



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1317VA-1 for Manassas City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides a detailed description of the district's vision for this proposal. The proposed vision and approach is well-rounded and is likely to accomplish the described goals. The proposed plan clearly addresses creating a personalized learning environment focused on ensuring students are college and career ready – this is a strength in this section. The applicant does not provide specific information regarding how its vision builds upon existing reform efforts. This is a weakness in this section. The applicant also fails to address how the plan will increase equity for high need students. This section warrants a medium score due to the well-defined vision combined with the lack of information regarding two critical items in this particular section. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	1
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant provides a chart with a breakdown of number of participating students from 3 schools. The table does include information regarding percentage of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The percentages meet the minimum requirement for RTTD applicants. There is no information provided about how students were identified to participate in the proposed plan. There is also no information provided regarding why the three schools identified were chosen and why elementary schools are not included. This is a significant weakness in this section. This section warrants a low score due to the lack of responsiveness to the specific selection criteria for this section. 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	0
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This section is not included in the proposal. 		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tables with subgroups, baseline data and projected goals for each year are provided. The applicant has created goals that result in eliminating the achievement gaps among subpopulations, however, the goals included anticipate no growth from school year 2011-12 to 2012-13 and also anticipate a decrease in performance, of one group of students in reading performance, over the course of the proposed plan. There is no information regarding how these goals were established – it seems that the goal, for most content areas and all subgroups, is to achieve 90% proficiency. For some groups, that anticipates very little growth and for others, large gains. These goals seem arbitrary and not developed with consideration of actual student data. This section warrants a low score due to the lack of information provided and the arbitrary assignment of achievement goals that seems apparent in the tables included. 		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides a description of the status of schools within the district over the previous several years. The picture painted is one of struggling, if not failing schools. Based on the applicant's description, many reform efforts have been implemented in an effort to turn around each struggling or failing school. • The applicant included some information regarding gains that are a result of reform efforts. The results described show a positive impact on students in several areas – however, they do not necessarily indicate a clear track record of success. • The applicant does not appear to have included information regarding how student performance data is made available to stakeholders. This is a weakness. • This section warrants a low score due to the lack of specific detail regarding sharing data, combined with the lack of description of an overall track record of reform and success. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This section indicates that the district adheres to federal, state and local budget and finance statutes, regulations and procedures. In addition, the applicant indicates that the district conducts an annual financial audit and results are submitted to the city and state. This provides basic information regarding compliance with requirements; it does not indicate transparency in the categories outlined in B2. • Some budget information is provided and the applicant notes that a copy of the 2012-13 budget can be requested from the district's Assistant Superintendent or accessed online. As reviewers base scoring on information included in the application, this is a significant weakness. • Finally, the specific items identified (transparency in salary information and non-personnel expenses) is not included. • This section warrants a low score for lack of responsiveness to the specific information sought in this selection criteria. 		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides information regarding the state context for reform and change. The description provided indicates that the state has adopted college and career ready standards as well as a focus on mastery rather than seat time. • The applicant does not address district autonomy. • This section warrants a medium score due to the context of reform described but the failure to address statutory autonomy that will allow the proposed plan to be implemented. 		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant addresses stakeholder involvement in the development of the grant in detail. • The description includes engagement of both internal/district stakeholders and community/external stakeholders. The applicant seems to have utilized a variety of strategies to gather input from all stakeholders, not just representatives from each group. This is a strong point in the proposal and should be commended. • There is not a description of how comments were incorporated into the final proposal, and that is a minor weakness. • Letters of support are included in the appendices and represent a variety of different stakeholder groups - local government entities, non-profit organizations and State-level officials • This section is well-developed and addresses the selection criteria well – as a result, it warrants a high rating. 		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provides information regarding the current status of schools within the district and participating schools. This provides a limited response to B5 as it does not include a plan for analysis of data. It does indicate that the district utilizes methods of data analysis.
- The applicant included a logic model that is clear and provides a rationale for specific grant activities as well as a description of who will be impacted by each activity. This is a strength of this section.
- This section warrants a medium score as it includes most elements required in B5, yet it is missing the “high quality plan for an analysis.”

