



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0502CA-1 for Merced Union High 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 Merced Union High School Union District (MUHSD) overall vision for reform focuses on improving classroom instruction utilizing all available resources. The application has set forth an innovative and focused reform agenda addressing 5 key areas: Evaluation System Project, Growth of the Common Core, Data Collection, Closing the Achievement Gap and a Community Partners Project. These key initiatives are closely aligned with the district' s strategic priorities. The plan is in concert with the four ARRA assurance areas and addresses the major goals articulated under this criterion . The proposed RTT-District funded programs will build on several existing program initiatives as well as advance innovation.</p> <p>The narrative does not appear in focus with the core program elements of the vision. Several parts of the scoring criteria are not addressed. Further, the 2 most significantly resourced components (purchase of technology devices and the evaluation system project) are not fully presented as part of an overall coherent plan.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Merced Unified High School District currently operates 8 regular school campuses and one adult school. An additional site is under construction and due to open in F all 2013. All 8 campuses will be served through the RTT-District funding with residual effects likely to benefit the adult school. A listing of the school sites is included in the application. Of its 10, 129 student enrollment 75.1 % qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch which satisfies the required 40% compliance for participation. All 10, 075 students enrolled in the district will participate along with 500 teachers. The district is comprised of 1000 staff members overall. The application does not document the number of non- teacher educators that will be involved. It also does describe a specific target number or classification of high needs students (in accordance with definition provided in the Notice) aside from the 2 subgroup categories of low income and race/ethnicity.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Included in the application documentation is a well developed logic model and high quality action plan containing the core features specified in the Notice. The fact that all schools and students will be served removes the requirement for scale up.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district in consultation with its teachers and administrators has identified specific goals , gap closure targets and measures across 3 of the required areas, however the goals do not appear to be ambitious as presented, i.e. 2-3% in annual improvements. targets. At this minimal rate, at the end of 4 years of RTT-District investment, large numbers of students would not have reached proficiency and gaps in achievement would only have. Only white students and Filipino students participating in the state math assessment are predicted to reach 00.0% and 0.2 % respectively by 2016-17.</p> <p>The application does not address whether the targets identified are equal to or exceed the state ESEA targets. A goal for college enrollment appears to be missing..</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>The application provides an extensive overview of the district's efforts to implement important reform initiatives over the last four years including: teacher developed course organizers, infusion of resources for technology enhancement, attendance discipline and data-based decision making. The narrative references throughout several illustrations of impact data, e.g. the newspaper article giving credit to the district for increasing the graduation rate among Latino students and the 5 year over of API gains for the district as a whole. The application also provides documentation of impact data covering: attendance, expulsions and suspensions, social and behavioral norms, and student achievement in math, ELA and primary language proficiency.</p> <p>The application does not fully describe the district's track record of accomplishments required under other sections of this criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) charts or graphs, raw student data, and other evidence that demonstrates the applicant's ability to close achievement gaps including by raising student achievement b. high school graduation rates and c. college enrollment <p>MUDHS is in program improvement, year three, but does not indicate which of the participating schools, if any, have been designated as persistently low achieving or low achieving.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application does not provides school level salaries nor non-personnel expenditures..</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	1
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application narrative does not respond to this criteria. The application overall does not include sufficient information to address this criteria.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative does not address this criteria in Section B. In Section D, there is information pertaining to the district's enlistment of 147 parents and 247 students in taking a survey regarding the RTT programs being proposed resulting in requests for more tutoring and teaching social skills. It is not clear how these requests have been translated into specific actions under the RTT-District program.</p> <p>In the appendix, documentation is provided consisting of 11 letters of support along with an MOU from the local teacher's union related to RTT-District implementation issues that fall under the jurisdiction of collective bargaining procedures. There is also evidence provided of an extensive dialogue held with a group of teachers.</p> <p>The CA department of education declined to comment on all CA RTT-District submissions. Letters of support were received from the mayors of Atwater, City of Merced and Livingston.</p> <p>Detailed minutes of a meeting held to engage teachers in giving feedback were included in the appendix but no further information is provided indicating the number of teacher meetings that were held or the number of teacher participants involved. It is also not clear whether the MOU between the district and the District Teachers Association should be interpreted as support for the RTT-District proposal from teachers.</p> <p>The minutes from the teacher dialogue indicate where agreed upon changes were made in the RTT-District proposal. The</p>		

application does not address how families and principals were engaged in the development of the proposal.

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

5

1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

In Section B of the application, the district describes its track record of responding to reform challenges and the resulting impacts. Embedded in this description are examples of how several personalized learning environments are being implemented. While there are a few examples described at a general level, the information provided does not constitute a substantive analysis or a plan for one focused on personalized learning environments.

The application contains a good logic model and action plan but lacks a needs/ gap identification based on data across subgroups.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The response submitted is a general overview and does not respond to the full list of the criteria detailed a though c. The application narrative for Section C primary addresses the district's plan to roll out the Common Core Standards and the technology components. The application content describing various learning resources for students focuses on: career explorations, and course advisement and alignment, development of a 6 year plan by each student and Senior Exit public Interview experience incorporating digital media. (Responds to iv B)..

The application also features a data collection component which would appear to align with criteria iv A. Other than these 2 areas, The application does not adequately respond to the detailed criteria outlined, e.g. how parental support would be provided, how studnets would exeriec how students would be exposed to diverse cultures, contexts or perspectives,

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

20

7

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application narrative does not distinguish its response to Section C/Learning and separately for C2/Teaching and Leading. As noted under C1, the application, addresses primarily the MUHSD plans for further rollout off the Common Core Standards. Teachers will be discussing best practices, calibrating there gradings and using this feedback to adapt instruction. The Evaluation System Project is closely aligned with criteria(d) and as such presents an innovative approach to increase student achievement through monetary incentives. The response references the district's teacher evaluation system but does not indicate how the feedback collected will be used for improvement. The application does not provide sufficient information responsive to all of the criteria outlined a though d.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	7

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Based on the application, practices and structures are in place within MUDHS at the district and campus levels that create flexible climate and supportive context for implementing personalized learning experiences. The application provides selected examples of how personalization is being implemented but without robust documentation.

