



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0236SC-1 for Marion County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

For the most part, MCSD submitted a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that was fairly clear with a credible approach with the potential for accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support.

The vision is supported with a laser like focus on collaboration which is a 21st century meta skill for coming generations. The evidence to support MCSD's commitment to this ideal is further demonstrated through its efforts to create a culture of collaboration among the staff. Not only will students learn to think collectively to solve common problems, teachers will be taught to facilitate cooperative learning styles and to cooperate with one another for student achievement.

MCSD also supports the notion of a personalized learning environment through individualized learning plans and fluid learning groups so that the learning needs of each student can be identified and met.

Core Educational Assurance Areas:

(1) Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy

- MCSD demonstrates a passion for preparing students for college and career readiness. One of the primary ways MCSD plans to execute its vision is through the use of technology. This vision is appropriate in that today's students must be prepared for success in the 21st century.

(2) Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction

- The prudent and creative use of technology is expected to expand the exposure, access, and reach that students have to engage in higher level learning beyond the district's human resources.

- The proposal, in this section, did not mention how technology would inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction but did provide speak to these areas in other areas of the proposals.

(3) Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and

- This was not addressed here although developing staff was mentioned in other areas.

(4) Turning around lowest-achieving schools.

- Reportedly, a majority of MCSD students could be referenced as high-needs and/or low-income. I am surmising that serving such students is tantamount to “low-achieving schools”. This single-mindedness on a bright future for each student is laudable yet critical in stemming the academic and career losses among high-needs and low-income populations.

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

MCSD demonstrates a commitment to advancing the education of all students. As a majority of the district’s students qualify as high-needs and/or low-income, MCSD will implement its respective plan in all schools. Such benefits are afforded to students in traditional K-12 schools, the alternative school, the vocational center, the adult learning center, and to students who are homebound.

To ensure that collaboration is occurring, the district will employ technology so that teachers and administrators can communicate in real time and without barriers, as much as possible.

The advantages of technology will be extended to parents for communication purposes, to shore up their parenting skills, as well as to enhance parents’ career and life skills. These efforts are extended for the purposes of enriching personalized learning.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district will be implementing this initiative in all of its schools; therefore, the concept of scaling up does not really apply. The ways in which the proposed changes would reach its outcome goals are as follows:

- Ensuring that students are conversant with project-based learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

- Joining forces with the state’s STEM centers in addition to employing national STEM theories of action to implement the necessary change.
- Commitment to providing teachers with a plethora of professional development opportunities in standards-based curricula, instructional materials, and assessing student learning.
- Teachers will also learn how to facilitate and lead collaborative groups; they will be required to model their learning on collaboration through their own learning communities.
- In addition to the basics of reading, writing, MCSD will emphasize collaboration as a system-wide culture through communications, and teamwork. The district will reinforce its culture of collaboration through partnerships with parents and other stakeholders to develop personalized learning goals.

With change models in place, MCSD will have additional tools and best practices that offer guidance on expectations, time frames, methodology, and measurement and so forth. In other words, they would not be attempting district-wide, organizational change in isolation.

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

10

6

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The goal of raising test scores to the state average is a good first step. Although the achievement goals are not overly ambitious, they do appear to be achievable as they afford slow but steady progress. Also, there are seemingly unexplained college enrollment predictions for different schools as opposed to a consistent standard throughout the district. Further explanation is needed. Also, the district failed to perform at the state average level on summative assessments.

Their goal for decreasing the achievement gap includes the following actions:

- There is an ambitious plan in place to reduce the drop-out rate and to increase graduation rates. Efforts include PUSH for middle schoolers and credit recovery for high schoolers. The middle school initiative is especially profitable in extending hope to students before they give up on school due to poor choices and life circumstances early in life. Likewise, this plan includes collaboration between traditional schools and the Adult Center which is a critical element in the district’s scale-up plan. The district is also planning physical and virtual visits to college and university campuses.

The district’s goal for increasing equity includes:

- Placing students into fluid social learning groups which is in alignment with maintaining a personalized learning environment and ensuring a equitable environment for each student. Such placement supports the goal for all children to be actively involved in their education and in designing their own future. This is valuable as there are several major returns on this investment. Some of the rewards for these groupings are that they keep each child connected to adults for the requisite and individualize support. They also will develop community with other students.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The strengths are as follows: MCSD reported having some growth in student achievement on the Algebra 1 and Biology EOCEP. The snapshot of academic performance indicated that the district performed well under the state in each

category. The district also stated that the improvements can be attributed to previous technological initiatives as well as former interventions. There are sprinklings of information on continuous growth in other parts of the proposal

The weaknesses are as follows: The reported graduation rates have not consistently increased. The district showed a snapshot of academic performance but did not show several years' worth of data in order for the reviewer to evaluate the strength of that success. Again, the corresponding scores were not documented. There are no tables or figures as evidence.

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

Since the consolidation of the respective districts, MCSD, by way of its website, appears to be somewhat transparent about its operational budget. For example, financial reports, vendors, and monthly spending reports for the district are available. Nonetheless, the proposal did not address whether each specific school's information is available to the public.

The salary scale for both teachers and non-certified staff are, reportedly, available online. However, specific salaries are not posted for teachers, non-certified staff, or administrators.

