



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0857KY-1 for Knott County School District

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 applicant does not fully describe a clear and coherent vision of where it wants to go. Knott County School District (KCSD) does an excellent job of conveying the current state of their school system, which makes it very easy to understand the need for the proposals they are outlining in the application. In this description, there is some language that points towards their theory of change, but it doesn't paint a clear picture of the vision for where they're going with this proposal. For example, KCSD describes a lack of opportunity for students in the local community with only 9 businesses in the entire county, making their learning feel fairly irrelevant as they get older. It is clear what their vision is to change this, and later in their application they describe various mechanisms to address the challenge. However, there isn't an overarching vision or goal laid out.</p> <p>KCSD's proposal does build off of the core four educational assurance areas. It is clear that their proposal offers smart solutions to enhance the work they've begun in this area through things like aligning Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) with the already adopted Common Core State Standards, expanding PLCs to include vertical and horizontal PLCs to connect teachers across the district, and fully expanding access to the Continuous Instructional Improvement Improvement Technology System).</p> <p>The approach to implementing personalized learning environments is strong in some areas and lacking in others. Some of the strengths and weaknesses are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCSD's approach to PLCs is promising, as they place a strong emphasis on the teacher development that will be necessary to successfully execute this work. They are targeted at equipping teachers to differentiate instruction to meet each student's needs, and help mitigate the "professional isolation" that KCSD teachers feel as often the only grade and/or content teacher in their school. • The district will implement Individualized Learning Plans for every student district-wide. While this is a critical component of any personalized learning environment, KCSD does not sufficiently describe what information will be included in the ILP, and only plans to update them three times annually. There is concern that this may not be frequently enough to drive student's individual instruction. • Continuing their work with the CIITS instructional improvement system holds a lot of promise. It is difficult to fully grasp the system's capabilities through a written narrative, but it seems very promising in terms of the individualized information it can provide for students. • The concept of the Technology Integration Specialist is promising as it will provide teachers the resource needed to identify the right technology/resources to use for individual student needs and provide support on using it. There is concern that one person for 140 teachers may not be sufficient. <p>Overall, this sub-criterion scores medium-low because, while it paints a clear and vivid picture for the challenges that its students face and that they are trying to address in this plan, and propose initiatives that will build on the core four assurances, a clear vision is not outlined and there are some areas of the applicant's plan that are concerning or lacking in terms of their ability to truly implement a strong personalized learning environment.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>KCSD outlines a strong approach to implementation that will support its ability to implement with high-quality. The district describes that, because they are a small district, they are choosing to implement in all seven schools because the schools are united by common needs, strengths, and weaknesses. They believe all students in the district should participate in order to create long-term solutions aligned to student needs. This is a smart approach because the district will be able to deeply embed the proposal into the culture of the entire district, impact every student, and learn lessons from one school's implementation that can help guide others.</p>		

While the district identifies the schools, number of participation students, and those from low-income families, the number of high-need students is listed as "TBD" without a description of the way in which they will go about identifying these students.

Overall, this section scores high because the district has a smart approach of implementing across all schools and students, and this plan seems to make the most sense for this district in terms of their ability to implement something meaningful and of high-quality.

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

It is difficult to assess the first component of this sub-criterion because KCS D will not have the opportunity to scale its plan, as it already serves every student in the district. However, they take a positive and thoughtful approach to thinking about scaling, indicating that they will view themselves and their implementation of this plan as a pilot, and if they are able to demonstrate success, there could be opportunity for the state to consider scaling it to other districts.

In addition, KCS D demonstrates a strong logic model in its approach. It touches on its theory of change in section A1 when it talks about what needs to change for students in order to reach the outcomes they've outlined in this proposal, and they dig deeper into the logic model in this section. Some strong examples of their rationale are:

- Implementing PLCs both horizontally and vertically will serve to eliminate the professional isolation teachers feel and allow them to collaborate with and learn from other teachers in their grade and subject area across the district, improving instruction and student outcomes.
- A focus on college expectations early through college visit, dual enrollment, and application assistance will help broaden students' horizons of what is possible, leading to additional relevance to their learning, thereby improving investment and outcomes.
- Technology solutions will enable students to access different content at the same time to best suit their needs. In addition, it will expand students' access to rigorous curriculum, as the small class sizes in the district currently prevent them from offering a wide variety of courses. This will improve rigor and expectations for students, and provide them with content that will better equip them for college and careers.

Overall, this sub-criterion scores high. The applicant is not capable of scaling its proposal as they will already serve every student in the district, but they have thought about the model they can serve for the district. In addition, they lay out a clear logic model for how the key proposals in their application will improve student achievement.

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

The district credits some of the pieces of this application (things they have begun implementing and want to expand and enhance through this proposal) with the gains they've seen in recent years, which gives confidence that this plan will lead to improved outcomes. In addition, the district is placing a strong emphasis on teacher support and development, which is the most critical factor to improving student outcomes.

However, the goals that the district proposes are mixed in terms of ambitious and achievable and it is uncertain whether or not this proposal (or any proposal) could lead to these kinds of gains in the time frame allowed. For example:

- KCS D expects to see growth in the number of students proficient or above on the K-PREP and K-PREP EOC tests of 10% annually. This seems overly ambitious given that there are few, if any, districts that show this kind of growth consecutively for four years. This rate of growth would put the district at 100% proficiency across all grades and subjects by the 2015-16 school year, which seems overly ambitious. This is particularly unrealistic in subjects like Biology and U.S. History, where proficiency is currently in the teens, given the timeframe allotted.
- In terms of growth, KCS D is measuring it according to a "NAPD Calculation." It is unclear what the calculation methodology is for this measure, and the applicant does not describe it. Therefore, it is impossible to determine if the measures are ambitious and achievable.
- Graduation rate and college enrollment goals reflect a 2% growth each year, which seems ambitious but achievable.

Overall, a majority of the districts goals seem overly ambitious and there is concern that they would be at risk of not meeting them, or setting expectations that are unreasonable in the time frame proposed and therefore difficult to motivate people around. However, it earns some points for setting a few goals that meet this criteria.

