



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0449GA-1 for Gainesville City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application provides a focused vision that will address three key areas: teaching quality, technology applications and supports for high needs students. School teams already in place with support from the state department of education will be responsible for implementing the activities proposed. As described, proposed program builds on the district's current efforts funded by RTT-State and local resources but it is not clear in the application what programs are already in place and operating under the GA RTT- funding versus what will be added or enhanced with RTT-District resources. Only 2 areas of the ARRA assurances have been fully addressed..While the district is working on comprehensive improvement of teacher and leader quality, the application does include plans in the areas of recruitment, reward or retention. The District does not have any schools that meet the criteria of persistently low-performing or low performing as defined in the RTT-District Notice. The approach presented lacks coherence and overall alignment of the various components. The application overall lacks critical required elements. In particular, the presentation of data and related analysis addressing the problem situation is inadequate to understand the district's past record of success and current needs.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application fully meets the requirements outlined in sections (a) and (b) and provides partial documentation for sub-criteria (c).. Gainesville plans to implement its reform proposal in all 8 of its schools. The application does not describe the process used to select the targeted program foci or populations, e.g., all schools versus a subset Overall demographics include: 38% English language learners and 12% students with disabilities. The largest ethnic/racial groups are:54% Hispanic, 22% African American and 20% Caucasian. The presence of a large number of low income students identified as 78% qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch, ensures full compliance with the RTT-District eligibility requirements. A total of 7,347 students will participate along with 483 educators. The application does not describe the process for assigning students to the category identified as "high "needs .</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan presented is at a very general level and appears to integrate existing district activities along with those proposed for RRT-District competition. The referenced goal chart framework is not specifically aligned with the targeted areas of the RTT-District program as defined in the vision section. The plan also does not clearly distinguish what is already in place funded by State RTT and what is to be newly added with resources from this competition. A number of key elements defined as high-quality in the RTT-District Notice are not included, e.g. a clear alignment between the Theory of Action, goals and outcomes, a rationale and greater details for the proposed activities, responsible parties, specific timelines, and measurable short and long term outcomes. The fact that all schools and students will be serviced by the basic program and services eliminates the necessity for scale up to a district-wide level except for the additional resources that will be offered under the Competitive Priority. In that section of the proposal there is an indication that a scale up plan is in place.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The documentation provided in this section in the form of data charts and incremental improvement targets do not adequately respond to the requirements outlined in this criterion. Additional information is needed related to the following:

- 1) validation that the targets presented equal or exceed the state ESEA targets
- 2) specific descriptions of the assessments listed under goal area measures (e.g ., Biology EOCT, Math CRCT, etc.) and how were they decided
- 3) the grade levels or grade bands covered by each assessment. (Current configuration appears to describe the aggregate combing participating grades)
- 4) the process used to determine the annual growth targets for each subgroup and by what criteria
- 5) an explanation for the projected variance between subgroups, e.g. a projected .6 increment for White students in Reading CCRT compared to an 11.5 % increase for the Multiracial subgroup.

The application does not propose an ambitious goal for college enrollment as required in A (4) d.

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	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The data presented in this section is not well organized. The graphs and charts are difficult to understand and the narrative does not provide substantial analysis related the specified criteria. It is not clear in Chart #7 that the all students group conforms with the achievement gap definition provided in the RTT Notice. Aside from the data presented in chart #7 there is no information to address the district's record in closing achievement gaps in the areas required. The district has indicated that none of the participating schools fits the definition of persistently lowest achieving or low-performing. The application describes a detailed set of communication methods utilized for making student performance data available. The application is less clear how the data disseminated leads to corrective actions, improvement in participation or program effectiveness.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application indicates that information pertaining to several of specified criteria can be found on various state and district websites but does not include documentation except for E-SPLOST provided in the appendix. The application does not indicate if the following categories are included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only b) actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only d) actual personnel expenditures at the school level 		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Since 2008, Gainesville has been designated a GA Charter School District and as a result has converted all of its schools to a charter application approved by the state board of education. Under this designation , Gainesville is afforded increased autonomy and flexibility. The district has taken advantage of this flexibility to institute several program innovations and non-traditional structural arrangements. The Charter Application provided in the appendix provides evidence to support this criterion.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application does not provide adequate documentation aligned with this criterion. The proposal describes a very modest level of effort in the area of broad stakeholder involvement. Only a small group of appears to have been involved in the design of the application. Aside from the small number of support letters, the application does not document what specific feedback was received nor how the proposal was revised in response to the comments received. Employees were surveyed to determine their support for the proposal resulting in 84% affirmative votes. Clarification is needed to ensure this response rate represents teachers only. The letters of support submitted from local universities, a parent, a national administrators group and a community-based organization does not demonstrate evidence of extensive community support.. Detailed feedback from the state department of education as well as a letter of support from the Mayor were received in response to the District's invitation for commentary.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
--	---	---

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The application does not adequately address the specified criteria. The description provided outlines the continuous improvement cycle process that is in place throughout the district that identifies routinely areas in need of improvements drawing on summative, demographic, performance and process data. There are several general references to identified gaps and needs but without substantiation. For example, instructional strategies related to personalization has been prioritized as a high need area but the district does not document the process or protocols used to generate the referenced data. It also does not provide specific data or analysis resulting from what is described as the data collection process “ observations conducted to examine in depth the implementation for various instructional strategies”. “Lessons learned” from piloting use of tablets are referenced, but there is no evidence given on what was learned.

The district indicates in it vision statement that family and community supports (e.g., financial literacy, health and wellness, employment counseling early literacy initiatives) are one of the three key foci of their proposal, but does not indicate how it determined the specific need areas it plans to address. The measures planned for assessing effectiveness do not align with the identified target parent population.

The application lacks evidence of a high quality plan as define in the RTT-District guidelines. The logic behind the district's reform proposal lacks coherence and is difficult to understand given the variations of implementation strategies that are woven throughout.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	2

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This section of the proposal related to Learning essentially repeats the language on the scoring criteria. Assertions indicate that the district has in place current practices that address all of the criteria required, however, the operational details and specific evidence of such practices and their impact have not been included, e.g. how students are involved in deep learning experiences and exposed to diverse cultures, how do students master critical goal setting skills, and what are the specific accommodations made available to high need students, existing training and support mechanisms that ensure students understand ow ot manage their learning. The application does not address how parents are involved in supporting the startegies and activites described.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
---	----	----

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Improving teacher quality with focused professional learning and ongoing supports to integrate new technologies into classroom unit plans is a core feature of the district's application. Under Teaching and Leading, the district already has in

place several strong existing programs that satisfy the requirements. Examples include: a robust teacher evaluation system, a Personal Learning team structure that has responsibility to adapt learning environments and a blended learning model infused with computer mediated activities.