Screenshots of the district's website were placed in the addendum as artifacts. MCSD also, purportedly, honors the Freedom of Information Act.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

While the state of South Carolina is closely monitoring MCSD's progress it is also providing support for intended outcomes. For example, the state provides achievement data by individual student, across the years plus comparison charts. These data empower teachers to notice patterns and trends that will help them to create personalized learning plans and tailor instruction so that student goal attainment is more likely. The state also monitors the performance of teachers and building leaders to make certain that the stated goals remain clearly in focus.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application affirms that discussion groups and meetings were held with stakeholders to receive input and feedback.

Students were reportedly excited about the possibilities that this award would afford. The key concept of fluid learning groups emerged from their participation in the planning of the application. For certain, students will need the supports to undergird this transition and new way of schooling.

The application asserts that by way of survey, 97% of the teachers responded positively to this proposal. Focus groups also allowed teachers to voice concerns and fears.

Using traditional, well-attended events, parents were queried on their opinions of the proposal and the proposed, attending outcomes. There were mixed results as some parents deemed other matters to be more important. If the intended outcome of career readiness is met, this should quiet that concern.

Marion County School District does not have any official union affiliations.

The intense focus of technology as a key component of the proposal was discussed with each group and was met with cautious optimism.

Agreement and excitement for this proposal was represented through a variety of letters of support from the community including two local business owners, the local Chamber of Commerce, the Dean of the College of Education at a local university, the State Superintendent of Education, and a local mayor who also sits on the economic commission.

There was no mention of the feelings of building administrators throughout the district.

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

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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The district acknowledges its shortcomings and has already implemented some efforts and has plans for additional strategies.

As an example of implementation based on shortcomings, the district has addressed the sharp drop in student achievement in 4th grade by adopting a balanced literacy program in addition to adopting the Common Core standards in the English language curriculum. To better understand students' individual needs, a computer-based program that provides teachers with detailed student progress and remaining needs was piloted. This year the software was purchased for the entire district.

Future actions will include Common Core training for all teachers, consistent data collection across schools, and various early and intensive interventions. Students will participate in the creation of their learning plans and be able to receive instruction that is best suited for their learning styles and specific needs.

With respect to the quality of the plan, it includes four focus areas (Develop Professional Learning Communities, Balanced Literacy, Instructional Shifts that Support Common Core, and Data-Driven Decision Making) as key goals and provides rationale for why these goals were selected. The plan included who would be responsible for helping teachers carry out these objectives (i.e. literacy specialists, curriculum coaches, instructional technology coaches, and speech and language teachers, along with community partners). Many deliverables were anticipated along the way such as students' ability to work in teams, set goals, and evaluate their own work as well as others' work, and self-reflection, to name a few.

The plan is solid in its inclusion of student responsibility and teacher training and accountability. Moreover, there is no mention of the role of the building level leadership in overseeing the outcomes which hinders the credibility of the success of the plan.

However, specific timelines for all of the above were not offered here but the scope and sequence of the entire reform effort is provided along with goals, activities, time lines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

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

	Available	Score
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(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16
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(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal speaks to MCSD's confidence in the actions of district and board of governance leadership. There is insufficient focus on the role that building level leaders plays in the overall plans for success. All the same, the proposal includes a wide-reaching approach to improvement and narrowing the preparation gap.

For academic improvement of students, strategies include decisive and early intervention, fluid learning groups, and early identification of individualized education plans with more frequent conferences and data conferences about performance.

For career readiness, students will be instructed in 21st century skills. They will also approach career exploration with more focus, structure and intensity. Overall, students will understand their role in their learning and in their success. Besides, they will be equipped to engage in meaningful conversations about their aspirations as well as formulate goals that increase the probability of attainment. In this part of the application, there was little to no mention of the scope and sequence that would be necessary to guarantee a threaded and coherent education for children who remain in the district from early childhood to high school graduation.

To support the efforts of teachers, opportunities include assistance from math specialists; literacy specialists, curriculum coaches, instructional technology coaches, speech and language teachers, and from one another through professional learning communities. Also, a plan for teachers to receive professional development from area colleges and universities was mentioned. In addition, the proposal speaks to instructional support by discipline, grade level, and community. Teachers will have increased access to technology and will be fortified with data in order to make data-evidenced decision making.

By all accounts, with their increased accountability, teachers will be well supported and the learning environment will be student-centered. With all the personalization, it will be important to enhance academic rigor and to provide specific support for students with special needs, deceleration and acceleration.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district has an ambition to promote a culture that inspires innovation to prepare students for a bright future in the 21st century that is consistent with the history of the U.S. Its hope is for MCSD to be the laboratory in which ingenuity can be nurtured. For certain, collaboration will be the linchpin to the fulfillment of this teaching and leading and MCSD is making accommodations for it.

Regarding the improvement of teaching and developing highly effective teachers, the district is securing partnerships to ensure that the collective and individual needs of teachers are met. Examples of external partnerships include STEM Centers and local colleges and universities. One their first actions will be to provide needs assessments to determine the state of teachers' instructional proficiencies and offer related professional development. Student data will contribute to such assessments.

Teachers will receive high quality learning resources through continued support for the specific strategies associated with this plan. Expected outcomes of such collaborations include facilitation of teacher learning and support for student progress toward individual learning targets (or a more personalized learning environment), more effective fluid learning groups, content and context connections as well as the use of content knowledge and researched, pedagogical practices for implementing instructional strategies. The intent here is also to improve instruction and increase capacity to support student progress. Teachers will also learn, via external partnerships, how to become proficient at making meaning of data and making data driven decision making in order to continuously measure student progress.