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
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>KCSD certainly demonstrates that it is making progress in improving student outcomes, but it is only able to show a clear track record over the last two years, and does not provide data for years prior to that. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCSD students grew on average by just over 6% in reading and math over the last two years. • There are no significant gaps in subgroups and nearly all students and subgroups perform consistently low. However, for the most part, all students seem to be demonstrating growth. As a result, the district proposes to measure gaps when the district is compared to the state. It states that gaps have narrowed but they don't provide sufficient evidence to support this statement. • The district is in year five of corrective action under AYP. • Graduation rates have declined over the last few years, but college enrollment has gone up. <p>In terms of achieving significant and ambitious reforms in its persistently lowest achieving schools, the district does not give clear information about which of its 7 schools (or all of them) are considered PLA, and it states that they showed improvement in PLA schools by piloting the Brigance readiness assessment, STAR learning programs, and the CIITS data system. These initiatives would not be considered "ambitious and significant reforms" however, the district is making progress.</p> <p>The district has the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System (CIITS) in place which allows teachers to review student results, and collect information to track multiple measures of student growth. This system seems to provide teachers will good access to student data and instructional improvement tools. In addition, KCSD describes a "parent portal" through Infinite Campus that will allow parents to access student records and grades. However, this system is not sufficient to provide parents access to real time formative data to support their child's learning.</p> <p>Overall, this section scores medium-low. While KCSD has demonstrated improved outcomes broadly over the last two years, it does not demonstrate a sufficient track record prior to the 2009-10 school year. In addition, it lacks a meaningful and comprehensive data system for parent and student access.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While KCSD states that they complete a budget that includes the items listed in sections a through d in the selection criteria for this section, they do not provide sufficient transparency with these figures. For example, they explain that they present their budgets at public school board meetings, and that the meeting minutes are posted on their website. They also explain that these budgets are subject to open records requests. However, this is not adequate transparency for easy public consumption of the district's spending figures. Therefore, while the LEA earns some points for including the required figures in their budgets, they score low for not making this information more easily accessible by the public.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district states that the Kentucky Department of Education supports their plan and the strategies contained within the proposal to create personalized learning environments. However, the email included in the application from the district states that they have reviewed the application, that it meets the requirements of the grant instructions, but that they are reserving comment on all applications. There is nothing to indicate their support of the specific proposal. Nor does the LEA describe what legal and regulatory autonomy it has, or would be required, to implement the proposal, though it earns some points despite this since it does not seem like any element of their plan would require an unusual amount of autonomy or flexibility from state law or regulations. This response is not sufficient to give confidence that the LEA will fully be able to execute all of its plans under state laws and guidelines.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>KCSD demonstrates that it has engaged in meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of its plan, seeking both early guidance and feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community members, and clearly demonstrating that it</p>		

took that feedback seriously and made adjustments to its plan as a result.

- The district surveyed teachers, parents, students, and community members to identify the top three perceived needs or gaps in the district, and solicited feedback on what new services could be provided to best promote student gains.
- Once the district had a draft proposal, they held an Advisory Group meeting composed of students, parents, teachers, and community members to solicit comments on the proposal. It is clear the district took this feedback seriously, and they made revisions as a result. For example, elementary students wanted to be able to do middle school coursework, which the district has enabled through video conferencing technology in its proposal. In addition, principals requested various supports that turned into the currently described college and career counselor position.

The district has clear support from its teachers, as evidenced by the signatures of 90% of teachers in the district. In addition, KCSD submits letters of support from four different organizations of various types. Given the size of the county and the lack of industry and services there, this demonstrates a significant community commitment.

The LEA scores high in this section as a result of its truly meaningful stakeholder engagement and community support.

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

KCSD has already begun an initial analysis of its status in implementing personalized learning environments. For example, it has identified that schools are in varying stages of implementing individualized learning plans, and that teachers need more support in using the CIITS system. In order to continue this evaluation and further assess the needs of the district to ensure their plan is meeting them, KCSD will develop an assessment team made up of the RTT-D project director, superintendent, principals, technology integration specialist, and coaches. This team will be responsible for assessing teachers' comfort and familiarity with the resources being used for implementing personalized learning environments and will plan coaching sessions to develop their skills as a result. The district outlines a clear, three-phase plan to execute this analysis.

In section A3, the applicant clearly describes the needs that its plan is intended to address (see section A3 comments for additional information) and the logic behind the proposal, that identifies the need, the strategy chosen to address it, and the expected outcome. This, combined with the work of the assessment team, will give the district a good sense of what their current status is in implementing, where teachers' needs and gaps are, and what to do to address them. As a result, the district scores high in this section.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district proposes a plan that is of somewhat high-quality. While the content of the proposal is strong, as described in more detail below, it lacks specific information (such as clear, key deliverables and milestones for each project) on implementation that would have made it qualify as a high-quality plan. From what is provided in the application, there is not enough information to know what the timeline for implementation is, and what their key process steps are, making it hard to evaluate quality.

C1a: The district's plan to invest students in their learning and help them connect its importance to their lives is two-fold: one component involves the creation of Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) so that each student can track their own learning and progress, further motivating and investing them, and the second component is the exposure to college and its accessibility through the College and Career Coaches to increase their excitement about the possibilities that are open to them, and to connect their instruction to their future goals. These are both strong strategies for making learning meaningful for students and helping them understand and monitor their own progress. However, the district indicates that students would track their learning on their ILPs three times a year, which is not sufficient frequency to enable them to truly engage in this process. Students need to be tracking their own mastery of content and the associated trajectory on at least a weekly basis. for them to really take ownership of it. In addition, there is little information about what would be tracked on the ILP.

The district plans to equip all students with iPads (or other handheld learning devices) to grant them exposure to academic areas of interest that the district may not be able to offer otherwise because of its small size. With the iPads, students will be able to take virtual field trips, and engage in live Q & A with field experts, as examples. Given the circumstances of isolation faced by the County, and a lack of ability to provide varied content and experiences, online opportunities seem like a reasonable solution. In addition, the district describes detailed plans to provide training and coaching to teachers and students to accompany the use of the iPads, which is critical to ensuring

that they are used productively to further student outcomes. The district does not sufficiently describe how it will support students in developing necessary skills and traits, as described in this sub-criterion. Particularly with the use of online components for students, it will be important for the district to have a clear plan for students to develop skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication.

C1b: KCSB does not sufficiently describe how students will experience a personalized sequence of content. They explain that this will occur through online learning, but don't sufficiently describe what the online learning components are. In addition, they cite the ILPs as providing a personalized sequence of learning, but don't explain what that will look like. In general, it's difficult to understand how all of these components will fit together throughout the school day and allow the student to meaningfully chart an individual course of mastery. The district offers some varied instructional approaches teachers will use (such as small group instruction, student-led investigations, large group instruction, one-on-one instruction, and technology facilitated instruction) though again, it is hard to understand how all of these pieces will fit together to provide a comprehensive and high-quality program of instruction for students. It would have been helpful to understand what the school day structure would be to get an idea of how the student will experience all of these varied resources and services. The district does describe effective and comprehensive structures to ensure feedback to students (though not as frequently as necessary with the ILPs) and to tailor learning recommendations to needs through the CIITS system. Through PD, teachers will analyze student data at least bi-weekly and assess progress. The CIITS is then equipped to provide recommendations based on student progress, though it is unclear what this looks like and what kind of recommendations it provides. The focus on teacher PD to drive data analysis and the resulting student supports and changes in learning plan is a smart approach, as teachers are the key to effective execution of the personalized learning structure and they need to be intimately familiar with student data and needs.