The application does not address sections c and d. E is only partially addressed under this criteria in that the Family Resource Centers employ community liaisons of diverse backgrounds to assist parents in accessing Center services . Overall the application, speaks minimally to the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. The application does not provide documentation for the referenced existing policies that embed appropriate academic and behavioral interventions for EL and students with disabilities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Based on the application, practices and structures are in place within MUDHS at the district and campus levels that create flexible climate and supportive context for implementing personalized learning experiences. The application provides selected examples of how personalization is being implemented but without robust documentation.</p> <p>The application does not address sections c and d. E is only partially addressed under this criteria in that the Family Resource Centers employ community liaisons of diverse backgrounds to assist parents in accessing Center services. Overall the application, speaks minimally to the needs of all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. The application does not provide documentation for the referenced existing policies that embed appropriate academic and behavioral interventions for EL and students with disabilities.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application describes at a very general level the district's ongoing use of student formative and summative assessments at various levels throughout the system. The district reports that it has made great strides in this but does not give illustrative examples. Structures, frequency and management arrangements for the cycle are not indicated. The application provides little evidence of how data is collected, used and stimulates change in practice. The intent to apply the same basic framework as a valid improvement cycle to RTT funded innovations and activities does not adequately meet the expectations of this criteria. Substantially absent is a response to how the results of RTT-District investments will be publicly shared.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application did not respond to this criteria.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application does not include narrative explanation for this section, thus, making interpretation of the various charts presented challenging.</p> <p>The separately prepared charts included in the application address the core components of this criteria, e.g., identification of key measures, rationale for selection, how measures will provide rigorous and timely feedback and be improved overtime. The application indicates that subgroup disaggregation for each of the metrics would be required. Further clarification is needed to understand the data provided on the RTT-D application charts because in their present form they are incomprehensible.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Except for the description provided under the general statement of continuous improvement in Section E1, the application does not address this criteria.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application outlines budget parameters in the amount of \$20M for direct costs and \$1,164,059 for indirect costs from</p>		

RTT-District.. This funding will be augmented by \$1, 005, 677 from other sources. These funds are being contributed from community partners as well as the District's General Fund as well as Title 1. Eighty percent of the budget is being allocated to the purchase of personal electronic devices and providing incentives for whole school improvement focused on instruction.

The budget sections provide adequate document to address the specified. The district has developed a reasonable fiscal plan to support the reform activities proposed. The purchase of the personal electronic devices and financial incentives are the only 2 items in the budget considered one time investments.

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

The application does not include a plan for sustainability due to the uncertainty of the economic climate. The district indicates there are two critical realities looming ahead: declining student enrollment and decrease in available annual revenue.(projected to be \$3M decrease over next year) which makes it impossible to present a budget at this point in time.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district has identified 4 community based organizations as collaborative partners to address this criteria. The proposed initiatives are well established in the communities where the District is located. In many cases, the activities build on and expand current supports. Letters from the 4 partner agencies have been received documenting their commitment. The appendix describes in detail the action plan for the four organizations indicating the kinds of supportive tools and resources that will be offered, responsibilities and timeline, but does not clearly define deliverables, the targeted population nor how the activities align to the performance. Additionally further clarification is needed on the following:

1. the process and rationale for selecting and tracking the identified performance metrics
2. the protocols that will be use to assess student outcomes and program effectiveness
3. Phase in and scale up plans to ensure all students are served.

Given the fact that a baseline with accompanying growth targets have not been established has yet to be determined, it is difficult to judge whether the proposed performance targets are ambitious..

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The application has many elements of a strong plan for addressing RTT-D goals. The district has articulated a vision responsive to diverse student needs which has been translated into both a logic model and detailed action plan. At the same time, the application does not address important core components: documentation of the district's track record in closing achievement gaps, project sustainability, and full response to important RTTT -criteria. Overall the plan lacks coherence and alignment of the various elements,

Total	210	81
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0502CA-2 for Merced Union High School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Merced Union High School District (MUHSD) says it is focusing its reform on improving classroom instruction. They hope to facilitate student growth across the four years of the grant creating foundational values and skills. While the four core areas (as defined in this grant) are discussed more fully in later parts of section A, they are not mentioned in the early paragraphs of the section. Each section of the grant application is addressed as a whole: section A, B, C, etc. The individual parts, A1, A2, A3 and A4 are blended into the larger section.</p> <p>The LEA has a logic model diagram that lays out specific projects to support the vision of instructional improvement. It would seem these are the key parts of the vision for improving classroom instruction. It is indicated that they will be described more fully in later sections of the application. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement common core 1:1 initiative • Continue to strengthen RTI in academic, behavioral and socio-emotional realms • On-going improvement of evaluation systems for superintendent, principals and teachers • Collect meaningful feedback from students up to 16 months after graduating re: college and career readiness • Strengthen community connection with after school programs and activities <p>There is mention made of closing achievement gaps and it is included in the charts for section A4. However there is not a comprehensive and clear reform vision. There are few strong statements of what they hope to gain through this grant. It must be extrapolated from paragraphs describing the demographics, conditions, previous reform measures and activities or projects that are mentioned in this section.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All nine high schools in the MUHSD school district will be included in this project. The adult school in the district does not qualify. The demographics of the district and schools are clearly listed. The schools are listed on the introductory page. Having all the high schools in the district involved in the project ensures that the district has a common focus and mission in addressing the needs of their students.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The MUHSD district reform plan is based on 5 projects. Four are listed in this narrative. One more, Strengthening their RtI system, is in the logic model, but not in the narrative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation system • Growth of Common Core m- implementation of the National Common Core standards • Data Collection • Closing the Gap <p>Each of the four listed projects are described. It is hoped that a great deal more detail will be included in section C.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Math scores in various classes and grade levels were listed to show current proficiency status and expected growth. The expected growth for each subgroup each year is 3%. Since the same amount of growth is expected, the achievement gaps are not being closed. They are simply moved to a higher percentage level.</p> <p>Graduation rates were also addressed in the data presented. Most of the groups are expected to have a 95-100% graduation rate. English Learners and Students with Disabilities were expected to graduate at an 85% and 74% rate respectively.</p> <p>There was no data regarding College enrollment and Postsecondary degree attainment. The district plans to partner with two local financial institutions to administer a post graduation survey with a cash incentive program administered by the partnerships. Degree attainment beyond high school was not addressed.</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	10
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The MUHSD schools have shown a record of success in the past four years and have shown improvements in student achievement including closing some achievement gaps. Their reforms are ambitious and achievable based on this record of success and the structures in place.</p> <p>The district has defined in great detail, the types of administrative changes, curriculum and assessment changes, professional development and coaching, inclusionary practices, technology support, structures (including RtI and PBIS), and community connections have been made since the current superintendent was hired in 2008. The district is now in year three of it's correctional plan. This entire overhaul of the system seems to be producing results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Academic Performance Index by 81 points - a greater gain than most California High Schools. • Improved Teacher performance based on specific Teach for Success standards • Improved curriculum - mapping the Common Core Standards and building assessments around these • Improved attendance including less truancy • Improved discipline - decline in weapons, assaults and fighting • Some reporting of information to parents • Closing of achievement gaps, particularly for Latino students who graduate <p>The data is included in a powerpoint presentation reprinted in the appendix. While this is difficult to read due to size and clarity of the print both on paper and in CD, it seems evident that the graphs are pointing in a positive direction. It is not known who this powerpoint presentation was intended for. In the narrative, it is stated that attendance and discipline data is "transparent" and has been in the local newspaper and reported to the School Board. There is nothing to indicate if other data was shared in any way. Nor is it clear what types of data are available to parents and students. Teachers do use data in their planning processes, although there was little elaboration of how.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In the appendix, there is a powerpoint presentation, "2011-12 All Funds Budget Unaudited Actuals". This set of slides shows revenue and expenditures for all school spending categories. Personnel salaries are presented in 2 groups: Certificated and Classified. General headings of non-personnel expenditures are also listed, but not in great detail. It is not stated for whom this presentation was prepared.

