



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1127SD-1 for Mid Central Education Cooperative

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides strong evidence of a comprehensive and coherent reform vision, per the criterion, and articulates well a clear and credible approach to the goals indicated. The application provides evidence of coherence across the various levels critical to effective reform, from standards to cross-district coordination to incentive for addressing professional retention issues. The application indicates prior work in the four core education assurance areas, along with consideration of implications for system-building (e.g., catalog) and systematic restructuring (e.g., professional development). The application provides evidence of attention to core instructional issues through its description of professional development approaches, specific instructional strategies, targeted use of virtual schooling, college/career transition mechanisms, etc.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides strong evidence for each sub-criteria above, and includes a description of the process that the applicant used to invite RISE-UP schools to participate. The participating schools collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements, a list of participating schools is included, with the following information: the total number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, and participating educators.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderately strong evidence of a high-quality plan, first addressing scaling by immediate implementation to all students in all participating districts. No staged or partial scaling within districts is indicated, though timelines, deliverables and responsible parties for the cross-district implementation are not indicated. The applicant provides evidence of a project paths meant to provide support for learning outcome improvements via personalization, along with an indication of the tools, practices and external supports for the alliance. The role of provider restriction to those with prior South Dakota experience within the logic model is unclear.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderate evidence of ambitious yet achievable annual goals (e.g., 3% increase in proficient in year one) per the criterion, and describes the methodology briefly used to generate these targets. Approaches to the wide variation of baselines in the setting of goals is not clear, nor how graduation rates overall stay constant as individual district rates increase (A4c). Subgroups identified only include districts and subject/grade level; subgroup goals for standard ESEA subgroups are not provided.</p>		

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides weak evidence of a record of success in the past four year in advancing student learning, per this criterion. The applicant notes at the onset that "we cannot illustrate a system-wide trend of rising student achievement across these 30 LEA's." The applicant claims that where "a personalized learning environment has been implemented...students benefit"; the evidence presented is weak or suggestive at best. Evidence supports claims of increased usage/participation, e.g., in GEARUP and the virtual high school, particularly for credit recovery courses in the last two years, with some evident increase beyond credit recovery as a percentage of virtual coursetaking. The appendix includes an excerpt from an evaluation of the GEARUP efforts, though it is not clear the relation of these students to those of the Alliance, and the evidence on learning outcomes is quite unclear. While there appears to be an increase in successful completion of courses beyond Algebra II, the report indicates that "due to the long period between benchmark and final reporting, it was difficult to determine the progress GUSD did or did not make towards this indicator." Completion of science courses appears to have risen, but again the evaluation indicates that lack of reporting over the project period "made ascertaining progress toward the target of this performance indicator difficult, if not impossible." Lack of tracking of specific courses in science was also cited as further complication. In short, the evidence does not provide even moderate evidence for sub-criteria a, nor the lesser claim of PLE benefits. The appendix supporting the deeper learning and college guidance benefits provides weak evidence, essentially the responses to a one-day career awareness day, primarily with speakers from Sanford Health, and an unclear set of teacher responses regarding project-based learning in science.

While an initiative last year, led by the PAST Foundation, is cited, no evidence of achievement is cited; data cited is from prior implementation in Ohio of a similar approach over the last four years.

Solid evidence is cited of the provision of student performance data to students, educators and parents through Dakota STEP data and Infinite Campus software. A longitudinal data system is under development, targeted for Spring 2013 launch.

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

The applicant provides evidence of a high-level of transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments; a sample district report indicates actual salaries by name of employee. Evidence is cited, without appendix example, of multiple ways non-personnel expenditures are provided to the public.

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

The applicant provides strong evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal. Evidence includes recent legislation as well as state department of education's flexibility regarding seat time, training and shared resources.

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

The applicant provides moderately strong evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal over the last two months, and includes signed MOU's from participating LEA's. Though all LEA's have collective bargaining units, per the applicant, a few MOU's do not have union signatures, though the claim is for 100% compliance. Evidence of engagement of students and families seems unclear; teacher engagement appears to have primarily occurred through programmatic contacts. An extensive and varied set of letters of support are provided, from stakeholders across public, private, academic, business and community organizations.

