



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0476GA-2 for Liberty County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In addressing the four core assurances the applicant indicated they were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace is addressed by referencing Common Core, Project STEP. 2. Building data systems: No indication this was addressed. 3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding teachers: The Schmoker walk-through model of right now instructional leadership is an example activity that addresses this assurance area. 4. Turning around low achieving schools: all schools are participating. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a rationale for focusing on post-high school life, i.e., careers or college. • The meaning of "Only about 55% of our students are able to comprehend at the established level" is not clear. • The inclusion of Common Core principles and discussion and description of "horizontal" and "elliptical" conversations is a strong element of this sub-section. • The focus is on engaging students in a highly personalized fashion. <p>The vision is not clear. The vision "Great schools do great works in the life of a child" as this more like a motto.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All schools are apparently in the project but there is no statement to that effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The schools participating in Project STEP are clearly identified and described. • The participating (15) schools are eligible according to the grant criteria. • The students enrolled in the participating schools are eligible according to the criteria, i.e., they are from low income families (7003), are high-need students 10,217. The participating educators (776) are clearly identified and described. 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	0
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This criteria was not specifically addressed. The applicant provided information about the history of reform in the district that this grant would help them continue.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does address the four areas identified for this criteria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables provide baseline data and goals: State Performance Targets in ESEA Waiver by Language, Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies, 9th Grade Literature, American Literature, Biology, Economics, Mathematics I, Mathematics II, Physical Science, and U.S. History. These goals are reasonable, measurable, and attainable. • A table provides baseline data and goals regarding decreasing achievement gaps. These goals are reasonable, measurable, and attainable. 		

In (F)(2) a narrative and tables present the “action plan” for the Project including the goals, the activities needed to realize each goal, the timeline for addressing each goal, the deliverable(s), and the person(s) responsible for completing each goal. Therefore a high quality plan is in place.

- A table provides graduation current and projected graduation rates for American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Multi-Racial, White, etc. students. These projections are reasonable, measurable, and attainable.

Thus the plan does have real potential to successfully improve student learning and performance, etc. according to the intent of this subsection.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence of success from various initiatives including and not limited to the Galaxy Project which focuses on using technology to enhance teaching. There has been an increase in 6%, 5%, and 18% of CRCT Science Scores in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. This successful program is supported by increase test scores presented in Appendix C. • The district does have a track record of success. An elementary school received a \$1,000,000 grant and a middle school received a \$1,350,000 grant and a Professional Learning grant for \$1,400,000. • The ASAP Center has served as a catalytic program to increase parental involvement which is born out in the information presented in Appendix E. • The applicant has identified low academic achieving students. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open GA, is a state program that assures all data and information related to public services, including education, is transparent. This information is available through reports and public sources such as websites. • Parents of k-8 children have access to Renaissance Learning which presents information about the reading level of their children. • District programs, information, and data including test scores and salaries are transparent. Salaries are posted on the district web-site as are travel expenditures. • Achievement data is posted in each school. <p>Overall the applicant makes budget and other information, es.g. board minutes, school news, available to the public.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	0
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: <p>Other than explaining they applied for the grant there was no discussion of autonomy, regulatory requiremnts, etc.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Councils and “monthly TAB meetings” indicate involvement of stakeholders. School governance councils provide opportuniity for involvement and keeping updated about the Project. • There is a presentation of how parents, students, teachers, and others were involved in identifying major elements of the proposed project. What was not clear was the degree of teacher involvment in reviewing and creating the elements of the grant. • Letters of support are present and they are from from the Deputy Supertendent of the GA DOE, the Liberty Co. Commissioners, the Liberty Co. Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club, Brewton-Parker College, a Liberty S/D 		

elementary principal, parents, and former students.

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

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The success of the district in acquiring grants has resulted in collecting comprehensive data regarding students in need and who meet the requirements of this grant. Through the presentation of data