In the appendix, there is some advertisement from Chase Bank, a local partner. It is not clear what role this bank has in the budget process.

There is no mention made in the narrative of transparency of budget items. It is very difficult to determine the level of transparency in processes, practices and investments with so little information.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Since the district was declared in need of improvement by the State, it can be assumed that the state would provide the necessary conditions to implement the personalized learning environments described in the proposal. The district has already made significant changes in replacing administrative personnel, in professional development and curriculum improvements. None of this was directly stated, but can only be assumed from the changes already made.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In the narrative for section B, there is no evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in developing the proposal. Yet the documents in the appendix, listed below, would indicate that some efforts were made in this direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A document of "Teacher Input Meeting" minutes. This meeting was attended by 7 people, 3 of whom are teachers. This document records a discussion of the proposal and input from teacher representatives. There is no date on the document. • It is followed by a document of "RTTT-D Questions and Responses". There is no indication for whom this second document was meant. • There are letters of support from the three community leadership councils • A memorandum of understanding supporting the proposal from the teachers' union • 4 form letters signed by student leaders from various clubs • A letter in Spanish from a parent or community member • A letter from a senator. • There is also a document from the Boys & Girls Clubs of America that aligns their goals with several of the efforts in the proposal. <p>In section D of the proposal narrative, the district states that 149 parents and 247 students from the district completed a survey regarding the RTTT-D programs being proposed. While the survey instrument was not included, so the questions are unknown, parents and students wanted more programs for tutoring and teaching social skills. It also described teachers involvement through their union. Assessments, disbursement of funds, survey instruments make-up of committees all involve some union negotiations. This would have been helpful information in this section as well, but shows a more comprehensive system of gaining input from a variety of stakeholders.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District does not directly point to a high quality plan for analysis of current status. It is described to some extent by documents in the appendix:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their logic plan lists action plans and projects built on expanding their Rtl academic intervention program. • This is followed by a plan to "Improve Teaching and Learning." Both plans address cohorts of students and their learning progress through a list of activities. • The district narrative describes briefly the Rtl and PBIS interventions used in the district. Powerpoint presentations on both academic, and behavior & safety interventions are included in the appendix. Again, it is not stated for whom these presentations were meant. <p>The narrative describes an example of personalizing the learning environment when the district notes that after school learning supports were often not utilized by students. Most students had jobs or caring for sibling responsibilities to consider. So the school instituted a lunch hour 30 minute daily intervention. They had 30 minutes for lunch, then, based on 5 week progress reports, students either received club and enrichment activities or academic interventions. Once students raised their achievement levels, they could join the clubs or enrichment activities. This resulted in less fighting during the lunch hour and increased student achievement.</p> <p>So while they have demonstrated evidence of implementing a personalized learning plan, and a chart of actions and activities are included, it is not yet a high quality plan as described in the criteria.</p>		

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



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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The MUHSD system has already put in place the components of this proposal in one of their high schools and have found this to be very effective. In piloting at one school they have learned how to better implement at others. The components of the plan that will provide for a personalized learning environment that engages and empowers all students in an age-appropriate plan includes:

- A classroom learning environment in which the teacher's instruction is based on Common Core Standards involving explicit instruction as well as opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.
- Purchasing technology devices for all students and staff, as well as building in the educational support and infrastructure to use these well.
- Students will be required to complete a 6 year plan that is regularly monitored by instructional staff. This plan has several steps to prepare students to become college/career ready:
 - a Self Directed Survey to identify careers that fit their interests and abilities
 - a chance to explore careers of interest with career guidance opportunities
 - in their junior year, they will receive guidance to choose classes based on their career choices as well as classes in financial literacy
 - the financial literacy will be supplemented by a partnership with a local credit union who will open a \$5 savings account for each student.
 - During their senior year, students will present their 6 year plans to community members in a mock interview.

These components ensure that students will be provided instruction that will support their learning goals, have opportunities for deep learning in their area of interest, become college and career ready, and master critical content and skills as listed in the criteria.