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

The applicant provides evidence for a high-quality plan to implement the proposed vision, and in this sense, identifies well the needs behind implementing the proposal. Timelines, deliverables, responsible parties and outcomes/metrics are indicated. No indication of analysis of current status per/across LEA's is evident in this section, though an earlier section categorized member LEA's by their capacity to implement the vision.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderate evidence of a high-quality plan of an approach to engaging/empowering learners by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. The variety of qualities indicated by sub-criteria above are addressed individually, and the combination of developed tools and those in development promise an approach to learning tailored to individual needs/interests. Transdisciplinary Problem-Based Learning appears to provide some coherence across the various catalog elements, though the manner in which students will experience this integration is unclear, as are the mechanisms of training and support to students. The plan provides considerable evidence of a multitude of resources and tools, though less evidence of the means by which they will engage actual learners.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderately strong evidence of a high-quality plan of an approach to teaching/leading that personalizes the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. Evidence is provided of an array of tools/resources, training, evaluation measures, real time guidance and forums, indicating a varied systemic plan for support to participating educators. The applicant provides less robust evidence of the training and policies supporting school leaders and leadership teams, though tools and data resources are noted. The plan provides only moderate evidence of a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas. The challenge is noted, though, and outside the BIE program cited, distinctly targeted strategy is unclear.</p>		

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 plan provides moderately strong evidence of a high-quality plan with LEA practices, policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning. Evidence is provided regarding the capacity of the consortium governing structure, and regarding criteria c-e. It is less clear the specific bounds of the autonomy for school leadership teams across the varied districts, even given state-level policy. It is not clear that practices at the innovation lab schools provides sufficient evidence for sub-criteria b.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderate evidence of a high-quality plan by which the LEA and school infrastructure support personalized learning. Readiness assessment and categorization of LEA's by capacity provide evidence of support for access, though provision of online access at school facilities in the evenings appears contrary to concerns about obstacles of rural geography. Evidence of the state of home access is unclear. Evidence for general support is provided, though the nature of "an appropriate mix of tailored support" is unstated. The capacity of the information systems to export in an open data format is not explicitly affirmed, while interoperability evidence seems solid.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderate evidence of a high-quality strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. Evidence for multiple levels of review and support are provided, from the Alliance Management process and Alliance Advisory Board, to corrective action tasks (including efforts to give voice to all stakeholders), and mentoring support from business executives. The plan's communication strategy includes efforts to publicly share information in this process. However, the applicant does not provide specific goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties for the continuous improvement strategy, beyond the general parameters of the quarterly reporting of overall progress.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderate evidence of strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders, though specific activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties are not indicated.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a strong rationale for performance measures selected, including their link to overall reform strategy, and particularly for the relation of targeted expectations to baseline and ongoing assessment of LEA capacity. Less evidence is provided for how the project will review and improve the measures over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan provides moderately strong evidence of an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, including tapping business experience in methodologies, building a data dashboard, integrating with other data systems and an annual leadership institute review. Less evident are specific timelines or analytics.</p>		

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 applicant provides a quality budget that identifies all funds, reasonable and sufficient to the plan, and with thoughtful rationale for the investments and priorities of the project. The planned allocation based on LEA capacity provides coherence with the plan's premise of support based on needs assessment, and allocating based on moving all LEA's to targeted outcomes during the grant period.</p> <p>One-time versus ongoing operational costs are less clearly delineated. A large proportion of the overall funding, perhaps half, goes to school allocations, presumably to stimulate demand for the set of tools, resources and services outlined in the plan, though it is not clear how that will be monitored or insured. A number of named contractors are in the budget, including individuals and PAST Foundation, Sanford Research, and Cambrian, among others. Some 10% of the overall budget is allocated to alliance management and business partnerships.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides moderate evidence of a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. While part of the sustainability is claimed for future efficiency gains in operations, the foundation for sustainability</p>		

revolves around the creation of \$10+ million endowment to fund "continuing and new programmatic activities resulting from the RISE-UP initiative. The plan includes a strategy of forming rural school partnerships involving participating schools, their communities, schools of education, etc. , and building out a Collaborative Leadership Team involving South Dakota Community Foundation, Citi Foundation and Bush Foundation. Initial benchmark activities are indicated. Concerns in the plan include the amount even a \$10 million endowment would yield annually, and the relation of that funding level to activities in the proposed plan, which is nearly \$5 million annually.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides moderately strong evidence of a partnership capable of meeting the sub-criteria indicated above. The application describes an emerging business partnership, led by the state's largest rural health care provider, that would organize and implement support to students, parents, teachers administrators and community partners. The applicant provides evidence of a coherent and sustainable partnership, its desired results, which include increasing stakeholder and professional capacities per the logic of the applicant's reform plan, particularly for school leaders. Less evidence is provided for specific annual "ambitious yet achievable performance measures," as the outcomes sought are described fairly generally.