Areas where the application falls short in addressing the criteria in this area include:

- a) targeted strategies that implement and monitor goals for to close achievement gaps
- b) a detailed plan based on current data and needs analyses for increasing the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective principals
- b) identification of high needs areas for developing current teachers and principals in the system and needed recruitment strategies associated with these areas, e.g. hard to staff schools and specialty areas

The basic plan presented is judged not to be of substantially high quality since its list of activities are presented at a high conceptual level without details regarding number served, format for implementation and frequency. The plan presented also does not include timelines, or expected outcomes(deliverables) tied to performance measures.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: Having designation as a Charter School gives the district the legal authority to provide policy and operational supports that facilitate personalized learning. The proposal describes several examples of how the district is currently carrying out such practices. A key feature is distributed leadership across central office unit. Other examples include: campus based school leadership teams, utilization of authentic assessments, and flexible learning time. The application addresses this criteria at a high level of description and does not provide evidence or operational details of where the practices are actually being implemented, e.g. what staffing models are being implemented at which locations, how have school schedules been changed, etc. The application is not explicit in describing how learning resources and instructional practices will be adapted for students with disabilities or English Learners (e.g., the numbers of and grade levels of students that will be served, the structure and frequency of contacts and the specific delivery methods that will be utilized.)		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: Through the proposed after school Learning Support Centers parents and students, there will also be programming provided. Integration of technological innovations is one of major components of the Gainesville application. The assignment of a full time technician to each of the 8 participating schools whose responsibilities will be to oversee management and the operability of the tablet computers as well as support to teachers through job embedded professional development and students providing hardware and software trouble shooting as well as instructional support. Peer support will be implemented through the implementation of professional learning communities at each school site. The application indicates on line learning opportunities will be expanded but does not provide details. The district has several systems already in place by which parents and students can access data and the application includes enhancements although without specifics. Intentionality is described for an interoperable data system, however information about the process, required resources and responsible parties is not included. The application does not include evidence or documentation to support its claim related to the stated district's fiscal policy for equitable resource distribution and how are teachers assigned to achieve equity and equality. Additionally, the district's does not include the full range of referenced participants in its response—i.e. other stakeholders.		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The continuous improvement cycle described is related to the district as a whole. It is not possible to discern what components		

of the RTT-Dist application, are included in this section of the application versus what the district's overall cycle involves. Additionally, for the most part the referenced data sources apply to student achievement and instructional practice. The involved personnel are described mainly as teachers. The proposal does not adequately address how program impact data across the full spectrum of priorities will be collected and used. While there are venues for the distribution of student achievement data, the proposal does not speak to other data categories aligned to program goals nor plans for public sharing.

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

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application describes primarily how the district communicates information through dissemination to multiple audiences utilizing a variety of communication. At monthly meetings, three core district level teams analyze pertinent data. These dissemination strategies do not adequately demonstrate responsiveness to the district's diverse student populations nor their families. The application does not indicate how the district has engaged a broad group of stakeholders in the development of the RTT proposal, how such constituents will be involved going forward nor what use will be made of input received as a result of these involvements. The focus of the district's effort has been primarily on information dissemination not substantive engagement.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The application has defined a total of 13 performance metrics covering a range of measures including academic assessments, students being served by highly effective and effective teachers and principals, and attendance. Identified measures were determined by highest needs presented in the district's Strategic Plan but there is no documentation provided to substantiate this claim or data based analysis. The subgroups identified are limited to low income, EL and SPED students compared to all participating students and not the highest achieving subgroup in each of the performance measures. In several instances the measures are not clearly defined or valid indicators of the stated intent, e.g. "we will measure the number of students who have scored higher" in order to determine which students are on track, we will measure student engagement and motivation using attendance data". The application does not give a rationale for the proposed growth targets. Given the minimal percentages projected, the district's goals cannot be translated into being ambitious.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

In its vision statement the proposal indicates three priorities where it expects to affect change and invest over \$10 M in RTT resources:

- 1) Improved teaching quality with focused professional development and ongoing support to integrate new technologies,
2. Connecting technological innovations to rigorous standards and assessments that are applied to real world experiences
3. Establishment of family and community engagement programs in low performing schools.

The evaluation plan does not adequately align with the identified priorities. It is also not clear how the measures described in the application relate to the RTT-District funded activities specifically. Measures appear to be absent for the technological applications and the community engagement components. Plans for analyses and reporting are described only in general terms. The application does not speak to how it intends to use the data and how it will inform or impact program components. Finally, there is no management structure described indicating personnel assignments or timeframes.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application requests \$10,031,548 for direct costs and \$393,281 indirect costs from RTT-District funding. The application also describes an additional \$393,281 that will be allocated to the program but does not indicate the source of these funds. The budget expenditure allocations are directed largely to a variety of technology enhancements supported by school based

personnel and do not sufficiently support the 2 other identified priorities, especially the Family support Centers. The application also does not identify the funds that will be used for one time only investments. In addressing sustainability, the district does not project significant ongoing operational costs. Additionally, it does not seem feasible that such a large investment of financial resources for equipment, software, personalized technicians and programming can be maintained in the future by only the application of E-rate funding and continuous rotation of technology devices. The rationale behind this position does not seem valid nor substantiated.

