



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0426NC-1 for Hickory City Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District's "Extending Excellence" vision is designed to provide opportunity for all students and teachers, K-12</li> <li>Goals align with North Carolina RTT master plan as evidenced by adopting and using the NC Common Core standards, the NC K-12 educational Cloud and Instructional Improvement System, CEDARS data warehouse.</li> <li>Four core educational assurance areas are a part of existing educational initiatives, but are not comprehensive or system-wide at present. Grant will provide support to do this. Proposal outlines plans to implement personalized learning opportunities, working with low performing schools, adopting assessments that prepare students for college/career; recruiting and retaining effective teachers, building a data system to measure student progress.</li> <li>Grant indicates the Helping Extend Excellence through Development (HEED) sub-project will address the minimal opportunity to provide personalized learning, enrich and deepen student learning that currently exists in the district.</li> <li>Lack of technology and training is addressed in this proposal by Helping Extend Excellence through Technology (HEET) subproject in a comprehensive manner.</li> </ul> <p>The district has assessed greatest areas of need and realized that investing in technology infrastructure would greatly improve student success in a personalized learning environment when combined with focused professional development and on-site coaching. This will have a great positive effect. Also providing 1:1 devices to students with home based internet access will be critical for student success.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All schools are participating but staff participation will be phased in over time with selected staff trained and then training expanded to include all teachers. Faculty role models provide authentic work to share and replicate.</li> <li>Technology access to everyone from beginning is strength as it will enhance learning in the classroom and at home.</li> <li>HEED and HEET roll out over 3 yr period. Teachers and classroom readiness determines start up. This may prove valuable as individuals work closely with colleagues who are not piloting initiatives in the beginning.</li> <li>Comprehensive formative and summative evaluation system used. Partner with UNC at Charlotte to evaluate grant implementation; use NC state professional performance evaluation system for teachers, principal, Superintendent. This provides an unbiased third party resource.</li> <li>Starting with small groups of teachers in each building may create a "sub group vs. the rest of us" scenario and impede implementation.</li> <li>Providing training and support to teachers who have been issued new equipment and access, but are not chosen to be in Phase 1 could be problematic.</li> </ul>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicants proposal clearly communicate the sustainability of planned initiatives at the elementary, middle and high school level as shown in the district wide goals for improved student outcomes and the district's approach to implementation documents.</li> </ul>		

Comprehensive and cohesive approach noted in logic model for both HEED and HEET sub projects.

- Utilization of both formative and summative assessment data runs throughout document and is noted in all program evaluative aspects of the proposal

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

10

9

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- Currently, student data shows significant gaps in certain grade levels and schools, but trending over time shows improvement in student results.
- Graduation rates and college readiness- great potential to improve through initiatives outlined
- Current student achievement targets are increased and timelines shortened in proposed grant

The potential impact of this proposal to improve student learning is tremendous. Creating an environment where teachers and learners become partners while continuing to build on current initiatives and provide a foundation of training and infrastructure will accelerate student success.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strong track record in effectively implementing change from within the system.</p> <p>Since 2008 implementation of these initiatives has redirected district efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Capturing Kids Hearts and Literacy First programs reestablished effective readiness skills at elementary level. Aligned curricula with Common Core created comprehensive, systemic, academic program in these curricular areas.</li> <li>• Reconfiguration of HCAM from an alternative school to a magnet school shows dramatic increase in student success.</li> <li>• Introduction and implementation of IB program greatly enhances high school student college/career readiness skills.</li> <li>• Positive feedback from stakeholder survey indicates effective communication between home and school regarding student progress.</li> </ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <p>Steady progress in student achievement at elementary level. Though Longview and Oakwood Elementary schools posted a 6% gain, they were in the 55% range while their sister schools showed similar progress were at the 70% range from the beginning.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Transparency through system wide, extensive website resources, blogs, Face book pages.</p> <p>Financial information and other official documents readily accessible to all stakeholders including 4 categories of school level expenditures.</p> <p>Evidence of impact shown through stakeholder responses posted on web page.</p> <p>Overall this creates a comprehensive communications system that provides meaningful transparency and accessibility.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Demonstrates alignment with NC RTT initiatives and other mandated program.</p> <p>- Vision supports the vision outlined in the North Carolina RTT proposal, "Career and College: Ready, Set, Go!" This initiative will move the district toward ensuring all students meet college and career ready standards.</p>		

-The district intends to "leverage the resources developed by the state RTT efforts". They anticipate "being a demonstration site for personalized learning and will work to share our experiences and lessons learned with other districts statewide."

-"Hickory City Schools has fully participated in all the initiatives developed with state-level Race to the Top funds and begun to see the fruits of those labors". (See document "HCS Improvement in Student Achievement").

Presents two options to receive mandate relief: Seek a waiver to request relief from the minimum number of hours required for high school coursework or request special legislation to change seat time requirement.

Plans to assure fidelity with state initiatives and district goals are evident.

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

District demonstrated active participation by stakeholder groups during grant development. The result is a proposal that reflects the district vision and addresses identified needs in an effective way.

Strong teacher support - 90% supporting the proposal as shown in the survey report. This was preceded by a presentation and "teachers provided a number of suggestions that were incorporated into the final project proposal."

Comprehensive plan to seek input from all stakeholder groups, review information at the building level, revise, and fold into final proposal.

Stakeholder groups were provided detailed overview of proposal and invited to give suggestions that were then considered for inclusion in the proposal. For example, students were actively involved in process and their input was acted on. As stated in the proposal "...to solicit student input district staff presented to the student councils of the high schools and middle schools. Staff answered questions regarding possible timelines and accepted input regarding the types of devices that would be preferred". The proposal became more responsive to identified stakeholder needs when it incorporated suggestions such as "a request to define the student device all the high school level as a laptop computer rather than a tablet device".

