



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1071MS-1 for Lowndes County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: The consortium has provided a vision of reform for the school districts that is coherent if not fully comprehensive. The consortium plans to support personalized learning environments through student learning plans and management systems. Further, it has worked on the physical space for learning for each student. It also addresses Common Core content and College and Career Ready Standards.		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: The consortium of districts described an intent to have one school district from each Congressional district, as well as meet the specific guidelines established in the application process. Further, The consortium of districts lists the participating schools from each district and well as the number of participants.		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: The consortium has stated that the centerpiece of its reform scalability will be the learning management system. This system will grow to include content for student learning, content for educator professional development, and video capture of instruction. The consortium does not address how the reform effort will grow to other schools in the districts or beyond the consortium.		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: While the consortium does address the required performance measures, it does not break them down by district. It is impossible to determine the scope of progress to be achieved or the baseline of each district, as defined in the application's guidance.		

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	8
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: The consortium does not adequately address a track record of improvement for each of the school districts in the consortium. Further, the data and narrative presented do not highlight ambitious reforms in the identified districts. Finally, there is little evidence of student data shared.		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium does have each district provide financial information on its individual website for the salaries of personnel at each school building. It does not provide to the public non-personnel expenditures. It states that budgets are available to school sites. The consortium does not make clear whether it addresses actual salaries for teachers and instructional staff publicly or only to those individuals in those defined categories through its contract distribution.

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

10

3

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium does not adequately address how each district has been successful in creating the conditions for personalized learning environments, nor has it demonstrated the necessary statutory autonomy from the state.

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

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Stakeholders were engaged primarily through the use of a survey to determine the vision and scope of personalized learning environments for students in the consortium. Stakeholders also had the opportunity to attend meetings to learn more about personalized learning environments, provide feedback on the grant application, and coordinate efforts among the districts.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium does address achievement gaps, poverty levels, and graduate rates are areas in need of improvement. It does not adequately address how personalized learning environments are a logically solution to address these concerns.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium has demonstrated a strong support for a student management system as the driver of personalized learning environments. It has focused efforts on educators creating content for the system and using the system for student performance growth. The consortium does address the role of pedagogy among teachers, but it appears to be tied to the use of the learning management system. The consortium has not addressed the specific components of personalized learning environments that will improve student achievement.

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

20

11

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium does address the need for professional development to support the shift in instruction needed for personalized learning environments. It recognizes that teachers will need support to use current practices in new ways. For example, teachers will still need to collect and analyze data to support student progress. Further, teachers will need to have pedagogical discussions about how to support personal learning plans for each student. Also, teachers will need to understand what are personalized learning environments. The consortium does provide significant evidence on content professional development, but very little evidence or support for pedagogical changes that will need to be made for personalized learning environments. How to create and support personalized learning environments by teachers is not well documented.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: The consortium has identified a project director to lead the reform efforts as well as School Leadership teams in each school building to enact the reform implementation. The consortium states students will be able to progress upon mastery and earn credits flexibly, but it does not cite any policies or procedures. It does address how students with special needs may access the learning management system.		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: The learning management system cited by the consortium will be available to student during and after school as well as technology devices to interface with the management system. By not having access to all students outside of the school day, the consortium is unable to provide equitable access to all students. Further, a basic tenet of personalized learning cannot be realized if students cannot learn "anytime, anywhere". The consortium states there will be devices for checkout but it does not address if it has enough devices to meet demand.		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: The consortium is relying on data from the student learning management system to make system improvements for professional development, technology, and staff allocations. The data in the system is not designed to meet so many program evaluation needs. The consortium does not explain how the content for professional development that may be housed in the management system can be used for program evaluation.		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: The consortium does plan to offer a variety of communication opportunities at various intervals to inform stakeholders about student progress, educator professional capacity, infrastructure improvements and financial investments.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: The consortium provides measures, but it does not provide a rationale for the measures chosen. It also does not indicate when the measures will be taken or reviewed.		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: The consortium plans to seek the advice of stakeholders for the personalized learning environments. It will also one of the district's evaluation protocols for professional development. It is unclear how the technological knowledge of teachers will be evaluated. The consortium does not address who will be in charge of evaluating the investments in this reform initiative.		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The consortium has outlined how federal and state funds will be used to support ongoing expenditures for the personalized learning environments initiative. The consortium has also provided detailed descriptions of the sub-projects.		

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The consortium does not address the sustainability of the reform initiative, except for the cost of the videoconferencing equipment.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The consortium has vaguely identified its partners in this effort. It has not established a clear need for the partners to be involved in the work described. The consortium has not identified ambitious goals to be achieved within the Competitive Preference Priority. Further, there is no process or timeline to collect data on the measures indicated.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The consortium has not addressed the specific components of personalized learning environments that will improve student achievement. While it works to build the capacity of its teachers and leaders with professional development, technology resources, and a learning management system, it has not clearly and comprehensively demonstrated a strong vision of personalized learning environments, nor has it demonstrated a compelling process to implement or monitor this change. They have provided evidence to improve student achievement, expand the effectiveness of educators and expand access to effective educators. But, I do not think the consortium has demonstrated an ability to accelerate student learning or deepen student learning.		

Total	210	115
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	7
Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments: The consortium recognizes that technology plays an ever-increasing role in the engagement of a learner. It is laudable for the consortium to want to purchase digital book readers for high school students. The program goals and actions do not suggest a high probability of success.		