The degree to which social, emotional, or behavioral needs would be addressed is less clear, as is how progress would be tracked and challenges addressed. Evidence is not provided regarding specific goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Across the various sections of the plan, the applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create personalized learning environments to improve teaching and learning. Prior comments provide further details regarding the selection criteria in the separate sections above.

Total	210	153
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1127SD-2 for Mid Central Education Cooperative

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a vision that builds on a solid foundation of resources and services currently in place from a number of other projects and organizations. This foundation is a strength of the proposal. College and career ready standards have been adopted and Common Core training is in place within the state. Recent state legislation identifies the Measuring Effective Teachers (MET) rubric as the accepted basis for teacher and leader evaluation, and is on track for full implementation by 2014. The project will utilize the South Dakota Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System to enable schools districts to monitor student growth measurements to be monitored over time.

There is strong participation by teacher preparation programs in the development and implementation of the RISE-UP Teaching Certificate that will encourage prospective teachers to obtain training in the strategies and approaches developed by the project. The Transdisciplinary Problem-based Learning (TPBL) will be one of the instructional models adapted and used by the project.

The existing Dakota Interactive Academic Link (DIAL) Virtual School provides an avenue for increasing more flexible learning environments. A previous GEAR-UP project put in place a program using cohort mentors to encourage connection between caring educators and students to help students better understand themselves, their strengths, and to plan for their futures. As part of this program students create individual life plans and utilize the *SDMyLife Career Cruising* software application to explore different careers. The coalition's lead agency conducts weekly professional development sessions during the school year known as Virtual BrainstormsSM, using virtual meeting technology are held with teachers across the participating LEAs to deepen their learning as an ongoing form of professional development.

This project will further develop and expand professional learning communities as the vehicle for larger scale dissemination of these programs and resources. LEAs will be grouped into 3 categories of readiness based on their current capacity to implement personalized learning. These communities will initially assess each LEA's unique needs and readiness, and then facilitate a high-fidelity installation of selected project resources and services.

The applicant presents a very ambitious and impressive plan in this section. It falls just short of being excellent because it doesn't adequately present an overall structure and vision for systemic reform to restructure infrastructure and practices. It would be improved by better demonstrating the interconnectedness among these various components with the project's vision of reform.

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

The applicant has identified and included schools in its proposed project that represent 12,029 students in a landmass of nearly 12,900 square miles. Of the students included in this area 48.89% are from low-income families, meeting the RTTT-D competition's eligibility requirement for applicants. This includes participants from three Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools, and seven districts with high populations of Native Americans representing from 10% to 60% of their total student population. In total, the 30 LEAs that have signed on to join the Alliance have a collective Native American population that exceeds 35%. To be included in the project participants was required to comply with five criteria necessary to assure deep engagement and commitment. The applicant describes these five criteria in detail.

This is strong, well-written section but, while no points were deducted, it could be strengthened some by providing more detail about the selection process by addressing questions such as, were all LEA's who agreed to the five criteria automatically added to the project or were there other criteria or factors examined? Which individual(s) or entity made the final determination about who to include? Were any schools left out of the project for some reason?

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

The applicant describes an implementation plan that will include a number of potentially effective approaches and strategies for personalizing learning environments and improving student achievement. The main components of the proposed project's personalized delivery are the TPBL instructional format, the expanded use of South Dakota's Virtual School Platform, and South Dakota's Curriculum Curation Project, SD-STARS and *SDMyLife*.

Eight Innovation Lab Schools are currently in the process of conversion from traditional textbook based instruction to TPBL and seeing early results of improved student outcomes. TPBL favors a mastery demonstration of learning, and South Dakota policy allows for mastery demonstration in lieu of seat time.

The RISE-UP plan also relies on support teams in the Professional Learning Communities that have familiarity with South Dakota region so there is a shorter learning curve for those less familiar by pairing them with more experience teachers. Professional development providers are required to have a *minimum of two years of track record* in South Dakota providing

tailored services so they understand the most pressing challenges in rural schools, such as teacher retention. Service providers are required to establish offices in South Dakota and establish shared services embedded into the districts. The plan also includes businesses as being deeply engaged in the project. The applicant's goal was not to seek large numbers of endorsements of business as advocates from the sidelines, but rather the strategy builds deeper partnerships by beginning with highly respected South Dakota businesses that already have a solid record of engagement and are widely trusted.