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

10

2

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application addresses sustainability focused on only one of the three priority areas (technology investments) outlined in its vision statement and program plan. The district expects to be able to maintain the activities and supports initiated under RTT-District funding through the allocation of E-Rate funding, the continuous rollover of equipment between entering and graduating students and use of existing personnel to support ongoing instructional and maintenance on the infrastructure. The proposal does not take into consideration the needs for future upgrades and replacements.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district has articulated a strong set of principles to guide work in this area. The plan's implementation will rely on three core partner relationships already established utilizing the existing district leadership structure and the Comprehensive System of Learning Supports (CSLS). The application also lists 28 additional agencies through their involvement with the district either through membership on the district or school based Learning Support Teams or through regular monthly meetings focused on strategic planning. The application identifies a limited number of "population level desired results". Student engagement and motivation will be applicable to both grade spans 6-8 and 9-12. Attention to high need students (EI and students with disabilities referenced in 3 b of the selection criteria is not addressed in this component nor substantially in the Gainesville's overall application. Improving results over time (3) d and (5) a-d are strongly embedded components into the district's regular cycle of improvement and district/school governance/convening structures. The district indicates that a plan to scale (CLISL) is presently in place but has not included it as part of documentation. All schools in the district are expected to be involved starting immediately if funded by RTT-District. There is no reference to schedule or detailed implementation timeframe in the district's application under the Competitive Priority, thus it is not possible to assess the adequacy of scale plan

A majority of the indicators appear appropriate, valid and aligned measures that support the RTT-District target areas and are tied to both parents and student populations. Only one indicator is addressed to family/community and there is one indicator on education, The validity of the measure stated for increasing engagement is questionable. The measures are reasonably put not substantially ambitious. The district did not describe the rationale or the process it followed to generate the measures. There is also no explanation for the specified growth targets. The district will rely on existing tracking systems for outputting data. Overall a solid program addressing most of the 6 major elements of the Competitive Priority system seem to be fully embedded into district policy and practices. Support for these services provided by the referenced partnership agencies It is not clear. There also does not appear to be any resource allocation specifically outlined in the budget for implementation of program services. The budget does include a \$3.5M reference to funds from other sources but does not make clear. Specific contributors are not given nor a budget for expenditure that align with this priority.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The application from Gainesville does not meet Absolute Priority 1. The articulated vision and overall implementation strategy is not fully aligned with the 4 ARRA Assurances. The plan is presented at very general level and does not distinguish existing district activities from those proposed for RTT-District funding. The application documents a number of strong extant programs

addressing continuous improvement along with teacher evaluation and infrastructures that facilitate improved teaching and learning, The district has not provided resulting evidence of significant gap closure nor data to substantiate gaps or needs across all three areas of program focus. Measures proposed throughout the application do not include adequate data analysis, a rationale nor explanation for the targeted growth areas. In developing the application, the level of effort for broadly engaging stakeholders has been minimal. The proposal is not viewed as being coherent or comprehensive. The implementation plan does not fully address the three focal areas identified. The plan for sustainability only covers the the technology component and does not take into consideration the long term needs for future upgrades and equipment replacements.

Total	210	69
-------	-----	----



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0449GA-2 for Gainesville City 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:

The school district plans to address teacher quality, the Common Core Standards, College and Career readiness, integrating data and building support centers for students and families. This ambitious goal is supported by a clear and credible approach of professional development, technology integration and community involvement. This is shown by such activities as;

- Working with the State of Georgia on their Teacher and Leader effectiveness model which includes teacher and leader evaluation.
- Integrating the Common Core Standards into their curriculum.
- Developing an integrated data system.
- Providing increased use of technologies.
- Developing College and Career readiness plans.
- Creating school based learning support centers for community use.

There is a lack of some detail in this section regarding the conditions of the goal currently in place and the exact nature of parts of the plan such as the connection between standards, assessment and technology, although professional development, and using the Georgia Teacher and Leader Keys to Effectiveness System are listed. A clear connection needs to be made to be considered comprehensive and coherent.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
---	----	---

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section addresses all of the criteria listed and demonstrates a high quality plan by previous and current commitment to professional development and school improvement.

- All of the schools in this district will be involved in the grant goals.
- They collectively meet the requirements with a 78% poverty rate.
- The schools in the district were listed with their corresponding grade levels.
- The total number of students and their demographics were also included.

In addition, the school district has an established system of professional development days and the professional development

will be offered throughout the four years. The professional development will include teaching technology integration and the use of data to support the plan.

While these points all address the criteria, it is not clear if the Kindergarten through 2nd grade students are included in the project. later in the narrative, most of the reform stems from individual technology devices for grades 3-12. So it is unclear if the K-2 students are included in these demographics and help to meet the criteria even though they may not benefit wholly from the reform efforts.

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

10

4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The school district has a good plan grounded on a research-based framework already in place, and one that is collaborative with two other school districts. This includes a public/private partnership and addresses management, instruction and learning supports. In addition, the school district is collaborative with 41 other districts online. They are "poised to share replication of the project" with others. The district has a quality plan, described in the chart, that describes goals, activities, timeline, measurement and other funding sources to create meaningful reform in the district and help them to reach their outcome goals. It does not though, indicate who is responsible for each of the goals and specifics under the Deliverables/Measurables to indicate when they have met their goal.

It also does not however, address precisely how the plan will be shared with the collaborative school districts. In later sections, it also seems that the majority of the plan is based on technology integration at the 3-12 levels.

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

10

3

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Performance on summative assessments was demonstrated by the district for the 2011-12 school year and projected throughout the four years of the grant. The goal is to exceed the state averages. They are already quite close to the state averages. The projected data indicate gains of 4-18 percentage points in a variety of subjects and subgroups. In addition, there were explanations of how the assessments will change in the state due to the ESEA waiver and the need to address Common Core Standards. The growth targets were not defined so it could not be determined if these targets are ambitious and achievable.

The data addresses closing achievement gaps for all student groups, in fact this is one of the goals of the plan. Based on the current data, projections and the plan, it is unlikely that they will achieve that part of the projected goals because the projected data indicate a continued gap particularly for SWD and ELL..

The graduation rates has only been addressed as part of a cohort calculation. It does not appear to be a goal of the plan. College enrollment for all groups has been addressed using a College and Career Readiness Index.

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	6

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA provided data charts showing increases in student achievement in all subgroups over the past 5 years. The student achievement data shows gains over time as well as in comparison with state data, although they are close to state scores, they do not exceed state averages and this is one of the goals of the plan. Most of the data was difficult to read since a key to the acronyms used was not included. Even with the narrative, it was difficult to determine exactly what was being measured.

The district identified a need to close achievement gaps at the middle school and then described how this need is being addressed currently through providing more opportunities to develop general knowledge and experiences for students and families through community based experiences. It will be addressed more comprehensively under the proposed project. Since some of the data was unclear, and others did not indicate huge growth spans, it cannot be determined if the district has set ambitious, but achievable goals based on their past performance and descriptions of how these goals will be met through data use, personalized instruction and the use of technology.