Race to the Top - District



Technical Review Form

Application #1071MS-2 for Lowndes County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application clearly outlines a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that incorporates 21st century skills and personalized learning environments for students and teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creation of a 21st century learning environment that allows for anytime anywhere access to personalized learning environment's tools and resources • provide real-time outcome performance based monitoring • needed resources delivered based on those outcomes • acceleration of each student's achievement • deepen students learning • increased equity of the system through personalized student support including high interest common and individualized tasks • infusion of 21st century skills within everyday classroom activities • decrease the digital divide and ensure all students graduate on time college and career ready. <p>Inclusion of a comprehensive data management system to support student success was included in the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning management system as the central control system to provide real time performance data from preK-12 • provide students instructional support needed to meet his/her personalized learning goals • system will identify each students' needs and learning gaps based on learning progressions and mastery of graduation requirements • teachers will have access to professional development anytime anywhere • teachers can develop and implement digital learning resources as needed to support student success • parent, student, and teacher have access anytime anywhere. <p>Personalized learning environments will begin in the classroom through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student access to computers where they can navigate instructions, assessments and the connect community • real time environments for online collaboration in the classroom, in study groups, with educators, with students, with real world experts, and with the global community • desks replaced with tables and chairs and dividers for students to personalize their learning spaces • learning management systems allowing teachers to use his/her pedagogies to deliver instructions and assessments via digital platform • students' personalized sequence of instruction and unprecedented level of individualized instructions • instruction always connected to personalized learning goals and needs • digital educational resources available: lecture capture, video-on-demand web access to classes through video streaming; flipped learning resources, etc. <p>The plan's comprehensive vision fully meets the criteria.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Lowndes County Schools' implementation approach is impactful, exposing a wide range of stakeholders to personalized</p>		

learning environments and 21st century knowledge, skills, and abilities:

- one school district from each of the Congressional Districts in Mississippi will participate in grant influencing change state-wide
- Superintendents from each district were invited to an informational grant meeting
- interested districts submitted eligibility requirements
- districts were chosen based on eligibility requirements and poverty indexes for the county (poverty index must be 40 or higher and eligible for Title I and Title VI funding)
- 6 school districts were chosen to participate (Lowndes, West Point, Noxubee, Wilkinson, Oktibbeha, and Jefferson Counties) servicing 13,757 students and 1,296 educators with 40% from low-income families
- Lowndes District - 9 schools; West Point district - 6 schools; Noxubee District - 4 schools; Wilkerson District - 4 schools; Oktibbeha District - 4 schools; and, Jefferson District - 4 schools
- schools will be served based on grade bands in reading, language arts and mathematics at all elementary, middle and high schools.
- high need student population was identified in each district/school

The applicant clearly defined their approach to selection of participating districts and schools within the six districts.

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

The applicant presented a plan has potential to be scaled up and broadened to a district level:

- the learning management system provides real time performance data in relation to college and career readiness and graduation requirement
- evaluation is based on assessments that are aligned to college and career ready standards and/or college and career graduation requirements
- assessments provide evidence to teacher and parents that the student has mastered a set of skills and objectives before moving along their learning progressions contained in their personalized learning goals and plans
- system has flexibility to add or delete alignments as performance data and new research indicate a better pathway of learning
- system will generate personalized learning recommendations based on student's current knowledge and skills via pre/post assessments
- students will receive available lists of resources from a variety of sources for tutorial or remediation purposes
- student learning is always connected and aligned to their personalized learning goals and needs based on college and career graduation requirements.

Student's individual learning needs and recommendations are available through the learning management system:

- based on performance outcomes and learning progressions each student's needs and learning gaps will be identified and tracked through the data management system beginning in prek-12
- students, parents, administrators and teachers can evaluate students' individual learning plans and revise them accordingly
- remediation and acceleration opportunities are provided through individualized support as evidenced by progression toward goals
- online instructional material is available based on student performance outcomes
- students can master standards at their own pace and learning goals toward college and career readiness
- students are accountable for their own learning and monitor progression toward goals through self-assessments.

Professional development opportunities are available in the plan:

- online self-paced professional development is available for teachers anytime anywhere
- digital professional development available to all teachers
- simultaneously as teachers teach they will be able to incorporate differentiated learning strategies based on students' needs and determine what strategies work for individual students
- effectiveness of professional development can be evaluated based on student performance
- access to real time data allows teachers to incorporate individual learning strategies for each student and assess the strategy immediately
- digital platform allows teachers flexibility to implement personal pedagogies, assess their own skills, and make adjustments daily
- learning system will allow for individual student strategies to be available district-wide (knowledge sharing)

teachers will have the capacity to develop and implement digital learning resources as needed to ensure student's success.

Plan calls for leveraging of technological solutions to videotape lectures and create videos-on-demand.

- allows for the creation of an online learning platform that is flexible, scalable, and will allow for the sharing of any video content
- can be accessed on computers and mobile devices
- facilitate the delivery of instructional materials for students as well as curriculum for professional development of teachers and administrators
- sharing of curriculum across the consortium
- each consortium can customize the web access to the video-on-demand system allowing their specific coursework and professional development
- public can access grant status on a quarterly basis
- required modules for students and teachers available and tracked through learning system
- addresses the individual and collective needs of students, educators and families.

The applicant clearly conveyed the potentiality of the plan to be broadened to include non-participating districts/schools.

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

The applicant clearly identified achievable performance growth measures for specific schools groups as specified in the selection criteria:

- targeted student growth outlined in reading over time as compared to baseline data in 2012 reflects overall increase of 2-3% alternate years. For example, baseline data percentage was 73% for all students, the goal for 2013 is 75% and 78% for 2014 and so forth until year 2017. No rationale for this variance was given
- targeted student growth for specific school groups vary with similar alternate year percentage variations in math
- goals for addressing the high needs students to diminish the achievement was clearly reflected in the plan through incremental growth each year with variations of 2-5% yearly
- graduation rate goals indicated 2-4% growth through 2017, post-grant
- college enrollment goals suggests 2-6% incremental growth through 2017.

Applicant fully included the data required for this selection 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	7

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presented extensive school performance data. Based on the displayed interpretation of the data:

- one elementary school achieved star status by the Mississippi Department of Education based on achievement results of the state test Mississippi Curriculum Test 2nd edition
- star status credited with effective leadership, instructional planning, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students all accountable for academic progress of all students
- some schools with Lowndes County School District met the state's accountability measures, but did not meet proficiency in the annual measurable objectives within specific school groups such as special education or the overall school performance
- data indicates an achievement gap in the areas of language arts, especially in 7th and 8th grades
- low-performing schools have eliminated ineffective programs and closely monitored effective programs for implementation fidelity

- regular assessment have been administered to all students in grades 2-5 in Language Arts and Math to monitor student success and address student weaknesses.