While this section does describe some excellent activities and program components it is not presented as a comprehensive plan in the sense that it doesn't describe a process by which resources will be implemented and how they will be delivered to students. For instance, this section doesn't explain how the applicant will determine what types of resources students will need, how technology tools will be used to truly personalize learning environments, how data will be used in the plan or how parents and families will be involved.

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

10

8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a plan to increase student academic achievement and to reduce performance gaps. The assessment being used for establishing baseline data is the South Dakota Standardized Test of Educational Development (D-STEP). This is the instrument that has been used to establish proficiency levels during No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The state was granted a flexibility waiver from NCLB standards the past year and has developed the Smarter Balanced Growth model for Next Generation Assessments. South Dakota will begin using the Smarter Balanced Assessment in the Spring of 2013 and from 2013 – 2016, a mean growth percentile will be used. The percent of schools that are performing at or above proficiency is the measure utilized for the baseline, allowing the applicant to identify those LEAs that are not at or above the state average.

In general, the applicant's performance measures are ambitious, but are achievable given the resources and services to be provided through the project. The applicant presents performance measures and goals by school, but not by subgroup. While each school, in general, is expected to improve performance by 3 percentage points each year, once a school reaches 90% they are not expected to improve any further. This does have the effect of eliminating performance gaps, but seems to do so in an artificial manner.

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant notes that state leaders have given local school leaders flexibility and autonomy to remove the restrictions of outmoded policies so LEAs so can adapt in real-time as data shows what works and what doesn't. The applicant describes a number of practices that are ongoing in the state and in the school districts that are part of the consortium for this project. This includes:

- (1) Creating Personalize Learning Environments (PLEs) that resulted in accelerated student achievement;
- (2) The implementation by GEAR-UP of the problem-based instructional model TPB;
- (3) The South Dakota Virtual High School;
- (4) The Innovation Lab Schools which have made extensive use of credit recovery for students;
- (5) A partnership with Sanford Health to provide mentoring and career awareness and training opportunities for students.

Accountability/Achievement Reporting and Student Assessment Reports provide data to school leaders as well as to parents, students and other stakeholders to provide feedback on how schools are performing. The Parent Portals and Infinite Campus are both tools to allow students and parents to monitor individual student performance. With Parent Portals parent and student have access student grades and homework assignments on-line at any time. Infinite Campus provides parents and students access to their current grades, student transcripts, attendance information, disciplinary issues, as well as summative achievement information.

These resources and tools are excellent mechanisms for assisting the school districts involved in the project in guiding reform efforts to improve student performance. However, this section lacks sufficient structure, depth and information to fully address the identified criteria. The applicant primarily describes projects, resources and programs that are currently occurring in the