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provides a detailed, thorough description of a comprehensive plan to improve learning by personalizing the learning environment for all students.
- The applicant describes several strategies to assist middle and high school students in setting college and career related goals.
- The applicant also includes an extensive description of how students will develop plans and pursue specific educational activities that allow them to achieve those goals (and address their own personal interests). The activities described would provide deep, meaningful learning experiences for students and will allow them to practice skills such as teamwork; critical thinking, etc.
- Exposure to diversity, different cultures, etc. is not addressed in detail.
- The plan clearly reflects consideration of all of the different factors that should be addressed in effective plans to create this type of learning environment (with a focus on preparing students for college and career). The applicant should be commended for including plans to address interest, learning style, rigorous coursework, mentoring and support for individual students, and the college and career planning process.
- The only weakness in this section is an explicit description of how high needs students will participate and have the necessary support and/or accommodations.
- This section is well-written and comprehensive – it warrants a high score.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant also did an excellent job of addressing items in C2.
- Teacher professional development and collaboration opportunities are numerous and the applicant indicates that they will be personalized. This plan seems to allow for a variety of educator needs to be addressed.
- The plan indicates specific attention to providing professional development associated with a tiered model of instruction as well as professional development for mentoring and assisting students in identifying interests and strengths. Given the proposed activities, these seem like necessary components of the district’s plan.
- In addition, the applicant describes specific opportunities for teachers to learn about middle school students’ developmental characteristics. This seems like a wise addition to the plan as it will allow educators to understand and assist students in creating their own personalized learning plans/environments.
- The applicant includes general information regarding the sustainability of these training efforts as well as extending opportunities to new educators and other stakeholders.
- The applicant also includes performance goals, and related strategies and activities to ensure that students are taught by highly effective teachers. The applicant notes that the current teacher evaluation system provides specific feedback designed to both identify highly effective teachers and help teachers become more effective.
- This section warrants a high score due to the thoughtful plan developed and the high level of detail included.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
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(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant includes a description of district infrastructure and leadership teams that provide a foundation for implementation of the proposed plan. • The applicant does indicate that there are school leadership teams, however, the level of autonomy the teams have is not addressed. • The applicant indicates that policies are in place to allow students to progress based on mastery of content as well as demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways. • A description of specific learning resources and instructional practices that provide access to all students, in particular high need students, is not included. • The applicant provides some indication that the district either has, or is open to creating, policies and procedures that will support this proposal. As a result, this section warrants a medium score. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant describes steps it will take to provide additional access to technology and to make data available to students, parents and educators. The included budget line items and plan to provide laptops, personal computing devices, low cost internet access, etc. reinforce those plans and seem to address the plan with appropriate support/resources. • The attached table and timeline provides a high level of detail regarding the implementation of proposed changes/improvements to the existing infrastructure. • The "how" in making data available, and the technical support (training, personnel) does not seem to be addressed. This is a weakness in this section. • This section includes a strong plan for addressing some of the items included in D2, however, items b and c are not addressed with enough detail – it warrants a medium score. 		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant briefly states that information will be made available to the public through quarterly summaries. • The applicant describes several data systems and practices currently in place. These systems allow educators to monitor student progress and use data to guide instruction. The applicant notes several improvements, additions or changes that would provide additional information to assist teams in developing personalized plans for each student. The availability of data and processes to monitor student progress are a strength in this section. • The applicant does a good job of describing many things that the district would like to do (FERPA training; VEWS incorporated into learning management system; Schoolnet & Power School partnership/alignment, etc.). The applicant also indicates that the district is data-driven and provides examples of how educators use data in collaborative planning and continuous improvement efforts. This is a strength. • The applicant does not provide a specific plan for implementing a continuous improvement process specifically related to grant activities and goals. Some of this may be implied, but the lack of specifics regarding RTTD is a weakness. • This section warrants a medium score due to the above strengths and weaknesses. 		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for ongoing communication and engagement are briefly described in the previous section (quarterly summary). 		

