertinent to discussion of state and local context for implementing the District's proposed reform.</p> <p>SCORE: M (5)</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Principals were engaged directly in the proposal development process through discussions with the grant team regarding interventions that would best meet the data-identified needs of students as well as the ability of schools to commit to the goals.</p> <p>Principals, in turn, discussed the initiative with their respective teachers. The narrative states that "Teachers indicated full support" for the proposal. However, it's not clear from the narrative how teacher support was ascertained (e.g., each principal's sense of teacher support; voting).</p>		

Numerous letters from diverse community stakeholders, including parents and teachers, indicate the community strongly supports the District's RTTD proposal.

SCORE: H (8)

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative in this section cites key findings from an analysis of needs and gaps and some of the interventions the LEA would employ to address these needs. The discussion does not focus much on strategies for implementing personalized learning environments. The needs and gaps analysis is contained in Appendix VIII of the proposal. While labeled "Analysis of Needs and Gaps," this appendix is actually a plan of action that includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The appendix does not describe the process undertaken to set the goals (the needs analysis?).

SCORE: M (2)

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

While this section sketches the applicant's broad approach to preparing students for college and work from preK -12, the bulk of the section provides a detailed description of the role of high school counselors: college aspiration, academic planning for college and career, enrichment and career engagement, College and Career Exploration and Selection Processes, College and Career Assessments, College Affordability Planning, and College and Career Admission Processes. Given this focus, many of the key criteria of (C)(1) are missing from the discussion. For example, the discussion does not delve into strategies for personalizing instruction at the early grade levels (such as the use and monitoring of Individualized Learning Plans, as discussed in earlier narrative). There is limited discussion of strategies (e.g., use of modern technology) for engaging students, parents, and teachers in broadening students' knowledge of and engagement with diverse cultures. Moreover, the narrative in this section does not discuss accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to

SCORE: M (10)

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	12
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative in this section responds some of the criteria enumerated for (C)(2) but not all.

a) To improve the quality of teaching, the LEA's professional development plan targets the following areas: instructional technology, ELL students, SPED students, and the development of teachers' SMART goals.

All elementary teachers work in grade level teams which meet regularly to discuss student progress. Teachers at secondary schools are organized by department. It is not clear from the narrative how frequently secondary departments meet to discuss student data and make adjustments.

Given that teachers' evaluations will now significantly factor in student achievement growth (weighted 40%), teachers have the incentive to develop SMART goals that link to student achievement. Moreover, all teachers will participate in quarterly data meetings with school administrators.

(b) In recent years, teachers have participated in professional development in the following areas: teaching students in poverty, meeting the academic needs of minority students, engaging students in instruction, and analyzing data to strengthen classroom practice.

(c) All administrators and school board members have tablet computers that are used to streamline access to and use of data. Staff members have received some training on data use.

Discussion of other criteria are is not evident from the narrative in this section.

SCORE: M (12)