state and in which the applicant schools are participating. There is not a clear, coherent plan provided describing how this project would design and implement substantive reform and change that will lead to meaningful and significant improvement in student performance. There is no unified structure provided to provide a framework connecting project components. For instance, data systems that are available are described. But, there is insufficient description of how it is made available in ways that inform improve participation, instruction and services.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant provides an appropriate description of how school expenditures are made public. Districts publicize this information in 3 ways. First, school personnel salaries are included in an annual newspaper publication in each school district's legal newspaper-of-record. Alliance members (school districts) also include this information on their district website. Finally, all Alliance members report this information on the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Common Core Data, which then becomes available on the NCES's website for all. In addition, at the conclusion of each school fiscal year, all Alliance members are audited. This audit, completed by a CPA firm or the SD Department of Legislative Audit, is then made public and provided explicitly to members of the local media.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant describes several ways in which the state has created conditions for autonomy and flexibility for implement personalized learning environment. A recent law passed in the state provides at least four ways to support these conditions:
 1) Incentives to teach in critical need areas; 2) Rewards for the best teachers and those teaching in math and science subject areas; 3) Provisions regarding the evaluation of teachers; 4) Creates a system for evaluating principals.
 In addition the applicant reports that the State Department of Education's (SDDE) has exhibited a willingness to be flexible with participating RISE-UP Alliance Districts. This includes (1) eliminating adherence to the Carnegie Unit for seat time, (2) modifying state-led Common Core Training for the SDILs to be TPBL based, (3) utilizing flex credit, and (4) sharing resources across LEAs including time, personnel and resources.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant describes a process in which participation and engagement was obtained from a variety of stakeholder in the development of this proposal. Teachers involved in the South Dakota Innovation Lab Schools, Summer Training Academies, and Virtual School were surveyed about needs and priority issues. Principal and administrator survey tracked LEA investments for school lab resources and understanding this has helped identify where the most resources are needed, and informed the categorization of LEA readiness that will be used to allocate budgets.
 A kickoff meeting was held with selected stakeholders and others the group participated in a facilitated concept-generation session to develop the core themes that eventually became the RISE-UP Alliance concept. The Application was posted, and sections updated and made available to selected stakeholders. This tool allowed all files and documents associated with the proposal development to be available at all times to potential participants in the RISE-UP Alliance. Letters of endorsement and/or commitment were obtained from each of the 30 participating LEAs, all of which indicate their opportunity to both review the plan and provide input to shape its direction. In addition, the RTTT-D competition, selection criterion asks for evidence of stakeholder participation from teachers, parents, and the business leadership community.
 The input as described was not broad-based enough and did not sufficiently involve parents, students or teachers. There is no indication that the applicant met the requirement regarding direct involvement of at least 70 percent of teachers from participating schools. There is not an adequate description of how feedback was used to modify and refine the proposal.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant describes a range and variety of excellent activities framed around six interrelated projects. The applicant describes designing this program with guidance by personalized learning experts and their case studies regarding how these environments and blended learning programs have been implemented in a wide variety of geographies and circumstances. The applicant developed the project by building on their own experiences in 5 years of Virtual School implementation. This

could be improved by more details regarding how the applicant identified and analyzed needs and gaps to address in the project. Identifying specific gaps and then connecting those gaps to specific project activities would assist in understanding how the project will expand and enhance the current capacity and status of the participating schools to enhance student academic performance.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a plan that contains some excellent activities, resources and approaches. These include increasing student access to STEM classes through distance learning opportunities, introducing mobile devices such as iPads, the use of college and career software such as SDMyLife and programs such as Sanford Health's PROMISE program and the Mitchell Career and Technical Education Academy.

The applicant describes a plan in which highly effective teachers will utilize assessments to make course corrections in instruction and recommendations for intervention. The project's holistic approach to the catalog of services and programs is designed to lead to the creation of rigorous professional development for both pre-service and in-service teachers, through partnerships with institutions of higher education, such as University of South

Dakota, and other partners such as the PAST Foundation with the intention of building sustainable, best practices among the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within the Alliance.

There are several shortcomings to this section, though. It is not clear how all of these resources are linked together in a meaningful way and how the applicant intends to use assessments to identify and provide specific resources to individual students. STEM type classes will be increased through distance education, but the applicant doesn't sufficiently explain how it will increase student participation and enrollment and to provide rigorous STEM classes in a comprehensive manner.

In addition, the applicant doesn't explain how students will be guided in the development of their personalized learning environments and how the mobile learning devices will specifically be used in the creation of those PLE's. Information regarding a plan to increase career and college awareness, understanding and preparation is undeveloped and does not adequately address many aspects of such a program (career and college readiness skill, college visits, awareness, application, etc.).

In general, this section lacks sufficient detail and specific information relating to student access to a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements and how the applicant plans to accelerate student learning through support of his or her needs.

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

The applicant describes a professional development plan for teachers and school leaders that is comprehensive and incorporates a number of impressive activities and approaches.

The PROMISE Educator Enrichment Workshop is a program for educators to develop and implement hands-on activities in biomedical using project-based learning as well as access to the tools needed to implement projects in the classroom.

The DIL Summer TPBL Workshops involves teachers in the South Dakota Innovation Lab schools and provides TPBL training for K12 course development that aligns to standards and uses formative and summative assessment tools. All teachers in the SDIL schools participate in summer training.

The STEM Certificate (Master Teachers) is a project of the PAST Foundation and SD Schools of Education who will partner to develop a set of courses culminating in a state issued STEM Certificate.

MyOER.com provides a curriculum curation database developed and maintained by South Dakota Department of Ed to facilitate ease in design and utilized of curriculum and rubrics.