- These specific items are not sufficiently described or included in the proposal.
- As a result, this section warrants a low score.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant provides a description and rationale for each identified performance measure. This is a strength within this section.
- The applicant briefly addresses how each measure will provide feedback to educators, however, a description of how these measures are specifically tied to the proposed plan or how they specifically measure either implementation success or progree in areas of concern. This is a weakness.
- The applicant does not include a description of how it will review these measures over time.
- The tables included provide some detail for each specific performance measure. However, baseline data is not available for most measures and specific targets seem somewhat arbitrary.
- This section adequately identifies performance measures in the required areas but it does not provide enough information regarding how the measures will be monitored and, with some baseline data missing (not available until this year), it is difficult to determine whether the targets are ambitious and/or achievable.
- As a result of the above comments, this section warrants medium score.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant notes that it will develop agreements with experienced research and technology professionals. A plan to evaluate the effectiveness of grant activities is briefly described.
- This section is brief, there is not adequate information to fully evaluate the applicant's plan. As a result, this section warrants a low score.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget narrative provides a thorough explanation of all budget categories as well as a description of local funds that will contribute to the overall plan. • All budget categories seem reasonable and expenses/budget is also separated by project which provides additional information regarding the applicant's plans. • Many of the expenses in the proposal are ongoing costs of maintaining the program. The personnel costs and technology maintenance costs are ongoing and the applicant plans to absorb them into the district's budget. The training and grant management costs will end after the grant period. The applicant provides sufficient detail to indicate that the applicant has planned for all expenses and sustainability (although specific ongoing costs and one-time investments are not identified as such). • The applicant provides a separate sustainability budget, with line item expenses included. The items, and associated cost, are reasonable and include fringe benefits, maintenance cost of equipment, etc. The applicant notes that district funds will cover these costs. The costs are significant, so there is a question regarding whether the district can sustain these expenses. • This section warrants a high score. 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant provides a general description of sustainability issues associated with each project. The description shows that the applicant has considered how to sustain the effort once the grant period ends, however, specific details are not included. 		

- Some support from district general funds is identified to sustain ongoing personnel costs, however, an estimate ongoing support from various stakeholders is not included.
- This section warrants a medium score due to included narrative but lack of detail.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: None included.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This proposal has strengths in a number of areas and fails to provide enough information in others. Overall, the applicant addresses how it will build on the core assurance areas and improve learning through data analysis, improved teaching, personalized learning strategies and a focus on college and career ready. • This applicant meets absolute priority 1. 		

Total	210	106
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1317VA-2 for Manassas City Public Schools

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 applicant articulated a coherent reform vision of achieving career/college readiness through personalized learning. The approach, focusing on rigorous standards and 21st century learning skills, implementing a process for developing student ownership of learning in the early grades, and providing a rich learning environment through a blended model of instruction, is credible and would likely move education in the district from a totally traditional learning environment to a totally independent learning environment. A discussion regarding how the proposal would build on the district's work in the four assurance areas was not included in the response.		

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant decided to initiate the project at the intermediate and secondary levels, then extend the vision of personalized learning to elementary classrooms during years 3 and 4 of the grant. This phased implementation of the project allows the district to focus efforts and resources on the grade bands that will be exiting the district first, ensuring that intermediate and secondary students have rich experiences with personalized learning that prepare them well for future endeavors.</p> <p>All students in 3 schools would participate in initial implementation of the project: one intermediate (grades 5-6), one middle school (grades 7-8), and one high school (grades 9-12). 325 participating teachers is a manageable number for the district and project staff to train, monitor, and support during the first 2 years of the grant.</p> <p>The percent of participating students from low income families meets the eligibility threshold of 40%. A high percentage (62%) of participating students are high need.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Although this selection criteria was not addressed in the application, in other sections of the application the applicant indicated that the proposal would be implemented in grades 5 through 12 initially, then expanded to elementary schools, at which point the proposal would become a district reform effort. No details were provided regarding how the scale-up would occur.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The 5-year annual goals for proficiency rates on the state assessments are set for 90%, which aligns with Manassas City Public Schools' strategic goals and outcomes. However, some of the annual goals seemed over-ambitious and not achievable. For example, a five-year increase of 57 percentage points in the math proficiency rates of limited English proficient students at Metz Middle School does not seem reasonable. The 5-year annual math goals for the Gap Group 2 at Osborn High School reflect an increase of 55 percentage points, also seemingly not achievable.</p> <p>For the annual graduation rates of most of the subgroups, there are large increases from SY2011-12 to SY2012-13 to 75%, then smaller increases through 2016-17. The rationale for the anticipated larger increase in 2012-13 was not provided.</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	12
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) Manassas schools have made significant progress in improving the performance of underachieving subgroups on the state assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From SY2010-11 to SY2011-12, Gap Group 1 showed a 12.5 percentage point decrease in the difference between their performance and all students; During the past 4 years, Gap Group 2 reduced the difference in their reading performance and that of all students to within 2 percentage points; and From SY2010-11 to SY2011-12, Gap Group 3 narrowed the reading gap by 50%. <p>The graduation rate, however, has fluctuated over the past 5 years, and the latest graduation rate of 83% is 2 points below the state standard.</p> <p>(b) A number of innovative, evidence-based programs have been implemented to accelerate student achievement in the district's lowest performing schools. These programs include the Content Literacy Continuum, extended learning opportunities for credit recovery, and the freshman academy. Two-year gains in reading lexile levels would indicate that the blended learning literacy initiative that was implemented in grades 5 through 12 is resulting in multiple years of grow for intermediate, middle school, and high school students.</p> <p>(c) Currently, student performance data are available through the data warehouse. The district is exploring the development of</p>		