- Teacher performance, student achievement, and Parent involvement are described as key elements in identifying learning/need gaps.
- Goals are reasonable, they are attainable and measurable and were identified through stakeholder involvement including the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT" formula. The goals are also based on identified learning "gaps."
- The high quality plan is based on sound rationale, e.g., the 70% low socio-economic student body that needs particular attention. The proposed project also intends to use current initiatives such as Common Core, to address the needs of identified students.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intent of Project STEP is to prepare all (Those referenced earlier in these comments as the served or participating students.) students to successfully graduate and move into college or a career. In summary students are to be ready for any post-k life. • Project STEP components are identified along with an implementation plan, duration – which is not clear, what is the meaning of “duration”? – and reform success monitored by stakeholders. • There is the intent to provide deep learning and monitoring experiences through, for example, Rtl, the GA OAS, personal student portfolios, and technology. • There is a clear, articulated, and logical Project STEP Assessment Plan that includes group(s) assessed, instrument or method for assessing, and data gathered from the assessment. This plan includes students, parents/families, teachers, “schools”, and the “system.” The schools and system would benefit from great explanation. • One of the focal points of STEP is the use of technology for tracking data and information as well as student progress. This is strength of the application. <p>It is not clear what plans are in place to personalize learning for students. Accommodating high needs students (Sped, ELL, G/T) was also not clear.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	12
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All educators identified in this plan will be part of continual and as needed training. As stated in the application, this will be a journey, not an event. The use of frequent webinars, wikispaces for sharing ideas and material are two substantive plans. • There is clearly an emphasis on teaching and learning that in part, is based on Common Core standards and principles. Teachers and leaders will also continuously learn in order to meet the needs of students as set forth in the application. • As mentioned previously in the applications teachers will have horizontal and vertical conversations to confer and share ideas and resources and to adapt teaching. This creates a professional learning community. • The stated goal of increasing student responsibility for their own learning is part of the expectation that teachers will be responsible for in transforming the learning environment. This is a strength of this subsection. <p>It is not clear how teacher professional development will be based on moving the school toward the goal of increasing student performance.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality support of Project STEP is in place via teachers, building level leaders, and at the district level. Curriculum support specialists housed at the central office will be in place to provide real-time and right-now assistance to teachers. • Another strength is allowing autonomy to work face-to-face with project directors and consultants to schedule training, spend funds, etc. • A parent portal will allow real time access to the status of the project. • The use of PowerSchool will systemically track grades and student attendance. • There is evidence of a high quality plan that includes goals/objectives, activities/tasks, timelines, outcomes/deliverables, and responsible individuals/groups <p>There is an iteration of programs already in place and nothing about if and how the LEA will change to assure the successful implementation of the project. There is no evidence of how (and if) students would progress based on mastering standards or being able to master standards several time.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders do have access to content, tools, and learning resources associated with Project STEP • Project STEP is transparent based on access to content, etc. as mentioned and the access is available to all stakeholders including those in effected categories, e.g., low-income families, families with special needs children, etc. • The Project will be transparent for all stakeholders including educators, parents/families, and the community 		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of a third-party evaluator will contribute to collect, disaggregate, and disseminate data and information about the status and progress of Project STEP • The existence of such programs as the ASAP Centers afford opportunities to support, involve, and inform parents/families about the Project. • The teacher discussions, site councils, and district level staff, i.e. curriculum specialists and consultants, and review of data indicating the status of Project STEP goals will provide information from which to continue or adjust the initiative. 		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>As stated, teacher discussions (vertical and horizontal), leadership, governance councils, etc. and district resources will provide, regular and frequent review of data to assure a continuous improvement of the plan. As indicated ASAP Centers, a communication technological network, and school site councils are examples of continuous communication and engagement efforts to keep all stakeholders informed and involved and the project moving forward.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The population and performance measures are identified. For example, All students involved will be tracked as to the number and percentage of those participating by school, teachers, and leadership (principal). 		

- The various components of the Project will be addressed individually and holistically. For example, PreK-3 student achievement results from the CRCT will provide data in reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies for each sub-group and this will address the performance targets presented earlier in the application.
- Rigorous and steady growth is displayed regarding performance measures for the population (as a whole) and each sub-group of that population. For example, it is expected that there will be a 2.5% increase in student reading abilities and skills over the duration of the Project.

The applicant identified 12 performance measures.

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

The decision making structure is interwoven and includes formal school and school district committees, e.g., the board of education, school site committees, etc. and professional development and growth opportunities for teachers and educational leaders.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The budget supports the Project but no rationale for funding is given.
- There is no indication of funds from other sources which are critical to supplement and sustain the initiative.
- Funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs are not apparent.
- It is not clear what funds will be used after the grant.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This subsection was not addressed.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

No narratives or descriptions were identified as addressing this subsection.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

- Students of low socio-economics status, those with special needs, and all others are targets and included in this application.

- Educators have been and will continue to be involved in developing the awareness and skills to create high engagement learning environments that emphasize the personalization of learning.
- The plan is designed to help all students move through the system at high academic levels and completing school on time as exemplified by the targeted increase in the graduation rate.

Total	210	129
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0476GA-3 for Liberty County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents a succinct plan to address the four core educational assurance areas. The applicant asserts that the proposed "Project S.T.E.P. reform model will result in a rise in student test scores at all grade levels and in all subgroups, an increase in the graduation rate, an improvement in overall teacher effectiveness, an increase in parent participation, and a rise in the number of students entering college.</p> <p>Sufficient evidence is presented to justify the likelihood of the proposed plan to improve overall teacher effectiveness and increase parent participation. Notable is the proposed "Assisting Students and Parents" (ASAP) Centers which will permit parents to become more fully engaged in their child's school experience by providing the opportunity for shared learning and access to technology. Also notable is the applicant's plan to address the professional development needs of teachers by providing job-embedded training, access to "living lessons" via video lessons and podcasts, and opportunities for in school Professional Learning Communities to foster "horizontal", "vertical", and "elliptical conversations. However, it is difficult to confirm a connection between the proposed Project S.T.E.P. reform plan and its impact on student achievement as measured by the proposed performance assessments (CRCT and EOCT).</p> <p>The applicant presents sufficient evidence of its intent to provide rigorous and relevant college and career curriculum. The applicant has adopted the college and career Common Core state curriculum which is a nationally recognized college and career based curriculum.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents a thorough plan for the implementation of an LEA-level and school-level reform plan. The applicant plans to implement the goals of the proposed reform plan in all of its schools and for all of its students and teachers. Its rationale that there is an urgent need to bring about district change is evident by the assertion that "only about 55% of [their] students are able to comprehend at the established levels".</p> <p>The applicant provides a list of the schools that will participate in the grant activities as well as the percentage of students who are from low-income families, high need students, and participating educators.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant plans to implement the proposed reform model in all of its schools and for all of its students and teachers.</p>		

However, it is not apparent how the proposed plan will have a direct impact on student performance. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain if the scaled up reform model would result in meaningful reform to support district-wide change.