The data system currently in use in the district makes specific achievement and progress monitoring available to appropriate

leaders, teachers, students and parents. It is also connected to a state wide data system. However, the district states they have the goal of closing achievement gaps among subgroups, but then they state that the data informed professional discussions at each school focus equally on all students. It is not clear then how these discussions will help to close achievement gaps.

Finally, the district makes available on its website a host of information regarding opportunities for families and students including student performance data, learning opportunities, meetings and notes.

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

5

1

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In the narrative, the LEA indicates personnel salaries, the fiscal year budget, practices, processes, and investments are all listed on the district website. There are also links to the Carl Vincent Institute and the Georgia state personnel records. These data are updated annually. There is claim to a high level of transparency concerning tax dollars spent at both the local and state level with the budget documents. All of this is difficult to substantiate since the actual data was not provided to support the referenced links.

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

10

5

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

In 2008, the Gainesville School District designated all their schools as part of the Georgia Charter School system, the charter application letter is enclosed, but not that actual application as stated in the narrative. This gives them increased flexibility and autonomy, as well as builds a culture of continuing innovation which will serve them well with this project. They have already used this flexibility to customize learning areas with regard to:

- class size
- instructional delivery models
- seat time
- teacher certification areas

Their 5 elementary schools allow for parental choice and are based on "magnet or theme programs."

They have a 6-12 blended learning school that offers virtual learning. Their other middle and high schools offer course sequences with career pathways.

These are all good points, but there is very little detail to support how the district might be well positioned for continuing innovation and improvements based on past innovations.

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

10

5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The school leadership reviewed the grant requirements in light of their long-term strategic plan to determine if it addressed their identified needs. They solicited input from faculty, parents, business partners and community members. 84% of their staff support the project as a whole, although in one of the schools 61% voted against the project. There are letters of support from public and private partnerships including three universities, one mother of a kindergarten student, and a Boys and Girls Club. No specific subgroups/ethnic groups wrote letters of support. Considering the high level of Hispanic, and African American students this might be expected.

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

5

1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The strength of the District's plan is the professional development and the technology components. The weaknesses are the personalized learning and specifics regarding closing achievement gaps.

This section includes a rich description of the strategic planning and continuous improvement process in this district. Each school sets SMART goals based on school data. There is a clear process for administering assessments, analyzing and using data and comparing data to benchmarks. Each classroom has an individualized learning plan. It does not however, relate how this improvement plan relates specifically to the proposed project.

The district identifies their greatest area of need as "personalization" described as a need for differentiated learning with

flexible grouping . They intend to focus on improved engagement and intrinsic motivation while encouraging student autonomy. They have piloted the use of individual technology devices or tablets at grades 3-12 and have learned some ways to improve this use. They plan to implement student centric learning strategies and blended and virtual learning opportunities.

T

In section B1, the district identifies closing achievement gaps as one of their considerations in this project, particularly for students with disabilities. There is no mention of this consideration or any specific student groups in connection with personalizing instruction in this section.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	4

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In this section, the district plans to utilize the Georgia Career Pathways system as well as to implement capstone experiences or internships. There is a claim to a clear process for universal assessment and data collection that has been in place in this district. Interest inventories and individual graduation plans, including parental oversight, will be used to help students on their chosen pathway. Eight technology specialists will assist students and teachers in the increased use of devices, which is an indication of the mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students and staff.

What is not clear is the systems alluded to for a personalized sequence of instruction for students.

- There is no information addressing the "accommodations" or "high quality strategies" to be used to address high needs learners. Although this is addressed to some extent in section C2.
- It is mentioned that students have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives, but no details are given.
- There seems to be a philosophy of including parents in the education of their children, but other than a reference to the graduation plan, there are no details regarding parental involvement.
- It is unclear how students might be empowered and engaged in their learning.
- The deep learning experiences, other than mentioning the internships and capstone experiences, are not explained.
- High quality instructional approaches and environments are not described, although more is mentioned about this in relation to College and Career readiness in section C2.

Overall, this section requires a great deal more information than given.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
---	----	----

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district begins with a philosophy and research statement that supports the unique abilities of each student and notes the need for effective teachers who can help all students to become college and career ready. It then goes on to give a robust explanation of the various aspects of the project and current practice that supports efforts toward making all students college and career ready:

- Career awareness modules at the elementary level that prepare students for creating an individualized education plan at the middle school.
- Distributed leadership including their Career Ladder to identify "Leader 1 and Leader 2" teachers who are recognized and rewarded for being exceptional teachers. They also site research to support the connection to student achievement with teacher leadership.
- Personalized Learning Teams - these seem to be the vehicle for data analysis, determining student need and arranging for personalized instruction.
- Within Blended Learning, the district identifies flexibility in instruction, schedule and technology; including their lab rotation, station rotation and individual rotation models.
- The Georgia Teacher Effectiveness Evaluation model is well described and is connected to student achievement and college and career readiness.

This section shows a greater amount of specificity with regard to the listed requirements. School leadership teams, professional development and student learning needs are all addressed quite thoroughly. They also include a table that shows each part of the goal and how it will be addressed through specific activities and who is responsible for each.

There is however, no indicated plan that addresses the need for highly effective teachers in specific content areas such as math, science or special education. Increasing the number of students who benefit from highly effective teachers and leaders is not specifically mentioned, but could be construed from the description of teacher leaders and the evaluation system.

This section described in greater detail some of the goals referred to in previous sections. It appears that the project is hinged on the Common Core Standards integration, the Georgia Teacher Effectiveness system, Blended Learning, and 1:1 technology devices for all students in grades 3-12. Since all schools and teachers in Georgia will need to integrate the first two, the second two are essentially what the plan will fund.