a learning management system that would provide more timely data to students, parents, and teachers.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 A moderate level of transparency was reported. School-level budget information, including a breakdown of the number and type of each position and non-personnel costs which can be accessed through a link on district's website. Transparency in district processes and practices was not addressed.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 The Virginia State Department of Education has shown a strong commitment to supporting innovative approaches to developing 21st century learners through the Virginia College and Career Readiness Initiative, changes in graduation requirements which require a career and technical education credential and the completion of an online course, and the awarding of credits through demonstration of content mastery. All of these guidelines directly support proposal components.
 The district's belief in technology-enhanced instruction has been demonstrated by the funding of instructional technology training specialist positions in all schools for the past 10 years. Manassas Public School would have sufficient autonomy to implement personalized learning environments.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant initiated extensive stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal and obtained meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal. The proposal development process included the establishment of a planning group and the formation of work groups led by principals that reviewed relevant data and developed draft sections of the proposal. Frequent input on draft documents was sought from internal and external stakeholders in a variety of ways (Board meeting presentations, drafts posted online for comment and suggestions, and presentations at parents meetings). The applicant indicated that 83% of faculty wanted the district to proceed with the grant application.
 Although the project would be implemented in grades 5 through 12 initially, it would be extended to all schools during years 3 and 4 of the grant period, so all district principals, teachers, students, and parents will become participants--supporting the district's approach of involving all school communities in the proposal development process.
 Letters of support from a diverse group of stakeholders demonstrate broad support for the proposal.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:
 Through a thorough analysis of district demographics and data, the applicant identified the specific learning needs and gaps that exist in each of the participating schools. A logic model clearly illustrates how inputs and activities would result in short-term, intermediate-term, and long-term outcomes, all focused on meeting project goals. The applicant plans for the transition to personalized teaching/learning environments to happen incrementally, which would likely result in more easily accepted and more lasting change.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 (a) The proposal presented a developmental, progressive approach for students in grades 5 through 12. A focus has been identified for each band that would adequately prepare students for the expectations of the next level. Throughout the program, students would be given more choice in the nature, goals and processes of their learning. Students would learn self-

management skills, and would learn how to engage in goal-setting, understand the consequences of their actions and develop peer relationships built on respect and an appreciation for differences in people.

There was no reference to exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives that deepens student learning (selection criterion (a)(iv).

(b) Students would receive a personalized instructional program focused on developmentally appropriate tasks to promote rigorous learning. The curriculum would be re-designed to include more problem-based learning, with an emphasis on task, project, or assignment selection as it relates to student's career/college explorations. Through the use of blended instruction, teachers would use best instructional practices and computer-based instructional activities to foster deep learning.

MAP growth data will serve as the primary measure of achievement and graduation readiness, providing teachers with formative assessment data three times a year. The district will develop a set of rubrics that will assess students on the 4 core skills of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity). These core skills are critical components of career/college readiness that can be assessed at all grade bands, but it was unclear as to whether the rubrics would provide teachers with frequent feedback that could be used to program for students.

Subcriteria (b)(4)(B) was not addressed.

Accommodations for high need students were not addressed.

(c) A comprehensive support and training plan for students by grade band was presented in Appendix C-3. It addresses the development of affective skills, technology skills, critical thinking skills and research skills, and understanding learning style inventories and career interest surveys.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Teachers would receive comprehensive, ongoing, and customized professional development and support during the grant period that would prepare them for their roles in transforming the learning experience. This training would include: teaching 21st century skills (collaboration, creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, conflict-resolution, resilience), implementing problem based learning, and implementing blended learning. Teachers would also receive training in developing tiered lessons to address diverse learning needs and incorporate student interests in career/college aspirations and to deepen learning.

Teacher training would be personalized and differentiated, consistent with best practices in professional learning. The applicant included a thoughtful discussion of how the roles of all staff will need to be modified to support personalized learning and the focus on career/college readiness. These roles include media specialist, school counselors, and assistant principals.