Student performance data is shared with stakeholders in a variety of ways:

- individual student scores are provided to parents
- district report cards are made available via the school and district websites; parents can request a paper copy
- quarterly school report cards and progress reports are disseminated
- daily access to all stakeholders available on the student management system including daily grades, term grades, homework, and attendance.

Data-driven instructional practices are emphasized to improve student performance:

- application of knowledge and real world practice
- moving from multiple choice responses to requiring explanation and justification for answers
- collaboration and collegiality required at and across all grade levels
- peer coaching sessions and common planning time for grade level teachers
- professional development opportunities exposing teachers to research-based strategies.

Outcomes to improve high school graduation rates and college enrollment were not included. Although district performance reports were available in the appendix, a written explanation to interpret district reports toward meeting state targets would have been helpful to accurately interpret the data in a succinct manner.

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

The applicant discussed the districts' processes for implementing transparent processes:

- through establishing and expanding programs that prove effective in providing accurate and tangible information
- all school- level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration are available to the public
- personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional support staff is currently posted on each school district's website under Personnel Handbook section and hand-delivered to the actual employees
- an at-will agreement is in place for instructional and non-instructional employees outlining start dates, days in which their contract requires them to work and their rate of pay; same at-will agreement exists for teachers
- access to the combined budget is available to the public
- non-personnel information was provided through the district's overall budget, but not explicitly addressed.

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

The plan provides some evidence of autonomy and flexibility between State legal, statutory and regulatory requirements:

- personalized learning environments are directed by local school district's central office, the Tutor and Assessment Coordinators or local school lead teacher
- Tutor and Assessment Coordinators or local school lead teachers are hired through federal funds and work in compliance with all district, state, and federal laws
- Tutor and Assessment Coordinators or local school lead teachers are responsible for assessing student needs and providing service to help these students become college and career ready and to meet graduation requirements
- using multiple data points, the Tutor and Assessment Coordinators or local school lead teachers create individual educational interventions for struggling students throughout the year
- an Assessment Supervisor creates the district-wide report card; and, along with the other coordinators and lead teachers, the school improvement plan is written, which guides the overall instruction within the individual schools.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presented support from various stakeholders:

- parental involvement is actively encouraged and supported by the school district
- parents, teachers, and principals were invited to participate in the Students of Tomorrow Race to the Top grant meetings for two weeks
- parents had the opportunity to view the grant during its working stages in various capacities-participation through subcommittees or volunteering
- parents completed a survey detailing the personal learning environment to be created through the grant
- grant committee members were selected, elected and appointed
- information was collected from parents, students, principals and community leaders
- time was allotted for the stakeholders to review the policies, programs and procedures.

Letters supporting the Consortium's implementation of personalized learning environment:

- Superintendent Lowndes County expressed firm support of goals to improve students' learning process
- Congressman Alan Nunnelee wrote that the grant would help Mississippi students achieve remarkable changes in their lives
- Mayer Robert E. Boykin believes that the district's effort to challenge all students to attain their personal best is a critical part of quality education
- other letters from the Lowndes County Supervisor; Lieutenant Governor of Mississippi, Mississippi Senator, various Mayors, and Interim Deputy State Superintendent expresses similar support.

Letters from the Consortium's Parent Teacher Associations and teachers were not submitted in the plan.

The collective bargaining representation or non-collective bargaining representation was not explicitly stated for teachers, instructional staff, or principals.

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

The plan clearly outlines the foundational purposes and need for educational reform through personalized learning environments:

- a needs assessment survey compiled using student performance data, grades, attendance reports, and discipline reports is administered to all employees, students, and parents to create a school-wide plan that drives the instruction for the year
- current data analysis indicates several needs for instruction in reading, language arts and mathematics - the proposed plan would begin with preK in order to increase long-term student achievement
- the state currently has limited preK programs with high poverty schools in a high poverty state, 35% of young children lived in poor families as compared to 25% nationally
- The poverty rate in participating districts/schools ranges from 52.68% to 94.85%, with two school districts' poverty rate unrecorded
- corresponding drop-out rates range from 13.3% to 28.6%.

The applicant has a comprehensive plan to increase personalized learning environments from preK-12:

- expand preK classes through hiring and training teachers and monitoring preK programs (ratio 10:1) based on the Mississippi learning standards
- schools will work with parents through parenting programs and implement new curriculum such as Treasure reading program
- classrooms will be equipped with computers and new assessment administered such as the Children's Progress Academic Assessment
- middle schools will implement personalized learning environments in all language arts and mathematics classes utilizing the latest instructional technology including: student computers/laptops; promethean boards; and, smart boards with lecture capture
- each student will be able to check out a laptop with internet capability, theft proof software, and system filters
- extended school day to accommodate a remedial math class for students scoring below proficient on the state assessment
- every school will have certified tutors in language arts and mathematics to assist students via personalized learning environments.

The project would span over the four-year award period and then move to state or locally funded programming at the end of