STEMwise is an annual STEM conference designed to promote innovative and good practice TPBL approaches and to bring innovation and transformative technologies into the classroom, maximizing use of regional STEM resources.

The South Dakota Summer Academy provides inexpensive professional development for educators, administrators and counselors on a wide variety of topics ranging from literacy across the content areas, 21st century teaching, diversity, differentiation, educational leadership, school safety, early childhood, assessment and more.

The RISE-UP Leadership Institute is designed to provide schools administrators training in business practices that can be translated to project implementation, execution, and sustainability, including project/change management, conflict resolution, strategic planning, data collection and analysis, grant writing, and resource management.

These resources are likely to result in program of professional development that will be successful in addressing and accomplishing the criteria described in the Application.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents an effective plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. The lead agency operates the DIAL Virtual High School, and is the lead agency for GEARUP and the South Dakota Innovation Lab (SDIL) Schools. The customized instruction offered by Virtual School complies with standards established by the International Association for K-12 On-Line Learning.</p> <p>The state's Department of Education has indicated that it will provide sufficient flexibility and autonomy. As evidence of this commitment the SEA has provided autonomy to the applicant in implementing the SDIL school scheduling and staffing models. This includes scheduling of virtual instruction by synchronous/asynchronous methods, flipped classroom models, and learning based upon projects determined and selected by students and approved by the instructors.</p> <p>The South Dakota Board of Education has also approved a new definition of unit of credit. The rule endorsed by the Board identified end-of course exams and alternative assessments aimed at content knowledge as methods for demonstrating competency and assigning credit recovery in Virtual School uses pre-testing at the beginning of units that allow students to advance and receive credit as soon as they show competency. SDIL schools will give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery by presentation to authentic audiences who complete rubrics to assess competency.</p> <p>This section could be improved by providing additional information regarding how autonomy and flexibility will be obtained and used by school leaders at the individual school level and by better addressing the specific needs of ESL learners and students with disabilities.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a strong plan for supporting project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, classroom, school, and LEA with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. The majority of LEAs in the RISE-UP Alliance has already implemented a one-to-one personal laptop policy for high school students, and is now moving this program into the middle schools. All students are also provided email and online accounts. If online access is not available in their homes, school facilities have evening access policies in place. The applicant reports that the basic online infrastructure is in place, and the proposed plan includes a readiness assessment to identify technology needs in the participating communities. Once LEAs have undergone a needs assessment as part of this project, they will have access to an allocation to be used to purchase services from the project's portfolio of vetted educational tools.</p> <p>The parent portals described earlier in the application provide parents and students with real time access to student and school information and data in flexible formats. The project plan includes distribution developed and allows for maximum benefit to the schools in greatest need and based on student numbers. To insure that students, parents, educators and other stakeholder have access to appropriate levels of support the personalized learning communities structure groups LEAs into three categories based on their level of readiness.</p> <p>A weakness that prevents this criterion from receiving the full value of points is the lack of information regarding how the applicant will ensure that students have access to the technology necessary for personalization of instruction.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's plan for obtaining and using timely and regular feedback relies on three parallel strategies for continuous improvement. First, the project' management process includes quarterly reporting of progress to an Advisory Board consisting LEA representatives from all communities. The communication plan notes how all of this information is publicly released, and made available to stakeholder groups. Second, the Plan itself incorporates several levels of corrective action tasks, including a rapid response sub-task so that LEAs have a mechanism for priority attention to address problems during implementation. The implementation of the SDIL schools currently includes an ethnographic methodology to capture the voice of the stakeholder teachers, students, and communities. In this project, the applicant indicates that it will expand this practice to all of the areas where project investments are taking place, and communicate the voice of the stakeholders to the RISE-UP management team.</p> <p>A third level of rigorous continuous improvement is put in place through the Businesses4RISE-UP Partnership. This effort includes a component called the RISE-UP Leadership Institute. The RISE-UP Leadership Institute provides mentoring to the administration of each RISE-UP LEA by business leaders for a minimum of two years. RISE-UP Leadership Institute participants will meet quarterly to assess project progress and to carry out executive-to-executive mentoring that will enable regional business leaders to serve as sounding boards for the critical change agenda that education leaders confront.</p> <p>This section could be improved by providing more specific information regarding how parents, students and educators will be able to provide input and feedback and how the input and feedback will be used to make any needed project adjustments. More structure including timelines and responsible parties would have made the plan clearer.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>RISE-UP Leadership Institute participants will meet quarterly to assess project progress and to carry out executive-to-executive mentoring that will enable regional business leaders to serve as sounding boards for the critical change agenda that education leaders confront. Other strategies for ongoing communication and engagement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ a person to work directly with the South Dakota Department of Education with the purpose of promoting and expanding the delivery of personalized learning. • Employ a person to work directly with Sanford Research to facilitate the business model described in this application, as well as to assist with the development of the business partnership. • Regular meetings with each school involved with this grant - formally through regular grant meetings and informally through other scheduled meetings involving partner schools. • Information dissemination and sharing through various electronic mediums and print mediums, such as Infinite Campus™ and the Parent Portal, Basecamp™ and individual classroom communication systems such as Edmodo™. • All grant staff will have the responsibility with meeting with school personal on a regular basis with the purpose of exchanging information. <p>This plan should result in effective input and communication with both internal and external stakeholders.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has grouped participating LEA's into three categories related to their readiness status. These categories are</p> <p>(Category 1) in-momentum – meaning they are already implementing aspects of personalized learning and have infrastructure in place, so these islands of excellence should be able to achieve results faster and spread them farther compared to peers in the RISE-UP at the start of the project;</p> <p>(Category 2) organized and ready to implement – meaning they have some structure in place; and</p> <p>(Category 3) committed leadership and ready to organize – meaning they have secured the all-important community support and will require more fundamental organizing supports before they achieve significant acceleration in personalized learning environments.</p>		