Meetings with key community leadership over a period of months plus surveying for grant support among stakeholders (72.4%) provided comprehensive feedback and direction to grant planning team as they designed/revised their proposal.

Numerous letters of support representing all stakeholders are shared in the appendices. This demonstrates an effective network of formal and informal resources available to the district.

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

Strong case to upgrade technology is presented and supported. Evidence that supports this assertion includes:

- There is no wireless access in any of the schools. Some of the computers in use in the district are as much as 12 years old.
- Most of the existing network infrastructure is operating beyond its manufacturer life expectancy.

- "Considering only the schools, HCS has just 1,701 computers, which is an average of one computer for every 2.6 students", 82% do not have interactive whiteboards and only 21% have document cameras. Also Table B5a shows the comparison of "HCS Teacher Responses Regarding Technology". Teacher responses indicate a downward trending of their beliefs that classroom technology in the district is adequate and meets the needs of their students.

In summary, when considering age of the hardware available and the very limited infrastructure, access to quality electronic resources is greatly diminished retarding the progress made in providing a personalized learning environment within the district. It also has a negative impact on providing timely data and feedback for analysis and reporting progress gained.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Research based "Personalized Learning LLC" framework and the "Universal Design for Learning" will be used as foundation of

the Hickory CSD personalized learning initiative.

Extensive teacher and student training will ensure that technology use is maximized and research based instructional strategies implemented.

High quality content that aligns with graduation requirements and career/college readiness currently is being implemented at the high schools. Plans to go system wide are noted.

The grant proposal does not outline how parents will participate with their student and the staff in establishing a student personalized learning plan and evaluate student progress.

In summary, strong learner-teacher partnerships is essential for the personalized learning framework to be successful. District has set specific goals to insure that teachers understand learner needs and how to assist learners in accessing and engaging content and then how to use this new knowledge. At the same time learners will "own their learning, they have a stake in what and how they learn". This process assures that teachers and learners can forge effective partnerships to assure progress toward mastery of college/career ready standards and graduation requirements.

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

Research based Universal Design for Learning will be foundation of personalized learning experience at Hickory Hills.

Repository of professional staff work, clustered staff development and interaction, professional on-site coaching, provides district with a mechanism for sustainability beyond the grant period.

District based funding for majority of Professional Learning coaches demonstrates strong commitment to their plan and these key positions.

As stated in the proposal "Key to the success of our Personalized Learning Implementation is the creation and sustaining of full-time Personalized Learning Coach positions."

School leadership deeply involved in implementing, assessing progress and continuously improving PL at each level within the school organization.

Efforts to recruit and retain highly effective and trained staff include initiatives such as Master Teacher and Lead Learner programs in the district. Teachers appreciate being recognized for their efforts and these strategies support them.

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

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- District policies align to take advantage of open source resources; teachers have 24/7 access to student data so this makes planned implementation feasible.
- Leadership teams will provide onsite feedback and assist in making necessary adjustments in implementation.
- Organizational structure proposed will weave local personnel resources together with grant funded positions to provide focused support for the implementation of the new technology and systems outlined. Also critical to success of the instructional shifts proposed, are the onsite key experts who serve as professional coaches to the staff.
- Installation of a "robust wireless network and providing devices to all teachers and students" will quickly improve access to world class knowledge and resources.
- Plans are shared to extend these initiatives beyond the span of the grant so that all staff is at the Stage 3 or full

implementation of personalized learning environment in their classroom.

- Proposal outlines a 3 stage phase in at the building level which will in year one work with a subset of faculty on implementation and then build on their successes. These role models are hoped to inspire others. A concern is that negative experiences may impede implementation as proposal indicates all teachers will have access to the technology hardware in year one but not necessarily the training and technical support to implement it successfully. This could also produce a negative attitude within the families of students who are not in a stage 1 classroom.

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

10

10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The grant proposes the following strategies to ensure effective implementation and sustainability:

Low cost home wireless internet option establishes essential for 24/7 student access.

Technology department staffing appears adequate for scope of project.

Staffing will continue beyond project to ensure sustainability.

Partnering with a research university provides comprehensive, unbiased formative and summative evaluation.

Community access improved (ex. Open library nights)

Offering more opportunity for staff and parents to collaborate would greatly enhance grant efforts.

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Timely and effective feedback is built in through building level and district wide assessment of training plans/implementation.

Leadership provided by grant coordinator will ensure consistency across and at all levels within the district due to access to all levels of the organization.

It is essential to provide focused staff development. The proposal notes that 14% of project budget is devoted to a phase in of professional development.

Initiative provides student achievement reports more often and to key stakeholders for continuous improvement. The district will create a digital dashboard that will provide parental and staff access to student progress.

The framework of the district's strategic plan will provide continuity beyond the life of the grant. This is an essential component of the proposal.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant addresses ongoing communication in a comprehensive and clear manner, utilizing an array of resources on a continual basis.

- Internal and external communication and transparency enhanced by key district resources: fulltime public information officer, volunteer communications liaisons representing every building within the district.
- Principal Blog spots link support home/school communication.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Proposal outlines the district's Strategic Plan 2012-15 "Extending Excellence" and utilizes the plan goals as rationale. The rationale adequately describes and supports measures chosen. Grant implementation plans include using clear milestones and objectives for each major activity. This will effectively measure and monitor progress.