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) Central office administrators support principals/schools in implementing the grant (e.g., hiring highly qualified teacher, budget development).</p> <p>(b) Principals present an annual budget for new programs. However, it's not clear how much autonomy principals exercise in this process.</p> <p>(e) Teachers strive to differentiate instruction so that students may learn at their own pace. The narrative notes that differentiated instruction may require additional resources for instructional materials, added staff expertise, field trips, and technology support.</p> <p>The narrative says nothing about giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. Nor does it discuss giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple time and in multiple ways.</p> <p>SCORE: M (8)</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) and (b) All stakeholders including students, parents, and educators will be able to monitor progress through postings on the schools' web pages, surveys, blogs, general meetings, and informational flyers.</p> <p>Stakeholders who do not have access to technology will be able to communicate with school personnel through library services, cell phone access, parent centers in schools, and local area community resources.</p> <p>Students have access to computer labs in each school building as well as student computers in each PreK-8th grade classroom. Beginning in 2012-2013 all 4th grade students and teachers are participating in a one-to-one computer tablet program that they will continue to use for the duration of their tenure in the district.</p> <p>(c) Through SchoolNet, Parent Portal is currently available to all parents who have children enrolled in the LEA. This software allows parents to export their child's academic information and opens communication with teachers and administrators.</p> <p>(d) The narrative states that "SchoolNet is the interoperable data system" for the division (district). SchoolNet stores all student information regarding academic performance, SOL test scores and attendance in grades K-12. However, it is not clear that SchoolNet interoperates with the district's human resource and/or budget systems.</p> <p>SCORE: M (6)</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district already has a continuous improvement process in place through its implementation of the Effective Schools Model. Each school maintains committees that engage all staff. The (Correlate) committees, which meet monthly, focus on areas such as the following: instructional leadership, monitoring of student success (quarterly for students in grades K-8), and home-school relations. Chairs of each Correlate committee serve on the school's leadership team. Chairs of each school's leadership team serve on the district-level Division Leadership Team. This existing structure would be used to ensure continual improvement in the operation of the RTTD grant.</p> <p>SCORE: H (15)</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: Findings from the analyses of project data would be provided quarterly to the Division Leadership Team and shared with the public through monthly School Board meetings. SCORE: H (5)		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: The application provides all required goals tables. In general, goals are very ambitious yet reasonable. The goals reflect the district's desire to close the achievement gap. Some of the targets raise questions. The "All" tables indicate that currently all principals are highly effective. Moreover, 92% of teachers are highly effective and the remaining teachers (8%) are effective. Not clear that this determination was made using the RTTD definition of teacher effectiveness. For grades 4-8 and grades 9-12, goals for % of students on track to college- and career-readiness is not provided for subgroups. Moreover, goals for # and % of grade 9-12 students who complete and submit the FAFSA form are not provided for subgroups. SCORE: M (3)		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: Narrative does not include a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of RTTD-funded activities. SCORE: L (0)		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Total budget request is \$3.725 million (which is over \$1 million lower than the RTTD minimum of \$5 million). In the assurance section of the proposal, the applicant indicated that \$5 million was being requested. Why the discrepancy? Budget does not list resources from other funding sources. Budget detail is provided for the following programs: Reading Specialist (4), Learning Lab (2), After School Book Club (1), Read 180 (30 licenses), Summer School (all schools - 10 weeks for preK-8, 6 weeks for high school), professional development (all schools), Family and Student Support (1 case manager for each school and 2 translators for district-wide use), STEM Coordinator (1). About 85% of the budget pays for personnel compensation. The stated rationales for these projects are reasonable. Some project budgets seem incomplete. For example, the budget for Classroom on Wheels includes funding for a full-time instructor/driver and a Classroom on Wheels bus outfitted for instruction - including technology. The budget does not include any funding for operating expenses (e.g., fuel, maintenance, insurance, equipment repair). Similarly, the Summer School project budget includes funding for compensation for 24 part-time teachers. However, no funding is included for equipment and supplies or the cost of maintaining the facilities (i. e., custodial costs). SCORE: M (4)		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Strategies listed for possibly sustaining the project include: (1) roll project staff into the regular school budgets at the end of the grant period; (2) seek funding from national philanthropic groups; and (3) and establish an education foundation to raise funds. However, a specific plan for sustaining the project is not described. The creditability of sustaining the project is iffy given the absence of a robust plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the project. SCORE: L (2)		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The proposal contains no narrative on Competitive Preference Priority. SCORE: L (0)		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: Throughout, the proposal discusses strategies designed to personalize learning environments including, for example, differentiated instruction, individualized learning plans for students who need assistance, data systems that process and analyze student performance data and make it readily available to key stakeholders, personalized instruction using computers (e.g., Read 180), tutoring, and summer school. Moreover, the LEA (division) has begun implementing a new system for teacher and principal evaluation that accords a weight of 40% to growth in student achievement.		

Total	210	117
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments: An optional budget supplement is not included in the proposal. SCORE: (0)		