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

The applicant presents evidence of baseline data of summative assessments for participating elementary, middle, and high school students. The applicant presents sufficient data for relevant subgroups of students. The subgroup baseline data will provide an opportunity to track student achievement gaps throughout the progress of the proposed reform model.

The applicant asserts that "performance targets" for the grant period "were established by the state in the ESEA Waiver application. However, the applicant does not provide a rationale as to how the performance targets were calculated. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to result in student improvement based on the proposed performance targets.

Although the applicant proposes to implement the reform model in all of its schools and for all of its students and teachers, the applicant does not provide a plan for tracking student performance in grades 1 and 2.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents limited evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement. Although the applicant asserts that through a variety of targeted grant implementations, district-wide initiatives were successful. Notable is the turn-around of the then failing Taylors Creek elementary school after the successful implementation of the 2003 REA Grant.

However, the applicant fails to demonstrate a consistent four year track record of advancing student learning as evident by summative student performance measures.

The applicant does not present evidence of a system to make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a systemic plan for a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. Pay scales for district employees and expenditures are posted on the district's website. Notable is the district's system of auditing and verifying financial records. It is apparent by the applicant's assertion that all stakeholders have access to district level financial information in education. However, it is not apparent if stakeholders have access to school level financial information.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	0
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements. Earlier in the application, the applicant asserts that it has adopted the state's Common Core curriculum. However, it is unclear if the LEA and the individual school leaders have autonomy as to how they will adhere to the Common Core curriculum.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides limited evidence of stakeholder engagement and support. The applicant asserts that a staff survey was conducted and more than 70% of all teachers requested that steps be taken to offer the training detailed in the proposed reform project. This assertion does not substantiate that teachers were engaged in and support the proposed reform project.

Although the applicant asserts that "principals, teachers, students, and parents have voiced concern that technology is aging and that students need more up to date computers and technologies", the applicant does not provide sufficient evidence that these stakeholder groups played an active role in the development of the proposed reform project.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents sufficient evidence of a plan to analyze success of the proposed reform model. Via a "PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT" model, the applicant plans to determine baseline data and track success measures throughout the grant period. The applicant asserts that it will gather effectiveness data through classroom observations, stakeholder surveys, face-to-face conversations, participation rates at "ASAP" centers, and training evaluations. However, the applicant does not clearly provide evidence of who would be responsible for gathering this data and who would be responsible for managing the change process if the data indicates a change in grant implementation is needed.

The applicant describes the current status of its students' access to a personalized learning environment by asserting that students currently receive personalized learning via digital content programs. The applicant identifies relevant gaps of which the proposed reform plan will address.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a limited plan for delivering personalized learning to all participating students. Through learning style surveys, career portfolios, and digital content programs, students will likely understand that what they are learning is key to their success. Through the use of the adopted Common Core state standards (which are career and college based) and the integration of project-based pedagogy as indicated in the application, the participating students will likely be involved in deep learning experiences. It is also apparent that through the proposed ASAP Centers, students and parents will be provided sufficient training on the technology and resources that will be included in the proposed reform model.

The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of its plan to ensure that participating students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development, and to a variety of high quality instructional approaches. It is unclear if the applicant will provide a high quality personalized learning environment for all participating students.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a plan to provide a variety of professional development and training to all participating teachers in "conceptual learning, learning styles, Universal Design for Learning, and data collection and analysis". Teachers will also receive training on technical resources that will be integrated in instruction based on the proposed reform model. However, it is unclear if the participating teachers will receive professional development and training on how to incorporate the variety of training as described in the application into effective strategies for personalized learning such as using actionable information to identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests.

The applicant did not provide evidence of school leaders and school leadership teams receiving training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	7
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents a sufficient plan for organizing the LEA's central office for adequate support of the proposed reform model. Notable is the accountability assigned to each building principal for the implementation of the proposed reform plan.</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of a plan to provide learning resources that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students and their families. Notable are the ASAP Centers where students and parents can access information around the clock.</p> <p>The applicant does not clearly describe practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning by giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery or by giving the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides sufficient evidence of its plan to support personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, and educators, regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. This support will be provided by the proposed ASAP Centers and in addition for teachers through the proposed "Center for Teaching Innovation". The established "Technology Advisory Board" (TAB) as described in the application will likely ensure appropriate technical support is provided to all stakeholders of the proposed reform model.</p> <p>The applicant provides sufficient evidence of its plan to continue to provide its parents and students a variety of tools such as PowerSchool to export their information from the district's data management system.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of an adequate continuous improvement process. The applicant asserts that it will employ a third-party evaluator to assist with the collection, disaggregate, and dissemination of findings related to the implementation of the project. It is evident that the applicant will track progress of the implementation of the project. However, the applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of a rigorous plan to make data driven decisions for continuous improvement.</p> <p>The applicant asserts that it will publicly share project implementation status via newsletters, a blog, a website, and newspaper articles. The methods of sharing is appropriate in that it allows electronic and paper modes of communication.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides sufficient evidence of its plan to maintain communication with teachers and parents through the proposed Center for Teaching Innovation and the ASAP Centers. However, the applicant does not provide evidence as to how external stakeholders (parents and community partners) will be informed of the status of the implementation success of the reform model.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>It is unclear if the rationale presented by the applicant for selecting the proposed performance measures aligns with the proposed reform model. Although the proposed performance measures are valid measures of student academic and social/emotional performance, it is difficult to ascertain if and how the proposed reform model directly impacts the performance measures. For an example, there is not a clear alignment between providing technology to all students (one of the goals of the proposed reform model) to the "FitnessGram" performance measure.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided limited evidence as to how it plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the grant's funded activities. Training surveys will be collected after each professional development. However, the application lacked specific details of the strategies that will be employed to evaluate data collected from surveys and make systemic changes to the reform model.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant presents a reasonable budget to support the proposed plan. Notable is the allocation for the Project S.T.E.P. program manager and the specialists because these positions are pertinent to the success of the proposed reform model.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides evidence of limited sustainability in that the Center for Teaching Innovation will develop web-based training modules that could be used for professional development even after the grant period. The application lacks specific details of a comprehensive sustainability plan for the proposed technology integration given the rapid development curve of new technology.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The applicant presents evidence of a partnership with the State to implement the "Bright from the Start" early learning program. Although this is a notable effort to improve student reading performance by Grade 3 which based on research is a leading indicator of future academic success, this partnership does not represent an external partnership. The applicant does not present sufficient evidence of integration of public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides sufficient evidence of its plan to build on the district's adoption of the state Common Core standards. These standards support the development of proficiency for college and career readiness. The applicant presents sufficient evidence of its plan to provide professional development to teachers that supports its proposed reform model. Notable is the applicant's plan for embedded staff development specialists in all of the participating schools. The applicant presents sufficient evidence of its plan to provide access to technical resource to students and parents in and out of school.		