(b) Teachers would be provided with the tools and resources needed to implement the program with fidelity and to accelerate the learning of their students. Teachers would continue to use the formative assessments for the academic core that are already in place. Formative assessments that measure growth in career/college ready standards would be developed to provide teachers with another tool in monitor student progress and to plan accordingly.

Teachers with exemplary practice would have opportunities to serve as coaches, providing peer support to colleagues. At the high school level, a mentorship/community resource liaison would be hired to work with teachers to establish extended learning partnerships for students.

Selection criteria (c) was not addressed.

(d) Appendix C-4 consists of a comparison of Virginia teacher evaluation rankings and the definitions of effective teacher and high effective teacher in the grant guidance. The district would be working toward increasing the number of students who have access to highly effective teachers, although no additional details were provided.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Each school has a technology support staff that provides instructional and administrative support. Grant-funded positions would support effective project management and program implementation. No changes in central office organization were discussed.

(b) School leaders and leadership teams have autonomy to make determinations regarding school operations, staffing, and budget priorities, which would allow them the flexibility to make decisions in these areas in support of proposed activities.

(c) (d) District students have the option of earning credit based on content mastery, within established timelines and guidelines. Students can demonstrate mastery of standards through multiple electronic modes on an individual basis, but the district does not have the capability of fully supporting this option by offering it to all students at the same time.

Selection criteria (e) was not addressed.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Grant funding would ensure that teachers and participating students have access to personal devices in and out of school to enhance teaching and learning. The district would also assist disadvantaged families in securing internet access through private providers, ensuring equity for all families.

(b) The district plans to develop technical support teams and would partner with local businesses to support families and other stakeholders through open computer labs in the evenings. Extensive technical support for teachers was discussed in section C2.

(c) Currently, parents only have access to grade and attendance information through the PowerSchool parent portal. The district plans to expand parent and student access to data through linkages between PowerSchool and the district's other data system, SchoolNet, evidence of the district's commitment to continue to strengthen family involvement in student learning.

Selection criteria (d) was not addressed.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Manassas City Public Schools engages in a comprehensive, robust continuous improvement process to analyze various indicators of student progress and to make instructional decisions. The district plans to use data from a variety of existing sources to enable teachers to monitor student progress. Although, reviewing formative data from existing assessments would address the need to monitor progress toward performance measures identified in the proposal, there is no provision for monitoring project implementation and impact, which should be a critical component of the continuous improvement process.

This response did not address how the district would publicly share information on the quality of RTT-D investments.

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

Limited communication and stakeholder engagement is planned through quarterly reports on project progress presented at Board meetings, and project summaries posted on the district website for public comment. No plans for regular, targeted communication with teachers, parents, students, or partners were presented.

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

Based on the rationale that was provided for the performance measures, they are appropriate, ambitious, and achievable. The measures will provide timely, leading indicators of progress toward meeting project goals.

Two performance measures were selected to assess increased student achievement: 1) state growth percentages, which is a measure of a percent of students making moderate/high growth based on grade level/course level expectation, and 2) the Measurement of Academic Progress, based on the percentage of students who met or exceeded their own growth target for the year. The use of 2 measures of student achievement increases the likelihood of accuracy in the assessment of student progress. At the secondary level, 3 measures would be used to report on the percent of students on track to college and career readiness--PSAT, SAT, AP. These measures are aligned with college admission and college success, making

them strong indicators of preparation for college and careers.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district plan to evaluate the effectiveness of grant funded activities was unclear. The applicant plans to work with research partners to develop a data collection, research, analysis and reporting plan to support the continuous improvement model. The applicant would also use surveys to elicit feedback from stakeholders. It was not clear what the specific purpose of the surveys would be.

No information was presented regarding plans to evaluate the critical and costly components of the proposal--professional development and the use of technology.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district's budget request will be augmented with funding from other sources. The district will provide funding in the amount of just over \$1M to support personnel/fringe benefits/training (78%) and equipment and supplies (22%). Funds from Title II, technology state funds, and local capital improvement funds will also support the project.

The budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the implementation of the proposal and reflects a well-thought out, rational approach. As would be expected based on the proposal, the largest expenditures would be in the categories of equipment and supplies (38%) and personnel/fringe benefits/training stipends (36%).

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

10

10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district included a three-year post-grant sustainability budget.