the fourth year.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's plan encompasses comprehensive outcomes for preparing college and career ready students through personalized learning environments and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students with teachers and the support of parents will create individual personal learning plans based on his/her college or career goals • teachers will have the capability to direct students' learning with assessments for anytime anywhere learning to ensure students are involved in deep learning experiences aligned to their personal goals • instruction that incorporates 21st century learning skills such as goal-setting, teamwork, critical thinking • instruction will include lessons and learning activities that consider varying cultures, contexts, and perspectives that encourage the development and growth of student communication, creativity, and perseverance • curriculum planning involving school districts will produce rigorous and relevant coursework and meet college requirements and provide the opportunity for students to earn college credits while in high school • exposure to adopted Common Core Standards. <p>Research-based instructional approaches along with professional development is a district expectation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher belief system about student potential with the appropriate scaffolding and gradually released as rigorous thinking is achieved • provide each consortia member access to online user management system • provide teachers the skills needed to use their pedagogies to direct individual student learning • training on using the system to direct individual student learning • create a personalized learning plan for each student aligned to college and career goals as related to Common Core standards and plans to close the achievement gap • training on analysis of longitudinal database reports and real time performance outcome data and high quality content. 		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Solid learning outcomes and professional development opportunities for teachers and students were enumerated in the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two primary outcomes listed for the project: create 21st century learning in every classroom through use of virtual computing and to provide an online learning management system for guiding anytime anywhere individualized instructions and assessments via the digital teaching platform aligned to college and career goals and graduation requirements • plan will support tools, strategies, real time performance outcomes, and the ability for teachers to guide individualized instruction that meets the academic needs of every child • multiple opportunities and multiple modalities for students to demonstrate mastery • interventions will serve as a key to reverse low achievement • include writing across the curriculum, not just in English • students can monitor their own rate of progress. <p>Instructional shifts for teacher practice were aligned to accomplishing goals for personalized learning environments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study groups led by professional development coordinators to move teacher from insructional practices in acquisition based instruction to adaptation based learning • data-driven instructional decision-making, which will require teachers to use data to determine instructional direction • training will be offered to teach teachers how to examine assessments (summative and formative) to determine students with needs and how to address those needs as well as students who've mastered content • support teachers in attending state and national conferences to deepen their understanding of personalized learning environments. • study groups to reflecting and examine current practices as a catalyst for growth and change in teacher practice 		

- incorporate interdisciplinary professional learning communities with clearly stated learning goals and objectives
- teacher accountability in accurately recording student performance data, successes and challenges
- teacher considers learning goals (what students need to know and be able to do); assess to find out what students already know; and, find the appropriate methods to support student mastery.

An extensive teacher evaluation system was included in the plan:

- teacher evaluation includes five domains
- Domain I: Planning - demonstrate knowledge of content and pedagogy; differentiated lessons; selection of higher level learning for all students; instruction that aligns with Mississippi Curriculum Framework and Common Core Standards, when applicable
- Domain II: Assessment - collects, organizes, and provides feedback on student data; incorporates assessments in instruction
- Domain III: Instruction - demonstrates deep knowledge of content during instruction; actively engage students in learning process; uses questioning and discussion techniques to promote higher order thinking skills; multiples perspectives in delivery of instruction; clear and effective communication
- Domain IV: Learning Environment - manages classroom space and resources effectively for student learning; creates and maintains a climate of safety, respect, and support for all students; maximizes instruction time; establishes and maintains a culture of learning and high expectations; manages student behavior to provide productive learning opportunities for all students.

Tools for evaluating the effectiveness of administrators and executive staff (instructional support personnel; superintendent) was not available in the grant.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposal provides a clear picture of the hierarchical structure proposed to maintain organizational fidelity:

- organization of Consortium begins with the superintendents and federal program directors of each district
- participating superintendents will designate project contact lead, who will report to the grant director and carry out the vision of the grant, monitor and supervise coordinators assigned to each district
- organizational chart identifying the chain of command, roles and responsibilities and levels of expectations for each person working within the grant
- all grant employees will be evaluated on the state adopted teacher evaluation, principal evaluation and superintendent evaluation system
- Lowndes County Schools will be the fiscal agent for the district grant.

The plan proposes transparent process that allows access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources:

- school leadership teams will consist of the building level administrators, lead teachers and district grant coordinator who will create a school level organizational chart, yearly schedules and annual calendars
- schools will have flexibility and autonomy in hiring personnel and monitoring the personalized learning environment of each student.

The online learning systems provides access to personalized learning goals:

- online learning system will house student performance outcomes and be accessible anytime anywhere to allow students to earn credit on demonstrated mastery, rather than the time spent on a specified content
- management system allows teachers to guide students through a rigorous set of instructions inside and outside of the classroom
- multiple assessment instruments aligned to the college and career ready standards will produce real time performance outcomes
- students have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery using multiple modalities with multiple opportunities
- web-based program provides coursework based on student's performance outcomes, ability levels, and teacher

recommendations

- students with special needs will be assisted by assistant teachers, lab assistants, and tutors with strategic professional development.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identified multiple opportunities for all stakeholders to access student performance data and progress towards college and career goals:

- participating students, parents, and educators will use technology to improve the personalized learning environment through access to technology during and after school hours
- resources include: iPads, promethean boards, wireless internet access, and mobile laptops
- online technical support available via live chat mechanism provided by the district
- use of technology to gather informational data and receive assistance to help support their personalized learning capabilities.

The comprehensive online learning management system will:

- allow teachers to assign instructional material, including remediation, and assessments aligned to college and career ready standards
- provide automatic updates on student performance
- laptops will increase student engagement throughout the day and can be checked out for home use
- administrators, teachers, parents, and students will receive technical training and support throughout the year
- parents and students can view individual test scores and longitudinal data
- individualized, detailed plans of remediation or instructional resources based on each child's current level of mastery
- electronic tutorials provided based on individual plan
- data system will house all data, both academic and personal for all enrolled students
- participating schools will have access to interoperable student data system with exporting capabilities.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The following cursory continuous improvement measures included in the plan are:

- aligned to Common Core standards that can be reviewed, analyzed period by period, quarter to quarter, and year to year
- immediate and timely feedback on progress toward project goals
- opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant based on student achievements
- provisions for teachers and administrators to monitor their own progress short and long term.

While the opportunities for immediate feedback and continuous was clear, additional specific information on a high-quality approach for soliciting feedback from stakeholders would have been beneficial to the reviewer.

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

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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The communication and engagement opportunities available to internal and external stakeholders include:

- quality, comparative reports will be provided yearly for all stakeholders to review and make comments
- reports contain a description of funds expenditures
- periodic newsletters, telephone messaging system, open house, PTO meetings and parental involvement meetings

stakeholders will be able to follow students and districts progress through the online learning system related to college and career readiness and graduation requirements

- online system contains user friendly longitudinal data aligned to Common Core State Standards and tracks students' progress toward individual learning goals
- online data system house information about effectiveness of teachers' strategies and how well the district addresses instructional interventions for learning.