Vertical, professional learning communities will be convened as a measure of taking collective responsibility for the learning that impacts student achievement. In these settings, teachers will be able to practice with protocols, share both content and pedagogical knowledge, and to engage in cycles of inquiry to evaluate student progress and inform next steps. Each of these holds promise for accelerating student learning teachers.

Additional support for student learning will be garnered from the building of parent and community partnerships that can expand resources for students. For example, the district intends to build strategic alliances with business, community organizations and institutions of higher education to enhance the objectives of the school that will enable students to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through job shadowing, internships, and service projects as well as onsite and virtual career talks and site visits. These alliances will also provide personnel resources for activities such as mentoring, tutoring, counseling and co-teaching, as well as financial support to fund scholarships, and other financial needs and incentives.

Although individual student success was mentioned, there was not any real detail relative to specific processes and tools to match students' individual needs. While the teachers will be offered access to a plethora of resources, tools, data, and support, there was no mention of a systematic teacher evaluation in this section. Besides, timelines are not explicated.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	9
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>MCSD has a hierarchical organizational chart that appears well organized with an apparent division of labor. A goodly number of administrative positions are in place for oversight of schools. There is, seemingly, open communication across the district. However, the plan does not speak to the role that building leaders play in carrying out the policies set by the board or the directives from central office. Moreover, the organizational culture appears to be top-down rather than collaborative which is not consistent with one of the key components for success of the proposal. It appears that decisions are primarily made at the district level and passed along to the building leaders. There was no categorical mention of whether school leaders have input into the design of policies, procedures, schedules, and calendars, etc. There seems to be collaboration at the district level and then again at the building level but not between the district and the building leadership.</p> <p>In high school, promotion to higher grades is based on the number of credits. However, promotion does not guarantee graduation. Where there are differences in grades and the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) examination results, interventions are put into action. Promotion standards for lower grades are not provided. Specific expectations for mastery are not outlined except in the case of credit recovery.</p> <p>The district aspires is to be in compliance with the letter and spirit of all state and federal regulations regarding special needs populations. Accessibility for all other student groups is not mentioned here.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district is being quite proactive in ensuring that technology access is available to low-income students and families and to those that reside in the outer skirts of the county. Although the district does not guarantee the elimination of a digital divide for all students, it is aspiring to this end.</p>		

The district is also paving the way for electronic records that can be accessed by teachers for improved teaching and learning and by parents for communication purposes.

The technological advances extend to human resources data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district provides many examples of how it would monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff:

- The district is positioning itself to receive feedback to ensure the monitoring, measuring, and mining of its data for continuous improvement. Specific data will be obtained from outcomes of the various academic standards - Dominion, Measure of Academic Progress., Palmetto Assessment of State Standards, and High School Assessment Program. Besides, there will be notable collaboration among teachers and the school leadership team.
- There will be a continuous data collection system in place to measure the success of teachers' instructional strategies and their leadership of fluid learning groups.
- Data for graduates applying to four year colleges, percentages of students applying to technical schools, and employment rates at one and two year intervals out of high school for non-college applicants will be collected and maintained.
- Teachers and students will be surveyed. Teacher surveys will question the impact of the learning groups upon teacher instruction and comfort level. Also, educators will be provided with test data to compare to the previous instructional practices' data. Students will participate in self-monitoring reports and blogs.
- Other data to be collected include percentages of students applying to four year colleges, percentages of students applying to technical schools, and employment rates at one and two year intervals out of high school for non-college applicants.
- Local businesses such as the Economic Development Council and parents will be surveyed to gauge community perception, the effectiveness, and the impact upon the social and economic climates of respective communities.
- The district will also employ an outside consultant to provide unbiased critique and comments. There was no mention of the specific checks and balances to determine the effectiveness of school and district leadership.

Several elements of the criteria were missing in this section as follows:

- A strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process
- Timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities and
- Ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant.

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

5

4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The superintendent will meet regularly with the following councils for the purposes of open sharing of school data and information: business/industry, faith-based, principals, teachers, parents and students.

Perhaps building leaders should also meet with community members.

Other avenues for ongoing communication and engagement are the website, news magazine, a public relations representative who communicates with the media, and board of education meetings.

There was no mention of authentic engagement (i.e. whether there is a standing procedure/place/time for community members to speak their hearts; how the community is afforded opportunities to engage and participate in decision-making; and whether their meetings were information-giving without feedback, etc.).

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district has extensive performance measures in place for all grade bands but will need to make adjustments made in order to apply these measures to college and career readiness standards. It is also the goal of the district to track longitudinal data for optimal success of students.

Even still, much of the proposed testing is summative rather than formative. There are disadvantages to this approach in that sometimes the results of such assessments are obtained much later than the teachers can act upon, for each respective grade band whereas formative assessments will allow teachers to modify instructional practices in a timely fashion.

Another omission would be the ways in which the social/emotional development, the 21st century life and career readiness skills of the students, and the impact of the and the fluid learning groups will be measured.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The district plans to use a three-tiered system for evaluation. It includes (1) qualitative data gained from teachers and students, (2) collection and analysis of survey results and performance assessment results at the district office level, and (3) the opinion of an independent consultant.

This combination of qualitative and quantitative data could solicit a comprehensive body of feedback that speaks to instruction and how it parallels to academic achievement, the school culture or the environment that must be in place to ensure school improvement, and organizational effectiveness.

The plan mentioned student report cards as a measure but did not mention outcomes of exterior tests to triangulate the results of what is occurring at school. The plan mentioned transparency and reporting of such data in other parts of the report so it could be presumed here.