Total	210	99
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0476GA-4 for Liberty County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Liberty County School System (LCSS) is a rural district of 10,200 students and 776 educators. 43% of students come from military families. Across the entire district, approximately 70% of students are low-income.

Liberty has proposed Project STEP to improve achievement and graduation rates in the district. The core elements of the Project STEP vision appear to be:

- Effective instruction of the common core standards that makes rigorous content accessible to all learners;
- Providing 1:1 technology and high quality digital learning resources to all students to promote a “digitally rich environment that promotes conceptual learning, creating thinking and collaboration among students”
- A commitment to engaging and motivating students via effective instruction and technology
- A commitment to engaging parents to support their children’s learning through new ASAP (Assisting Students and Parents) centers at local schools
- A commitment to equity, with particular attention to subgroups with low achievement and graduation rates (students with disabilities and English language learners)
- Intensive, on-going professional development for educators in multiple areas (e.g. learning trajectories, conceptual learning, content knowledge, learning styles, digital publishing, safe and legal use of on-line resources, UDL, technology integration) carried out through multiple strategies, including a model tech-enabled classroom, job-embedded training and just in time support

The district has what it believes to have been successful pilots of 1:1 e-devices at one middle school and an ASAP center at one elementary school. It plans to expand them district-wide through RTT-D.

Overall, the response provides a straightforward vision of providing 1:1 devices and a range of professional development to help teachers integrate them into instruction coupled with some after school parent centers. It is solid, but far from innovative.

The application does not fully articulate how this proposed effort builds on prior work in the four assurance areas, although it does suggest that the district has a professional development approach firmly in place, has provide some training to teachers on the common core standards, has made some progress with low performing schools, and in general has a strong commitment to the collection and use of data.

Moreover, the response would be stronger if it provided a clearer vision of how it expects teacher practices to change, student learning experiences to be different than they are today, and student support to be personalized, grounded in common and individual tasks, and based on student academic interests. While there are generalities that touch on all these areas, the vision (and the application as a whole) lacks a granular sense of the transformations sought, calling into question whether there exists a shared and concrete sense of how the district believes its classrooms of the future should look and how it will get there.

Based on these strengths and weaknesses, a mid-level rating is appropriate.

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(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>LCSS consists of one pre-kindergarten program, 8 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and 3 high schools. LCSS proposes to include all schools, all students, and all educators in the RTT-D initiative.</p> <p>Given the high level of poverty across all the district's schools, choosing to work with all schools appears reasonable. One concern is whether the district has the capacity to ensure high quality implementation across all its schools at once given that the application suggests there has been little exposure to technology integration heretofore.</p> <p>Looked out in toto, this response is in high range.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Because the proposal is that all district schools participate in the initiative, LCSS understandably did not provide a plan for scaling into district-wide change beyond the participating schools. The district should not be penalized for the omission under these circumstances.</p> <p>The district also failed to provide specific logic model or theory of change of how its plan will improve outcomes for all students. Looking at the application as a whole, it is evident that the district has some expectations about the impact of professional development and 1:1 devices on teacher practices, student engagement and student performance as well as belief that ASAP centers can engage parents to improve learning. However, the connection is not always made clear and a logic model spelling out how activities lead to results would provide more confidence in the ultimate success of the initiative.</p> <p>Looking globally at the response under these circumstances, this response receives a score in the mid-range.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In the area of performance on summative assessments, LCSS has set reasonable goals, except in Reading and Language. On the state CRCT and End of Course assessments, it appears to have used performance goals set by the state in its ESEA Waiver application. (At one point the application states that they have "adjusted" those goals, but the actual data charts do not give any indication that is the case.) In language, the district proposes to move from 92% to 95% by 2016-17 and in reading a similar amount. Given that the application itself says that Lexile scores and NAEP scores show that student performance in ELA is far too low, more ambitious goals are needed.</p> <p>In the area of decreasing achievement gaps, the district's proposed goals are difficult to understand. However, it appears that the district's current achievement is in many areas at or above the state average and in these areas, the district has not proposed a more ambitious goal, as would be appropriate.</p> <p>The goals regarding graduation rate and college enrollment rate improvements appear to be "ambitious", calling for a rise in graduation from 63.7% to 83.7% and an increase in college enrollment from 46% to 56%, by 2016-17. It is not entirely clear that these are achievable given the lack of concerted attention and investment in the proposal to drop-out prevention, guidance and building high school culture focused on college and careers.</p> <p>In addition, the district does not make a compelling case about how its vision is likely to lead to achievement of the goals.</p> <p>Overall, this response is in the low end of the mid-range.</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	4
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

LCSS does not provide any longitudinal district-wide data (except one instance noted below), to demonstrate a record of success.