C1c: The district does an exceptional job of providing supports to teachers and students to ensure that they know how and when to use the right tools and resources to best support student learning. For example, the college and career coaches will be on hand during ILP meetings to link available programs and opportunities to the student's ILP. In addition, the district will provide trainings for teachers on each new product provided, and then the teachers will prepare the students. KCSB is also hiring a Technology Integration Specialist to work with teachers on linking technologies to student needs and using them in an effective way, which is a very smart strategy. The only concern is whether one specialist can effectively serve teachers in all 7 schools.

Overall, the district scores medium-high in C1. It provides a strong plan for creating a personalized learning environment for students that fosters ownership for learning and goals, provides students with opportunities to expand their horizons and access new content and experiences, and supports them in understanding how to utilize these resources to meet their goals. However, the district did not sufficiently provide a comprehensive vision to connect all of the pieces and describe how all of these resources fit together during the school day. In addition, a lack of detailed timelines and milestones for implementation of each initiative contributes to this lack of clarity around execution.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	15
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

KCSB describes an approach to teaching and learning that focuses on one-on-one, individualized supports for teachers just as it describes throughout the application for students. It proposes job-embedded, and sustained PD structures that are no frills but spot on in terms of their potential impact on instruction and student outcomes.

C2a: The district has a strong plan to provide individualized, job-embedded, sustained PD to support the effective implementation of the personalized learning environments, and to assess data and improve practice. The district's PLCs (both vertical and horizontal across the district) provide the main structure for this professional development and will cover a variety of topics including data analysis, differentiation, and best practices on ILP usage. The CIITS also provides a great tool for allowing teachers to collaborate and share resources through its online resources repository and discussion boards. Teachers will also engage in professional development through video streaming opportunities to observe each other's practice. In addition, teachers will receive in-class coaching to provide further support and feedback to help them adapt content and instruction to support students' needs. The Technology Integration Specialist will also play a role in this process. Throughout these mechanisms, the district places the right emphasis on supporting teachers through collaboration, coaching, and training in a job-embedded and ongoing basis. In addition, the CIITS system has an "educator development suite" to house teacher effectiveness ratings and capture the data needed to generate these ratings, which will aid principals in identifying the needs of teachers and targeting supports accordingly.

C2b: In terms of ensuring educators can access and use the resources at hand to support students, the district has several important structures in place. First, the technology integration specialist will provide direct and individualized support to teachers on using instructional technology. In addition, through the support of the content area school improvement coaches and PLCs, teachers will receive support in identifying specific instructional strategies to meet student needs based on the data provided by the CIITS. Though the "Leadership Network" of the CIITS, teacher, principals, and district leaders have the space to reflect on the importance of the standards and the associated new instructional and assessment practices. They can share lessons and make refinements early on in implementation. In addition, they can design high-quality formative and summative assessments and will develop and populate an online common core instructional resource center. Through these varied structures, teachers will have sufficient support to implement effectively and will have

access to high-quality resources for implementing the new standards and assessments.

C2c: The attention to principal capacity and development is the greatest weakness in the district's application. They state that principals will use information from the evaluation system to personalize professional development according to teacher needs. However, there is very little detail about how they will do this, how they will structure and manage PLCs, and how they will become more knowledgeable about instructional practices. The role of principals is rapidly shifting to that of a true instructional leader, and many principals are not prepared to take this on effectively. There is concern that the 7 principals in these schools may not be equipped to provide and facilitate the kind of intense, job-embedded PD that is described in this application.

C2d: The only solution the applicant proposes to increasing students' access to highly effective teachers is through the interventionists and professional development. The district misses a big opportunity to use some of the technology they describe in the application to really leverage and expand the reach of their best instructors. There is not sufficient evidence in the plan that the district has an innovative plan to expose their best teachers to as many students as possible.

Overall, this section scores medium-high. The supports the district proposes for teachers are outstanding and are well-aligned with research-based best practices in professional development. However, the plan lacks information about the significant role that principals play in this development process, which puts their plan to support teachers, and ultimately achieve outcomes, at risk.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Knott County indicates that it plans to hire a Race to the Top project director in its central office to support and oversee the implementation of the grant, and who would work closely with principals. While this position is necessary for effective oversight, coordination, and implementation of the work, there is no indication that the broader central office structure is built in a way to support the grant. It is unclear how many staff there are, how its structured, and what the major work streams are as there is no organizational chart submitted in the application.</p> <p>KCSD's application states that principals would have all of the autonomies necessary to implement the personalized learning environments described. However, there is no evidence to support this, and no description of what autonomies the district thinks might be necessary for successful implementation.</p> <p>In terms of creating opportunities for earning credits based on mastery and opportunities to master content in multiple ways, the district describes opportunities for students to test out of content and have various assessment opportunities. But the district falls short in providing more detail about how this would happen. It is difficult to get a sense for how they would structure the school day, week and year to accommodate these opportunities for students.</p> <p>The district explains that it will make content, practices and resources accessible to all students through the Educator Development Suite in the CIITS. Through this system, teachers can get online lesson plans, tools and resources for differentiating instruction. This tool will also serve to eliminate the professional isolation of SPED teachers, for example, who will be able to collaborate with other SPED teachers in the county and improve their instruction. This will be a powerful tool for the teachers in this county and will allow them to better serve their students.</p> <p>Overall, this sub-criterion scores medium-low. While the district states that all of the necessary structures, policies and practices are in place to support implementation, there is not sufficient evidence provided to earn high marks in this section.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
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<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In order to ensure all students have access to content and tools, regardless of income, KCDS will provide an opportunity for students to take iPads (or similar devices) home with a parental permission slip. However, there is still concern about connectivity and how students without internet at home would access the content. The district also plans to provide an online query system to provide tech support for it's tools and resources, and has a comprehensive plan for training on using the technologies, but there does not appear to be a system to access tech support outside the school day, which could hinder students' abilities to access resources and content at home.</p> <p>Through the CIITS, all students have a unique file that is accessible by students and parents with a unique login. Parents are able to communicate with the teacher through this portal, and they can download and use their student's data from the system. It is unclear exactly what kind of student data parents can download, but the system sounds promising. In addition, the district describes approximately six different systems that it uses to track its different processes, including student data, finance and accounting, and instructional resources and</p>		
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states that all of the systems communicate with one another. However, there is no information provided about the HR, payroll, licensure, or other systems, which makes it difficult to determine if a truly interoperable system is in place.