Although this section was shy of specific goals, deliverables, responsible parties and the other rudiments of a high quality plan, the approach and pledge (in this section and other narratives) to be transparent is credible. Also, the goals are not overly ambitious but seem attainable with incremental progress.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget seems reasonable and sufficient and provides a thoughtful rationale for expenditures. The majority of the requested funding is in support of teachers and their instructional effectiveness and instructional tools. Funding is also allotted for the huge boost in technological dependency that includes equipment, infrastructure, and training.</p> <p>In general, the rationale speaks to whether the requests are one-time versus recurring expenses (i.e. technology infrastructure and equipment versus personnel costs which are ongoing).</p> <p>Although budget years are visible, a clear outline of timelines for disbursements is not quite as apparent.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Whereas the technology will certainly require updating over time, the budget is structured in a way that personnel will remain after the life of this award. Either there were no figures in the Equipment Table for technology infrastructure or they were somehow, off the page. I attempted to make the text fit onto the screen but still the dollar amounts were not visible.</p> <p>The district plans to save money by training internal staff to serve as technology coaches and mentors so that it is not so reliant upon outside professional development. All the same, there is no budgetary documentation to verify sustainability for 3 years after the term of the grant and no mention of support from State and local governments or additional financial backing.</p> <p>Timeframes for the expenditure of budget items were included in the addendum.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The applicant did not submit this section.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

To a large extent, the scope of the work is provided along with goals, activities, time lines, deliverables, and responsible parties. A table is provided in the addendum.

The district demonstrated due diligence in adopting standards and assessments that will prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. The district also employs several data systems that measure student growth and success, as well as informs teachers and principals with data for instructional improvement. On the one hand, the proposal did not speak extensively to how it might recruit additional team members with the appropriate dispositions to help fulfill this great work. On the other hand, the district demonstrated extensive investments in the development of teachers. There would be plans in place for rewarding effective teachers for the purposes of retention. For schools with persistent achievement gaps, a plan for turning around such schools or ensuring the placement of highly effective teachers was not expressed.

There is, apparently, a great deal of district leadership planning for a vision of excellence in education. One of the critical elements missing in much of the planning is that of the building leaders. The organizational structures are also sound in terms of policies, procedures, and structure for the district. Again, there is a deafening silence regarding the role of building leaders and explicit and mutual collaboration between the district and the school leaders.

Moreover, the proposal did not provide as much detail about how leaders are groomed to lead a shared vision with innovation, collaboration, instructional excellence, a personalized environment, or a positive school culture.

The proposal was comprehensive in a variety of ways. It offered curricula that would engage students and provide opportunities for physical and virtual learning experiences. Engaging students in inquiry and other STEM-based processes are slated to offer rich, curricular and instructional initiatives to shore up achievement opportunities. Myriad interventions were also named to ensure students could maintain the necessary pace for high school completion. Opportunities for accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student learning environment were offered. The district could, however, strengthen the plan with a more explicit scope, sequence, sequence of steps, and timeline towards achieving its primary goals.

A prevailing thrust of the plan was the use of technology to create schools without walls. Removing such barriers would serve to increase equity. There is cause for pause, however, in that technology was mentioned as the first step in increasing test scores and for personalizing education. This sounds like a flawed approach. One must consider that it will take time for the faculty and staff to order, assemble, and learn the technology. All the while, learning must commence and

continue while those pieces are coming together. This is further support for the need for sequences of steps and timelines, etc. Another consideration is that while technology can help to individualize instruction, it would be a misuse of the technology to use it for “personalization”. The human touch must remain front and center for personalization. Factoring in the human touch is especially critical when it comes to positive behavior management. However, positive behavior was not highlighted in this plan yet academic success is unlikely to occur without it. Moreover, moving to a technology dependent environment will call for many more technology units and backups to ensure that all students and teachers have work stations when they need them. While the integration of technology, for certain, is an important 21st century tool, it sounds as if the district might be relying on it as panacea which may not yield the expected outcomes.

The district is clearly committed to the professional development of teachers that include professional growth cycles and evaluation of teachers. The district will participate in the evaluation system that the state is devising in addition to the current Goals Based Evaluation system that is used to help teachers set and achieve professional growth. Teachers are expected to will experience an instructional shift and learn the necessary skills to collaborate, facilitate, teach, and monitor student collaboration in fluid learning groups so that they can learn to collectively problem solve. Teachers will be supported in the practice of new strategies and assessments in classroom.

The district appears to be savvy at finding new ways to assess students, formally. Much emphasis is placed upon summative assessment but formative assessment measurements were less defined and less clear. Formative assessments inform classroom teachers more informally and routinely and provide critical information about current status, necessary change, and disparity between where students are performing and where they should be performing. Performance-based assessments also seemed to be less relied upon in this plan when they actually go hand-in-hand with project based learning. Besides, with so many assessments, it may become difficult to tease out and assess what is working and what is not.

A variety of input and possible partnerships were mentioned that might enable students to apply knowledge and skills learned in school to real-world settings through job shadowing, internships and service projects. There are still many other opportunities that the district could seize with respect to parental and community partnerships. For instance, the district did not speak to how it might engage or extend the net to parents in nontraditional ways. Parents who are hard-to-reach due to life factors that, for all intents and purposes, lesson their liberties to routinely visit school and become vested in traditional outreach methods must be courted. Also, business and industry collaborations/exchange of resources were not elucidated.