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0373VA-3 for Fredericksburg City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant intends to create personal learning plans for all students in reading and increase STEM integration. • They intend to personalize literacy support through both common (all students) and individual tasks based on student academic interests. • They have demonstrated success with reading achievement as measured by the Virginia SOL test - increasing 3rd grade scores from 75% in 2006 to 89.4% in 2012. They have not been able to demonstrate success in math scores, and intend the new focus on STEM to help increase these scores across schools. • Teacher effectiveness will increase through a revised teacher professional development focus. • Narrative is lacking information about the reform vision as it relates to college- and career- readiness and data systems. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant intentionally decided to select all students, schools and staff to create the largest impact. • 55.6% of students are identified as free/reduced, 16% are English Language Learners (and that number is expected to grow), 9.5% are special needs students. • Administrators from all schools have been a part of the planning and will be part of the implementation and evaluation. 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant plan is designed to build upon existing systems and enhance them using the grant funds. This includes a new teacher evaluation system and a fairly new data management system. • The applicant is intentionally including all schools in the district, so scale up is not a separate issue. • There is a four-year implementation plan. • There is no logic model or theory of change. 		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant has set annual goals to improve student performance on summative assessments; significantly decrease achievement gaps by the 2016/17 school year for all sub groups and significantly increase graduation rates for all subgroups. • The applicant does not currently have a method for tracking college enrollment, and has not set any data goals for this area. 		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Applicant has extensive evidence of a record of success and increasing equity in learning and teaching including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All division schools have made annual measurable objectives in English and Math. • All subgroups, aside from SPED, have met AMO in English; and all subgroups made AMO in Math. • Drop-out rate has decreased from 5% to less than 1%. Graduation rates have increased from 76% in 2008/09 to 86% in 2011/12 • Schools intentionally plan events for parents and students to fit parent schedules - events held in schools and community centers, meals often provided, as well as child care. • Division has partnered with Boys & Girls Clubs to provide after-school tutoring, provided by licensed teachers and in connection and contact with a liaison who makes sure the work at the after-school tutoring is aligned with the school 		

<p>focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents have access to student data through the parent portal, as well as through school-based events. It is unclear to what extent the division has reduced achievement gaps, because data was represented as % of sub-group improvement, without showing data over time. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant currently does not have processes in place for transparency. They currently do not make data available, and there were not discussions of a plan to make data available. 		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	0
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant provided insufficient information to determine if they have sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory and regulatory requirements.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application includes many letters of support from teachers and community members including potential partners. Applicant states that over 70% of teachers expressed their approval, however, there is no narrative describing how this took place. Applicant mentions that all school administrators were part of the planning process for the grant, however, there is insufficient detail to fully understand how this happened. There is insufficient information to determine how students and families were engaged in the development of the proposal. 		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant has analyzed existing standardized testing data to determine that they have some gap areas, specifically with students of color and special needs students. Applicant gap/need analysis includes discussion of increasing use of existing tools, including parent portal and enhancing use of literacy coaches - particularly at the middle school and high school level. There is insufficient evidence to determine how the applicant currently implements personalized learning environments and how this plan will build upon current practices. 		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	3
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant states that they begin college and career curriculum beginning in pre-school; however, no examples were provided for PK-8. At the High School level, students have access to internships, mentors, specialty clubs with a focus on Career awareness (FBLA, DECA) High school students have access to dual enrollment courses School counselors at the high school level provide access to College- and Career- planning and programs and support the application process. 		

- Application is lacking a plan for improving teaching and learning by personalizing environments for students. There is not plan for how the applicant will modify or create new learning approaches.
- There is no information provided for how the applicant intends to develop deep learning experiences for students or how they will help students master critical content and develop skills that will prepare them to be college- and career-ready.
- There is no information about how students will have access to a personalized sequence of instruction or how the applicant will modify environments to support students.
- There is no evidence of how students will have access to their data, or how data will be used to determine progress towards mastery of the college- and career-ready standards.
- No discussion of how the applicant will make accommodations for high-need students.

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

20

4

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant has provided past professional development on a variety of topics aimed at addressing achievement gaps including: working with students in poverty; meeting academic needs of minority students; analyzing data to strengthen classroom rigor.
- Current teacher practices to support personalization include: grade-level team meetings at the elementary school level; at the secondary level - department teams where they discuss adapting content for students, responding to students needs, analyzing benchmark data.
- Have a few small groups that are tasked with looking at achievement of specific sub-groups, including black male students, special needs students and doing some vertical curriculum alignment K-6.
- Beginning in the 4th grade, students receive tablet computing devices for 1-to-1 technology support. These will now follow students through middle school and high school.
- New teacher evaluation system includes 40% of the evaluation tied to student growth. Staff participate in quarterly data meetings.