Since the district requires a 6 year personal education plan for each student with an exit interview, they indicate a personalized sequence of instructional content and skills to enable students to reach their individual goals and graduate college and career ready.

The district is transforming one of their high schools into a virtual academy. Students who attend there will also have instruction based on Common Core Standards and will have a 6 year plan. The setting and access to learning will be different, but still high quality.

During the 6 years of a student's educational plan, they are linked with instructional staff who monitor their progress and provide on-going feedback. This again creates a personalized setting for each student to realize their own goals.

Since students will each be given a technology device to support their learning, and it is required to be used during the exit interview, there is a built in system of technology education through peer cohorts. A group of students will be highly trained to teach their peers. These are students who show early mastery of the technology standards. They will help their peers and staff to trouble shoot technological issues.

In this section, parental support and involvement is not mentioned at all. Parents could be an integral part of the students 6 year plan. However, it is mentioned in section D. The narrative in section D described Family Resource Centers staffed by Spanish, Hmong, and Punjabi Community Liasons. Parents utilize these centers to learn how to access their student's grades, progress reports test scores, attendance and disciplinary information on AERIES, the district data system. Knowing this information would certainly help parents to be partners in their child's education.

Overall, this is a high quality plan with many well developed components to ensure student success in reaching goals and being college and career ready. There are just two factors missing: there is no specific provisions made for high needs students. It could be assumed that the 6 year plans will address this, but it is not explained in the narrative or in the appendix. Secondly, there is no mention of students having access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives that could motivate and deepen their learning, and as noted above, the parent community connection was not made in this section.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	12
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The District has developed a clear system for technology support both for students and staff as listed in the action plan in the appendix, a system of professional development that includes monthly meetings, instruction in integrating the Common Core Standards and improved instructional strategies, a cohort of peers who voluntarily began to learn and use the Common Core

Standards such that they have become peer instructors, and guest speakers who have researched the methods and practices in use in the district. There is follow-up on what was learned through a comprehensive evaluation system that is still under development, but most of the components are in place. Both administrators and staff are evaluated with a rigorous process to ensure commitment to personalized learning and increased student achievement.

In addition, the district has added an award system, "the Superintendent's Cup," that is awarded to the district high school with the highest point value in several areas: benchmark assessments, Callifornia standards tests, academic performance index, pass rates, proficiency rates, student attendance, AP results of 4 or 5, athletics and teacher attendance. The points are awarded with the greatest amount on the first three categories and the least in the last 4. Principals and staff are highly motivated to work toward this award since it grants \$10,000 to the winning school to be used as they decide. They have used this system since 2008, with three schools winning the awards - one of them twice - and hope to continue this process.

While the district reports good results so far, very little is said about assessments, data collection and use to inform instruction, nor is there a plan to increase the number of highly qualified teachers to continue this type of instruction. There is use of assessment data in the award program, and the student plans described in section C1, but no specific information on how often or in what venue the assesments are given. It is not clear who sees the data and makes decisions about which students get the interventions mentioned in section B. There is a brief mention of data use in conjunction with student plans, but more information would have been helpful. It is assumed that the evaluation system supports improved teaching and leading but the connection is not specifically made, even in the evaluation samples and plan in the appendix.

Overall, this section gave a great deal of explicit information to describe the proposed plan. it is a very good plan, but there are some pieces missing as mentioned above and in section C1.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this district, professional development was provided to all classified and certified staff not only for instructional purposes, but to "create a more welcoming environment for teachers, parents and the larger community." The district is organized into several levels of leadership: School Board and School District Office, District Administration and Site Leadership, Site Adminsitrators and Teachers. All sites have an Instructional Leadership Team made up of the principal, site administrators, Instructional Coach, Collaboration Leaders and/or chairs of departments. The narrative describes the communication among these groups and some is connected with the evaluation and professional development systems.</p> <p>Each individual site is responsible and has autonomy to develop its own site plan to meet the academic, attendance, and behavioral growth targets the District has set. Decision making is collaborative, and the district hopes to do some of its collaboration via an electroinic social networking format.</p> <p>The narrative does not describe how students earn credit - whether it is through "seat time" or through demonstration of mastery of content, however, the student 6 year plans described in section C 1, would indicate that the personalization and senior exit interview would be a student's chance to show mastery of what was learned.</p> <p>Again, other than the personalized plan, there is nothing to indicate that the district is providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible to high needs students.</p> <p>The district pain is of high quality in providing that policies and infrastructure are in place to support staff and most students in their personalized learning. The missing information is how the district intends to address the needs of high-needs learners, other than the lunchtime interventions mentioned in section B.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This district has included a document in this section in which they compare the 4 Key educational assurance areas of the ARRA, the RTTT-D Top Priority Components with the District Mission Statements and cCore Beliefs and the RTTT-D Project alignment. This is a correlation among all of these.</p> <p>The district has developed Family Resource Centers such that parents can learn there how to support their student's education, and can access data about their child's progress, assessments, attendance, etc. The data is provided on the district's interoperable student information system - AERIES. It is provided, along with other informational and electronic</p>		

systems available to students and parents in an open-data format. The district's infrastructure allows parents and students to export this data in a non-proprietary, machine readable format. They have already piloted the AERIES parent portal and will be moving to on-line registration in fall of 2013.

The district does not explain how parents may have technical support, content tools, or other learning resources, although it could be assumed to be part of the Family Resource Center structure. The range of strategies is not explained. The only other strategy besides the family resource centers were the lunchtime interventions. It also does not explain how the school district uses this data system, although that is briefly alluded to in several sections.