Rigor is present and evidence identified for the proposal's K-12 goals:

- HCS has "adopted three programs to support non-cognitive growth: FitnessGram, Olweus Bullying Prevention, and Healthy School"
- District addresses improving effectiveness rating of teachers and principals by identifying current rating, developing a professional development plan to support improvement and providing extensive training and resources to teachers and principals. The proposal also notes that the definitions of these ratings is changing and that state data indicating the number of students who had a highly effective teacher is not available at time of grant submission.
- HCS participates in the Educational and Planning Assessment System which provides career explorations resources through components such as EXPLORE, PLAN, and ACT.

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

- Using the Kirkpatrick model provides extensive feedback derived from a variety of strategies.
- Third party evaluator provides impartiality and objective results for continuous improvement.

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

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

High quality of plan shown by ambitious funding of technology infrastructure to immediately address one of the district's greatest needs. "Because the district lacks robust wireless and one-to-one technology, 61% of requested grant funds will be spent on technology".

District has made a large financial commitment to personalized learning and upgrading/maintaining the technology infrastructure that will be created. They also have plans to maintain the infrastructure beyond the life of the grant. This is important as project longevity will happen with the combination of extensive technology implementation paired with long-term professional development and support. A key asset is the system implemented to gather, analyze performance data and revise initiatives based on the trends/conclusions identified.

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

**Strong infrastructure continued:** District has committed to maintain current budget items that support technology development.

**Strong internal human resource:** District anticipates all staff will be trained and plans to continue personalized learning coaches, master teachers in the district.

An extensive breakdown of requested grant funding indicates that 61% of the grant will be used for equipment acquisition, 23% for contractual services, 14% for personnel costs, 2% for indirect costs. These appear to be accurate when reviewing detail of budget documents.

HCS provides clear plans regarding sustainability of project goals. The proposal effectively addresses the need for continuation by, once components are up and running the district will shift existing personnel "to maintain the robust infrastructure and one-to-one device environment". The other key component that will continue at the Personalized Learning Coaches and identified master teachers who will be able to "sustain the PL environment and will be tasked with training new teachers as they enter the district."

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Comprehensive established community system enhances the personalized learning initiative of this grant.

Strong community partnerships will create additional opportunity for students to achieve success.

Appropriate utilization of community based family resources to support students and families are employed.

Unique community partnership to provide home based internet access for economically disadvantaged families is a resource that will have a multiplier effect in these families.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Applicant provides comprehensive plans to develop and implement an effective personalized learning environment within their school system. Extensive surveying and assessment of needs was conducted with all stakeholder groups prior to plan development. Maximizing and partnering will community resources greatly enhances grant. Objectivity is established by using a third party evaluator. Grant goals and vision of district align closely crafting a seamless transition for students and staff. District has ensured their efforts align with the North Carolina educational regulations and RTT initiatives. They have utilized these resources effectively. Long range plans indicate that sustainability of grant initiatives will occur. District has committed significant financial resources to this grant proposal and values the opportunity this grant will provide. Extensive evaluation of student data was used in crafting grant and is an integral part of the grant assessment. Utilizing a third party evaluator and outside professional trainer will provide high quality feedback and training. Sustainability efforts are attainable and provide significant foundation for other future endeavors.

Total	210	204
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	15

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Proposal addresses significant after school needs by continuing successful programs within the community.

Each program has an academic or cultural focus that supports student engagement and academic success.

Connecting after school experiences to school based programs will greatly enhance student success. It also presents a challenge as to how to accomplish this. Both proposed programs focus on a challenge the district faces: improving academic rigor in the area of STEM and supporting the cultural diversity of students, particularly the Latino population. Both programs have demonstrated successful implementation and management of an after school program. They partner with the school district and other community resources to maximize limited resources. Key components in both programs is the established relationship with the students and their families and their support of the HCS educational system. Evidence of these components are noted in the program descriptions and the letters of support included. For example "the STEP Coordinator will spent 100% of her time on the project in providing guidance, program for teens, mentoring, upgrading Catawba Science Center school programming and working with professionals".



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0426NC-2 for Hickory City Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(1) Score = 8</p> <p>Hickory Public Schools demonstrates a comprehensive vision for the required four core educational assurance areas. Examples include: (1.) Clear communication and understanding of needs for technology/tools to implement personalized learning, with strong focus upon two projects as a part of this proposal, the Helping Extend Excellence through Technology and Helping Extend Excellence through Development projects; (2.) adopting and implementing the Common Core Standards along with Essential Standards. These projects represent innovative initiatives with sustaining and positive implications to personalize education.</p> <p>What is missing from their evidence presented were: (1.) a model or framework on how to assist teachers and students to personalize education based upon student interests and needs. For example, how will these needs be described, assessed, and then methods employed to impart these. (2.) An approach to develop a personalized learning plan for each student in the district so as to be able to take students through their three stages of personalized learning (as described in Appendix 2). Therefore, a deduction of two points is warranted.</p> <p>Overall this places Hickory Public Schools at the bottom of the high range for this criterion.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(2) Score = 8</p> <p>Hickory Public Schools demonstrates a focused use of data as evidenced in Tables (A) (2) (a) and (A)(2)(b). The implementation plan calls for 100% of their 4,366 students, with 4,100 considered "high need" students to utilize technology. Further, the plans for converting instructional coaches to personalized learning coaches representing an innovative approach to developing the professional talent in house in lieu of contracting for these services externally, and a strong basis for continuous improvement over numerous years.</p> <p>A strong component of the implementation plan is the use of the Center for Measurement and Evaluation at the University of North Carolina to assess the effectiveness of their programs.</p> <p>Noticeable is the lack of conceptualizing and of describing how the flipped classroom method or other personalized learning teaching and learning methods with associated software applications would be implemented over the three stages of personalized learning described in Appendix 2, requiring a deduction of two points placing Hickory at the bottom of the high range for this criterion.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(3) Score = 8</p>		