Since the district Board of Education believes that this proposal is the driver of reform in the district, they have made a commitment to providing financial support to the project beyond the grant period. Within each of the individual projects that comprise the project, the district identified strategies that will ensure sustainability. These strategies are reasonable, given the budget projections identified in the sustainability budget.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

(1) The applicant did not identify one partner that would support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1.

(2) Population-level desired results identified were appropriate and well aligned with the broad RTT-D proposal. The desired results address skill attainment (reading, math, digital technology), development of tools to monitor and support progress (digital portfolio, college/career planning guide), and enrollment in a post-secondary institution.

Selection criteria (3), (4), and (5) were not addressed.

(6) The performance targets provided were ambitious, yet achievable. No targets were provided for the completion of the career/college planning guide for 7th grade students.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The applicant presented a comprehensive plan for improving student outcomes and preparing students for college or careers through personalized learning.		
Total	210	141



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1317VA-3 for Manassas City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: <i>The plan describes extensive improvement over the past three years. The division has used multiple funding sources and program changes to get their schools aligned to high expectations in NCLB, and state accreditation. The plan presents some evidence of closing the achievement gap and personalizing instruction. The concern with this plan is that it could easily become a counselor tracking system in which some students are encouraged to take AP courses and prepare a college ready transcript and students who are struggling to learn in these schools are put on a personalized learning plan and tracked into CTE courses to focus on a career instead of college.</i>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: (a,b c,) The plan has a list of the schools that were selected. They are the schools that meet the expectation for at least 40% low income students and continue to be on the list for improvement as defined by the state's NCLB waiver. The table is filled out with the names of the schools and the number of students and educators who will participate in the grant activities. The description of the gap groups and the population groups was confusing. It was unclear if these were the same students counted two different ways or independent groups which made it difficult to know which students were at risk the populations or the sub groups or both.		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: <i>The only place to scale-up the reform would be down through the primary grades and there is no plan to scale the project throughout all the schools. The plan indicates that after the district has figured out how to do personalized learning in grades 5-12, it will consider if there are benefits for students in the elementary schools.</i>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan designates increasing academic achievement, closing the achievement gap (the gap between performance groups as designated by the state tests), raising the graduation rate (the high school missed state expectations by two points in 2011) and increasing enrollment in four year colleges (currently a large number of their graduates enroll in two year community college) as measures of improvement for this project but the measures have not been determined.</p> <p>Perhaps more importantly the plan recognizes that many of the improvements, for example critical thinking, collaborative, self-direction are not easily measured by the tests expected by the state and by this grant. While it might be a good thing to find a way to measure these skills. there is no clear plan for doing so.</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	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>a) This plan provides test score increases as evidence that this division can and has made improvement over the past four years in closing the achievement gap raising student achievement (66% increase in AP course taking) Increasing graduation rate and graduating students with college ready transcripts and increasing college going.</i></p> <p><i>b) There is not clear description about how they will monitor and address the persistently lowest-achieving schools. The plan is more to address the lowest achieving students through personalization rather than the school as a whole. It is not entirely clear how they will determine who the "at risk" students are or how an at risk student works their way out of at risk status.</i></p> <p><i>c) Limited student data is currently available to students and families and the division plans to increase the amount of data and the accessibility of data as the state continues to develop its data sharing capacity.</i></p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The plan indicates the division meets state and federal expectations for accounting and reporting of financial budgets. These are publicly reported at school board meetings and budgets are posted on the division website, but do not include actual personnel salaries at the school level.</i></p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Yes, the division appears to have at least some autonomy to personalize learning and accomplish the other parts of their project. There is a policy in place that allows acceleration and can include extended days and night classes in order for students to reach their graduation requirements on a flexible schedule. There was no mention of regulations related to students being off campus, in apprenticeships working in industry and other environments. There was also no mention of how regulations for cross-crediting or providing credit for experiences the district did not create for example online college extension courses. These are the sort of policy issues that are likely to become obstacles if the leadership group does not address them, and there is no indication that these policy issues have been addressed.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The plan describes an collaborative grant development process that began with the central office staff and expanded to include principals and invited teachers and then extended to any teacher interested in being involved. The conceptualization of</i></p>		

the project and the writing was divided into committees with continuous inter-committee review and adjustment. The plan had more than 80% approval from teachers.