The applicant doesn't sufficiently explain the rationale some of the measures used in this section. It is difficult to interpret the measure of growth in reading achievement. Some of the measures used for college and career readiness are not sufficiently ambitious with some indicating only a three percentage point improvement over current levels.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant intend to create a project dashboard as a lens on how funds are being used, where efficiency gains (or roadblocks) are being see, and how these are directly tied to improvements in student access to personalized learning environments across the board. The applicant believes that as the project progresses the in-place measurements used in State report cards, data systems, parent portals, as part of reforms, etc., will be able to be restructured from a total systems perspective to reveal trends that might not otherwise be observable. The applicant also plans to connect project data reporting on investments to existing state communication systems. A progress review of the project is planned at the annual project Leadership Institute, bringing leaders from other Race to the Top District winners to help evaluate the progress.

While this provides an overview of an evaluation plan it does not provide enough detail and information to form an adequate evaluation plan. Specific measures (instruments and procedures) are not explained and linked to project objectives, there is no timeline provided or responsible parties identified and no clear process described for how evaluation results will be used to monitor and modify, as necessary, the project's plan, design, resources or activities.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides good detail regarding proposed expenditures. Description of specific budget items are provided and are logically linked to budget activities. The applicant does not provide specific identification of ongoing expenditures versus one-time expenditures.

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

10

10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a strong plan for sustaining the project after Race to the Top funding ends. The heavy reliance of shared support and efficient delivery systems is expected to realize improvements in cost effectiveness, and the business partnership in the Competitive Priority is designed to improve administrator's skills in business management. Overall, a 10% improvement in operational efficiency over 4 years in this group of LEAs will enable the gains from RISE-UP to be permanently transitioned into their collective operations.

The applicant proposes a model focuses on forming school foundations that can provide additional financial resources for community-based academic projects. The resource development partners in this endowment program include: the South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF), the Bush Foundation, Citi Foundation, rural school (local) foundations, corporations, colleges, and individual donors. The Sustainability Plan also includes a strong resource development partnership with South Dakota colleges and universities.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

This plan to meet the application's competitive priority focuses on a business partnership to improve and enhance education in the participating LEA's Business leaders at operational headquarters and their field offices that signed onto this program will identify well-networked executives in their company to pair with the local school leaders designated through South Dakota's RTTT-D. The business executive will identify supplemental experiences naturally occurring within their company that can benefit the RISE-UP School administrators.

The Coalition will extend these practices to assist SD RISE-UP in three immediate areas with critical support:

- Executive coaching and mentoring;
- Taking an active role in personalized learning goals (e.g., assigning junior personnel to serve as near-peers, acting as “adopt-a-professional” for classrooms); and
- Facilitating LEA-wide assistance for teams.

The coalition of business leaders will operate through in-kind and voluntary participation by SD’s businesses. As the project LEAs begin implementing the proposed project, coalition members commit to increasing the effectiveness of groups LEAs working together.