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

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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The plan demonstrates appropriate performance measures with sound rationale for outcome selections:

- chose measures to ensure students including school groups are taught by highly qualified teachers and administrators through an adopted teacher appraisal rubric - student surveys will be administered once yearly to provide feedback to teachers and administrators; teachers will conduct self-assessments with a more stringent plan in place to address underperforming teachers
- PreK-3 goals include read proficiently (on grade level) and the ability to communicate effectively
- 4-8 goals including developing in-depth readers through advanced analysis; communicate effectively; and begin completing college and career readiness requirements
- 9-12 goals include preparation to complete financial aids forms; participating students by subgroup on track toward graduation requirements; communicate effectively in workplace settings; and, to engage in a variety of collaborative conversations including peer-led discussions, paired reading and responding, and cooperative group
- the intention of the high school measures ensures students are on track to complete all college and career requirements. Social development skills are embedded to sufficiently prepare students for success at the post-secondary level. Yearly career and college assessments will be administered to track completion of goals.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The plan contains reasonable broad efforts to determine the effectiveness of the Race to the Top District funds:

- opportunities for internal and external stakeholders to submit suggestions for improving the college and career ready personalized technology-based learning environment through a district-created survey and/or evaluation form
- data results from surveys and evaluation forms will be analyzed by the grant committee and shared at yearly school level meetings and made publicly available through individual's school websites, media alert, podcasting, email, and a posting in community leaders' and partners' facilities
- professional development will be evaluated using the Lowndes County School district professional development evaluation form
- the school district will monitor use of new technologies throughout the school year
- effectiveness of resources will be evaluated by teachers, test scores, computer programs' software reports, reductions in the number of tier II and tier III students, and budgets
- content library needs will be measured, automated and monitored by teachers and curriculum coordinators
- IT managers will ensure video solutions operate successfully with existing systems and applications that protect the IT investments
- testing and certification capabilities will be monitored to create and maintain a flexible and scalable online learning platform. A software program for managing testing and certification will allow multi-format options for tests and survey questions; test/pass failure thresholds that can be programmatically set; the ability to trigger tests upon completion of a video; the ability to group tests and videos in a series; and, response tracking to questions or surveys.

Improvement goals related to compensation reform, working with community partners, and modifications of school schedules/structures were not addressed.

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's response to this criteria outlined the technological infrastructure and supports currently in place within the school district/Consortium:

- infrastructure connected using ATT Metro E with HP servers and switches
- school campuses connected with Fiber technologies with Barracuda as the internet filtering software
- 150-200 promethean boards in the district and utilized at all schools
- 1,300 networked computers with wireless technology and access points at all schools; some schools have N-computing stations
- one technology coordinator and one network manager along with two information specialists are currently employed by the district.

Grant funds will be used to: hire appropriate personnel; travel expenses; initial purchase of computer programs, equipment and supplies; contractual obligations; training stipends, and other expenses directly linked to supporting personalized learning environments.

Separate state and federal funds will be used to support the personalized learning environments include:

- up to 20%, any additional salaries except preK
- ongoing professional development
- supplementary resources to pay for tutors or extra staff as needed
- transportation costs
- licensure renewals and software upgrades
- continuation of the proposed plan post-grant.

Detailed descriptions of budget items were listed along with respective salaries and other related expenses.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicated the following areas for sustainability through district, state, and federal funds (non-grant funds):

- up to 20%, any additional salaries except preK
- ongoing professional development
- supplementary resources to pay for tutors or extra staff as needed
- transportation costs
- licensure renewals and software upgrades
- continuation of the proposed plan post-grant.

The applicant inferred an option for rolling the budgeted amount for the videoconferencing equipment maintenance contracts after the initial 100% investment from the grant as a savings for the equipment cycle in years four and five.

The plan to sustain the program demonstrates some ability of the consortium to maintain the program, but not specifically at the level during the grant years. A detailed, high quality post-grant plan that included potential sources and uses of funds would have appropriately addressed this criteria.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant described some level of partnerships with public and private organizations:

- some schools partner with YMCA agencies to assist with afterschool care
- some industry partners will support special activities

- partners will be asked to provide data regarding college and career readiness expectations
- partners will be invited to speak with students and staff regarding opportunities for careers and expectations from employees
- partners can provide mentoring opportunities for students and will be invited to meetings related to grant
- partners will provide suggestions and ideas for improving programs including remediation and acceleration efforts.

Plan identifies three population-level desired results:

- preK-3: academic, students will demonstrate proficient performance on the end of the year standardized test
- 4-8: academic, students will be on track with all career readiness and graduation requirements
- 9-12: academic, increased graduation rate; all students will enroll in post-secondary programs

The ideas expressed in this criteria do not directly state established partnerships, decision-making processes to evaluate the program and supports, or the needs and assets of students supported by the partnerships.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant reasonably addressed the criteria for Absolute Priority 1 by building on the core educational assurances areas through:

- creation of a 21st century learning environment that allows for anytime anywhere access to personalized learning environment's tools and resources; providing real-time performance based monitoring with needed resources delivered based on those outcomes. Deepening students' learning through rigorous, online instruction via digital platform and other media and providing personalized student support based on high interest collective and individual tasks.

Inclusion of a comprehensive data management system to support student success through a learning management system that provides real time student performance from preK-12. Management system provides students instructional support needed to meet his/her personalized learning goals including remediation and acceleration. Parent, student, teacher, and administrator access ensures progress monitoring toward student mastery of individual learning goals. System will identify each student's needs and learning gaps based on learning progressions and mastery of graduation requirements. Student access to computers where they can navigate instructions, assessments and the connected community anytime anywhere allows students the opportunity to master content in their own time.