The district demonstrated fiduciary responsibility in their proposed budget as well as in their recent decisions to consolidate schools and close some campuses for the fiscal health of the district. For the budgetary expenditures, timelines were provided but not necessarily so for the implementation or outcomes of the academic goals.

Overall, the district provided a credible proposal for implementation of its goals and solid structures that support the reform. A personalized learning environment is at the forefront of the plan for the purposes of meeting academic challenges as a district and helping children take ownership of their education in order to close their own personal achievement gaps.

Total	210	138
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0236SC-2 for Marion County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application envisions that students and educators would be better prepared for the challenges of the 21st century through the infusion of social media processes, including “fluid social learning groups,” with communication and individualization facilitated and broadened through modern technology (e.g., tablets for every student). Students would have individualized education plans and would develop skill to monitor their own development with the assistance of teachers and coaches. It is not evident from the narrative that this vision is aligned with the four core educational assurance areas as defined in the notice.</p> <p>SCORE: M (5)</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Under plan, District would purchase tablets (e.g., Ipads) for all students and educators and a personalized learning plan would be developed for each student. Insufficient detail/examples regarding how low-achieving students from low-income families would benefit from the plan.</p> <p>(a) All 5000+ students in the District will participate in initiative.</p> <p>(b) Schools are listed using requested format.</p> <p>(c) The requested data are provided for each of the District’s schools.</p> <p>SCORE: M (5)</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Plan calls for professional development for teachers in areas such as Common Core standards, practices that engage students in inquiry, and teacher self-assessment. Given that the plan would be implemented for all students in the District, scale-up plan is not applicable. More clarity needed on how plan would lead to effective personalization of student learning and improved student outcomes.</p> <p>SCORE: M (4)</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) Goals for performance on summative assessments (PASS English Language Arts and PASS math) set at increases of 3 percentage points per year for each subgroup, using 2011-12 performance as a base. For high school exit exams, the ELA and math goals are set at increases of 2 percentage points per year. It is not clear from tables or narrative whether these numerical goals, if achieved, would equal or exceed stated ESEA targets.</p> <p>(b) No goals set for decreasing achievement gaps. The goals set in (A)(4)(a) could be interpreted as a goal to not change the achievement gap.</p> <p>(c) Based on table in application, goal is to increase graduation rates for each subgroup by 5 percentage points per year to a maximum of 100%. If achieved, the District’s overall graduation rate in five years would be about 97%. While the narrative does not compare these rates with State ESEA targets, the goals are ambitious.</p>		

(d) college enrollment data are not available for the district. To set goals, the application uses rates for rural high school college enrollment rates.

SCORE: M (5)

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Narrative for this section is missing. However, some items are covered in other sections. For example, the narrative for (B)(3) includes the following passage:</p> <p>(relates to (B)(1)(c))</p> <p>“Part of the ESEA flexibility request called for the state to provide student data to teachers in order to help assess student growth. Professional learning teams meet to discuss the data provided by the state, including PASS, HSAP, SAT and End of Course exam data. Student performance is tracked by individual students across the years, and comparison charts are created, allowing teachers to see patterns and trends.”</p> <p>SCORE: L (3)</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a)</p> <p>Narrative states that the district’s website provides public access to “such information as financial reports, vendors, and monthly spending reports. These reports will also spell out how much was spent in actual nonpersonnel expenditures such as travel and supplies.” Not clear from statement that this will include personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff.</p> <p>(b) (c) and (d)</p> <p>While information regarding the salary scale for teachers is available, actual salaries for instructional staff, teachers, and non-personnel expenditures apparently are not readily available.</p> <p>SCORE: L (1)</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Beginning 2012, the state assumed responsibility for areas designed to promote improvements in public education statewide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track districts’ progress and holding schools accountable for growth. • Offer programs for schools (e.g., single gender, positive behavior, and response to intervention). • Provide student growth data to teachers to facilitate teacher development; • The state has proposed a multifaceted teacher evaluation system that includes student performance data (value-added). <p>These state actions seem supportive without restraining the District’s ability to implement its plan for personalizing learning environments.</p>		

SCORE: H (8)

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

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application incorporates feedback from students, teachers, and some parents and teachers are highly supportive.

- District does not have an official teachers union. 95% of teacher respondents to survey supported RTTD proposal.
- Application writer solicited input from students at the middle and high schools.
- The RTTD proposal was discussed with parents at elementary schools during key celebratory meetings.

It's not clear whether or how school principals provided feedback and support. Also not clear that parents of students at middle and high schools had input.

SCORE: M (6)

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Proposal does good job describing how data has been used to identify problem areas and strategies employed to address those problem areas through, in some cases, personalizing instruction (e.g., 4th grade literacy). However, it is not evident from the narrative in this section how the data supports the logic behind the reform proposal's personalization strategies

SCORE: M (3)