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>The Gainsville School District has several areas of strength that support personalized learning. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a charter school/district, Gainsville has the ability to be flexible with many of their structures. In addition, they have a horizontal district alignment based on three teams: management, instruction and learning support. The roles of each overlap to some degree. Each school also has a governance council. The schools each control their own schedule, personnel decisions, staffing models, roles and responsibilities, and school level budgets. Calendars are created on a district level. The district has mentioned in previous sections, their blended learning and virtual learning for students and staff professional development. Students can earn credits at an accelerated pace since Georgia has no required seat time. Students may move on when they are ready. <p>There are some parts of the plan that are not as well developed and need to be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic assessment of and for learning is mentioned, but not described. The district claims to use a variety of frequent assessments, but none are listed. Their balanced assessment system has a few examples. The district says they have specifically certified teachers who can provide additional support for students who need acceleration, differentiation and scaffolding of their learning units. The type of certification is not explained, although it might be assumed this is special education or reading certification. This type of assistance is listed to explain that learning resources are accessible by all, including students with disabilities and English learners. More detail and examples would have clarified this section. <p>By addressing the shortcomings, the district will likely be successful in supporting personalized learning.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district describes an equitable distribution of personnel and resources so that all students have access to rigorous standards and support of various instructional programs. There are no specifics as to how these supports are available both in and out of school, although in previous sections and later in this one, the availability of the media/technology lab with specific programs is mentioned as an out of school support. In addition, blended learning with both an in-school and out of school component has also been described. The district stated previously that they would like to have technology devices for each student which would provide both in and out of school access.</p> <p>Technology support for educators seems adequate and is job embedded professional development and led by instructional technology teachers. They also have professional learning communities that support technology. Blended learning was described in a previous section as a means for professional development for teachers as well as for students. For parents and community members, the media/technology lab with specific programs provided by instructional staff is available.</p> <p>The current data system in use by the district provides progress and grading reports to parents and students. New resources to be obtained through this grant will be merged in with the current system. In addition, the Georgia Data system is in use and available to parents, students and teachers. The data system compiles both human and financial resources. With the implementation of grant supplied resources, it will become a more robust interoperable system with student and instructional data. It will also help them to analyze their budget data to determine its impact on their instructional improvement system.</p> <p>Overall, the infrastructure plan and the data system seem to be the strength of this plan. Most of the plan is dependent on a</p>		

strong infrastructure, professional development, devices and data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has a continuous improvement model which has been used by the district before. It seems to be part of the school culture and structure since it was mentioned in three sections. It is a high quality approach since it informs all stakeholders as well as having representation from all groups.</p> <p>The district currently has in place a thorough and comprehensive continuous improvement model. This section gives a detailed description of the sequence of steps,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the assessments: universal assessments given at each quarter. The first is base-line data. • SMART goal-setting is done at all levels: the district, school and classroom and based on the data - a benchmark analysis • 45 day action plans are based on the goals. • Reporting out process - progress reports, online information and the district and school Scorecardds. <p>Teachers and school leaders are primarily involved in the data collection and analysis, assessment administration, goal setting and action planning. The parents and community are kept informed through a Scorecard system that includes school goals, progress toward them, and college and career readiness on the part of all students. Their intent is to continue to use this system in monitoring the progress of their goals under this grant, however, there are no specific details or explanations as to how this might be applied.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This is a communication rich district. They listed 28 means of communicating with stakeholders both within the district and the community. Several of these involve the data systems and online tools described in previous sections including the state longitudinal data system. They also hold regularly scheduled meetings with various groups to inform and to gain input. They describe themselves accurately as a data informed system and community. However, they do not directly apply all of that communication to the proposed project.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's performance measures indicate the needs of the population of students. They are very ambitious goals for some groups; expecting 3-30 percentage points increase. There is no explanation as to why some sub-groups are projected to gain fewer points than others. However, the plan includes a clear process for oversight and monitoring. Some of the performance goals are likely to be achievable. Others are questionable both in their scope and that there is no clear connection between the assessment chosen and the goals of the plan.</p> <p>The district plans to use their current instructional improvement plan, strategic planning and data analysis, described previously, to monitor their performance measures under the grant plan. The district cites the following as data that will be collected to support the goals of the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading, science and attendance measures at grades K-3. • A local reading post test and attendance at grades 4-8. • The high school writing test and attendance at grades 9-12. <p>The measures and the process were briefly described although the rationale for selecting these particular measures was not evident. Information linking the measures to the goals of the plan is also missing. Some of the specific data in the charts is also missing. It is difficult to determine how achievement gaps will be closed with these dat.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district will use the data systems discussed in section D and E1 to determine the effectiveness of Race to the Top activities. They will evaluate this effectiveness using these measures:

- Student Achievement measures toward progress on Common Core Standards
- Survey perception data
- Teacher/Leader effectiveness evaluations and ratings
- Budget usage
- Time logs
- Student information including attendance, discipline, and health records

In addition, the state of Georgia is developing a Georgia scorecard that integrates many of the Race to the Top goals. They refer briefly to the leadership teams as providing the oversight for this project. However, there are few specific details to explain who will evaluate the effectiveness shown by these measures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The initial funding to expand bandwidth, provide saturation wireless coverage, and a tablet computer for each student in grades 3-12 is the major portion of the budget. There are some personnel costs with the 8 new technology support teachers: one per school. Professional development is already in the local budget. The budget documents indicate which are one-time costs and which will need to be sustained by future local budgets. There is a plan to rotate the use of the tablets so that graduating seniors would turn in their tablets for third graders to use. Any new tablets required would come from the district budget.

The greatest part of this budget supports the technology needs of the plan. Professional development for staff members is already in the local budget. The district has not cited assessment or other needs as budgetary. Therefore it is unclear as to how new strategies may be supported financially other than technology. It is possible that they will be addressed through other professional development plans, but that is unclear in any of the sections.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
--	----	---

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Since the budget, professional development and support systems primarily address technology usage and needs, it is unclear how closing the achievement gap will be a sustainable part of the goal. The technology parts of the goal are sustainable and described that way in this section, or can be deduced from the budget charts:

- Rotation of the tablet computers as described in F1.
- Professional development days in the calendar year and in the local budget, although the type and topics for professional development are not described.
- Current programs and services are likely to be maintained.
- Once the common core Standards, and College and Career Readiness points are in place, they will be maintained through local and state efforts.
- The management software for E-texts is being purchased in this plan, so there will not be further costs for the current type of E-texts.
- The hardware and infrastructure for increased technology usage is in the plan and is a one time cost.

A plan for 3 or more years after the grant project was not included.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1. The Gainesville Schools have a public/private partnership with Scholastic, the UCLA School of Mental Health in Schools, and the American Association of School Administrators. This is entitled the LEAD Collaborative. Its purpose is to:

- address systemstemic prevention and intervention to address underachievementnet.
- support personalized learning in classrooms.
- deliver all district processes and procedures through a three team system: management, instruction and learning supports.
- address barriers to teaching and learning
- engage students in learning.
- intermix funds, resources, strategies and practices.
- be fully integrated with school improvement policies.