Plan addresses professional development and growth of teachers with an adopted and established evaluation system to ensure all students are taught by highly qualified and effective staff. Teachers will deliver personalized sequence of instruction using digital education resources such as: lecture capture, video-on-demand, web-access to classes through video-streaming, flipped learning resources, and more.

Total	210	139
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1071MS-3 for Lowndes County School District



A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has described a coherent and ambitious vision that they describe as starting an education revolution in Mississippi. As such, the applicant describes a plan in which students, teachers and parents will have access to learning resources anytime and anywhere.</p> <p>The applicant has a very focused plan on teacher effectiveness, providing teachers with feedback in real time to be able to adjust individualized learning approaches, access professional development in which they can earn certificates, and provide additional tools to students based on data and state goals. This demonstrates the applicant's understanding of the value effective teaching has in learning and the priority on which they have placed having effective teachers in classrooms.</p> <p>If the project described is implemented, students will be become engaged in their learning and take more control of their educational experience, enabling to reach college and career ready goals.</p> <p>The applicant articulates a well thought out vision and sees this as an opportunity to transform education not only within the consortium but throughout their state. .</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant set forth a thorough process that invited districts from each of the congressional districts in their state express interest. Based on the stated criteria and willingness to participate, districts were selected to participate. According to the applicant, of all of the participating students, the criteria for participation has been met within the consortium. It is not clear if all of the participants have been selected, however, the applicant indicates that the consortium will services over 13, 700 children and almost 1300 teachers.</p> <p>The applicant includes a list of districts and their participating schools along with the total numbers of participating students documenting those students who are low-income and high need. Based on the chart provided, it appears the applicant makes synonymous high needs and low income as the numbers are the same in each category in each chart.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the applicant has a strong vision and is able to articulate how students will have access to more personalized learning environments and more effective teaching, the proposal lacks a high quality plan which describes how the applicant will bring this plan to scale to reach beyond the participating student population. The applicant has the vision to transform education is their state but does not describe how this plan will expand beyond the consortium.</p> <p>The applicant does not include a logic model or theory of change but does explain the way in which they want to leverage technology to improve student learning outcomes for all students served in the consortium.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a list of performance measures in areas such as Reading/Language, Math, high school graduation and college enrollment. The applicant does not include any data or goals in the area of Post Secondary Degree attainment. The goals set are ambitious yet achievable. One area of question is the significant gap of college enrollment among White students minority students. It is not clear why there is such a significant gap and what the applicant will do to provide additional support</p>		

for minority students to achieve higher rates of college enrollment to reach parity. For example, Hispanic students at the baseline level are enrolled at 10% and the goal after five years is 30%, whereas White students currently enroll at 77% and the five year goal is 90%. While these goals are ambitious for White students, comparatively, they are low for Hispanics.

The applicant does not include what the state's ESEA targets are for the LEAs.

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>The applicant is able to provide two examples of a school and a district that have been able to make gains. For the school, it lists gains on the state's standardized test, for the district, it lists gains in the areas of the Quality Distribution Index and in graduation rates. While these gains are noteworthy, it is not demonstrative of gains throughout the consortium. Additionally, the applicant does not provide substantive evidence of a clear record of success in student learning outcomes, closing achievement gaps or college enrollment.</p> <p>The applicant mentions low performing schools in the context of reviewing programs and determining which are effective and those that are not. They have eliminated those programs. This strategy demonstrates the willingness to make change and rework programming that benefits students. The applicant does not indicate how these changes have yielded results but it does indicate the district is moving in the right direction.</p> <p>The applicant describes a number of ways in which parents have access to information regarding their students including, individual test scores, report cards for the district and the school, and access to the student management system. It is not clear if this access include actual student performance data. The applicant notes that information such as daily and term grades, homework and attendance. Whether or not information on formative and summative assessments, teacher observations or other information defined as student performance data is included.</p> <p>The applicant does not appear to have substantive evidence across the consortium, however, they have indicated a number of examples of practices being employed to make such gains. They also appear to have a strong commitment to making changes, identifying and replicating best practices, and abandoning those practices found to be ineffective.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant includes a plan by which districts in the consortium are providing expenditures in the areas of instruction, pupil and instructional support and school administration through their websites. In addition, the consortium will produce report cards to be distributed in a number of ways including to the news media. The information provided includes actual personnel salaries at the school level for all instructional and support staff.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	0
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this section, the applicant speaks of the use of Tutor and Assessment Coordinators and their role in schools to offer student an individualized learning opportunity. The applicant does not address the conditions by which the state laws or regulatory requirements provide or prohibit the applicant from implementing personalized learning environments. The applicant does not address the question at all.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes an extensive process in which parents, students, educators and other stakeholders were provided opportunities to review the proposal and provide feedback. The applicant created and disseminated surveys to all stakeholders in participating schools across the consortium to provide feedback on individualized learning opportunities. Based on these surveys, program ideas, policies and practices were implemented.</p> <p>It is clear that a process was created for participation. What is not clear is how many people participated in the process.</p>		

Additionally, the applicant indicates there are letters of support that express the level of appreciation and engagement from stakeholders. Upon review of the letters of support, they are primarily from mayors within the consortium who have signed on to a form letter. There are no letters of support from parents or parent organizations, civic or civil rights groups, and there is no indication in the application or in appendices the level of support from the teacher's organizations or individual teachers.

The extensive process offered to stakeholders is commendable. It is important for the applicant to have documented the support from participants in the process and certainly those who would be directly impacted by the reforms.

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

The applicant provides information on how data is collected at the school and district level that later informs teacher, principals and districts. Based on the data and surveys conducted among parents and school employees, a school wide plan is created to drive instruction the following year. Based on the learnings of the data, the applicant determines there is need in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. Additionally, they plan to enhance Pre-K programming to better prepare students entering the school system.

The applicant goes on to substantiate the need to enhance Pre-K by providing poverty and drop out rates. Finally, the applicant discusses the changes that need to take place in middle grades and plans to ensure students have access to technological devices to enhance their personalized learning opportunities.