This section scores medium because, while the district has some strong systems in place through its CIITS system, and is forward thinking in terms of letting students sign-out iPads and access the CIITS, there is some concern still about whether the necessary infrastructure needed to implement the plan is in place.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>KCSD describes a strong process for continuous improvement that includes collecting and analyzing data, and an evaluation of the data by an oversight committee to determine next steps. The district plans to hire an external evaluator to run quarterly reports, and a data collection specialist to do monthly data collection. The district will look at a variety of indicators each month including academic (grades, data from online intervention programs), environmental (attendance, behavior), instructional effectiveness, and professional development effectiveness. While these are the right pieces of data to be tracking, it is unclear whether there will actually be data produced in all of these arenas on a monthly basis. There is also some concern about the external evaluator's ability to turn around quarterly reports. It will depend who the evaluator is, but the research timeline tends to move slower than the pace of educational reform and they may not be able to get information back in time to meet their deadline.</p> <p>The district also has a strong plan to make adjustments based on the data it receives by utilizing an oversight committee. Once data is collected and reported, the district's oversight committee will review the reports and have decision-making authority over what structures/practices to change as a result. This group will be made up of the superintendent, principals, some teachers, the college and career coaches, parents and students.</p> <p>The district scores high in this section because, despite the uncertainties about the external evaluator, the district has a good process in place to continually assess and monitor their work, and to make adjustments in real-time as needed.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district describes the communication structures it will put in place but they do not provide an opportunity for direct communication and do not include structures for ongoing engagement. For example, the district describes how the project director will engage regularly with principals, that they will do mailings to all residents that are specific to this project, and will start a website. However, there is no information about how the district will continue to engage stakeholders. As a result, the district scores low in this section, but earns some points for having some communication mechanisms in place for the broader public.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>KCSD's performance measures for their proposal are mixed in terms of ambition and reasonableness, and only a few of them provide leading information to help inform district leaders on progress of implementation prior to the end of the school year. For example, discipline referrals and STAR assessments will provide leading information at frequent intervals throughout the school year, but the rest of the measures appear to be collected at the end of the year. Examples of the variance in performance measures are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCSD proposes to increase K-PREP scores by 5% annually, which is ambitious but achievable. • The district is aiming to improve ACT scores by 3% per year, with the exception of students with disabilities, who will grow faster because they're much farther behind. Because it is harder to move ACT scores than it is typically for state assessment scores, this is an ambitious and achievable target. • Increasing FAFSA completion by 3% annually also seems like an ambitious and achievable goal. • The district's goals around effective and highly-effective teachers seem slightly ambitious given that they don't have baseline data and still aim to have 90% of students with a highly effective teacher and principal. Particularly with a new evaluation system rolling out in the middle of the grant period, this seems like a goal that is overly ambitious. • The applicant's performance measure table on ACT data has no information in the columns that serve as the numerator and the denominator for the percentages provided. The percentage increases seem reasonable but it's confusing as to 		

why there are no numbers forming the percentages.

- In addition, there is no baseline data for STAR tests, but there are goals projected out. It is unreasonable to set goals without baseline data.
- The district sets an optional performance measure around the ASVAB - a multiple aptitude battery that measures developed abilities and helps predict future academic and occupational success in the military. The full population of students is not represented by this measure, as only 162 students took the test in the baseline year. Therefore, it is not a sufficient measure for the purpose of assessing impact on college and career readiness as impacted by this grant proposal.

Overall, section E3 scores in the medium range. While the district provides a majority of ambitious and achievable performance measures, others are less so, and a majority of them do not provide leading information. In addition, the district does not describe how it will continually assess whether these measures are yielding adequate information in order to adjust course.

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

In terms of a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of its initiatives, the district describes a strong continuous improvement cycle that includes data analysis and decision making on a quarterly basis at least, as described in more detail in comments on section E1. However, it does not provide any information as to how it will look to use its resources (people, technology, financial) in increasingly effective ways. As a result, this section scores in the medium-low range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district's budget proposal is reasonable and sufficient where there is information to assess this by. The district has well-thought out descriptions of positions and salaries, which are reasonable for the work being performed. In addition, \$10,000 annually in travel seems reasonable to be able to support the kind of inter-district PLCs that KCSD wants to execute. In total, \$9 million over four years seems like a rational number to execute the district's plan.

However, the district is lacking some critical components in its budget. First, it does not offer project level budgets that delineate a specific, detailed budget for each project proposed. In addition, there are several key components of their plan that do not clearly appear in the budget. For example, there is no funding to support their partnership with Hazard Community and Technical College, the online intervention programs, any potential ongoing costs of the CIITS, or the expansion of the ACT to include offerings in all subjects. While there may not be funds required for these projects for a variety of reasons, it is unclear in the applicant's submission whether or not that is the case, or if these pieces have been overlooked or funded elsewhere.

The district also does not provide any information about sustainability beyond building capacity in its staff through professional development. It does not identify which costs will be one-time vs. those that are ongoing, nor does it outline strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of this work. As a result, this section scores in the medium-low range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide any information to assess the plan for sustainability beyond the life of the grant. They mention at several points throughout the application that embedding knowledge and capacity in their staff will help sustain the work, which is true and generally a good strategy. But, there will certainly be other ongoing costs with the personnel they are hiring through the grant and some of the technology pieces that are not addressed at all. As a result, this section scores low.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In its competitive preference, the district outlines a partnership with Hazard Community and Technical College to provide dual-enrollment and support in navigating the college-going process (such as filling out FAFSA forms and seeking other financial aid opportunities) for families from college guidance counselors. This partnership will serve to build on and support the goals of KCSD's application in that it will further broaden the scope of opportunities beyond high school for many Hazard high school students and will make access to college level work while in high school an option, as well as making college a reality beyond high school.</p> <p>The district describes that it will conduct quarterly project evaluation sessions to assess the progress of the partnership and drive modifications as necessary. In addition, Hazard representatives will serve on the broader project leadership team to conduct ongoing needs-assessments and ensure alignment of approach. However, these statements are not sufficient to describe a comprehensive plan to collect data, assess, and improve over time. The performance measures in this section are centered on the percentage of students pursuing dual credit, and the percentage completing the FAFSA. While these are worthy outcomes from this partnership, there is no apparent effort to track the participating students to determine if the dual credit is actually improving their outcomes in high school, or if they are graduating at a higher rate than their peers. In addition, there is no effort to track this population's enrollment and persistence in college, to be able to compare to the district-wide measures. Finally, the applicant does not submit any financial information about this partnership. It is not included in its broader proposal budget, nor is there any information in this section about how this partnership would be supported financially or sustained, which is concerning.</p> <p>Overall, this section scores medium because, while it proposes a clear partnership to supplement opportunities for students beyond what the district can provide, it lacks information about how its effectiveness will be measured, how many students it will reach, or how it will be supported and sustained.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Knott County School District meets the absolute priority. Throughout its application it describes a comprehensive and coherent plan for implementing elements of a personalized learning environment that builds on the core four assurance areas. The district proposes some strong strategies for providing individualized learning for students and places an appropriately strong emphasis on the development of its teachers through such strategies as:

- Horizontal and Vertical Professional Learning Communities that will serve to break down the "professional isolation" teachers in this rural county often face, and will place an emphasis on collaboration and instructional improvement.
- A technology integration specialist to ensure teachers know how to use the technologies and resources at hand in the most effective way to support teachers, which should help ensure teachers use the supports provided in a productive way to meet each student's needs.
- Content Area School Improvement Coaches who will serve as coaches for teachers, implementing truly job-embedded, sustained professional development in implementing a personalized learning environment.
- Technology-facilitated advanced coursework to expand content access opportunities for students.
- College and career coaches to help make college a reality for students and bring relevance to their learning.
- Individualized Learning Plans for each student.

The plan has some deficiencies, as described throughout the application, but overall the applicant's strategies have a high likelihood of yielding outcomes for students in Knott County and satisfy the requirements of Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	122
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0857KY-2 for Knott County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>Moderate Evidence was provided by the Knott County Schools articulating a comprehensive and coherent vision. Evidence of this reside in the applicant sharing "...an innovative restructuring plan" called EDUCATION: I.N.S.P.I.R.E.D. Evidenced in the re-structuring plan was the building on the core areas to achieve this restructuring that include adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college, building data systems that measure student growth, recruit and retain effective teachers and principals, & turn around the nation's lowest achieving schools. No Evidence to the applicant's reform vision was an organizational chart or discussion regarding the role of the Board of Directors. Evidence a Project Director was reported and it appears this role is a critical piece of the reform vision, but details of the role of the person was not found in the budget and it was apparent where they reside regarding the current infrastructure to support and make credible the reform vision.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	2
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>Weak evidence was provided regarding the applicants approach to its reform proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school implementation. Evident was that this plan would district-wide and address all teachers and students. Evidence was stated by the applicant that all campuses in the district are united by common needs, strengths, and weaknesses with each school meeting the competition's eligibility requirements. A total of 7 k-12 schools serving 2,433 students with 1,785 students and 178 participating educators would be a part of the implementation. Evidence of a list of the schools, percentages, number, and number of low income students to be a part of the project were shared. Weak Evidence was provided by the applicant that the choice of schools and implementation is compelling for the applicant to implement the reforms of the plan. No Evidence or information was provided regarding a column in the table called "Watchlist students are to be determined later" column. No compelling evidence was provided regarding this group of students and how they were to be addressed in the high-quality LEA level and school-level implementation of the plan.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: <p>Moderate Evidence was presented by the applicant regarding a high quality plan regarding scaling up and translating it into meaningful reform that supports district-wide change beyond the participating schools. Evidence shared by the applicant highlights that the applicant works in close partnership with the Kentucky State Department of Education and that they use Knott County School District frequently as a pilot site for new initiatives. In the past five years they have piloted the STAR Enterprise program, Early Learning Assessment, and the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System. The applicant further shared a detailed logic model and plan regarding the EDUCATION: I.N.S.P.I.R.E.D. initiative being implemented as a pilot program within ALL Knott County schools demonstrating significant impact among students and educators in preparation for eventual scale-up among other struggling school districts throughout the state. Weak Evidence was provided regarding the key goals, the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the plan given the size and scope of the project across the district. Evidence of prior pilot projects in the district have continued, it was not evident in that a "high-quality plan" incorporating the individual schools and students needs was addressed in the plan. Evidence was not provided regarding the role of the Board of Education or District Leadership in the plan to scale up and translate meaningful reform district-wide.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: <p>Weak Evidence was provided by the applicant regarding the extent to which the vision is likely to result</p>		

in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals. Evidence of Education: I.N.S.P.I.R.E.D. was the goal to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase learning equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks based on student academic interests. Reported in SY 2016-2017 was the goal for students on the K-PREP performance assessment to be 100% proficiency across all grades and content areas. Reported for the SY 2016-2017 Post Grant year will also achieve 100% proficiency eliminated the achievement gap across all comparison groups and content areas. Graduation rates were provided and represent 12% increases over baseline going from overall 66.8% (2010-11) to 78.2% (2016-17) overall. It was also presented by the applicant that College enrollment post grant would achieve 81% which is a 22.65 increase over baseline of 2010-11(58.4%). Post-secondary attainment was reported to be determined and will be established in 2012-13. No Evidence was provided regarding current or state goals in relation to the ones to be established in the proposal. Weak Evidence was provided of the ability of the applicant to achieve the goals established, and these ambitious goals are further questioned given that the district has been designated in "Corrective Action Year 5".