This system is the basis for the district's restructuring into a charter system.

2. Of the five populations and their needs listed by the district, three concerned middle and high school level students. One concerned parent and student satisfaction with the schools and the last addressed third graders reading at grade level by the end of the year. In section A and B concerning vision and data, the district indicated a desire to close achievement gaps, particularly with students with disabilities. The needs listed here do not align with the stated goals of the plan.

3. The partnership agents will:

- Track selected indicators for all students and each subgroup. They will use student information systems, the Charter School Perception Surveys and data from the CRCT Lexile Framework to measure 3rd grade reading.
- They will use virtual resources to report formative data, attendance, discipline referrals, reading levels and survey results. Areas of concern will be identified and school 45 day action plans developed. This continuous improvement plan was cited earlier.
- The plan to scale the model beyond the participating students is in place with the UCLA partnership. Few details are given although links are cited.
- Results are monitored and a plan is in place to continue improvement over time.

4. The three main groups described in this district in earlier sections, along with the partnerships and governance councils will use the continuous improvement model to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services. By monitoring data and programs in their extensive data system, they are able to analyze the support necessary and see to its implementation.

5. Building capacity is done through the student information system, instructional improvement system and through the analyzing of data and implementing supports for students. The horizontal arrangement of the charter school district allows for the autonomy and flexibility needed to build capacity for staff and students. There is a chart that is enclosed identifying each population group goal, the type of result expected and the timelines and desired results. Parents are included in one of the population goals and desired results.

6. Performance measures and expected outcomes for each of the four years of the grant are included. They are not explained or defined.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Gainesville School District hopes to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps among various subgroups by:

- Giving each student in grades 3-12 a computer tablet.
- Providing professional development in technology to staff and students
- Having teachers learn personalized learning strategies in professional learning teams
- Integrating Common Core Standards
- Implementing a graduation plan for each student so they are college and career ready
- Involving parents in the graduation plan

- Monitoring the progress of each student on a well developed data system
- Communicating with all stakeholders
- Holding staff and students accountable by reporting results

The Gainesville School District has shown improvements in the learning of their students previously and has documented ambitious but mostly achievable goals in this plan. They are developing the infrastructure, knowledge and skills to reach these goals through their stated goal activities. It is very likely that they will succeed in meeting the needs of most of their students as stated. Monitoring progress of individual students, holding everyone accountable for improvements and providing professional development for staff and students on new technologies are bound to result in improvements. Given that some of the students are already close to achieving at state average levels, it is likely they will succeed in meeting or exceeding state averages.

The one area of concern that is not addressed in this plan is closing achievement gaps. It was not explained in any part of this narrative, how the use of individual technologies, the primary basis of the grant, will close the achievement gap among various subgroups.

Total	210	88
-------	-----	----



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0449GA-3 for Gainesville City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant asserts that their reform vision will lead to transformational learning through improving teacher quality, technological innovation, and learning supports for students, which is aligned with statewide structures, but does not clearly articulate ambitious goals for the district. The strengths of the vision rely on the already established conditions for success, particularly the structure of school leadership teams. The lack of strategic focus in standards and assessments for personalized learning led to point deductions, and demonstrates a disconnected approach to integration of the existing data systems. Their commitment to improving teacher quality is reasonable and provides evidence that teacher professional learning will be aligned with individual student needs. The credibility in the vision relies on existing conditions, but lacks coherence and ambition in the key areas of standards and assessments and innovative ideas (i.e. using proposed investments for same day recording of lecture notes).		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	4
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant completed most of the requirements as it related to the presentation of data in this section. There is an inconsistent presentation of the applicant's approach and a limited description of the grade bands selected: Year 1(3-6) and Year 2(7-12). The data accounts for all students at the 8 participating schools, but fails to address the PreK-2 population in the approach. The inconsistency presents in the accompanying chart that includes the excluded grade bands, and does not provide the total number of low-income students (78% was provided in description). This leaves the application with the possibility that if PreK-2 students are excluded that the 40% low-income threshold would perhaps not be met.		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates consideration for both the inputs and outputs related to meeting goals of their plan, but it presents more as a human capital initiative and related professional learning initiative than a true focus on improving outcomes for students, which lessens its credibility. Also, the plan lacks important detail for who will be responsible for the deliverables. In addition, some of the measures seem misaligned to the proposed objectives, as evidenced by including reading by 3rd grade, even though the plan addresses only 3-12th grade students. A distinct strong point for this applicant is their potential to scale up the initiative through their plan to phase-in grade bands and participation in a collaborative with schools in Minnesota and Louisiana, as well as online.

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

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Achievable targets have been set forth by the applicant in all areas, and are ambitious by ethnic subgroup in terms of student achievement, but less in other subgroup categories (ELL, SWD, ED). The vision set forth is quite general, and does not address specific subgroups and their needs being met by the personalized learning efforts from the grant, and have failed to address subgroups specifically in any area of the vision. The applicant chose to compare the achievement gap data to the State equivalent, rather than the highest performing subgroups at the State level. Lastly, both the graduation rate and college enrollment rate targets are not significantly ambitious, particularly for subgroups such as Hispanic students who would end the grant with a 25.6% gap in college enrollment and an 8.8% gap in high school graduate rate compared to White students. These targets should be much more ambitious given the similarity in population size.

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	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided a disorganized arrangement of data, which made it difficult to determine a clear record of success in advancing achievement and increasing equity. The use of obscure data from a district middle school (Chart #7) to highlight the upward trend of Black students in comparison to White students did not necessarily show a significant narrowing of the achievement gap, but in fact improvement in both groups. This would relate to their stated commitment to focus on all groups equally. There is very limited data available to show a track record of success in closing the achievement gap over the last four years, instead snapshots were presented and did not cover college enrollment rates at all.

While the district is reasonably high achieving now, on the CRCT more of the applicants' students did not meet standards compared to the State - all 4 years in all subject areas. In addition, the number of students exceeding standards was lower than State averages all 4 years in all subject areas. Math and Science present similar data on the CRCT, while gains were made over the last 4 years, in both cases the 2012 data shows the same number of students did not meet standards as in 2009.

The applicant does not meet the criteria (b) in this portion of the application, which results in point deductions.