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Narrative presents sound ideas and strategies for preparing students for college and careers that align well with the intent of RTTD. Strategies (most of which build on current initiatives in the district) include: adoption of Common Core standards to insure students are prepared for college and work, fluid learning groups for students, individualized learning plans with monitoring through frequent teacher-counselor-student conferences, grade-specific strategies for ensuring students understand how their education activities are essential to their futures, use of modern technology (e.g., Skype labs, tablets) to provide students broad access to knowledge/information in diverse contexts throughout the world. Students, teachers, counselors, and technology staff would bear primary responsibility for implementing the strategies. Technology staff would be hired. Apparently, no additional teachers would be hired to aid implementation of the initiative.</p> <p>The plan does not delineate clear roles for parents. Moreover, while the plan is coherent and makes broad reference to professional development for staff, it lacks specificity regarding how current instructional staff (particularly teachers and guidance counselors) would have sufficient ability and capacity (time) to fully and effectively implement the proposed new paradigm.</p> <p>SCORE: M (12)</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>In conjunction with information from earlier sections, the proposal lays out a coherent multi-year (summer) strategy for professional development for teachers, coaches, and administrators in areas such as implementing Common Core standards, teacher collaboration (Professional Learning Teams), technology, strategies for facilitating and empowering</p>		

fluid learning groups (one of the proposal’s student personalization strategies), and facilitating student self-monitoring/assessment. STEM Centers of SC and Costal Carolina University would provide professional development services. The proposal also describes a broad strategy for engaging parents in the educational process.

However, it is not evident that the plan would make use of teacher and/or principal evaluation data that meets the standard set by RTTD. In an earlier section, the proposal discussed the State’s new role in holding SC districts accountable using, among other strategies, a multi-faceted teacher evaluation system that includes student-level growth data. However, the proposal does not indicate the intent to use these data. Moreover, the proposal does not describe an approach for increasing schools’/students’ access to highly effective teachers and principals (as defined in this notice).

SCORE: M (10)

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has structures and policies in place that could effectively support personalized learning. The central office is configured to provide instructional and instructional technology support to schools. Principals have great decision-making influence regarding the planning of schools’ schedules, the selection and evaluation of school staff, as well as control over the school budgeting process. Several options are available to students for earning credit by demonstrating mastery (e.g., credit recovery). Benchmark tests and group and individual projects are used in classrooms to assess student mastery at multiple times. The district provides learning resources for students with disabilities and English learners.</p> <p>SCORE: H (13)</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Students and educators will enjoy high access to content, tools, etc. through existing computer and software systems plus the new tablets that would be purchased under the plan. However, because the District is partially rural, the District is not able to provide Internet access to all school families (parents). In lieu, the District is setting up computer stations at various locations (e.g., library). Those parents who are able to go online will be able (through Power Data) to view their children’s school records securely. Thus, information access may vary by geographic residence (rural vs non-rural) which, in turn, may be related to family income. Technical support will be provided by District technology coordinators and specially trained teachers. It is not clear from the narrative whether parents and students would be able to export their data in an open format to other electronic learning systems (note: the narrative refers to an “open door policy” for parents but not to an “open data format.”) The intent is that the Power Data system (student) and the Human Resources System are interoperable, but it is not clear that they actually are.</p> <p>SCORE: M (4)</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Periodically, principals, teachers, and coaches would review data and feedback to assess project progress and make adjustments accordingly. Data include student benchmark test results, student surveys, % of students applying to college,</p>		

etc. The Project Director would assemble monitoring data and share with central office staff for review and adjustments in support. In addition, the district would hire a contractor to conduct an unbiased evaluation of key elements of the project. Not clear from the narrative if or how monitoring/evaluation information would be shared with the public. For example, not clear whether all stakeholders will be assembled periodically to review monitoring/evaluation data in order to explore the need for comprehensive, integrated adjustments to the project.

SCORE: M (10)

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 Ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders occurs primarily through the Superintendent’s six advisory councils: Business/Industry, Faith-Based, principals, teachers, parents, and students. Narrative does not explain how the superintendent’s councils would adequately address the communication/engagement needs of the proposed project.
 SCORE: M (3)

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 Some performance measures and targets are reasonable (e.g., attendance rates). However, some key required measures are inconsistent. For example, according to the listed performance targets, by year 4 of implementation every participating student would both have a “highly effective” and an “effective” principal (entries not clear for teachers). Moreover, the entries suggest that 0% of the district’s principals (and teachers?) are currently highly effective or effective.
 SCORE: L (1)

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 Evaluation plan has three tiers: (1) student and teacher survey data and grades; (2) school and teacher performance data reviewed by the central office; and (3) external evaluation.
 The appendix of the application includes a clear, practical scope of work for the external evaluation (BSCS Marion County Race to the Top Program External Evaluation). This includes a listing of key evaluation questions and approaches for pursuing answers to these questions regarding individualized learning plans, technology infusion, and fluid social learning groups.
 SCORE: H (5)

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 The budget document includes only funding that would be provided through RTTD. However, the narrative mentions selected other sources of funding that are (and/or will be) used to support implementation of the plan. The budget distinguishes between one-time and ongoing expenditures and includes some discussion of strategies for sustaining essential personnel once RTTD funding ends. (This apparently was an issue raised by the state; however the official state comments are not attached to the pdf version of the application.)

One-time outlay for technology (primarily Dell tablets) account for about half the budget. Given the size of this expenditure, the proposal lacks sufficient detail regarding how the use of tablets would promote improvements in student achievement, especially for students from low-income families.

SCORE: M (7)

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative discusses sustainability challenges related to aging of equipment (tablets and software) and infrastructure, as well as the need for continued funding for essential personnel funded by the RTTD grant. According to the narrative, the state raised similar issues. The District indicated that it is mindful of this challenge and, as applicable, will pursue other outside funding at the end of the project, explore partnerships with outside technology firms, redirect District funding, and/or discontinue use of unessential personnel. Overall, the discussion of sustainability is broad and lacks specificity or certainty.

SCORE: M (6)

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not include a discussion devoted to the Competitive Preference Priority.