There are letters of support from community stakeholder's but little evidence of community stakeholder engagement in the project development and even the stakeholders who were named as sites for apprenticeships did not seem to reflect the extent of support the project might require.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The plan reflect a needs assessment but it basically establishes that the division needs to work on the areas that are funded by this grant which is particularly convincing as all schools need to work on these things.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This plan is designed to teach students to set (i) goals not only for their immediate learning but (ii) long term career goals beginning in eighth grade and their personalized learning plans will be linked to these goals in order to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure student progress toward those goals.

(iii) The theory of action is that if students understand the careers available and are working toward a career as a goal, they will be more focused and motivated to learn.

(iv) The division has a diverse student population but it is not clear that the district engages this resource for directly learning about multiple perspectives and different cultures. The division does recognize that learning on-line will expose students to a wider array of interactions with people outside of their school community. This seems to be considered an enrichment, rather than an area of focused learning.

(v) The plan does include students learning to set SMART goals and to measure their progress toward their goals. It also includes critical thinking, learning to work on a team, creativity, and problem-solving.

(b) (I, ii, iii) The bulk of the reform in this plan focuses on personalization. Transforming the traditional classroom into a place where students are pursuing multiple approaches to learning and a wide variety of learning goals and aligning all of those personal goals to the states' graduation expectations and college and career expectations.

(iv) The plan includes new roles for counselors and graduation coaches who will work directly with students to align their goals and their learning plans, monitor their progress and provide feedback to keep them on track to graduate on time college and career ready.

(A) Beyond the state/fed required measures of student progress the division is considering how to measure that parts of student learning that are not easily quantifiable including team work and critical thinking.

(B) The plan has students identifying a personal learning path in eighth grade. There is some mention of how to accommodate a students' changes in interest from eighth grade through high school and a recognition that having to choose a personalized learning path may be stressful for some students. There are parts of this plan that sound like it intends to turn the intermediate school and middle school into CTE programs, which can be accomplished with Perkins funds but the Perkins funds are not reflected in the budget.

(v) Perhaps because this plan was written by committee, some of the programmatic descriptions i seem to focus on personalization primarily for disenfranchised students while other descriptions seem to include all students. The plan explains that the new AP program is in place for students who want to work on a college ready transcript, and this personalized learning approach may intend to fit the rest of the students with career (CTE) focused learning. There is a clear emphasis on career planning and preparation throughout the project descriptions.

(c) The plan puts mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students to learn to use the tools and resources to manage their learning.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	12
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) (i) This plan provides training first with early adopters and over four years, all the teachers in the participating schools.</p> <p>(ii) Some of the training for teachers is to learn to adapt content and instruction for students to engage in personalized learning</p> <p>(iii) This plan favors personalized interactions with students to monitor their progress toward their goals and the goals of the project. The project's success overall will be monitored through student achievement scores and student growth measures, but for individual students teachers, counselors and graduation coaches will keep close connection with students.</p> <p>(iv) Improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation systems (as defined in this notice), including frequent feedback on individual and collective effectiveness, as well as by providing recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement.</p> <p>(i) The plan provides for teachers, counselors and coaches working directly with students to understand and act on students' interests and learning needs.</p> <p>(ii) The learning resources have not been fully identified. A prominent resource in this plan is apprenticeships and working with mentors, learning about real world jobs and particularly how people use technology in their jobs. Internships may be useful to a point but it might be more ambitious for example to students to learn to program computers and websites and manage servers and networks rather than watching others do that.</p> <p>Other learning resources will be teacher created which may or may not be high quality, some learning resources will be found on the web, some may be purchased and still others may be student discovered and developed.</p> <p>(iii) Tools, beyond student achievement tests, to measure how successful the approach is will be developed as the project unfolds.</p> <p>(c) The plan provides for training and for hiring expertise. The division will rely on data that is generated</p> <p>(i) The plan does describe a process for monitoring information from the teacher evaluation process but this process is still under development, as is the principal evaluation process.</p> <p>(ii) Training is a central feature of this plan as is hiring the expertise they need to do the new work this project will require.</p> <p>(d) There is no mention of hard to staff schools or math and science particularly, but the plan does suggest that they may have some room to improve in teacher effectiveness in the CTE program which may not be held to the same certification standards.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>a) This project plans to reorganize positions at the school levels to provide more one-on-one coaching and counseling for individual students but it does not explain how the central office will change its work to support the reform.</p> <p>(b) The schools have the authority to accelerate students' learning and reconfigure learning opportunities, for example, night school or extended days. This reform will require more flexibility than this.</p> <p>(c) Yes, some students will be given the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. It is unclear if students themselves will direct the choice for personalization or if they will be counseled into personalizations based what what adults choose for them.</p> <p>(d) Yes, some students will show mastery through earning regular grades in AP courses or other traditional course, and some students will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the standards through apprenticeships and internships and online courses and self directed research projects. It is hard to tell if this is a form of tracking or if all students will do both some AP</p>		

and some apprenticeship work.