This applicant while presenting an inconsistent track record of success noticeably places an enormous emphasis on making data available to all stakeholders. There are numerous examples of communication and distribution strategies, everything from a Parent Portal to immediate access in the Longitudinal Data System for educators. While monthly meetings address data collaboratively, it appears that there is much more emphasis on the publication of data than the interaction among all stakeholders around the data.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant focused their response on the hyperlinks to areas where budget information is available online, but there is no evidence that the applicant is deliberately transparent about processes, practices and investments. The applicant did not provide a direct response that they followed the 2011-2012 school year Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) guidelines when reporting school expenditure data, nor did the applicant offer that a link was made available on the district's website.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The entire district is considered a Georgia Charter School System, and thus has more flexibility and autonomy from statewide regulations. Unfortunately, the embedded charter school application that was included in the appendix was not accessible, so the specifics of autonomy related to creating personalized learning environments was unavailable. The evidence that one of the district 6-12 schools already uses a blended learning model shows some support for personalized learning.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant engaged a variety of stakeholders, most notably with school leadership and principals who then engaged the faculty and School Governance Councils, composed of teachers, parents, business partners, and community members, in gaining feedback and suggestions on how to address personalized learning. It is unclear how this engagement impacted the grant proposal. Appropriately, the Superintendent and Director of Development presented to the Mayor and City Council, and garnered an official letter of support and thorough review with feedback. The partnership with the Lead District Collaborative also yielded a strong letter of support, although data that was cited was inconsistent with data in the proposal. The other letters of support from higher education and a community organization provided a more well-rounded contribution.</p> <p>The key issue with stakeholder engagement in the proposal was with parents and teachers. There was only one letter from one parent of a kindergartner, which seemed inappropriate given that the proposal is aimed at 3rd-12th grades. The biggest weakness is with educator support, given the results of the district survey that had nearly 16% voting against the proposal, and nearly 12% that did not respond. In one particular school at least 61% of the educators (37 out of 61) voted not to support the proposal. In addition one of the schools failed to get a response from more than 25% of the teachers. Given that this district only has 8 schools, this represents a significant deficit in educator support.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides extensive evidence of an existing data-driven culture, which led to an analysis that there are gaps in instruction related to differentiation and flexible grouping. While a plan has been set forth that consists of adding personnel, it is not clear what role each of these positions would serve and whether they would be school-based or centralized. The plan cannot be considered high quality, as it is unclear how the new team members relate to the proposed professional learning activities and what their role will be in improving outcomes for students and creating personalized learning environments.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Due to a lack of sufficient detail, based on an almost verbatim assertion of the commitment to the selection criteria, this plan appears limited in its scope. There are areas in this portion of the proposal that could have benefited from additional research. For example, the proposal is vague about high quality digital content in the form of electronic texts, apps, and web-based resources.</p> <p>Some of the most promising ideas in this proposal relate to having students complete interest inventories and individualized graduation plans, as well as having community learning labs open in the evenings and giving students access to technology at home. Personalized learning teams will help staff the evening labs, and technology specialists will help with technical implementation, but it is unclear what roles supported in this grant will be responsible for improving teaching and learning and fostering engagement and differentiation. The applicant states that teachers, instructional technology specialists and data specialists will train students to monitor their progress, which seems unnecessary to accomplish this goal. Also, given that job-embedded professional learning and personalized learning teams are important to the success of the grant, there is no distinct plan for ensuring students get exposed to high quality instructional approaches and environments, and that teachers receive the support to make personalized learning a success.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	7

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant establishes that by increasing personnel at the school level in the form of personalized learning teams (PLTs), teachers will receive ongoing job-embedded professional development through professional learning communities. It is less clear what each of these new roles will be responsible for, and how teacher leaders and existing school leadership team structures will interact in the new dynamic. The plan does not include timelines for implementation or an overview of the feedback cycle that would encourage effective implementation and use of data. Goals are established under personalized learning environments and highly effective instruction for students, teachers, and administrators, but the activities are not descriptive nor connected to measurable outcomes.

Conditions exist in this school district that could make for successful implementation of personalized learning environments: formal teacher evaluation system, Common Core standards, Career Ladder Program, etc...but the applicant provides a disconnected picture rather than an integrated approach. The lack of specificity about how, when, and who will be responsible for outcomes, creates an unclear picture of how the Personalized Learning Teams will increase student achievement and teacher effectiveness. It is not apparent that the applicant has a coherent high quality plan to adapt content and instruction and reflects a contradictory strategy for implementation. While the proposal has mainly focused on a 1:1 technology solution, this part of the proposal focused on three different traditional computer-based station models, without referencing the purpose of the individual technology tools for students, or how personalized learning teams would enhance and accelerate student progress toward college and career ready goals. There are many solid ideas and structures in this section of the proposal that have potential, but the absence of clear goals, significant details, and timelines to accompany them, create gaps in being able to score this section highly.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	9

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The organization of the LEA district office into distributed leadership teams aligns with the school-based leadership teams and is well organized for success. School leadership teams have extensive flexibility and autonomy over keys areas that will support the achievement of personalized learning environments. Policies are evident from both Charter School governance structures and the Board of Education that allow for students to have flexible learning time and eliminate seat time requirements, and promotes students' ability to demonstrate mastery and progress in an individual way. With such an unambiguous emphasis on frequent and varied assessments, it would be useful to increase details about the specific assessments used and how often they are administered. As far as learning resources and instructional practices, the applicant credits specially certified personnel and taking into account developmental and motivational needs of students. While differentiation is mentioned here, it is in contrast to an earlier statement that this is an identified instructional need and part of what will be addressed through the grant.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
--	----	---

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There is strong evidence that the applicant ensures access for all stakeholders to content tools and other resources online or at school-based technology labs. Technical support is available for stakeholders and will be scaled up through the proposal. In addition data systems for financial and human resources information will be merged with the open Student Information System and Student Instructional Improvement System, and eventually the state level longitudinal data system that will create a strong foundation for supporting personalized learning and integration of information. There is some deficiency in information as it relates to specific strategies related to criteria of learning supports and protection of sensitive student data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant maintains a sound continuous improvement cycle related to student achievement, but did not incorporate the

priorities of the proposal into the described process. In addition, this process allows for progress monitoring and measurement, as well as efficiently reporting on RTT-D targets through the use of a widely distributed balanced scorecard. Inadequate evidence is provided that the district plans to share information about the specific investments in the proposal, but instead will focus on student achievement and teacher effectiveness targets supported by the proposal.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant cites more than 25 strategies to provide ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders. Through a diverse approach of leveraging formal technology, social media, traditional in-person meetings and progress reports, the applicant is clearly committed to a comprehensive system of communication and information sharing. Communication strategies are solid internally, but there is less evidence of the results of external engagement. Some data to support these strategies would have shown that this is not one-way communication but true successful engagement of external stakeholders.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