- It is assumed that these practices will be continued, however, the application is greatly lacking in detail.
- There is no insufficient detail as to how the applicant plans to increase their capacity to support student progress towards college- and career-ready standards. There is insufficient detail about how they plan to prepare educators to implement and manage personalized learning environments; adapt content and instruction; measure student progress; and how they plan to improve effectiveness through a strong use of evaluation feedback.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	4
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant is ready to provide support to all participating schools. • Principals have flexibility and autonomy over their school budgets to adjust for instructional needs. It is unclear how much autonomy and flexibility schools have over factors such as schedules, calendars, personnel and staff, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators. • There is no evidence or discussion regarding students having the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery. • There is no evidence or discussion regarding students having the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways/multiple times • Teachers provide before and after school tutoring services for students, mentors are available for all students in need, teachers have the flexibility to utilize small groups for instruction. • Specific strategies for students with disabilities and English learners were not discussed. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

- The LEA has provided a number of resources to ensure that parents, educators and students have access to necessary learning resources including providing data and communications in multiple formats (internet and printed materials), a library system with technology access for free, and parent centers in the schools.
- Beginning with the 4th grade class, the LEA is implementing a 1-to-1 computer tablet environment. These tablets will follow the students as they progress through the grade levels.
- SchoolNet Parent Portal allows parents and students to access and export information and data.
- SchoolNet also provides data for educators including instructional and assessment data.
- There was no discussion about access to technical support for stakeholders.
- There was no discussion about the LEA and schools data systems and whether they are interoperable.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant currently uses the Effective Schools model at each of the participating schools. These committees meet monthly and focus on the seven areas that comprise the Effective Schools Model. Chairs from these seven committees, form the building leadership teams. Applicant intends to continue to use this model as part of the feedback for the plan. • End of each quarter, schools will report out on student data and performance measures including: performance on reading assessments, PALS testing for the preschool students, and standardized test data/benchmark test data at the middle school and high school. • While the applicant has some structures in place to look at different aspects of the implementation, there is little discussion about how they will amend these structures to focus on the areas of the new career- and college-ready standards, or that they have aligned the Effective Schools information with the career- and college-ready standards. • There was no specific discussion regarding feedback for professional development or technology infrastructure. 		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant plans to share information through committee structures at the schools and quarterly data analysis by teachers. • Parents will have access through SchoolNet parent portal and through written materials. • Public/community stakeholders will have access to communication through the public school board meetings (aired on local television station), as well as through the website and printed materials. • There was no discussion about how the applicant will solicit feedback from the various stakeholders, just how they plan on providing data. 		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has ambitious yet achievable measures for most of their performance indicators including: 100% access to highly qualified teachers and principals by 2016/17; 100% pass rate on standardized tests for most sub-groups, and significant progress for the. Applicant has ambitious yet achievable measures for social-emotional indicators. • The college- and career-ready indicators are not ambitious: 8th grade college-ready indicator only has a goal of having 39% of 8th grade students on-target for being college-ready. At the high school level, college- and career-ready indicator includes a goal of having only 70% of students college- and career-ready as measured by advanced diplomas. Applicant needs to re-evaluate their college-ready indicators. 		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant did not have a specific plan in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the Race to the Top District funded 		

activities including professional development, technology, use of time, staff, money or improved strategies.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant has identified how all of the Race to the Top funds will be allocated. The application mentions that the LEA receives other State and Federal funds and that they will support the new implementation plan, however, there is no detail in how the LEA is planning on leveraging these funds. The LEA has identified which of the Race to the Top funds will be utilized for one-time investments and those that will be used for ongoing support. 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically, the applicant has been able to take new hires from previous successful grant applications and roll them into the school budgets at the end of the grant term. They are hoping to do the same with the Race to the Top District grant award, but are unsure if they will have the funding. They have identified some other potential sources of funding including foundations and private donors. They intend to create a local non-profit foundation in year 2 of the grant. There is a local resident who has been a benefactor for the district and she has indicated interest in continuing to support this work, but no commitments have been made. With no high-quality plan, it is doubtful that the applicant will be able to sustain this plan beyond the term of the grant. 		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: Applicant did not complete the competitive preference priority.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant has failed to provide specific ways in which they will accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by providing personalized instruction. There is little detail of personalization strategies, tools and supports and how they are aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Applicant intends to provide resources and access to programs that may help individual students, but there is not a comprehensive plan of how instruction will change. The creation of a classroom on wheels, and additional reading instruction will support student growth, but it is unclear how the district intends to be explicit about the relationship to what students are doing in the classroom and how that will lead to career- and college-readiness skills. The applicant does not have an ambitious strategy of significantly increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. 		

Total	210	97
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