The applicant does provide some level of a needs and gaps analysis by pointing out the need to enhance Pre-K programming and focus on Language Arts and Mathematics. Consequently, no high quality plan is offered to indicate the applicant's current status or logic behind the reform proposal. Without a high quality plan, there is no specific timeline, goals, action items, not identify who will be responsible for elements of implementation. It is evident that the applicant understands there is a need for reform but it is not clear if they understand why and which approach is best.

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 has a strong overall vision of increasing opportunities for students' personalized learning. The applicant has a comprehensive set of goals and deliverables that relate to creating a learning management system that can be accessed by all participants in the consortium. However, in regards to a high quality plan, lacks a timeline to achieve these goals.

The applicant does describe a vision in which students will be able to understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals. They also describe their goals to ensure students have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives, as well as goals to help them develop skills such as goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, etc. The applicant does not offer any specifics regarding how these goals will be accomplished or what system will be used to achieve these goals.

The applicant also establishes goals that will ensure parents, students and teachers are trained on how to utilize the learning management system, how to analyze data as well as how to access tools that will provide individualized learning environments. With this system, it will provide the following:

- a way to track a student's success on each standard
- insight on their college and career standards over their entire educational life
- real time performance outcome data from assessments providing insight on a student's progress on personal learning goals
- real time instructional interventions
- access to high quality content

It is clear that the applicant understands the value of using technological tools. The plan lacks detail as to how this tool will be developed, who will develop it and when these actions will take place. The applicant lacks focus on specific strategies for high needs students to ensure they are on track to college and career readiness.

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

In this section, the applicant represents a clear paradigm shift in teaching, learning and ongoing engagement and development for teachers, parents, students and the educational community at large. The applicant presents a clear vision and thought process about the following elements:

- supporting the effective implementation of personalized learning environments
- content and instruction that provides students with opportunities to participate in a number of learning strategies
- access to content and instruction allowing students to participate in common and individual tasks
- the ability to adapt learning and teaching methods based on data
- create environments for teachers to participate in peer learning and training

The applicant provides a comprehensive plan for developing teachers and ensuring they are prepared and feel connected to the larger school community. These strategies include:

- Transition for teaching program for new teachers beginning in the summer and follow up visits from a consultant to train in key areas such as classroom management and building community
- Opportunities for teachers to attend conferences in and out of state based on subject matter and grade band (ie, Middle school)
- Ongoing professional development training (versus a one day) on how to utilize the learning management system and the longitudinal data system to inform teaching and improve effectiveness
- Study groups led by professional development coordinators to enable reflection and examination of current practices

This focus on teacher and leader training establishes the major priority and understanding the applicant has in providing effective teaching to students and the impact it has on student achievement. The applicant also understands that providing such training and support for teachers is a way to invest in teachers and foster their sense of community.

It is clear that the applicant plans to implement training, systems and practices that will continue to improve school progress towards the goal of increasing student performance. This includes efforts to train and develop teachers, provide a more personalized learning opportunities for students, cross content learning and skills development such as writing, make decisions based on data that inform teaching and learning, while continuing assessing students, and finally and perhaps most importantly, creating a complete shift that gives students and parents more power over learning.

Also important to note is the plan the applicant has to engage parents on a much more substantive level. The applicant indicates they will ensure parents understand the system to be used by schools and engage parents in understand the needs and desires of his or her child. Moreover, these parents will be more engaged in the actual learning process of their child and will also be able to track and participate their learning rather than leaving it all up to the school. The applicant understands how these practices also help student learning and fostering a greater sense of community for teachers, lessening the frustration and burden teachers may feel from what can be perceived as uninvolved parents. The applicant underscores how this level of engagement adds to the overall health of a school climate.

The applicant does include some information in regards to how they will address needed change in low performing schools. This includes addressing the leadership challenge and all educators to change the culture, conducting working sessions among departments, and demonstration of community and consistency regarding instructional practices. These are helpful tactics to employ, however the applicant does not in any way address how they will increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective teachers and principals, in general, or at hard to staff school and subjects. Given the thoughtful approach the applicant gives to ensuring teachers are effective and receive ongoing support, this is a critical missing piece to the overall plan.

While the applicant provides much more detail as to how training will take place, and provides key activities to be carried out, they miss the opportunity to provide a timeline and establish who will be responsible for each element. As strong as the plans are, without a coherent and intentional timeline, it is difficult to determine when these elements will be implemented for both the reviewer and more importantly the applicant.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a process for which contact persons and a project director will be selected. The process described is not clear, however once these individuals are selected, the applicant indicates that the governance body which is made up of superintendents and the federal project director from each district, along with the director of the project will create an organizational chart. Although not clear, it does appear there is a plan to create a structure that will support participating schools and students.

The applicant indicates that the school leadership teams will have the flexibility and autonomy to set schedules and calendars as well as make hiring decisions based on the guidelines set by the governing body of the consortium. Without any examples of what these guidelines might be, it cannot be determined if in fact such autonomy will exist. For example, if guidelines are set by the governance structure that hard to staff decisions will come from the district or governing body of the consortium, this will not provide the level of autonomy needed at the building level to make the decision based on unique needs.

Regarding giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than time spent, the applicant focuses much of the efforts on giving teachers the tools to provide with students with a rigorous set of instructions inside and outside of the classroom. The applicant does not specifically discuss what opportunities the student has to access such tools for themselves. Just as the applicant discusses the need to remove the reliance on the teacher to guide the entire learning process, it is imperative that the applicant makes clear how students will access online tools to guide their learning as well as demonstrate mastery.

In earlier parts of the proposal, the applicant describes the learning management system as a tool to deliver multiple ways of delivering instruction. In this section, the applicant also indicates that this system can adapt learning modules based on the individual students' needs and level. This mechanism will give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.

The applicant includes a plan that will help meet the needs of students with disabilities by providubg assistant teachers, lab assistants and tutors to help these students better navigate the system.