These measures are neither comprehensive, nor particularly relevant based on the grade span focus and the content of the proposal. In addition, there are numerous examples of targets that don't accelerate subgroups achievement measures and are the same as high performing subgroups. The applicant did not set consistent, ambitious goals, and as an example will measure proficiency on the high school writing exam, but expects the same 1% growth from students with disabilities (starting at 65%) as it does from Economically Disadvantaged students (starting at 93%). Irrelevant performance measures were included: 2nd grade and PK-12, even though the proposal will be implemented in grades 3-12. The highly effective teacher and principal data was not targeted to the grade spans addressed in the proposal, but also was not compelling as it shows that everyone is already considered highly effective, which would mean that there is not much room for growth. Potentially, the December 2012 data system would provide a clearer representation of effectiveness.

In addition the only measure for 3-6 is on science proficiency, while nowhere else in the application did the district reference content or needs in this area. Most of the targets focused on 8-12th grades, and did not set ambitious goals for closing the achievement gap. A particularly stark example is in the % of students filling out FASFA, with an almost 7 point difference between economically disadvantaged students and the average of all students participating. In this area, the applicant expects to close the gap and have 92% completion across all student populations. This section was overall incomplete.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is well coordinated with big picture existing systems and will publish student achievement and educator effectiveness results in a balanced scorecard and eventually a statewide performance index. As it relates to the specific investments in this grant proposal, the applicant has not provided even basic assertions (i.e. professional learning evaluation surveys), details of activities laid out in plans, and their impact on changed structures or reforms.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This narrative only addresses bandwidth, tablet purchases, and staff, but is not complete based on the proposal. There appears to be a rather gross underestimation of the necessary expertise it will take to successfully create personalized learning environments. Technicians imply technical troubleshooting and not instructional expertise, and it is unclear who would fill these roles to make this initiative sustainable. Given that this strategy is significant to the applicant's proposal, it clearly needs a more detailed rationale.

Throughout the proposal there was no clear identification that the key strategy will be to purchase 5000 iPads. In fact in criteria C traditional computers are referenced, and not tablets as part of different station models. In light of this, perhaps the Ethernet investment is not necessary, as iPads are incompatible with Ethernet connections. Most worrisome is the commitment of only 10 hours of professional learning in the summer to implement personalized learning. In addition, if existing

staff is too be responsible for working extended hours, perhaps the use of a few additional part-time consultants could help provide professional development and avoid burnout.

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

10

2

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The grant investment may be able to be somewhat maintained through E-rate and local funding, creating sustainability. There is no specific budget or timeline that expressly lays out the plan for sustaining the initiative beyond the term of the grant. Many questions remain about all of the positions associated with the personalized learning teams and the LEA district office technology supports and their potential for sustainability. This proposal while achievable is not necessarily ambitious as it does not account for sustained improvements and maintenance of personalized learning environments.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is justified in its eligibility for the competitive preference priority, based on its integrated approach to partnership with Scholastic, the UCLA School of Mental Health in Schools, and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) entitled the LEAD District Collaborative. In many ways, these partnerships are one of the strongest elements to the overall application due to the capacity building and focus on aligned organizational, communication, and outreach structures. There are 2 areas for concern with this partnership, that were not addressed in the proposal: 1) sustainability – not enough detail provided about the length/depth of partnership and 2) lack of focus on the highest needs students and accomplishing direct correlation between performance measures and the proposed investments in the grant.

The population-level desired results are achievable, but not necessarily ambitious. There are some concerns that these measures don't necessarily connect to a strong trajectory of college and career readiness but more with satisfaction with the school district. There is a significant emphasis on data-driven decision making for this applicant, that involves a variety of stakeholders including the School Leadership teams and the School Governance Councils, but it is unclear how the newly formed Personalized Learning Teams will be deliberate in targeting high needs students, and will contribute to improving results over time.

The *Comprehensive System of Learning Support* framework from this partnership is designed to create a coherent process for the applicant, but it remains indistinct what services are actually being integrated to serve the students who need them the most. While the partnership appears to build capacity for an organized approach to data analysis, it appears that there is less emphasis on progress monitoring. Distributed leadership is evident, but shared decision-making is not.

The focus on these particular performance measures, are a bit disappointing in that they are less focused on improving outcomes for students and more focused on improving outcomes for the district. A more student-centered approach would be more convincing for the investments in this proposal.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant possesses a strong infrastructure with the potential for success in creating personalized learning environments. In the areas of policy and partnership, the applicant has an advantage in being able to truly meet the needs of their students by leveraging existing structures to advance teaching and learning outcomes.

Regrettably, the proposed plan is not high quality, and would have been deemed credible through more research and understanding of how to effectively leverage these investments. The overall coherence and comprehensiveness of the proposal were disappointing and did not present a realistic picture of how investments in a personalized learning team, technicians at every school, and tablets for every 3-12 grade student would actually enhance an already high performing

school district. Under Criteria C, the applicant had a real opportunity to express how this technology would be deployed to truly differentiate learning, but instead presented computer station models that were totally unrelated to the proposed investments. In addition, while professional learning activities dominated the goals, it is uncertain how this would be accomplished by the proposal.

While performance measures presented by the applicant are certainly achievable, the overall projections were not ambitious, particularly as it relates to focusing on the highest needs students. Much more of the narrative around the proposed investments should have focused on details of how high needs students would benefit. In addition, while the conditions for success are available to put students on a strong trajectory for college and career readiness, this applicant is lacking focus and understanding of how these investments interact with this priority and meeting the needs of all students. In addition, it is worrisome that while the investments will only serve grades 3-12, that the applicant used the data from the entire to district to meet the eligibility requirements. This requires additional research into whether the low income threshold would be met through the removal of PK-2 students.

Total	210	80
-------	-----	----