The district does describe grant-funded programs that were implemented in a few schools or grades and have demonstrated positive results. A middle school pilot of 1:1 e-devices in selected science and math classrooms led to impressive one-year gains (8th grade from 54% to 72% meet or exceed standards).

It states that it has had grants to improve reading instruction and that reading scores are very high. There has been some rise in reading achievement (88% to 95% since 2008). Of course, the fact 95% of students meet or exceed standards is likely more a reflection of the state's artificially low performance bar than actual achievement given low Lexile scores and the disconnect between NAEP and Georgia results.

It also points to one elementary school which was in line for school takeover in 2003 but was awarded a Reading Excellence Act grant and now has earned Governor's awards for excellence. Moreover, reading practices developed at this elementary school have been replicated across the district. However, the application does not speak to reforms in other low-performing schools in the district, of which there are at least two since the application mentions that two middle schools are state "focus" schools.

In addition, the district states that the elementary school with a pilot ASAP center has seen both increased parent involvement and improved test scores. (The screenshots of school data are difficult to read and do not show longitudinal data, weakening the evidence for this claim regarding achievement.)

Finally, the district does not provide information here or elsewhere in the application regarding its record in making individual student performance data available to students, parents and educators in ways that improve instruction. However, in other areas of the application the district describes its technology infrastructure and its use of data to improve instruction, suggesting that data is made available and, in the case of teachers, is used to inform and improve instruction and services.

Without more complete information, it is impossible to fully assess the district's record of success. However, the picture provided in the application is of a district with a few bright spots but no overall pattern of success. Given this record, the response is in the bottom of the mid range.

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

LCSS describes the range of ways it makes administrative, financial and teaching and learning information transparent and accessible. These include state and district websites, local newspaper reporting, a parent portal, etc. However, LCSS does not make available any of the school-level expenditure data called for in the application. Thus, a low rating is warranted.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

In its response, LCSS speaks to local support from their school board and local community, however this selection criteria concerns successful conditions and autonomy under state requirements. The district does not make the case that the state provides either the conditions nor the autonomy to allow RCS to successfully execute all its strategies. Despite the lack of positive evidence that there is no conflict, there is no reason to think that the strategies proposed would be in conflict with state requirements. Moreover, the SEA letter supporting the application does not indicate any concerns regarding policy conflicts.

Thus, a score in the mid-range is appropriate.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

In its application, the district provides evidence that it has engaged stakeholders in the development of the strategies

underlying this proposal. For example, 70% of teachers have requested “the training detailed in Project STEP” and the focus on 1:1 technology is based on input from educators, students, and the community.

However, the application provides no evidence that the district engaged students, families, teachers and principals in developing the specifics of the proposal or ask for input on the proposal before finalizing. Nor is there any indication that 70% of teachers support the proposal. The district appears to rely on survey data saying that teachers want technology and want the professional development offered here; but that is far different than sharing an actual proposal and asking for support.

The application also includes a number of letters for support from the Chamber of Commerce, Board of Commissioners, Lions Club, local college professor, a principal, a parent and a student. More support for the proposal from a wider range of community actors, including perhaps military organizations given the high percentage of military-connected students in the school system, would have strengthened the application.

As a result of these weaknesses, the response is at the bottom of the mid-range.

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

The response enumerates an impressive range of data that the district will collect and analyze and the process it will use for much of the data collection. The data ranges from multiple forms of achievement data (summative assessments, benchmark assessments, and Lexile levels) to walkthrough reports on teacher practice and technology integration, to participation rates at ASAP centers, to survey data. Despite the commendable attention to data, the response does not articulate a high quality plan for analyzing the current status of the implementation of personalized learning or an analysis of the logic model underlying the proposal. Thus, the rating is in the mid-range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

LCSS approach to improving learning and preparing students for college and careers includes the following major strategies:

- Removing barriers to access for students with learning challenges though implementation of Universal Design for Learning coupled with use of 1:1 devices and digital learning materials
- Create a learning environment that supports all students by implementing RtI and PBIS across all schools in the district
- Helping students set sensible goals through training on “learning styles,” interest surveys, and development of career portfolios starting in fifth grade.
- Training students in technology use based on results of 8th grade technology assessment
- Providing 1:1 devices so all students have access to personalized digital content
- Equipping students with the following skills: keyboarding; digital publishing to create presentations starting in Pre-K, digital research (including searching within their Lexile, accessing teacher-developed materials, and searching kid-friendly websites); understanding own personal work style; collaboration with peers in simulation and real life; use technology appropriately (e.g. cybersaftey, cyberethics, copyright), apply for college loans using state college access website. A mix of classroom teachers, media specialists, computer lab teachers and guidance counselors will support students in acquiring these skills.
- On-going assessment of student outcomes and leading indicators to support continuous improvement
- ASAP centers for parents and students

Its response includes a plan in chart form that outlines project components, a brief implementation plan (e.g. 1-3 sentences with activities and timelines), duration of the activity, and how reform success will be monitored (e.g. classroom observations, principal interviews, participant surveys).