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

The applicant has a thorough and well thought out plan to ensure students, parents and educators have appropriate levels of technical support. This includes access to an online mechanism for live chatting as well as a calling option should online access be the problem. These services will be available during after school hours. Additionally, teachers will receive ongoing training on the tools and the most effective ways to use them to foster personalized learning environments. This includes providing multiple opportunities to receive training which ensures that everyone can be served.

While the applicant mentions the capability of the learning management system to provide real time data, assessments and learning tools, they do not mention the capability that allows parents and students to export their information in an open data format for other uses. The applicant does describe an inter operable data system that holds sources of information, both academic and personal.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Other than stating that progress with professional development will be shared, the applicant does not specifically address the process by which they will access timely and regular feedback on the overall project goals, nor what the process will be to make ongoing corrections and improvements. The applicant understands the need to individual and collective improvement as it relates to student achievement which is critical. The other critical element is ensuring the process by which they improve student achievement has efficacy.

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

The applicant will establish an ongoing communications plan in which stakeholders will receive annual reports. Additionally,

the applicant plans to use a number of mediums to communicate with stakeholders to keep them informed on activities. These mediums include, newsletter, parent engagement meetings, and community meetings held at numerous times throughout the year. The applicant envisions internal stakeholders such as parents and educators to access the longitudinal data system to see the status of the project at any time in addition to the meetings and events offered.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has established a number of indicators that lead to reading proficiency and ultimately college and career readiness. Inconsistent with the first chart earlier in the proposal, the applicant does provide the number of students with an effective teacher on record and establishes goals of 80% of students having access to an effective teacher by the end of the grant period.

The applicant does include a rationale as to why certain indicators were selected.

Also of note is the applicant's goal to have all teachers trained and measured by the newly developed teacher evaluation system. What is not evident in the instrument and throughout the proposal is whether or not student achievement is one of the factors used to evaluate teachers. It is inferred as being evaluated through the longitudinal data system but does not appear to be embedded in the evaluation tool. This is of concern as student achievement is the most important measure by which to know the effectiveness of teaching.

It is also not clear, the actual numbers or percentage of students and goals related to them. In each chart, the same numbers and expected growth appears in each category. Whether it's performance measures for Prek-3rd grade, middle school or high school students, all of the numbers in the submitted chart begin and end with the same numbers.

It is not evident how these elements will be measured and the applicant does not include a high quality plan.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant will create a process in which all stakeholders, both internal and external, will have the opportunity to participate in evaluating process through the use of surveys and evaluation forms. A committee will analyze the feedback and shared with all stakeholders at an annual meeting. Individuals participating in professional development will complete an implementation plan that will be monitored at the school level. The lead applicant has been identified as the entity to review elements such as teacher evaluations, computer programs software, and the level of engagement for students and determine effectiveness of resources.

These are a good foundation to a plan for overall continuous improvement. These ideas lack clarity as to who specifically will conduct this work and what the improvement process will look like once the need for changes have been identified.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant identifies funds that will support the project including the use of additional federal funds. Additionally, the LEAs have committed to cover a small portion of activities throughout the grant. There are not external funding sources identified such as foundations.</p> <p>The budget presented is reasonable and sufficient towards the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal.</p> <p>The applicant does not clearly identify which funding allocations are one time investments and which are ongoing operational costs. They do list for salaries the time span of the funding through the life of the grant but does not give sufficient detail on which items will require ongoing operational costs. For example, the applicant identifies maintenance of the technology used as well as a replacement of technology when needed as one item that will require ongoing funds and has identified the LEAs and federal funds as the source to cover such costs. A delineation is needed in the budget to determine which items are one time and which are ongoing.</p>		

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not include a high quality plan for the sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The applicant does identify support from LEAs and federal funds to help maintain and replace equipment when needed. There is no budget included for three years after the term of the grant, budget assumptions, potential sources or uses of funds.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a desire to utilize community resources to assist in the overall project plan. The challenge is, there is not a coherent plan that is inclusive of consortium. It is noted that some of the districts have relationships with certain industry partners that are not named, others have relationships with counseling agencies who can provide services to students when needed, some have relationships with the local YMCA. It appears that none of these resources are consistent throughout the consortium making it difficult to measure the impact, number of students participating or even how to address needs once identified.</p> <p>The applicant does not indicate any substantive structure that will be put in place to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track selected indicators that will measure each result at the aggregate level for all children • Use data to target resources (other than an assessment to be conducted by teachers) • Develop a structure to be able to scale the model beyond the participating students or even students within the consortium • Improve results over time • Create a decision making process • Engage parents in any way whether to be a part of the decision making process or access resources <p>Overall, the applicant has not developed a thorough enough plan to adequately address the needs or provide services to participating students as a way to provide additional support to the overall project.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While there are some gaps, overall, the applicant does meet this priority. The applicant has established a plan to deliver personalized learning environments to participating students within the consortium. Building on the core educational assurance areas, the applicant has a plan to utilize a longitudinal data system that will drive learning, teaching, assessments and the delivery of multiple learning modules to students. Additionally, the applicant has a plan to utilize a new teacher evaluation system in which teachers and principals will be trained. With this tool, the use of the data system and ongoing professional development, the applicant demonstrates a major focus on effective teaching. The applicant has adopted rigorous standards and assessments, and finally will focus some efforts on their lowest performing schools.</p> <p>Throughout the application, the applicant demonstrates the priority placed on providing learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college and career ready standards.</p> <p>Finally, there is a focus on the part of the applicant to deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each students, decrease achievement gaps and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. What is most evident is the commitment to which the applicant has to shifting the paradigm of student learning and education as a whole in the state of Mississippi.</p>		

Total	210	115
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	1

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to purchase digital readers for low income students identified as potential first generation college attendees who will take Advanced Placement English. The applicant believes that having these devices will encourage more reading among this cohort and thus increase participation in AP courses as well as the passage rate on the exam. This is an idea that certainly would augment the learning opportunities and access to technology for students, however this proposal is not necessarily innovative, does not address an area of Priority 1 in providing more personalized learning environments for students, it does not include a high quality plan, and does not provide any details as to how students will be identified or any measurable impact this effort will have.