(e) The personalization in this plan aims to provide students with disabilities and students who have otherwise struggled to learn with new options for meeting standards and choosing what they want to learn.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) All students are expected to take at least one on-line course. This grant will help the division meet this expectation by improving the division's internet system and providing electronic devices to students. Currently this expectations is not fair because some students can not afford internet at home. Under this plan the district will help negotiate access to the internet for families that can not afford it. This seems like a problematic Position for the district to but itself in. The plan would be stronger if the district would provide internet access.

(b) In order to accomplish this the district would have to ensure that all families have access to the internet. because training will be available through webinars and other on-line venues.

(c) This system exists and is expected to be improved over the four years of the grant.

All data systems are expected to be interoperable

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan describes two business based approaches used in the division for continuous, iterative improvement. These processes will be used for monitoring and adjusting the project to reach its goals. It is not clear how broadly trained the division staff are in these processes, in ther words are these processes used only in the central office or do schools use there process for their own monitoring and adjustment work.

The plan explains that they will use data the state already expects including teacher evaluation data to monitor and adjust toward the project's goals but these measures are only sufficient for measuring the academic acheivement gaols not for understanding how the project is meeting many of its goals other than improving achievement test scores and graduation rates.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan describes an adequate communication plan for sharing information externally. internal communication seems to be primarily infomral which may not be sufficient. to support whole school and intra-school reform.

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

5

4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The plan includes a detailed description of the measures the division will use to monitor annual student achievement goals. These measures align with what the state expects and with the ESEA waiver expects.

The tables for the measures are left largely blank. The plan explains that the division will take a research approach to learning how effective the project is. The division is interested in effecting more than can be measured through students achievement measures and will require qualitative data collection and analysis to understand how students are personalizing their learning as well as qualitative measures to understand what students are learning. Although the plan does not show the sorts of measures suggested, researchers are likely to produce more useful findings than the sorts of achievement measures

suggested.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There is little detail on this criteria except to say that this will be done through the division's research partnership. While there is not a lot of detail on this research relationship, it is described like an evaluator role which is typical in many grants but not expected in this grant. None the less it might be useful to work with researchers but there is so little information provided about what the researchers would be doing or how they would be doing it, this section reads like it is off loading some of the important planning to an outside evaluator to figure out.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <i>The budget identifies all funds that will support the project, the funds match the project needs and provide adequate support for the project. The investments identified as one time investments, are actually not one time investments. For example, the computers will need on-going upgrades and replacements in order to continue to access the latest improvements in online learning. Also, if the entrance grade receives a computer and keeps it for their whole educational career, every year the district will need to supply a new grade level set of computers.</i>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <i>For each budget item a sustainability factor is provided. In most cases the sustainability plan is for the Division to absorb the on-going costs. In some cases, like the college counseling positions and the teachers professional learning the sustainability plan expects that these costs will no longer be necessary because people will have learned to do this work.</i>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <i>(1,4) A central feature of this proposal is to establish apprenticeships and internships with local business and industry. There will be a new position created to develop literally hundreds of internships and apprenticeships, place students in them and monitor their success. This is an ambitious goal. The plan includes six population level, outcomes. (3) The plan describes how the division will track progress on a,b,c,d. (5) (a) The plan describes using surveys, counseling and coaching to assess the needs and assets of participating students. (b) There is not a specified plan for identifying inventorying the needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with those goals for improving the education and family and community supports. (c,d,e) The plan specifies that the counselors and graduation coaches will select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and engage parents and families in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time. (6) There is a plan to do this as ongoing work and t have the researchers report on findings.</i>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

There are some discrepancies in the descriptions of the reform that make it unclear if the personalization will be primarily for students who struggle to learn in these schools or if personalization is the way the entire district will go and all students will be involved in personalizing their learning. If personalization is for all students it meets the criteria. If this is a drop out prevention program for students who the schools are unable to ensure success now, then it does not meet the criteria. The score of met, has been awarded based on the majority of the plan describing a district wide reform for all students.

Total	210	134
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