This criterion requires an LEA-wide reform and change high quality plan for “how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools (as defined in this notice), and will help the applicant reach its outcome goals.” Hickory Schools has demonstrated confidence in Superintendent Dr. Hart’s leadership to implement this proposed plan, based upon past accomplishments. A future scaling plan with learning goals and outcomes, such as a school by school achievement gaps or subgroups proficiencies, or Common Core subject by subject phased implementation is missing from the narrative. Therefore, a deduction of two points. Table (A)(2)(b) represents a detailed timeline that is measurable and ambitious yet practical which will guide the implementation well.

Finally, Hickory Public Schools focus upon a personalized learning coach at every school to coordinate the one to one device technology and implement the personalized learning environment creates strong accountability for adherence to the proposed plan and success.

Overall a score of 8, placing Hickory at the bottom of the high range.

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

(A)(4) Score = 8

Hickory Public Schools utilizes strong data based analysis to create goals for reducing non-proficient students, closing the achievement gap among subgroups, and increasing cohort graduation rates. What is absent from their discussion are goals for number of students going onto college, graduating college and career ready, participating in internships or service learning projects, (or other indicators that curricula has been changed to personalize learning) over and above the percentage of students they will send to North Carolina state schools from 27.9 to 35 percent.

Overall a strong understanding and basis for measurement, and a score of 8, placing Hickory at the bottom of the top range.

## 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:

(B)(1) Score = 14/15

Hickory Public Schools has demonstrated the commitment to adopt new programs that focus upon the hearts and minds of K-12 young people as evidenced by implementing two impactful programs: Capturing Kids’ Hearts and Literacy First. Further, they have adopted and implemented the Common Core/Essential Standards training in all schools.

Data provided in Tables (B)(1)(a) through (B)(1)(f) demonstrates significant use of data for decision making, as well as impressive improvements, examples include:

From the 2007-08 dropout rate of 8.65 percent, the district had just a 4.10 percent dropout rate in 2010-11.

Academic achievement is on the rise. From 2008-09 to 2011-12, three of HCS elementary schools have increased the percentage of students proficient in reading, including a 6.4 percentage point gain in the district’s lowest-performing elementary school.

Elementary schools have maintained similar levels of math proficiency in the same time period, despite acknowledged increases in the difficulty level of the assessments.

Both middle schools have posted five-point gains in math proficiency.

At the high schools, the percentage of students proficient in biology increased by nine points between 2008-09 and 2011-2. The percentage proficient in English I increased by 13 points.

Further, the creative approach used to turn around a low performing school, the alternative school into the Hickory Career and Art Magnet School (HCAM) is impressive with improving results.

What is missing from this data is college readiness and high school to college transitions, with associated data points such as ACT or SAT scores; understanding that the Common Core implementation will allow school personnel to focus upon these metrics.

The score of 14 out of 15 points places Hickory Public Schools at the top of the high range for this criterion.

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

5

5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(2) Score = 5/5

The efforts to make data more widely available serves as a model for school districts nationally. Here their efforts have been noticed by a third party evaluator: The 2011 AdvancED Quality Assurance Review of Hickory City Schools commended the district in this area, noting

that "Student, school, and district performance is communicated to stakeholders in a variety of format. This performance data included formative, benchmark, and summative data."

Further, the district demonstrates transparency when reporting all finance and human resources data to the community through their website and social media.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(3) Score = 10/10

Hickory Public Schools through their participation in the North Carolina Rtt Grant is at the forefront of analyzing how federal and state policies empower or inhibit implementation of new initiatives such as their personalized learning proposal. The most acute and important example is the Hickory Public School's awareness that seat time requirements could inhibit implementation of a personalized learning environment as evidenced by: "We need the professional development to help our teachers to learn how to do this in a Personalized Learning Environment. The state legislature requires a minimum number of hours to grant credit for high school course. We will utilize the state's waiver process to request relief from this mandate. In the event that a waiver is not granted, we will request a local bill from the legislature to allow us to change the seat time requirement. This is an allowable legislative process in North Carolina and is used by districts interested in piloting changes in current regulations."

The independence of the Hickory district from state DOE to allow for changes in policy for purposes of implementing new initiatives is exceptional. Further, that Hickory Public Schools has this forward thinking mindset supports their proposal. Overall, this places Hickory Public Schools at the top of the high range.

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

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(4) Score = 10/10

Hickory Public Schools has thoroughly engaged numerous stakeholders in the process of preparing this proposal. Examples include numerous letters of support from key organizations, numerous PTA meetings to involve parents in the future vision, and most notable is the confidential survey of teachers. Survey results demonstrate that 80.5% of teachers participated in the survey, with 90% in favor of this proposal.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(5) Score = 3 /5

Hickory Public Schools demonstrates an awareness of the lack of technology resources in their district as evidenced by their past teacher working conditions survey. This criterion specifically requests a focus upon gaps in the personalized learning environment plan, which in this case are the two programs: HEED and HEET programs. Not mentioned is the need to develop metrics for assessing the degree to which teachers have an understanding of how to develop curricula around students' interests and strengths, as examples. Further, a high quality plan would need to mention the need to be trained in personalized teaching methods such as flipped classroom, differentiated learning, among others.