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	2
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: Weak Evidence was provided regarding the applicants extent to which each LEA has demonstrated evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching. Evident was that the applicant has been designated a "Corrective Action Year 5" district for failing to meet Federal NCLB and AYP requirements and for the past five years has worked alongside the Kentucky State Department of Education to promote and create solutions to advance student learning and achievement. Reforms and solutions include the piloting of the Early Learning Test, the STAR Enterprise tool, and the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System all devised to support increasing student learning and achievement. Evidence was provided that over the last two years, evidence in the achievement tables for some of the some subgroups had shown gains. While student performance data was reported as being available to parents and students through the "Parent Portal", it is not evident in the data how that is improving participation, instruction, and services. No evidence was provided by the applicant to demonstrate success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching.		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant noted that the District presents a budget to the Board of Education in a meeting that is open to the public. It was stated that the budget includes the four categories of school-level expenditures from state and local funds. Little Evidence was provided in the application to support a high level of transparency for the applicants LEA processes, practices, and investments in the body of the application or in the appendix section.		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	2
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: Weak Evidence was presented by the LEA regarding successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments. Evidence was shared that the applicant has been designated as a "Corrective Action Year 5" district for failing to meet Federal NCLB and AYP requirements and during this same time has been working very closely over the past 5 years implementing pilot projects with the state through a partnership. The applicant also serves youth under the guidance and oversight of the Kentucky Department of Education, which is encouraging and supporting the submission of Race to the Top application. No Evidence was provided regarding the Board of Education referenced in the application, and it was unclear of their role to support and provide the autonomy of this application at the LEA level.		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strong evidence was provided by the applicant regarding meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development and stakeholder support for the proposal. Evident was that the district included teachers, parents, students, and community members in meetings, notes, and letters of support. Evidence was also shared in the form of signatures for well over 90% of educators signing petitions supporting the application. Also shared was the making of presentations to an all-volunteer Advisory Group comprised of students, parents, teachers and community members early on in the planning process. Weak Evidence was provided by the applicant regarding a university partner mentioned in the application helping with dual credit opportunities, but evidence of their input or stakeholder participation was not evident.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Moderate Level of Evidence was presented by the applicant regarding a high-quality plan for an analysis of the current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal. Evident is that the applicant plans to make the creation and integration of Individual Learning Plans a requirement for all students K-12. Designed by a learning team, comprised of the targeted student, their family, classroom teachers, and any involved support staff, each Individual Learning Plan will provide students and families a living document that monitors student progress, short-, mid-, and long-range goals, and movement towards unique benchmarks and milestones. Evident also was that the applicant has started the groundwork for the establishment of the Individual Learning Plan process, teachers, schools, and grade levels. Evidence was provided by the applicant of the needs assessment goal, activity to be undertaken, the timeline, the deliverables, and the responsible party. Weak Evidence was provided regarding applicants feedback regarding knowledge of the varying levels of preparedness in the educators, but nowhere in the document did it discuss this gap and the definitions used in this analysis to inform the plan.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Moderate Evidence was provided by the applicant evident regarding a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. Evident in the application was the clarity of how important the student’s individual learning plan along with professional development of the educators is to the reform vision. Evident also is the importance in the plan that students will have access to content and materials and that student programming would be designed by a learning team, comprised of the targeted student, their family, classroom teachers, and any involved support staff, with plan will providing students and families a living document that monitors student progress, short-, mid-, and long-range goals, and movement towards unique benchmarks and milestones. Evident in the applicants plan were key goals, activities to be undertaken, timeline, deliverables, and then as par to the needs assessment the applicant included parties responsible for implementing. Evidence was also highlighted in that the Technology Integration Specialist would provide ongoing coaching and training to all teachers in the numerous applications in an array of large group presentations and small group hands on activities with teachers and other staff will reinforce the use of the personal learning devices. Weak Evidence was provided regarding the support for parents and students in accessing materials and understanding how to use them. Credible evidence of the one technology specialist and several college & career part-time coaches providing support services to all the families and students was not clear. No evidence was discussed regarding what the monthly data being provided to parents and students actually included and how it would link to the annual and personal learning plans.

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

20

16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Strong Evidence of a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready was shared. The cornerstone of this level of evidence resides in the Continuous Instructional Improvement Technology System, professional learning communities to be established with it by educators, and the access to the Literacy Design Collaborative tasks and Mathematics Formative Assessment Lessons. Evident is that the district is one of five pilot sites that is using the state data management system that tracks the student, class, and teacher data through a variety of tools with a subject-unique monitoring program available to educators that includes evidence-based literacy and math supports selected to meet the specific needs of high-poverty, high-need students. Evidence also of the pilot project are Professional Learning Communities to help in the utilization of Individual Learning Plans and strategies that will meet at least monthly at each

campus, in addition to coaching, training, and professional development workshops led by outside providers. Evident was the Project Director who will work with administrators and teachers to establish foundational processes and tools that match student needs with specific resources and approaches that provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs. Weak Evidence was provided regarding the administrators and principals role in using the system to help support teachers using the integrated Educator Development Suite for measuring teacher effectiveness into the professional learning communities or other supportive systems. No evidence or discussion regarding the lesson plan materials and how they are being evaluated which raises credibility concerns regarding the high quality plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	7
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: Moderate Evidence was provided by the applicant regarding a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the supports it needs and when it needs it. Evident by the applicant is that the District under the umbrella of the Kentucky Department of Education has the policies and rules in place that facilitate the adoption of strategies and tools that personalize learning for all students. Evident was a Project Director to be hired and they would work closely with all principals and create the structures required for communication among all the district principals and support staff. Professional Learning Communities and the related online discussion boards, coaching sessions with Interventionists and the Technology Integration Specialist will provide additional opportunities or ongoing communication among classroom teachers and administrators. College & Career Coach, Interventionists, Content School Improvement Coaches and the Project Director will collaborate with principals and the district superintendent to create a school turnaround plan that meets the unique needs of each school. Evidence was also shared that the CITTS data system is already supportive of existing policies that allow students to “test out” of coursework in order to pursue an accelerated pace of study. Weak Evidence was provided by the applicant in the plan regarding the organization to support the project's implementation and timelines. More specifically the evidence of an organizational chart was not found regarding how the hired Project Director would be established in the plan and the authority or relationship this person would have to the infrastructure. No Evidence of the chain of this authority makes the credibility of the plans success extremely tenuous. Even more unclear was the actual authority, job requirements, skills, and level of education of the Project Director. While the Project Director would collaborate with the district superintendent and principals to develop a turnaround plan for each school, it is unclear how the implementation would be reviewed and by whom and when.		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: Moderate Evidence was provided by the applicant that the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning. Evident in the application was that the applicant will provide extensive training, coaching, and online support will be available for educators, students, parents, and relevant stakeholders throughout the initiative and beyond, to promote full integration of available Educational resources. Educators will participate in training, coaching, and PLC’s focused on technology integration, with specific instruction delivered by the Technology Integration Specialist and other experts both within the District and from outside agencies. Ongoing support to parents and students will be available at the school during the traditional school day, or through online queries and related troubleshooting during out-of-school time. Currently, KCS D offers parents online access to individual student records and content by subject. Weak Evidence was provided in the plan regarding the credibility of how 1 Technology Integration Specialist and 7 part time College and Career Coaches will support 2,433 K-12 students and of them 1,785 being qualified for free and reduced lunches over 7 schools. Evidence in the plan did not address how the district would be able to schedule limited resources for technical support during the school and off hours. No evidence was provided regarding the other experts mentioned by the applicant in being supportive part of the plan. Evidence of current technology supports and structures was also not evident as being a part of their plan.		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score