It seems the district has a good quality plan for implementation with support and resources for school staff, students and families because they have piloted their plan in one high school as mentioned in a previous section. However, it is not clearly described.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	3
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Since the district began their reform measures in 2008, they said they have institutionalized the practice of employing formative and summative assessments to monitor and evaluate student learning. The outcomes were then used to inform instructional decisions. They have a "healthy collegial climate," and they have Assessment and Accountability administrators who monitor, support and facilitate this collaboration. They say they will use the same process for the RTTT-D grant. However, no process was described. It is not clear that they can adjust and revise the plan as needed. It is known that they have piloted the process in one school and have made adjustment in the process. What is not known is what those adjustments were and what process was used.</p> <p>In this section there is a chart with sections that define and describe each performance measure, the rationale for selecting the measure, how the measure will provide rigorous feedback and how the measure will be improved over time. This is primarily directed toward the criteria for section E3, however there are a few statements about timely and regular feedback to stakeholders and making changes in case the measure is insufficient or needs to be expanded.</p> <p>The district has not stated a clear, high quality approach to continuously improve its plan.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative for this section does not indicate what strategies the district will use for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders, the chart referenced in section E1 and E3 indicates that performance measure results will be shared with community and stakeholders, even describing it as "respectful, timely and meaningful." There is one statement about posting information to the district and community websites. No other strategies or processes for communication or engagement are noted here. It might be assumed that some information will be shared at the Family Resource centers, through school meetings with staff and students, or at parent-teacher conferences. However, that is not clearly stated.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this section there is a chart with columns that define and describe each performance measure, the rationale for selecting the measure, how the measure will provide rigorous feedback and how the measure will be improved over time. There are 12 performance measures, three of which are required by grant criteria, but two are not applicable because the evaluation system in use for teachers and administrators in this district does not fit the model described in RTTT-D criteria.</p> <p>The measures address college and career readiness through the Common Core Standards, Teaching for success based on certain objectives, progress of subgroups, attendance, and surveys. The survey literature is included in the appendix as powerpoint slides but are barely readable on either the CD or the paper version. The charts with results show only the baseline and projection for all students. The number of students who complete and submit a FAFSA is expected to increase by 13 percentage points over the course of the next four years with the help of the grant. Likewise, those students who are on track to college and career readiness is expected to increase by 10 percentage points. It is understood that surveys may</p>		

be taken anonymously and therefore cannot be disaggregated by subgroup. It is not known why no other information was listed by subgroup.

Based on this information, it is difficult to tell if the achievement performance measures are ambitious and achievable. The description and rationale of the 10 applicable measures seem achievable, but there is a lack of baseline data, particularly for subgroups to be able to determine whether or not they are ambitious and achievable.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Evaluating the effectiveness of the investments made with this grant was not addressed in this narrative. In previous sections, the teacher and administrative evaluation system was noted as being rigorous and comprehensive. The site based governing team has the autonomy to decide how resources are used, to schedule and decide how to reach the targets set by the district. However, other than the performance measures mentioned in section E3, there is no evidence of an ongoing system to evaluate effectiveness of the investments.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The District's budget narrative identifies Federal Title I and III funds to be used primarily to support the staff development plans of the five projects. The general budget will continue to pay for most staff and administrators salaries as well as supplies and operating expenses. The RTTT-D funds are slated for technology devices for each student and staff member (41%), and incentives for all district staff to work together to improve instruction for all students (40%) The remaining 19% is for the other three projects in the proposal. The devices will be a one-time purchase as will the Reading Specialist and Intervention Specialist positions. The incentives are a negotiated item so that amount could change. If it is not used for incentives, it will be used to "bolster the Common Core roll-out." Within the pages of the actual budget accounts with listed amounts, there is a narrative explaining the use of these expenditures within each of the five projects.

The district plans to partner with a local credit union to provide a \$5 savings account for students during their financial literacy classes. Another partnership with Chase Bank will provide an incentive of \$50 transferred to that savings account for each of two surveys each student completes in a post graduate follow-up survey.

The district has had deficit spending for several years now. The district does not expect this to change, although it may become worse pending the outcome of the recent elections.

In the appendix, there is a powerpoint document reviewed in section B2, but more pertinent to this section regarding expenditures in each category of the overall LEA budget. It is clear that any cuts to offset deficits are made as far away from student learning as possible. An example of laying off 15 bus drivers was given. While this impacts a student's ability to get to school, it does not deprive students of the ability to come to school and to learn.

Given the information in this section, it seems that the district will continue their deficit spending and that the grant will assist in making this deficit smaller. The grant funding will adequately cover the projects in the proposed plan. However, the LEA budget may fall short of supplying the remainder of what is needed to educate the students of the district.

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

The District does not have a high quality plan for sustainability of the project goals after the term of the grant. In the narrative, the district states that predicting personnel costs for sustainability within the context of unpredictable revenue limits is close to impossible. Those projects and staff that are already in the LEA budget will likely continue, but anything that was funded through the grant will very likely not. The district lists the technology devices as a one time cost, but technology needs to be

updated periodically, so that recurring cost over several years has not been considered. The budget documents do not contain any plan for years beyond the grant.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district has developed three partnerships that enhance and enrich the educational opportunities of their students:

1. Boys and Grils Club opf Merced County
2. Police Activities Leage of Atwater
3. University of California, Merced with the Department of the Interior National Park Service (Yosemite National Park)

Each of these partnerships provides a different kind of service but all are designed to build positive relationships with peers and adults which supports their socio-emotional resiliency. This emotional support will enable students to be more successful academically and also show them new career choices. The district describes thoroughly the goals and programs involved with each partnership. While the grant will help to strengthen these programs, the partnerships will continue after the term of the grant.

The district has identified 10 population level ambitious but achievable results. Some are directed at specific subgroups such as Students At-Risk for Gang Involvement, or English Language Learners. The results address improvements either socially or academically for 75-90% of students in the identified category. They also indicate the assessment measure to be used in determining the success of that result.

The RTTT-D Project Director will collect the necessary data from the directors or lead teachers of these partnerships. Student records will also be accessed. The collaborative will then meet to target resources for students identified as "in-need." The agencies will work together to develop an intervention plan to support the student. The director will need to be aware of interventions available locally for students. The annual performance measures listed cannot be described as either ambitious or achievable since no data is included. It simply states the "number and percentages of students..."

Active parental involvement is still a challenge for the project. The district will utilize ideas generated from this community collaborative. The plan did not describe scaling up the model to include more students, nor did it address how the partnership would build the capacity of staff in the participating schools.