Finally, it is clear from this proposal that Hickory Public Schools needs to upgrade their technology, from wireless capabilities to laptops for one-to-one computing, which is the focus of this proposal. What is missing is a focus upon personalized learning and how to develop a comprehensive framework for their district and students' personalized learning. This is perhaps the largest gap in their plan and proposal.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(1) Score = 15 /20

Hickory Public Schools provides a thoughtful set of goals and objectives for implementing this proposal. Further, a four (4) year timeline is presented for implementing a personalized learning environment. Importantly, their plan centers around a series of pilot projects in all nine schools led by teachers and personalized learning coaches who are committed to transforming school culture from teacher centered to student centered.

The analysis makes reference to Table (C)(2) which mentions the importance of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) method to assist teachers, coaches and students alike to make the cultural shift, however, in Table (C)(1)(c), the use of UDL is not listed as a milestone in their project implementation timeline. Taken together, both tables demonstrate a complete plan and timeline. Of particular importance and relevance is Appendix 10, which offers a very detailed implementation plan to guide Hickory Public School instructional and administrative leadership.

What is missing from this analysis is the understanding of the student profile and use of when designing personalized learning. UDL as a body of work does indeed provide a multi-modal understanding; however, student aspirations and interests, and developmental stages and self knowledge are not discussed, and should be to satisfy this "learning" criterion. The learning target for this project is college and career readiness but does not include developmental milestones such as competencies or personal growth through stages. Therefore, we can conclude that even though the intent is to personalize learning, where the focus is upon the learner, Hickory Public Schools framework for their discussion is from a teacher centric view.

Finally, the proposal calls for an outside contractor to train personalized learning coaches and teachers in the six steps to personalized learning in a summer workshop. This is important step as a part of the entire plan and should include a series of ongoing workshops to reinforce concepts and add to a database of best practices learned through the numerous pilots.

Overall this places Hickory Public Schools in the bottom of the high range. Applicant has a solid plan in place to learn from as they implement each step in their plan.

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

(C)(2) Score = 18 /20

Exhibit (C)(2)(a) when combined with Appendix 10 provides a very thorough plan for improving teaching and leading over the four years of this grant. Of particular note is the reference in goal 1, objective 1 to building capacity to personalize learning and, objective 3 to a "personal learner toolkit" to guide shifting the pedagogical focus.

Additionally, a particular strength of this plan is the selection of 50 Master Teachers with increased responsibilities to lead other teachers in best practices and long term in house knowledge of how to shift the entire culture.

Missing from this plan is a process to allow students to learn about and demonstrate competencies such as those required in Common Core. The Common Core standards are not present in the personalized learning plan and appear to be a separate consideration from Hickory Public Schools' personalized learning proposal.

Overall, this places Hickory Public Schools in the top of the high range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(1) Score = 13/15

Hickory Public Schools proposed use of personalized learning coaches as central managing function in each school establishes a solid foundation for establishing policies for each school and then district. Further, the central function of a library of best practices serves the entire district over the life of the grant and beyond. The districts involvement in the North Carolina RTT grant and the analysis of policies to facilitate or inhibit reforms will also serve as a foundation for policy changes within the district as they relate to implementing their personalized learning environment.

What is missing is an approach to allowing students to demonstrate mastery instead of seat time to earn credit. The district is considering eliminating seat time requirements, however, a plan for how this policy will be changed to accommodate competency based learning has not been fully discussed.

Overall this places Hickory Public Schools in the middle of the high range.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(D)(2) Score = 9 /10</p> <p>Hickory Public Schools is well positioned to support the personalized learning environment proposed with a well thought out technical infrastructure including the addition of a computer technician position for the first two years of the grant. In those two years, HCS will install a robust wireless network and provide devices to all teachers and students. This will modernize every HCS classroom and dramatically increase the number of devices in the district. This equipment rollout will require a significant investment of staff time to be successful. The grant-funded computer technician will supplement the district's existing technology staff of six, all of whom will be dedicated to grant implementation in this manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Technology Director – 50 percent of time for life of grant;</li> <li>o Instructional Technology Facilitator – 100 percent of time for the first two years of the grant (the position is RTT-State funded and ends in 2014);</li> <li>o Computer Technicians (4.0 FTE) – 25 percent of time for the first two years of the grant, then as needed; and</li> <li>o Technology Specialist – 25% of time for the first two years of the grant, primarily to handle purchasing activities, then as needed.</li> </ul> <p>After the initial rollout in Years 1 and 2, HCS has the existing technical staffing to maintain and sustain a one-to-one environment in Years 3, 4, and beyond.</p> <p>What is missing from this plan is a similar pedagogical infrastructure and set of processes to establish a library of best practices as they implement flipped classroom and other applications developed using UDL, as well as processes to sustain this library long term.</p> <p>Overall this places Hickory Public Schools at the top of the high range.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(E)(1) Score = 14 /15</p> <p>Hickory Public Schools has in place a formal strategic plan which allows for continuous improvement feedback and changes, so as to achieve stated goals. Of particular importance and strength of this proposal is the use of a grant coordinator, personalized learning coaches, and technical support staff to coordinate continuous improvement processes. The amount of funding dedicated to professional development, 14 percent is perhaps a little low given the extent of workshops and training that needs to be conducted at all levels of the district organization, teachers, technical staff, principals, among others.</p> <p>Overall this places Hickory Public Schools at the top of the high range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(E)(2) Score = 5 /5</p>		

Each school in the Hickory district has a community communications liaison to facilitate deep engagement with all stakeholders. Further, numerous screenshots from their district website demonstrates multiple access points for a vast amount of information that is available to the public.