A real strength of the response is its attention to data and how reform success will be monitored overtime. Another positive aspect of the response is the plan chart, which gives a bit more specifics about high level strategies. A third positive aspect is the attention to training for students (which is described under (C)(2) but is appropriately considered here)and families in the

use of technology tools.

Nonetheless, the district has not fully met the requirements of a high-quality plan under (C)(1), due to multiple areas of where the response is limited. There is a lack of specificity in many areas that makes it difficult to evaluate the quality of the plan and approach or see how the various activities fit together into a comprehensive and coherent strategy to personalize learning and advance achievement and attainment. For example, the response mentions career portfolios several times but there is no description of what they are, how they are implemented, if they are new or an on-going initiative, how they lead to opportunities for students to structure their learning to achieve their goals, or how they support the overall strategy. Similarly, it states that UDL plus technology will lead to personalization, but there is no detail of how the district expects student experiences to change in and out of school or whether and how each student will have access to individualized instruction.

While the response to this criterion and to (C)(2) gives some sense of how the district expects teacher practice to change (e.g. “teachers recognize and react responsibly to students’ varying backgrounds, knowledge, readiness, language preferences, learning styles and interests”), it does not make clear how student learning opportunities will change or become more personalized. For example, there is no indication if there will be self-paced on-line instruction, multi-grade classrooms, independent studies and projects personalized assignments based on student’s interest, different group strategies, opportunities for acceleration, and/or opportunities to demonstrate mastery and move on to new assignments or courses. Throughout, there is a palpable absence of concrete descriptions of the transformations sought, calling into question where the district wants to go and the sufficiency of its plan to move forward.

In addition, there are several areas called for by this selection criterion that the district does not address at all or mentions but does not provide substance. For example, while the overall attention to data is impressive, the application would be strengthened by attention to how data will be used to determine personalized learning recommendations. Similarly, the response does not address how students will be able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest; measure their own progress toward accomplishing their goals; or be exposed to diverse cultures (other than the statement that technology “can help our students expand their horizons and collaborate with other students across the globe”). Finally, there is no attention here or elsewhere to how the district believes technology use should differ at elementary, middle and high school so that its use is age appropriate.

Overall, these strengths and weaknesses place the response at the bottom of the mid range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

LCSS has made teacher professional development a centerpiece of its strategy, devoting approximately a quarter of its budget to this area. Building on professional development regarding the Common Core already provided by the state and regional service agency, the district has several strands to its proposed professional development strategy. They are:

- establishing a Center for Teaching Innovation, a state of the art technology equipped classroom where teachers can “experience ‘living lessons’ offered by local and regional curriculum and technology experts”
- Face to face professional development, primarily at the new Center, during the school year and in the summers. Each topic would be covered for a few months for teachers in particular grade bands. Training covers a wide range of topics including: appropriate use and copyright; using e-device as part of balanced lesson plan; managing classroom sets of e-devices; customizing instruction through digital publishing; conceptual learning; learning styles; PBIS; UDL; data collection and analysis; reading for comprehension; standard for mathematical practice, meeting the needs of the 21st century digital learner; moving from substitution to redefinition state of technology implementation. The budget includes teacher stipends to support participation. It is not clear from the application whether participation is mandatory.
- Professional Learning Communities and instructional specialists at each school facilitate teacher conversations and the examination of student data as well as “just in time” job-embedded support.
- Assessment of teacher instruction via observation reports based on various observation tools (one on teacher practices, one on integration of technology, one on student engagement) and achievement data will be used to fine tune and match needs of students and teachers and drive professional development.

The application includes a plan in chart form that outlines training goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and persons responsible for each area of training listed in the second bullet above.

The district is to be commended for its strong commitment to building educator capacity. Strengths of the response include the specificity about the topics teachers will be trained in, the identification of timelines and responsible parties for training, and the plan to have on-going assessment of teacher practices as well as student outcomes to improve and inform the strategy.

The response does, however, also have some weaknesses.

One concern is the sheer amount of professional development to be offered on a myriad of topics. It is not clear from the application if professional development is mandatory; nor is it clear whether all teachers participate in all aspects so that over four years every teacher is trained in every area or whether there is a more individualized approach. If all teachers were expected to be trained in all these major initiatives (PBIS, UDL, learning styles, conceptual learning, subject area content; effective use of technology in the classroom), it is difficult to see how all these strands of educator support would connect and be reinforcing or how educators would have the capacity to assimilate so many new tools, approaches and resources at once.

Second, based on the description of the myriad forms of assessment and monitoring that will take place, there are concerns about how teachers and administrators will be able to manage and make sense of the range of data, particularly since there is no discussion of whether and how data will be analyzed and shared with teachers in accessible, easy to use ways.

Third, while it is understandable that a small rural county would bring in outside experts to deliver specialized professional development, the plan would be strengthened by attention to how local instructional experts (instructional specialists in schools, principals, department chairs, etc...) are expected to gain expertise in these areas so they can coach and model new practices once the out-of-district experts are gone. Related to this, the plan would be stronger if it presented a clear strategy or theory of action about how centralize training connects to in-school support (professional learning communities, coaching, etc..).

Fourth, the district does not provide a theory or explanation of how these multiple strands of professional development will ultimately empower and support educators in effectively personalizing learning for all students.

Finally, there are several elements of the selection criteria that the response does not address. There is no mention of how school leaders and school leadership teams will have the training, tools and resources to enable them to structure effective personalized learning environments. Nor does it provide a plan for increasing access to effective teachers.