Since the partnerships are already in place and have begun to work with students, it is likely that they will continue. The partnerships augment and enrich the services offered in the schools by providing additional student supports for social, emotional and behavioral needs as well as some career choices. High needs studetns are addressed with targeted interventions. These partnerships seem to be successful for students.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The District has a highly developed plan for improving instruction, personalizing the learning environment, and aligning instruction for college and career readiness based on Common Core Standards. There is a strong system of professional development for staff to increase the effectiveness of teachers and administrators, although they use an evaluation system with different terms. The plan will strengthen student learning by meeting the academic needs of students through individual 6 year plans graduating students who are college and career ready.

The plan does not effectively address closing achievment gaps among various subgroups, nor does it adequately address the involvement of families, data use, communication with stakeholders and sustainability of the plan. There is clearly a need for the type of plan described in section C. However, there are several sections with inadequate information, or where information is only alluded to and the reader must deduce what is missing.

Yet, the vision, the basic plan, the partnerships and the pilot program show that most of the components of the Absolute Priority have been met. There is obviously a need for the work the District proposes.

Total	210	108
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0502CA-3 for Merced Union High School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant sets forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that will be bolstered by investments made through this proposal. The district strategic planning efforts contribute to a strong foundation in setting goals that clearly address the four core educational assurance areas. The district appears to be on a progressive track, but is certainly still in the stages of development and would benefit from additional funding to support these priorities.

Areas with a high potential for success relate to targeted use of data to provide interventions to high need students, and focused instructional objectives related to Common Core standards. The applicant's "no excuses" approach to college and career readiness for all subgroups is noteworthy.

The district outlines 5 key relevant projects that are central to the proposal: 1) Evaluation System Project 2) Growth of Common Core 3) Data Collection 4) Closing the Achievement Gap 5) Community Partners Project.

While these projects suggest that the applicants' goals are well aligned with the absolute priority, the most concerning is the Evaluation System Project. Given that this aspect of the proposal hinges on agreement among stakeholders in order to advance the work, it is important to establish the appetite and buy-in for reform in this area. Also, the applicant seems to have merged the Data Collection and Community Partners projects based on the language in the vision, and it is uncertain if the conditions are available to support new data from evaluation systems yet to be determined. This vision represents the complicated phases of reform, where innovation and basic foundations both need to be addressed, and while the vision is promising, the details of implementation and stakeholder engagement are fundamental to success.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a distinct advantage as a high school only district, and will serve 9 of 10 schools (one opening in fall of 2013 will be included and one adult school which will be excluded based on eligibility requirements). All components of the required criteria were met, and the diversity and level of need for personalized learning environments are evident. One area that requires further detail relates to the types of participating high schools, and what these designations mean to the investments proposed.

The applicant currently operates 8 Schools that will be participating in the grant with 1 opening in the fall of 2013: five comprehensive campuses (Atwater, Buhach Colony, Golden Valley, Livingston and Merced), one continuation school (Yosemite), one community day school (Sequoia), one independent studies program (Independence), new school not defined in the vision, (El Capitan High School). With more 75% of its total student population of 10,000 qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch, the investments made in this proposal will certainly be targeted at high needs students at a crucial time in their development, in an economically challenged area.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Overall the presentation of how the academic and social/emotional objectives of the applicants' reform initiatives shows that it will be brought to scale in a thoughtful, and ambitious but achievable way. The logic model shows the districts' commitment to a student-centered approach that is backed up by a high quality and reasonable plan. One of the key areas for concern relate to the absence of focus on educator effectiveness measurement and teacher quality assurance. The current evaluation system does not include student growth measures, but relies on a rather traditional checklist style evaluation system.</p> <p>In the areas of personalized learning and focus on rigorous implementation of standards, with accompanying supports (professional learning and technology), the plan is to be deemed high quality. On the other hand, significant details are missing for the other proposed investments: Data Collection, Evaluation System, and Community Partners (or Closing the Gap Project). There is some confusion about these two projects and the assumption is that Community Partners related to the Closing Achievement Gap project. The narrative provides some relevant details, would benefit from a clearer roadmap outlining the activities associated with these projects.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant shows a reflective team approach to identifying district-wide goals with attention to readiness and impending adjustments required for new assessments linked to Common Core. The unique addition of semester benchmarks for grades 9-11 alongside the passing rates on the California high school exit exam, accomplish ambitious yet achievable targets in decreasing achievement gaps and increasing graduation rates.</p> <p>There is an inadequate focus on college enrollment both in the presentation of the targets as well as in the narrative. The applicant wants to launch a large initiative as a part of this proposal to collect data about how prepared students felt that they were for college and career, but the application lacks data and goals in this arena. The vision has substantial promise, but needs to be supported with an effective presentation of data and appropriate target setting.</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>There are tangible signs of progress in this school district, as evidenced by the 70 point gain in the API since 2009, and over the last three years subgroups have also made academic gains. Since 2008 the applicant has employed a systemic focus on the utilization of student-generated data to drive instruction, with an accompanying investment in bimonthly collaboration time to analyze performance data from common assessments. While data is made available to educators, efforts to provide data to parents and students are undocumented.</p> <p>The district achieved an ambitious initiative of reorganizing administrators to leverage expertise and effective leadership: Principal, Associate Principal of Guidance, Associate Principal of Assessment and Accountability, or Associate Principal of Student Support.</p> <p>By establishing instructional norms and adoption of the research-based Rigor/Relevance framework, the applicant shows a clear focus academically and investment in associated professional learning. Key achievement gap populations and opportunities for inclusion, have also garnered district investments. Partnership with West Ed to further target ELL instructional improvements and to set growth targets for the instructional practices observed.</p> <p>The applicant has an excellent perspective on being responsive to both intervention and acceleration needs of students, which contributes to an increase in equity for students. Remarkable achievements in personalized learning exist by providing additional academic opportunities within the instructional day to be able to reach more students needing assistance. While not a long track record, there are positive trends based on outstanding results from intervention during the school day – the number of students receiving Fs in the first quarter is down 80% at one school that has implemented the innovation.</p> <p>The applicant provided an abundance of positive growth data (i.e. truancy, suspension) from the last four years to show the impact of a Character Education initiative: incorporating two nationally recognized programs Character Counts and Safe and Civil Schools, and in the last 2 years Positive Deviance at one High School. The district was awarded the 2011 Golden Bell</p>		

Award for Character Education, given by the California State School Board Association for their efforts, which shows that their investments and implementation are superior. The applicant was recently recognized in Education Week around graduation rates for Latino students as one of four school districts in the nation who "overachieved by at least 15 percentage points".