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

(E)(3) Score = 3/5

Hickory Public Schools has proposed eight performance measures as a part of this grant proposal. Of which only three (3) pertain specifically to personalized learning proposal. What is absent from a complete set of performance metrics are measures of personalization of student learning and teaching effectiveness. Metrics are discussed in other parts of this proposal, such as number of teachers trained to be Master teachers, trained in UDL, as examples, but none to measure the culture shift to personalized learning best practices and results.

Considerable data are presented for academic achievement metrics as performance measures of effectiveness.

Of importance are the non-cognitive programs implemented, but performance metrics are not presented to measure the impact of this grant proposal.

This places Hickory Public Schools as the high end of the low range.

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

(E)(4) Score = 5/5

Central to evaluating the effectiveness of the interments made in the personalized learning environment in Hickory Public School is the involvement of staff in the Center for Measurement and Evaluation housed in the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. The numerous and substantive research questions presented will effectively guide the evaluation process and effectiveness of this investment.

This places Hickory Public Schools at the high end of the high range.

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

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(F)(1) Score = 8/10

Hickory Public Schools provides a comprehensive budget which includes a detailed breakdown and allocation of expenses. Fourteen percent of the budget is allocated for professional development of teachers, technical staff and leadership. This may prove to be too low. Also, the software applications such as those required for a flipped classroom method have not been identified and should be included in this proposed budget.

This places Hickory Public Schools at the low end of the high range.

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

(F)(2) Score = 8/10

The reliance upon personalized learning coaches for ongoing improvements will require additional professional development funds and release time for Master teachers to dedicate time toward designing personalized learning lessons and applications after the grant period of four years. These have not been discussed and accounted for in this proposal.

This places Hickory Public Schools at the low end of the high range.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Competitive Preference Priority Score = 8/10

Hickory Public Schools has proposed a significant number of key partnerships, all of which will serve to personalize the learning for each student through increased STEM, Latino community engagement, among others, and create the capacity for a personalized learning environment.

What is missing is an approach providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students (as defined in this notice), giving highest priority to students in participating schools with high-need students (as defined in this notice). To meet this priority, an applicant's proposal does not need to be comprehensive and may provide student and family supports that focus on a subset of these needs.

This places the Hickory Public Schools at the low end of the high range.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Hickory Public Schools demonstrates a comprehensive vision for the required four core educational assurance areas. Examples include: (1.) Clear communication and understanding of needs for technology/tools to implement personalized learning, with strong focus upon two projects as a part of this proposal, the Helping Extend Excellence through Technology and Helping Extend Excellence through Development projects; (2.) adopting and implementing the Common Core Standards along with Essential Standards. These projects represent innovative initiatives with sustaining and positive implications to personalize education. The implementation plan calls for 100% of their 4,366 students, with 4,100 considered "high need" students to utilize technology. Further, the plans for converting instructional coaches to personalized learning coaches representing an innovative approach to developing the professional talent in house in lieu of contracting for these services externally, and a strong basis for continuous improvement over numerous years.

Hickory Public Schools proposed use of personalized learning coaches as central managing function in each school establishes a solid foundation for establishing policies for each school and then district. Further, the central function of a

library of best practices serves the entire district over the life of the grant and beyond. The districts involvement in the North Carolina Rtt grant and the analysis of policies to facilitate or inhibit reforms will also serve as a foundation for policy changes within the district as they relate to implementing their personalized learning environment.

Hickory Public Schools is committed to implementing personalized learning best practices to empower all students to see and acheive their unique and full potentials, their vision and plans have positive implications for our entire system of education.

Total	210	180
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Hickory Public Schools has proposed a significant number of key partnerships, all of which will serve to personalize the learning for each student through increased STEM, Latino community engagement, among others, and create the capacity for a personalized learning environment. Therefore, the budget supplement should be considered as important and needed.

Hickory Public Schools demonstrates a focused use of data as evidenced in Tables (A) (2) (a) and (A)(2)(b). The implementation plan calls for 100% of their 4,366 students, with 4,100 considered "high need" students to utilize technology. Further, the plans for converting instructional coaches to personalized learning coaches representing an innovative approach to developing the professional talent in house in lieu of contracting for these services externally, and a strong basis for continuous improvement over numerous years.

A strong component of the implementation plan is the use of the Center for Measurement and Evaluation at the University of North Carolina to assess the effectiveness of their programs.

Hickory Public Schools has demonstrated the commitment to adopt new programs that focus upon the hearts and minds of K-12 young people as evidenced by implementing two impactful programs: Capturing Kids' Hearts and Literacy First. Further, they have adopted and implemented the Common Core/Essential Standards training in all schools.

What is missing is a focus upon personalized learning and how to develop a comprehensive framework for their district and students' personalized learning. This is perhaps the largest gap in their plan and proposal.



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0426NC-3 for Hickory City Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This section was closely connected to the four key assurance areas. The applicant also made several connections between

District plans and State RTT activities (reform, teacher evaluation, using data) which demonstrate a strong connection to the key assurance areas.

Although there was reference to a State-level teacher evaluation system (and later a principal system), there was no mention of a district-specific principal or supt. evaluation system nor any efforts to improve District or school-level leadership.

The application demonstrated a strong data system as being developed at the state level. Technology was referenced with regard to how these data would be used to improve instruction. Few specifics were provided as to what the District would do beyond what the state is already doing as part of its RTT program.

The district presented four priority areas. These focused on technology use, data use, teacher recruitment and retention, and turning around the lowest-performing school. These goals are achievable but not overly ambitious.