Overall, given these strengths and weaknesses, the rating is in the 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:		
<p>Current central office staff who will be essential to the project are: the Superintendent, Executive Director of Technology and Media, Director of Professional Learning, 4 instructional technology specialists, 4 technicians and 3 curriculum specialists. To carry out this project, the district plans to hire a project manager, two additional technology specialists and an additional technician, all of whom report to the Director of Technology and Media, although implementation of the Common Core continues to be overseen by the Director of Curriculum. The application does not draw a clear picture of how central office staff work to support schools and to extent to which school instructional support is school-based or district based. Given that the ultimate focus of the proposal is to transform learning and teaching, placing leadership under the Technology Director raises some concerns. Moreover, given the extensive professional development to be paid for under the grant, the proposal would have been stronger if it explained how the district was planning to manage that additional work with current staff.</p> <p>Regarding school level flexibility, the response states that principals manage their available funds, but provides no other details.</p> <p>The district emphasizes the value of its proposed approach for “fragile learners,” particularly students with disabilities and English Language Learners. The district states that research and its own experience in the middle school piloting 1:1 devices has been extremely positive for these students as they can customize materials to meet their needs, whether it is communicating in a different language or speech-enabled text for the visually impaired</p> <p>The application does not address district policies giving students the opportunity to progress based on mastery, although it does point out opportunities for dual enrollment and a career academy. It states, in passing, that students will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways but provides no evidence for this claim. Neither approach appears to be part of the districts strategy.</p> <p>Overall, the response is at the low end of the mid-range.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

The heart of the proposal is to provide access to technology (computers and devices) and high quality digital content to students, to educators, and through ASAP centers, to parents as well.

In terms of technical support, the district says it has assessed its IT support needs and it plans to hire 1 additional technician. While not mentioned here, the ASAP centers would also have a part time staff person who can help students and parents use computers. Given that the school district is moving from a pilot of 1:1 in a single middle school to district-wide implementation across 16 schools, it is questionable whether the proposed increase in technology support is commensurate with the increase in technology support needs.

The response describes the district's current information technology systems. PowerSchool contains instructionally related data and has built in links to the State Longitudinal Data System, a parent portal, instructional programs, etc... Munis integrates core budget functions, including human capital management, budget, payroll, revenue, etc....

The application does not state whether PowerSchool allows export of data in open data format. Nor does it state whether its systems are interoperable as defined by RTT-D and the description suggests that they are not.

Given that the response is strong in ensuring access to technology but weak in other elements of (D)(2), a rating at the bottom of the mid-range is appropriate.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

A real strength of the proposal overall is the attention to collection and use of appropriate data. Specifically, the response to (E)(1) contains a thoughtful and robust plan for monitoring progress overtime. It provides a chart laying out what data is tracked (e.g. technology proficiency), the collection instrument used (e.g. 8th grade technology proficiency assessment), and the purpose (e.g. seeing the extent to which 8th graders are capable of applying technology skills). In addition to the more expected measures (summative and interim assessment, discipline referrals, ASAP center participation rates, graduation rates, teacher observation tools), interesting approaches to monitoring progress include frequent walkthroughs using an observational tool to assess technology effective use in the classroom; walkthroughs using an observation tool to assess student engagement levels; and monitoring of content on iTunes university and iBook Authoring to assess levels of teacher digital publication. The district also plans to hire an outside evaluator to assist in data collection, disaggregation and dissemination. One weakness in the data collection plan is the lack of apparent lack of measures of personalization that tie the monitoring back to overarching goals of the initiative. Nor, given the significant student learning data one would expect to be generated by digital learning tools, is there sufficient attention to how that data would be used to foster continuous improvement.

The response is less strong, however, in describing the process and structures it plans to use to publically share data and determine whether and how corrections and improvements are to be made based on the data analysis. It does not describe standing advisory committees or other approaches to ensure that internal and external stakeholders understand progress and challenge and can determine needed modifications. While the application states generally that school teams will have access to data for improvement, there is no concrete process and accountability structure spelled out to ensure that data translates to action.

Overall, this response is in the mid-range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district intends to share data in a wide range of ways including: newsletters, websites, newspaper articles, parent meetings, school council meetings, central office meetings, student council meetings, etc... This is a fairly typical one-way communication strategy; the evaluator and central office get the data and determine the message and send it out to others to receive. The proposal does not describe any other meaningful mechanisms for engaging and gathering substantive input from

teachers, principals, students, parents and other stakeholders to inform modifications of the district's plan over time. For this reason, a low rating is warranted.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

LCSS has provided a large number of performance measures (depending on how they are counted, there are 20 or more). It has not provided a rationale for its choices except to mention that it has included a measure of teacher and principal effectiveness because tracking this is “a fundamental best practice in achieving our goal of an improved graduation rate and positive school climate.” It also has not explained how each measure would provide rigorous, timely, formative information tailored to its proposed plan, although the incorporation of some the measures in the proposal's discussion of continuous improvement shows that the district sees some of these measures as part of its continuous improvement strategy. It also does not discuss how it will review and improve measures over time.

Many of the measures do appear to be reasonably related to the applicants plan (e.g. teacher and leader effectiveness; assessment results in math and literacy; Lexile scores; FASFA completion; discipline referrals). Others, while often measures of important dimension of progress, do not appear to link tightly to the actual activities and strategies proposed by the district (e.g. fitness assessment) or are unclear (e.g. Project Success 9th and 10th grade course).