A clear track record of success is supported by achievement and social emotional data, and in addition these trends support that the District is capable of sound investments and fidelity of implementation.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 The only reference that is documented in the application related to Criteria B2 does not satisfy the requirements. The applicant asserts that it is transparent with disciplinary and truancy data to the school board and local newspaper, but not any of the evidence necessary of school level expenditures. No points can be awarded for this section, due to the complete absence of information.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	1
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 Successful conditions and sufficient autonomy are not established by the applicant. There is a short narrative that laments how California is reform-oriented, but does not produce the funding necessary for enactment. Amidst an austere budgetary climate the District has managed to be awarded two Grants from the California Department of Education: A three-year \$380,000 award from the Tobacco Use and Prevention Education (TUPE) and a \$225,000 McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Grant. The applicant needed to provide more detail about State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements, particularly in areas that relate to projects yet to be negotiated like the impending teacher evaluation system.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant failed to provide any narrative description of stakeholder engagement, and the documentation included in the appendix reflects minimal engagement with stakeholders overall. Meeting notes were included from one Teacher Input meeting (no date listed), where only 3 classroom teachers were present, which can be considered insufficient. While the local Union signed off on the proposal, it is not without conditions (represented in documentation in the appendix). The conditions relate to an agreement to negotiate a new teacher evaluation system, but not on the details of the evaluation system itself, which could ostensibly derail the proposal. The applicant was successful in garnering letters of support from appropriate agencies and stakeholders. These letters of support bolster the case for potential of the applicant to implement personalized learning, but notably lack any parental representation.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:
 This criteria was not explicitly addressed in the application, but can be inferred from the inclusion of the Response to Intervention Action Plan, Improving Teaching and Learning Plan, and Teacher Evaluation System plan. Both Rtl and Common Core initiatives are underway, but are not fully implemented and represent clear needs and gaps. The plans presented in the appendices are sufficient in their scope and quality, but not necessarily ambitious.
 While the District reports that they have failed to meet its Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs 1 & 2) for English and Language Arts and Math for Economically Disadvantaged students since 2008, there does not appear to be solutions directly targeting this need. Technology integration infrastructure was established in 2006, and it is apparent that additional supports will need to be realized in order to move to a 1:1 environment.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is moving forward vigorously in the implementation of Common Core State Standards, which establishes their commitment to rigorous teaching and learning. The innovative approach to having students complete a 6-year plan through a self-directed survey and capped off with a Senior Exit Interview, provides evidence of a district culture where students are invested in identifying and pursuing college and career goals. The district will further personalize the academic experience, while incorporating digital literacy through student-created electronic portfolios, which is both ambitious and achievable. While the applicant presents a healthy mixture of ideas using 1:1 technology to master critical academic content, and real-world application in the form of financial literacy, there is a clear lack of emphasis on providing access and exposure to diverse content.

Most of the ingredients for successful personalized learning environments are evident, but a few critical areas need more depth. Students will receive technical training as it relates to having access to personal technology and related content, but it is less clear whether they will take ownership over their own learning and mastery of skills. The system of response to intervention does not appear to be integrated well with the ideas and initiatives in this section, as it was not referenced explicitly, nor are accommodations or accelerations. The plan for students in comparison to teachers feels somewhat disjointed and leaves questions about the overall fidelity of the proposal. Without enough emphasis on providing ongoing and regular feedback based on individual student data, it will be difficult to monitor and improve the quality of the academic experience, which lowers the overall quality of the plan. Given that the district has been working to transition one of their schools to a virtual academy and they are planning to open another new school next year, the timing is good to invest further in structures to make sure that innovative ideas and investments are properly monitored for effectiveness and responsiveness to students' needs. The applicant needed to provide a much more detailed structure and timeline of how different the academic experience will be based on the investment requests in this proposal.

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

The applicant has a solid structure and plan for the training and implementation of the Common Core State Standards, along with teacher-created content from early adopters and subsequent cohorts informed from best practices sharing. The creation of a Common Core Stakeholder Committee is an innovative approach that will contribute and strengthen the overall process through stakeholder feedback and progress monitoring. Teachers are clearly motivated in this arena, as evidenced by 64 teachers voluntary participation in professional learning, and effort to deconstruct the standards into discrete skills and then integrating curriculum. The key to success of this proposal will be the absolute emphasis on what is described as students being able to demonstrate mastery. The intent of the applicant is appropriate, but the lack of attention to using data to drive personalized learning may harm the ability to execute the proposal and improve student achievement across all subgroups.

Both the teaching and learning plan and the 1:1 plan are reasonably thorough and provide for comprehensive training, but may focus too heavily on technical application rather than ambitious pursuit of academic results and redesigned classroom environments. In the area of policy, the applicant is committed to allowing for proper collaboration amongst educators to engage in professional learning, and contribute to the Common Core implementation effort. The district's use of a "Superintendent's Cup" to incentivize schools to perform against a variety of criteria is notable, but there appears to be reluctance and potential resistance to the implementation of a proposed bonus structure that would recognize individual educator effectiveness. Overall, while the professional learning sequence for teachers in the implementation of the Common Core is sufficiently comprehensive, the plan lacks preparedness for integrating educator effectiveness and an integrated approach to using technology and data to drive personalized learning environments. The structures are generally available like IT support at sites, but without a coherent in the narrative to tie together the multitude of planned investments, it is difficult to assess the potential outcomes for all students

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Throughout the application there is evidence that district-wide organization revolves around curriculum and instruction, whether the integration of technological and educational services, or a system of support designed to center on meeting students' needs. At the school-level instructional leadership teams with oversight from the district have a reasonable amount of control over school level decisions that would contribute to maintaining personalized learning environments.