It wasn't clear what vision the District offered that was above and beyond what the home State was already implementing.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal mentions that all District schools will participate in the RTT project if funded. Because of this there is no scale up involving non-participating students or schools.

Overall the District's approach to their proposed intervention is very general. It's not clear from what is provided that the District's plan will result in significant education reform in alignment with the four assurance areas. The District plans to re-title some positions as well as create some positions and purchase a great deal of technology. This is not overly ambitious.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Much of the information provided in this section regarding Supt reform efforts and initiatives are not related to the proposed grant activities but rather deal with past efforts.

It is clear that the teachers and District administration are in agreement regarding District reform vision. Teachers were surveyed and reported a high approval of the proposed direction of reform.

Because the District's plan is to be implemented in all schools, there is not much to include regarding district-wide scale up.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The District's goals focus on those put in place by the State RTT grant (e.g., reducing achievement gaps, reducing numbers of non-proficient students, etc). The District then expands on these goals by making them more ambitious (e.g., occur earlier, close achievement gaps by more). The goals do not appear overly ambitious, but are an increase over State expectations and are achievable.

It is not clear how the implementation of technology as described will accomplish the stated District goals. The proposal does not explain how the purchasing of technology and additional wireless access will result in increased student achievement and the closing of achievement gaps.

Some of the numbers in the outcome tables (e.g., Biology proficiency rates going up and then going back down) do not make sense and are not in line with the stated goals.

Most of the goals presented (proficiency, gaps, and graduation) seem achievable and somewhat ambitious. However, it is not clear that the proposed grant activities will actually result in these outcomes. The applicant has not provided enough information to demonstrate that proposed grant activities will actually result in the proposed outcomes.

**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:

a - It's clear from the proposal that the District has been involved in a lot of reform over the past several years. However, it's not as clear that these reforms have resulted in positive student outcomes. In some cases student achievement has gone up (Table B1a for example some schools increased proficiency by 7%). The same can be said for gaps (closed or decreased). What is not clear is whether or not the reforms actually caused these changes. The Biology achievement area doesn't make sense (numbers do not add up) and isn't in line with the stated goal.

b - The District has made significant progress in turning around the lowest-performing school (e.g., changing the entire structure of the lowest-performing school to a vocational academy).

c - There is little evidence that the District has made, or currently makes, student achievement data widely and easily available. Responding to requests from individuals for such data does not signify the District is interested in sharing data as to inform and improve instruction.

The District has demonstrated some past success in increasing student achievement and reforming low-performing schools. However, it's not clear that these reforms have been ambitious nor that data are made widely available.

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

5

2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal references District efforts regarding communication. However, this is not in response to the selection criteria. No evidence was provided that the District currently makes teacher salaries, instructional staff salaries, or non-personnel expenditures widely available to the public. General budgets are available but that is not in response to the selection criteria (with regard to open availability and transparency).

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

10

6

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The overview of the State evaluation system is missing from the appendix - the page is blank.

The District is in a RTT State and much of the proposed activities are in alignment with State priorities. Little information was provided regarding the selection criteria of state context for implementation. It is not clear that the environment is ripe and/or appropriate for what the District wants to do. Part of this is that up until this point the proposal has not presented a clear plan for grant activities.

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

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Material presented earlier in the proposal referenced strong agreement in vision between school staff and administration (e.g., strong agreement on the part of teachers regarding the proposal (90% of the 80% of teachers responding).

The information provided regarding evidence of stakeholder engagement is very vague and consists primarily of statements that meetings were held. This does not establish engagement. It's clear that a wide range of meetings were held with a number of groups, but this does not present how stakeholders were truly involved in the conceptualization or drafting of the proposal. Simply having meetings and giving presentations does not demonstrate engagement.

The letters of support provided are all rather vague and indicate a general level of support for the project. However, it isn't clear that this support is based on knowledge of the proposal as opposed to general support for additional resources and funding.

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

5

2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Annual teacher and staff survey data in the proposal show that teachers and staff see technology in the District as inadequate (68% of staff agreed with this statement). However, technology and teacher perceptions are not the focus of this grant (four assurance areas). It is not clear what gap exists with regard to student learning and other educational outcomes. The proposal does not demonstrate that if the identified gap was to be filled, students would learn more and better, teachers would be more effective, and more students would graduate and go on to college.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District's emphasis on Universal Design and differentiation is in line with the selection criteria and goal of personalized learning. The proposal includes a detailed framework and philosophy for transitioning from a traditional educational model to a student-centered model. However, there is no high-quality plan (including details of goals and steps to be taken) for how these goals will be accomplished. The goals are very general (e.g., have the skills and tools necessary so that teachers and students can monitor student learning) and do not represent a high-quality plan. Instead, information such as a timeline, deliverables, and responsible parties are needed. Information such as outcomes that relate to increased quality of instruction, increased feedback, use of data, etc. are not provided.</p> <p>Several components of the C1c table are completely new. Items such as performance pay and a master teacher program have not been discussed. Further, many of the outcomes listed in this table involve spending money to hire people or purchase technology. This does not demonstrate that the District's learning plan is focused on student goals, accelerated learning, exposure to diverse cultures, etc.</p> <p>The goals and vision of the District's plan is well conceived and well in line with the emphasis of personalized learning environments. However, this section was to be a plan (outlined in the program application) and did not provide much detail.</p> <p>Overall much is missing from this section with regard to a high-quality plan. Such a plan (as defined in this grant RFP) requires goals, outcomes, and responsible parties but this information was not provided.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	7
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>a - This section is very general (e.g., all teachers will strengthen instructional strategies) and does not represent a high-quality plan. In this case a timeline is provided, but the deliverables and action steps are still very general. It is not clear how teachers will be trained to adapt content and instruction using the technology to be purchased as part of this grant. There is much discussion of training for Universal Design or PLEs, but this does not demonstrate that all staff will be able to differentiate and use assessment for educational improvement. There is also no reference to using staff evaluation data. It seems that the proposal includes ideas, but these ideas were not connected with grant priorities or the selection criteria.</p> <p>b - The program (what exactly will happen in a personalized learning environment in this program) is not clear. It's also not clear that based on all of the goals and deliverables presented, teachers will have access to and know how to use data for instructional improvement.</p> <p>c - Little reference was made in this section to the three staff evaluation systems that are requirements for this grant program.</p> <p>d - No information was provided regarding how the district will improve ineffective teachers and assure that more effective and highly-effective teachers are in place.</p> <p>Very little of this section was in response to the selection criteria, nor did it draw connections between action steps and the technology referenced earlier.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	6
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>a - The proposal references a school board ready to change structure and policy as needed. However, this does not demonstrate that this structure is already in place. Little information was provided to demonstrate that the central office was revised in a way to facilitate significant reforms presented in this proposal.</p> <p>b - School principals have flexibility in some areas. However, it wasn't clear that this flexibility was significant enough to allow for grant activities to be implemented.</p>		