Given that the response does not provide a rationale, use case, or improvement process for the measures and the fact that some measures do not, at least on their face, appear to be aligned with major initiative strategies and goals, the rating for this response is in the low range.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The response recognizes that heretofore “technology has been placed on top of antiquated models” and that now the district has the opportunity to instead transform its schools. It also mentions that the district has experienced deep budget cuts, teacher furloughs and other retrenching. However, the district does not include here or elsewhere in its discussion of evaluation a plan to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of or productivity gains resulting from its strategies. Thus, the response is rated in the low range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

LCSS requests \$21,487,599. It does not request indirect costs. It states that RTT-D funds will be the primary funding source for Project STEP. Its budget does not identify other funding sources; however, it is clear that in its district-wide implementation of the initiative the district is allocating myriad staff (who are paid by other local, state and perhaps federal funds) towards the successful implementation of this strategy.

The major elements of the budget are:

Program manager - \$385,000

3 specialists in integrating technology into instruction - \$960,000

1 IT staff - \$160,000

Travel (for trainer mileage within county plus teacher travel to unspecified outside meetings and trainings) - \$400,000

Equipment (10,000 e-devices, 509 laptops, AV systems for classrooms, 509 carts) - \$8 million

Tech related supplies (headphones, device covers, keyboards, surge protectors, etc... for 10,000 units) - \$1,675,000

Contracts for outside professional development on various topics (conceptual learning, digital publishing, learning styles, UDL, data collection and analysis) and 3d party program evaluation - \$2,000,000

Training stipends for teachers - \$400,000

Digital learning materials (software, apps, digital textbooks) - \$6,000,000

Center for Teaching Innovation (technology, other equipment, furniture for model classroom) - \$1,100,000

ASAP centers (staff 5 hours a week during afterschool hours in school media centers) -\$210,000

Overall, the budget appears reasonable and sufficient for most of the items included. The proposal does not provide a detailed rationale for each budget item but does, through the budget narrative and the application as a whole, provide reasonable explanation why most items support the overall strategy.

There are some areas where it is difficult to evaluate the reasonableness of the budget due to lack of information. For example, the budget allocates \$6 million to digital learning materials but nowhere in the application is there discussion of what materials they plan to select, or even what process and criteria they might use for selection (e.g. can teachers buy materials themselves, will the district adopt new textbooks district wide, will committees of teachers screen materials before purchase). Also, almost \$400,000 for travel to unspecified conferences and trainings invites question. Elsewhere in the comments it is already noted that the district would provide more confidence that the heavy investment in contracted professional development would pay off in improvements in teacher practice if there were more specificity about how it expects to achieve the expertise, time and culture that supports effective school level coaching, support and supervision to help teachers transfer what they learn in summer workshops and other trainings into on-going practice. Finally, the investment in ASAP centers seems low given the hopes that these centers will become afterschool hubs for students and parents to have access to technology, books, and homework help.

The district states that all costs are on-going other than technology equipment purchases. The district does not appear to factor in replacement and upgrading of technology over time.

In terms of sustaining personalized learning environments overtime, the district appears to have two basic strategies. First, it states that local and Title I funds will be used to sustain the project, "if funds are available." Second, while not explicitly stated in the budget section, it's clear from the application as a whole that the district hopes that once the technology is purchased, teachers trained under the grant, and existing instructional specialists, principals and central office staff better understand how to support personalized learning that teachers will need much less on-going support and that there will more district capacity to support teachers in this work.

Overall, given the strengths and weaknesses in the budget, a mid-range rating is appropriate.

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

Some of the district's proposed investments are likely to support the long-term sustainability of the project's goals. Certainly, the investment in building educator capacity, digital resources purchased and developed, and technology purchased will persist beyond the life of the grant. However, the district provides no substantive response to (F)(2), stating merely that local and Title I funds will be used to sustain the project, "if funds are available." It offers no plan, no budget information, and no evidence of future financial support from state, local or community leaders. Thus, a low rating is warranted.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	1

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district has not demonstrated evidence of a partnership that will integrate public or private resources to augment school resources by providing additional supports to address social, emotional and behavioral needs of students.

In responding to this priority Liberty describes its current work in early literacy and how its Project STEP proposal will help it more effectively increase literacy skills in pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade. It points to the fact that pre-K is included in Project STEP, ASAP centers that will allow families access to book-rich environments and support them selecting appropriate books for their young children and enjoy parent-child time, and provide ELLs and SWD access to digital reading materials thus increasing access and engagement. The district states that has “partnered with the state” to fully implement Bright from the Start early learning program (it is a bit unclear whether this is a pre-school program or a pre-K to 3 early literacy program and whether or not it is a state-wide program). The district also provides population level outcomes appropriate to an early literacy focus (although it provides no actual targets).

While all these strategies may be admirable and effective, they do not meet the requirements of the competitive priority. There is no evidence of a coherent and sustainable partnership, there is no evidence of integration of public or private resources in order to augment the district’s work, there is no explicit focus on social, emotional or behavioral needs, there is not sufficient evidence about how educator capacity would be built to implement the strategy.

Because of these weaknesses, the rating is in the low range.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

This application has met the absolute priority. It addresses how it intends to improve teaching and learning through personalization of strategies, tools and supports aligned with the Common Core standards accelerate achievement, deepen learning, increase educator effectiveness, decrease achievement gaps and increase graduation rates. While there are weaknesses in the application that have led to low scores in some areas, overall the absolute priority is met.

Total	210	77
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