In section C, reference was made to the availability of credit recovery options for students, which relates more to intervention than a redesign of the environment of earning credit based on mastery, not time spent on topic. There is no evidence that

students will be given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The applicant is vague about how learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable for all students, especially high need students, although their commitment in principle is visible.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The existence of established Family Resource Centers staffed with different language community liaisons, justifies the applicant having appropriate levels of technical support for stakeholders to access information about student performance. It is less apparent, whether infrastructure is available to support students' individual needs outside the school context.

The district allows stakeholders to export data in an open-format, and in addition, the infrastructure is in place to launch a Parent Portal in the fall of 2013, which will further establish the resources to extend personalize learning and imbed it into the academic culture both in and out of school.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	3

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant asserts that a continuous feedback cycle is used at the school level with increased efficiency being supported by Assessment and Accountability district administrators, but the proposal as a whole has limited insight into this process and its relevance to the school culture. Based on the description that this is still an emerging initiative for the district after 4 years of implementation, and there is no reference to making information publicly available, it is difficult to determine the overall efficacy of the current system of continuous school improvement. The criteria is addressed by asserting the investments would be monitored in a similar fashion to instruction, which would not necessarily accomplish the criteria in this section.

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

5

1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Other than a parent and student pre-survey and a commitment to negotiate a new evaluation system with the local union, there is no real plan for on-going communication and engagement with external stakeholders. While not explicit, it can be inferred that the applicant will engage internal stakeholders in the various elements required for implementation of personalized learning based on the details offered in investment plans.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

This section of the application is mostly incomplete due to the absence of subgroup level data and targets as well as data about educator effectiveness, based on the fact the evaluation system would be under development with the implementation of this proposal. There is definite inconsistency as it relates to setting ambitious and achievable targets for the available performance measures. For example, National Educational Technology Standards will see an increase from 50% to 100% through the term of the grant that shows student career readiness, while the described Leading Academic Indicator (the number and percentage of participating teachers who are implementing the Teach for Success (T4S) instructional practices), has no baseline data or targets included.

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

5

0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There are a not enough specifics in this area to provide a score. The general narrative leads to the conclusion that perhaps investments would be evaluated for their effectiveness upon completion of the grant. This is counter to the countinuous improvement process that will support the realization of personalized learning environments.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The structure of the budget is somewhat deficient and there is unrealistic expectations embedded particularly as it relates to the Evaluation System Project. It is not clear why the investment will be in bonuses, when the system that needs to be designed to support it, if successfully negotiated, most likely won't be implemented until further into the term of the grant. There is a clear lack of attention to how much costs there will be associated with the implementation of new evaluations and compensation structures. Given that this is close to 40% of the requested investment, this is crucial to the success of the proposal. The applicant contends that if a new evaluation system is not successfully implemented, that it will simply repurpose the funds to the Common Core project, without providing additional details.

In the other largest investment of the grant, the Common Core project, there is surprisingly no grant funds being requested for professional learning for staff (which come from other funding), but a bulk of the money will be spent on personnel and Google Chromebooks, which can be considered important investments to create personalized learning environments.

Throughout the budget, there is the appearance of programs that are not described elsewhere in the proposal, like the significant proposed investment in the Boys and Girls Club and PALS program. In addition, the budget set forth for the College and Career Data Collection project is somewhat incompatible with the rest of the proposal, and this type of incentivizing of students to complete surveys, seems rather excessive. There is an attempt to make a clear distinction of the number of one-time investments that this application entails vs. ongoing operational costs. There is not adequate focus on strategies that will ensure long term sustainability.

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

There is no high quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. Given the narrative provided in this section, the district financial picture is quite bleak, and their proposal is riddled with investments that would benefit the current cohort of students, but would fail to impact outcomes over a longer period of time, While one time investments in Google Chromebooks is worthwhile to move towards a more personalized experience, there is no plan in place for how to fund replacements. The Evaluation System Project is the most flawed given that without the system in place, it will be difficult to execute the bonus structure.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is seeking investments (that if granted) would make it eligible for the competitive preference priority, based on its proposed partnerships to provide extended learning opportunities for students. The after school collaborative is coherently described with 2 particular themes, with one social/emotional in focus and one more college and career ready focused.

It is unclear how many students in total would benefit from these programs, which diminishes the ability to understand their potential for impact. This lack of information also creates an inability to assess how this could be brought to scale. In addition, the population-level results cannot be determined ambitious or achievable, based on a lack of context or baseline data. In addition the tracking process will be a group effort across the collaborative, which smartly would be agreed upon upfront.

Structures will be in place, in the form of personnel in order to target resources at high need students and track progress toward improving outcomes through the after school collaborative. While this partnership has potential to build capacity in the district, it is difficult to determine the impact without a real clear connection to ambitious and achievable annual targets.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
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Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
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Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

There are definitive strengths and weaknesses of this proposal. As it relates to the Common Core Project that represents a significant investment, there is clearly a high quality plan to make an effective transition to the new standards with related supports for educators. In addition, it is commendable that the applicant will seek to get policy adjusted to allow the district to create an integrated Math Model to adapt the course structure to the new standards. The plan for integrating technology is not particularly strong, but the relative infrastructure seems to be available to ensure some fidelity of implementation.

The weakness in this proposal relates to the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system. With the proposed investment being directed at a bonus structure, even though the system has yet to be negotiated, there is significant potential, based on the low level of teacher engagement that this project could be derailed. In addition, the budgeting of the project fails to recognize the significant amount of support and professional development needed to implement a new system, and does not account for that. An additional weakness was a lack of coherence in describing the details of the projects and their interrelatedness, and the appearance of additional details in the budget project descriptions that had not yet been proposed.

Overall the application was loose on goals, and tighter on means, when it should have been able to prioritize the other way around to design a well crafted vision for implementation of personalized learning environments. While the focus on college and career readiness supports the application in pursuit of the absolute priority, the clear high quality plan and associated ambitious but achievable performance measures for all students, particularly those of the highest need was not accomplished.

Total	210	90
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