- c - The proposal states that having technology will allow for student to demonstrate mastery. However, the mechanism for this effect is not at all clear. It's not at all clear that students will be able to move more quickly through content as they are ready.
- d - Little information was provided regarding multiple ways for students to demonstrate mastery.
- e - No information was provided regarding how grant activities would reach a diverse range of learners beyond simply saying all students will engage in PLEs.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- a - The proposal references greatly increasing wireless internet and computer access both in and out of school. This is in alignment with selection criteria and grant activities.
- b - The proposal references extended library hours as well as a parent university to help support parents in the implementation of grant activities. Technology support will also be provided, although no mention was made regarding out-of-school tech support.
- c - Little information is provided regarding data systems beyond staff access to student information systems.
- d - No reference was made to data system revision. However, the State is implementing a new system for all schools to use.

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Saying that the to be hired grant coordinator will take care of grant milestones is not sufficient and does not represent a high quality plan for improvement.
- The proposal references assessments to be used after professional development (one of many grant activities) but does not describe them to the level of equaling a high quality plan.
- The proposal also references formative and summative evaluation by an external evaluator. Once again, this is not a high-quality plan as more detail is needed.
- The Plan outlined in the appendix provides much more detail than does the application narrative itself. This plan includes information regarding timelines and deliverables that will be used to evaluate and reform the plan along the way.

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

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The information provided in the proposal references how the District stays in communication with outside groups such as parents or the public. However, this does not provide information regarding engagement with both internal and external stakeholders for program revision and implementation.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- Much space and time was spent discussing the lack of information available regarding effective teachers. However, information was not provided regarding how teachers and other staff will be evaluated and how that data will be used. The information requested dealt with the measures to be used in the grant period. Even though the State is still developing the system to evaluate staff, some information should have been provided regarding this measure.
- The measures provided in the E3 Table regarding effective and highly effective teachers were not ambitious (only 20% by 2016). This was better for effective teachers (80%).
- Not a lot of information was provided regarding the rationale for using each measure (criteria a) nor how the measures will

provide timely feedback useful to improving instruction (criteria b). None of the measures were connected back to the Universal Design structure or the technology initiatives.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There was no overview of the evaluation system in the Appendix.

Very little information was provided regarding evaluating the effectiveness of grant activities. The District plans to partner with a University, but very little information was provided regarding how the District would evaluate the effectiveness of their intervention.

This section was weak because evaluation information was not provided.

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

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget appears to be reasonable considering the substantial investment required in both computers and network infrastructure. That being said, the connection between the technology and the PLE could be more clear.

The fact that much of the proposed program deals with the purchasing of technology makes the budget simple and easy to rationalize.

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

10

7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Given the nature of the project and the fact that a large portion of grant funds will go toward technology (61%+), sustainability seems straightforward. However, it's not clear what will happen once the computers purchased age out of use and will need to be replaced.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1 - The proposal references groups with whom the District has partnered in the past (e.g., Community College, arts groups, Department of Social Services, etc.) but fails to explain the new partnership to be created to support grant activities. The creation of a partnership council points to the possibility that no new / grant-specific partnerships have been created.

2 - It's not clear how the results presented (e.g., decreased pregnancy rates) will be supported by the partnerships.

3 - Information was not presented regarding tracking performance over time and modifying partnership activities

4 - Information was not provided regarding the interaction of schools and community groups.

5 - Information regarding staff training was very general.

Overall the information regarding partnerships was not detailed.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
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Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This proposal was clearly focused on personal learning environments. That being said, the connection between that focus and the technology initiatives was never clearly established.</p> <p>This proposal spent very little time discussing teacher, principal, and administration evaluation data (how it will be determined and how such data will be used).</p> <p>There was sufficient connection to college and career-ready standards.</p> <p>It was not clear how the District would use data systems and data in general to create personal learning environments. Because of this and because of the lack of attention to educator effectiveness, it's hard to say that this proposal met the absolute priority. There needed to be more attention to HOW the data systems would be used to create the PLEs. The very general section 2 left this unclear. This proposal is "on the edge" with regard to meeting the absolute priority.</p>		

Total	210	120
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