SCORE: L (0)

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Throughout, the proposal describes how it would use three strategies to improve personalization of learning (technology infusion, primarily providing tablets to every student; creating individualized learning plans for every student; and assigning students to fluid social learning groups). Teachers would engage in professional development in areas such as Common Core standards, practices that engage students in inquiry, and teacher self-assessment. Each student's performance would be continually tracked, and comparison charts would be created that allow teachers to see patterns and trends. The plan also includes a solid plan for evaluating the initiative's overall impact as well as the effectiveness of key project components. Note, however, to be successful the District would have to buttress its implementation of RTTD's core educational assurance areas (e.g., use of data from teacher and principal evaluations that meet the RTTD definition).

SCORE: MET

Total	210	111
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0
Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments: Not applicable.		



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0236SC-3 for Marion County School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant intends to utilize technology and project-based learning, increase teacher training, and focus on developing individual plans for students. • Mention a four-step framework that will assist students, but no details about what that framework entails. • Little mention about the four core educational assurance areas and how they are built into their vision for this reform effort. • Applicant does not mention data that they currently collect, how a plan for how they will collect in the future. • There is no reference to how this plan will build on existing changes that have been successful throughout the district. • No conversation about increasing student equity. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant intends that all schools and all students will be a part of the implementation. • They have also identified how they will do family and community outreach to support the implementation and help the community. 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant plans to align with PBL and STEM techniques that are research based. • They have identified potential partner organizations with a history of success. • Since they are planning on working district-wide with all schools and students, they didn't need to reference how they would scale for meaningful reform district-wide. 		

- There is no clearly defined discussion of timelines or how/when they will begin the work.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant mentions some data about one school that has increased student growth based on intensive intervention and elevated use of technology (this information would have been helpful in A1). • Mention having some success with single-gender classrooms, but no data to support this assertion. • Mention that individual student learning plans will help students address their own academic gaps. • Marion 7 has had increased graduation rates, however, Marion 1 & 2 have not demonstrated growth over time. • Part of the personal learning plan will include a focus on college prep and application. • In the data forecasting, the applicant does not demonstrate that they will work to decrease achievement gaps in any areas, yet instead have forecasted a consistent achievement gap between white and black students on both standardized tests, as well as in graduation rates. There is no mention of what work will be done to decrease the achievement gaps, or to focus on equity for all students. • Applicant has set a data goal of 40% of students enrolling in college by the year 2016/17, this number seems low (not-ambitious), particularly in light of the core assurance area of college/career ready. 		

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	0

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
Nothing was included in the application for this area of selection criteria.		

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has a link on their website for spending transparency that includes access to spending records. • Applicant has some salary scales for teachers and non-certified personnel available online via Human Resources page on website. Admin salaries are not posted yet, but are in process. • No mention of how school-level expenditures are made transparent. 		

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools are regularly reviewed by the South Carolina Department of Education and are issued annual report cards. • The applicant will comply with all facets of the South Carolina ESEA flexibility request provisions. • The applicant outlines several facets of the ESEA flexibility provisions, and has documented how those same provisions align with their application, including a focus on teacher self-evaluation and reflection (embedded in their proposed professional development plan), as well as providing data to educators to better serve students. Many of the elements of the applicants plan mirror the ESEA flexibility provisions, and are aligned with the intent of creating personalized learning environments and increasing teacher effectiveness. Applicant did not describe any concerns over autonomy to implement plan based on state legal, statutory and regulatory requirements. 		

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

- Applicant reached out to students in a meaningful way, and some of the student feedback led to key elements of the proposal.
- Teachers were surveyed via survey-monkey, however, there is no information provided about how much detail the teachers were given about the educational changes being suggested. There was plenty of mention about the technology access increase, and some frustrations teachers have experienced about technology access, but no mention about how the technology access will change student academic achievement.
- Applicant reached out to parents at the elementary school level, but no mention about specific reach out to high school parents.
- No mention about any revisions that were made based on feedback from parents, teachers or community members.
- Narrative included no mention of letters of support, however several letters were included in the appendix - but most of them referred to increasing students technological skill, and nothing about increasing students critical thinking or academic achievement.
- Data and narrative demonstrate a reach-out to various stakeholders, but no information on how meaningful this engagement was and how it informed the proposal or revisions of proposal.

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

5

2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant mentioned two programs that were piloted including Success Maker and Waterford Early Learning system that focused on individual computer-based instruction/intervention. Based on that pilot, they purchased the program for all schools.
- There is no evidence that they have thoughtfully used data to identify needs and gaps in order to implement personalized learning environments, or how the use of the pilot led to the proposal being submitted.
- Applicant mentions that it has a process for analyzing data at the school level, but no mention about how that process has led to the proposal being submitted, or how they will use that data to implement a personalized learning environment.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	6
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant is planning to build on existing structures/strategies that have proven successful - utilizing professional learning communities, balanced literacy, instructional shifts tied to common core and data-driven decisions. • The applicant talks about exposing students to data, but no plan for how that data will be reviewed, what data will include, how the data will inform instruction and how students will use that data to change their personal learning plans. • Narrative has very little information and planning for how instruction will change in order to offer deep learning tied to college and career readiness. • Lots of discussion about how technology will assist in differentiation as well as allowing students access to resources they haven't previously had access to. Again, conversation about how instruction will look or how classes will be structured to support greater personalization are missing. • Application is strong on theory, however, insufficient specifics about how things will be implemented on a day-to-day basis. 		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	5