(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Overall, a Moderate Level of Evidence was provided by the applicant regarding strategies to assist supporting a high quality plan regarding the continuous improvement process. Evident in the plan was the accessing of an External Evaluator and Data Collection Specialist who will be contracted to play a key role in this process. They will then work with the Project Director to monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by the RTT-D initiative. The External Evaluator will submit Quarterly Evaluation Reports to the Oversight Committee, who will utilize results to drive program modification to promote full attainment of stated goals, objectives, and performance measures. Quarterly Evaluation Reports, and minutes from the Evaluation Committee quarterly meetings, will be made available to the public through a variety of measures. Summaries of project progress will be included in district newsletters and mailings, and will be discussed at school events such as Open House. Links will be provided through the Knott County School District website, to the full Quarterly Evaluation Report and meeting minutes (with identifying data coded or hidden to protect both teacher and student anonymity). Finally, individual stakeholders will be able to request full paper copies of these documents at their local school administrative office. No evidence in the plan was shared regarding how the work of the Oversight Committee activities is informed by the School Turnaround Plans that would be developed by the local school leaders and Project Director. There was also Incomplete Evidence in the plan regarding how the Committee would actually interact with the Board of Education and how monitoring of the process would be established. It was also not evident in the plan how the members of the Oversight Committee would be selected and how long they would be serving.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Moderate Evidence was provided by the applicant regarding the ongoing communication and engagement of both internal and external stakeholders. Evidence in the plan was that the principals will communicate with the Project Director bi-monthly to solidify training sessions and professional development. Each principal will communicate directly with their faculty and staff. Professional Learning Communities will communicate monthly with experts from within the District, and from outside sources. Educators will communicate with students on a daily basis. In addition, the Data Collection Specialist and the External Evaluator will work directly with the Project Director, conducting outreach to include campus principals and teachers as necessary. External Stakeholders of community members, including parents and local residents, will remain updated on through specific mailings to all district residents, summaries in regular district communications, and links through the district website. In addition, interested individuals can access hard copies of all evaluation and project modification documents from the local school administrative office. No Evidence in the plan was provided regarding how the district administration would be a part of the communication and engagement of the plan. No Evidence was provided of who would be responsible for communication and engagement to the Board of Education and how the Oversight Committee would be a part of the communication efforts.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Weak Evidence was provided by the applicant for a high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan. Evident were a total of 14 performance measures with an additional two being end of course completion in Algebra II and the Number of Discipline referrals both in Grade 12. Discussion regarding the subgroups regarding students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged were noted in the narrative as being the primary sub groups the district experiences. No Evidence supporting the rationale for selecting the measures of ACT Explore, ASVAB, and/or STAR Reading assessments were provided. Evidence and discussion of why these Target Measures are lower than the LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes of 100% was also not provided. Incomplete was how these Targets which are lower than the LEA-wide goals will help gauge and support implementation and help in progress monitoring.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Strong Evidence was provided in the narrative regarding evaluating effectiveness of investments and effectiveness of the RTT-D funded activities. The responsibility of this will be by an External Evaluator and Data Collection Specialist. In partnership with the Project Director and administrators and educators, the fidelity of the project activities and the impact on teaching and learning will be assessed and data sets will be collected to assess the impact of partnerships with the University of the Mountains, including student participation levels, student success levels in advanced coursework, and longitudinal studies of long-term student outcomes following access to and participation in advanced coursework. Surveys will also be created, distributed, and collected that measure teacher, student, and parent impact. No Evidence was shared regarding the evaluator's examination of the impact of unique project activities on all groups of stakeholders and what were the comparable baseline data sets that would be compiled at the start of the initiative.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Moderate Evidence was provided in the budget to support the project. Essential personnel of the Interventionists (7), Tech Integration Specialist (1), Content Improvement Coaches (4), and Part Time College and Career Coach (7) were all noted in the personnel. Fringe benefits were also provided in the budget along with travel and supplies. No Evident was any built-in cost increases for personnel, Fringe Benefits, and travel. Equipment costs were justified and evidence for increased first year costs were shared. The rationale for the Contractual Cost of the Evaluator at \$125 per hour for [70.4 hours a week] over 50 weeks during Year 1 was not clearly evident. During Year 2-4 the time allocations, especially for hours per week at 25.6 make appear more reasonable. The rationale for the Contract Cost of the Data Collection Specialist at \$100 per hour for [88 hours per week} over 50 weeks during year 1 was not clearly explained and justified.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: No Evidence or Discussion was noted regarding sustainability.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: A Moderate Level of Evidence was found regarding the applicants Competitive Preference Priority. A Letter of Support was shared regarding the County School District and Hazard Community and Technical College to provide new opportunities for dual enrollment and college preparation. In addition, Hazard Community and Technical College administrators and guidance counselors it was noted would work with students and families to complete FAFSA forms and guide them in the search for scholarship funds. Performance measures targeted in the preference priority were the percentage of students District-wide meeting KPREP standards in both Reading and Math. The plan includes an external evaluator and data collection specialist to capture the data and then report results out monthly and compiled quarterly for evaluation reports. Data collected will track sub-groups to monitor achievement gaps and also monitor the number of students able to take advantage of the new dual credit opportunities. Staff at the college will also work alongside district staff to support and guide parents and families as they investigate the college application process. It was noted that this partnership will provide students and families increased opportunities to be linked to available college preparation services within the community. Evidence Missing in the competitive preference section was how the part time College and Career Coaches would be a part of this plan and activities. It was also not evident in the plan how other educational offerings other than Hazard Community and Technical College could or would be provided as a choice for students. Noted also was the reference in the application in numerous places to a university, but it was not evident that they had any active engagement in the application.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: Evidence was MET for Absolute Priority 1 by the applicant coherently building on what has been done and enhancing efforts to create sustainable reform that impacts learning at all levels. The applicant has designed a restructuring plan – EDUCATION: I.N.S.P.I.R.E.D. – to dramatically improve student outcomes in this isolated and overlooked community overwhelmed by low levels of education and extreme poverty. The goal of this project is to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase learning		

equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks based on student academic interests. The applicant will adopt standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy, build data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction, recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals, and turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Total	210	101
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0857KY-3 for Knott County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Evidence shared indicates that Knott County School District (KCS D) demonstrates a strong commitment in setting forth a comprehensive and coherent vision for their district, which is in the lower half of achieving schools in the nation. Committed to make changes that help all students, and building in the four-core areas result in the articulation of a credible approach. Although the applicant’s track record for improving student learning does not reflect a long period of time, claims made by the applicant indicates their willingness to make the improvements called for in their competition.</p> <p>Lack of supporting materials and information places this section of the proposal in the low range. The one technologist specialist for this project does not reflect the careful planning needed for this size of commitment, therefore placing it in the low range.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Evidence of a bold approach in the implementation of its reformed proposal has the support from the LEA and school level. The initiative aims to target all teachers and students in the KCS D, totaling 2,433 students. Documentation is also provided on each of the participating schools, with student demographic data, and data at the school level. Evidence indicates that majority of the population in Knott County is low-income, with schools serving children with high-needs.</p> <p>What is lacking is the process used to select the participating schools. The rating places this section in the medium level.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates it’s scaled up vision in a visual chart totaling sixteen components that will be involved in this reform. The applicant shows prior success in pilot projects, and from here KCS D plans to continue to build to eventually scaling up among other struggling school districts throughout the state.</p> <p>Mention is made of a logic model plan but this is not displayed. The model plan is identified as serving substantial evidence of the area of needs, strategies to be implemented with expected outcomes. The NAPD evaluation mentioned in this section is not found within the stated proposal. This section is rated in the medium range.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Articulation of the vision plan to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase learning equity are reflected in the LEA goals for improvement. Evidence via chart format illustrates KCSD vision of ongoing improvement with performance on summative assessment on a steady rise would decrease the achievement gaps and cause graduation rates to raise with more students entering into college.</p> <p>The applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance, increasing equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet attainable annual goals that are equal to or exceed the State ESEA targets for the LEAs. The applicants' use of visuals through charts helps to visualize the development of the project.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is evidence of progress in the improvement of student learning and closing the achievement gap within the past two years, yet the proposal request a track record for 4-years. Reading and Math data provided in charts demonstrate positive changes in grades 1-10th. Graduation data reflects some troubled spots that need to be addressed, while the college enrollment is on a rise. The applicant provides evidence of aiming to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in the graduation rates as it has to the overall dramatic achievement gains experienced by KCSD students in the past two years.</p> <p>Although gains have been made over a two-year period, this proposal request for that 4-year range which has not been supplied. Evidence of student data availability to educators and parents are addressed but does not indicate access of information to students. Analysis of data results has not been addressed and therefore is found to be weak. This section is rated within the low range.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The high-level of transparency is addressed by records being made open to the public via meetings held between the Board of Education and KCSD. Budget is presented with its full details and recorded as public records covering. What is lacking is a clear indicator of procedures in place to report on the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction • Instructional support • Student support • Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff • Actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers <p>This places this section in the medium range.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes in the high-quality plan how their proposed reform will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. This will help to reach their goals by improving student learning outcomes for all students who will be served.</p> <p>The applicant states the success it has had with prior grants where autonomy under Kentucky legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements that have not been an issue. The statement is brief without sufficient details.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

There is evidence of engagement by all stakeholders via surveys and questionnaires that were disseminated. A Community College is also reflected within this group. Advisory Group composed of students, parents, and teachers all participated in the planning process detailing the potential project layout. Letters of support serve as evidence as well as the teacher support containing over 90% of KCSD educators signed petitioners supporting this application. Feedback made by these various groups is found lacking, therefore leaving multiple questions unanswered.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Extensive efforts to implement instructional elements that support personalized learning environments are addressed yet it holds a key role for improvement. The needs and gaps are also noted and addressed. Yet there is a lack of evidence via the discussion within this proposal of the current status in the implementation of the personalizing the learning environments.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides strong evidence of details in their plan for parents, educators and students to help them understand what is being taught and learned. Ongoing communication, meetings and on-going feedback will help parents know what the student is learning. The plan demonstrates full implementation of the individual learning plans supported by the college and career coaches, interventionists in math and reading, and the technology integration specialist. An attempt is made to expose students to diverse cultures through Social studies, songs, photos, drawings and videos. Student data will be used to determine progress being made towards the mastery of college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. High-quality strategies for high-need students will help to ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. In the applicant's high-quality plan proposes to:

- Identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements
- Understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals
- Master critical academic content and develop, teamwork, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving
- Provide training and support to students to ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their own learning

Student data will be used to determine progress being made towards the mastery of college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. High-quality strategies for high-need students will help to ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

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

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Evidence is presented that addresses specific areas that all students will be supported to graduate college- and career-ready; Participating students will be lead to pursuing a rigorous course of study; the acceleration of learning through support of his/her needs, and capacity to support progress towards meeting college and career ready standards.

Efforts are in place to increase the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, and that all educators have access to and know how to use tools, data and resources that will help accelerate student progress, while having training on these tools, data and multiple resources.

Details and unclear statement has caused this section to be in mid range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	6

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Evidence is made available of the organizational structure in the central office and the hiring of a project director to carry out the details of the plan with flexibility and autonomy not being an issue. What is found lacking is the details of that structure from within.

Evidence has also been supplied of a system that is already in place that generates performance data providing at a glance documentation of success. The system also supports existing policies which will allow students to “test out” of coursework and pursue an accelerated pace of study. What is not clear is the number of time a student might attempt to test out.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant addresses and assures that all students, parents, educators that they will have access to the necessary tools and learning resources both in and out of school. Appropriate levels of technical support are stated as being made available. A variety of technology systems are in place, which includes human resource data, and other systems, each with a specific function to help inform teachers, principals, students and parents of the students learning achievements that will lead to graduation and college- career-paths.

What is found lacking is the information on the infrastructure and what is already in place. Clarity is also lacking on how LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems that include human resources data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: Evidence of a rigorous continuous improvement process through the coordination of the external evaluator and data collection specialist to be hired has been projected into the project plan. An oversight committee with members to include the superintendent, principals, teacher representation, college career coaches, volunteer parents, students and partner representatives will meet quarterly to evaluate and make recommendations for modifications.		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: he applicant’s high-quality plan provides evidence of a clear and high-quality approach to continuously work towards the improvement of their plan. The applicant plans to establish ongoing communication with both internal and external stakeholders. Lack of clarity what steps they propose to undertake to ensure this is identified takes place early in the development of this plan.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: Although a series of charts with performance measures were made available, rationale for selecting was found lacking. The applicant failed to identify with clarity the rigor and areas of concern. Lack of clarity made it difficult to judge the ambitious yet achievable nature in this set of measures.		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: The applicant’s high-quality plan reflects an ongoing process of adjustments and revisions. The external evaluator and data collection specialist will play a leading-role in this process. Project Director working with site administrators and teachers will make the necessary adjustments with data reported. Identification of a process that will be used in evaluating the effectiveness of Race to the Top investments in the following areas:		

- District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology,
- Use time, staff, money, and resources
- Improved use of technology,
- Networking with community partners
- Modification of school schedules and structures, and decision-making structures

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant has provided important details within the prepared budget. The identification of funds to support the project is found to be reasonable with the provision of a thoughtful rationale for investments.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: Discussion of the sustainability after the life of the grant was found to be missing.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The applicant demonstrated that the Competitive Preference Priority areas were met by supplying distinct answers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results, resource alignment, integrated services providing much needed services to students and parents • Description of the coherent and sustainable partnerships formed with public and private organizations • Identification of no more than 10 population-level desired results • Description of how partnerships would track the selected indicators that measure each result • The use of data to improve results • Development of a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students • Description of how the partnership integrate education and other services Although these answers were supplied the College Career coaches mentioned were not fully addressed, therefore it remains unanswered. The evaluation methods remain questionable, details of how these will be used and by whom. Another area of weakness is the clarity of how partnerships have been formed with both public and private organizations.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Total	210	120
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