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant plans to build on the existing use of Professional Learning Teams.
- They have identified potential partners including S2TEM Center and Coastal Carolina University for both instructional training as well as educational technology training.
- The applicant discusses utilizing student assessment data initially, as well as expanding data to include observations and peer reflections.
- The narrative includes a variety of ways that teachers will be supported in learning new techniques and strategies including modifying teams based on interests, needs and learning styles, but there is insufficient evidence to link these new strategies to a plan for student implementation and student achievement.
- The narrative does not describe any instances of how teacher evaluation systems will be used for the purpose of continuous school improvement, or how these practices will close the achievement gaps.
- The narrative is heavy on theory, but unclear about the actual implementation plan of how and when things will happen for teachers and students.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	6
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has a clear governance structure and regular meetings of the cabinet, as well as an all-admin meeting. • Principals have autonomy on the daily schedule for their schools, and have input into hiring decisions - with the ultimate decision about a contract resting with the superintendent. Principals also appear to have some autonomy over the budgets of their building, but it is unclear if they are given full control about how they utilize the lump sum allocated for their school, or if the district provides a staffing model and then the building has a discretionary budget. • No evidence that students can earn credit through mastery. Promotion is tied to Carnegie units, but it is unclear if Carnegie units are determined by units, time, content or competency. • The schools utilize multiple ways of assessing student work. It is unclear if students have choice about which assessments they are allowed to use for different content. • Applicants has several staff to support students with disabilities and English learnings, but no connection to how these specific groups of students will be supported with this new implementation plan. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district recognizes that many families may not be able to afford internet due to their rural nature and income. However, they have decided to donate computers to the library system to increase access, as well as utilizing existing PCs to create a parent education lab. • Students will be allowed to check-out equipment to take home. • The district utilizes PowerSchool, as well as Waterford Early Learning System and Success Maker. Parents have access to PowerSchool via a web portal. The other two software systems are used for personalized instruction. • The district has a Human Resource system that was purchased specifically to interact and connect with PowerSchool. That connection has not been finalized, but is in the plan. • Technical support will be provided by existing technology staff. No discussion about how increased need will be handled. 		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative includes lots of information about how they will collect data from various stakeholders, including both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as utilizing the services of an external evaluator. • There was no information included about how the applicant will publicly share the data that is collected, or how they will analyze it and use it to improve their implementation. 		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant will utilize existing superintendent advisory council structure with specific reach out to various stakeholders. • Regular board meetings • District magazine for highlighting the implementation successes • Applicant will be enhancing the existing website, and will do specific outreach to the local media. 		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant plans to utilize existing standardized testing data as a source of implementation data, as well as utilizing attendance data and #'s of high level courses that students enroll in. • Rationale for the existing tests is that they are tied to state standards, and teachers are familiar with the data sets • No information about introducing additional formative assessments rather than relying on the existing summative tests. • No timeline for when formative assessments will occur throughout the year and how that timeline supports ongoing review of the implementation plan. 		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant intends to utilize a three-tiered system - using data from teachers and students as the first tier; survey results and standardized assessment data as the second tier; and an external evaluator as the third tier. • What they will be measuring is not as specific as it could be. 		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has listed how most of the Race to the Top District grant funds would be utilized and allocated. However, there is an 'other' category that includes \$1.6 million that is not defined. • Applicant has not listed how it would utilize existing LEA, State and Federal funds to support this work. 		

- Applicant has identified which funds will be used as one-time investments, as well as those ongoing operational costs that will need to be absorbed by the district at the end of the grant period.
- There are not funds allocated for equipment or training stipends beyond year one of the implementation. This decision does not take into account adding new staff (replacing existing staff that retire or move to another location), nor does it take into account a potential for new students and the need to purchase additional equipment as well as repair broken equipment. It is unclear if this is embedded in the plan elsewhere.
- The districts plan for long-term sustainability in regards to staffing is insufficient. They are not sure if they will need the extra technology technicians and coaches at the end of the grant period, and if they do need them, they do not have a solid plan for funding those positions. They intend to reach out to local industry to identify potential financial support.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant intends to train existing school personnel to assume responsibilities for on-going professional development beyond the four-year grant award. • Applicant intends to sustain the new Instructional technology staff (technicians) by spreading the cost of the additional staff across all schools. • For equipment, the plan is to try to secure new funding to replace outdated equipment, on a rolling replacement cycle. This plan for replacing equipment is insufficient to insure long-term sustainability. If the district is unable to secure funding for new equipment, there is no plan in place to continue serving students with adequate resources. 		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No competitive preference priority information included. 		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant intends to create a 1-to-1 technology environment using tablets, building on existing software that has been piloted that provides additional student support. However, the narrative is lacking a clear plan for how instruction and day-to-day teaching and learning will change in order to build on the core educational assurance areas. • They have outlined some instructional changes that are aligned to college- and career- ready standards/graduation requirements including a new focus on college preparation and application tools that will be part of Personalized Learning Plans for all students. However, the plan for implementation is not clear or comprehensive and lacks details about how teaching and learning will change with implementation. • Application lacks evidence of how the applicant will address student achievement gaps across student groups. They have a goal of addressing the gaps, but no comprehensive plan on how they will achieve this. 		

- The narrative includes a variety of ways that teachers will be supported in learning new techniques and strategies including modifying teams based on interests, needs and learning styles, but there is insufficient evidence to link these new strategies to a plan for student implementation and student achievement.

Total	210	98
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