The primary role of the business leaders will help facilitate a RISE-UP Leadership Institute, with annual kick-offs held at the STEMwise Conference each year. The RISE-UP Leadership Institute will provide mentoring to the administration of each RISE-UP LEA for a minimum of two years.

During the Leadership Institute, administrators will receive training in business practices that can be translated to project implementation, execution, and sustainability, including project/change management, conflict resolution, creating strategic plans, data collection and analysis, grant writing, and human resource management. RISE-UP Leadership Institute participants will meet quarterly to assess project progress and to carry out executive-to-executive mentoring that will enable regional business leaders to serve as sounding boards for school reform efforts.

This partnership is impressive and has many outstanding features. It has the potential for having a significant impact on the advancement of education achievement in the participating schools. The plan, however, is not sufficiently student-focused to meet the criteria specified in the priority. The desired results identified by the applicant do include some student-centered results, but that is not the main emphasis of the plan proposed by the applicant. In addition, other aspects of the criteria for this priority are not well addressed, such as assessing the needs and assets of participating students, tracking indicators that measure results for children within the LEA’s, or describing how the partnership would integrate education and other services.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does present a coherent plan to build on the core educational assurance areas to create personalized learning environments. The plan does have a number of very impressive components and has the potential to effect significant and meaningful change in the schools, the students and the communities to which it is targeted. Some aspects of the proposed plan are not as well-developed as they should be and are not as innovative, extensive are as systemic as they could be. The geographic area and the population included in the participating schools face many barriers and obstacles and the applicant does a good job of attempting to develop a plan that will fit within the parameters and conditions imposed by these barriers. However, more attention to data and to a structure that better connects the various components of the plan to measurable data would improve the proposed plan.

Total	210	182
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1127SD-3 for Mid Central Education Cooperative



A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has successfully set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision for accelerating student achievement, deepening, student learning, and increasing equity through tasks based on student academic interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision is grounded in the applicant's recent work in core educational assurance areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The vision is based in alignment with the now adopted Common Core Standards and common core assessments ◦ The vision relies on existing and new infrastructure for data systems and methods of measuring student growth to inform instruction ◦ The vision relies on a new rubric for evaluating teachers that will be fully implemented by 2014 • The vision is focused around accelerating and deepening student learning through personalized student support based on student academic interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The application describes a number of existing programs that will be scaled through this proposal, including a transdisciplinary problem-based learning framework that allows students to self-select products that demonstrate what they have learned and which is focused on local, regional and global problems that resonate with students ◦ The application describes the existing virtual school that provides self-paced learning with adaptive assessments and a personalized set of learning modules based on the student's need. Currently this is used for remediation and the application proposes to extend it for use in acceleration as well. ◦ The application describes an existing program where students identify their goals in the 8th grade and the steps needed to achieve them, provide mentoring and shadowing at the high school level, and increase equity by using the virtual school remediation facilities and integrated career counseling with a feedback loop to ensure it is followed ◦ The vision includes scaling these programs and providing additional tools and resources across 30 LEA's that are centrally vetted and made available to create an effective blended learning environment made available to all students within the LEAs • The vision includes personalization through a number of efforts, including flexible groupings outside of traditional grade groups, blended learning, and transdisciplinary project-based learning that supports student interests. <p>The strengths of this vision lie in a robust plan for ongoing professional development to support a shift from seat-time-based curricular instruction to mastery-based problem-based learning; increased personalization through increased use of the virtual school and online content; interest-based learning informed by personalized learning plans; and use of data to inform instruction and increase equity.</p> <p>The primary weakness of this vision comes from a lack of development of how personalized learning sequences will be evolved and extended from a limited model that is currently used primarily for remediation. The vision also does not lay out with any explicitness how mastery-based advancement will occur, though it is an implicit priority.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant has established a credible approach with several strengths and some weaknesses resulting in a high medium score for this section.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated an approach that will support high-quality implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicants chose high quality selection criteria for involvement in the proposal including: prior demonstrations of collaboration, agreement that the proposal would enhance rather than add stress to existing reform aspirations, engagement in the development of the proposal strategy, and evidence of community support 		

- The application describes all the participating schools, the total number of participating students and teachers, students from low-income families or who are high-needs, ensuring that the qualification requirements were met.

However, the description of the process was lacking in detail regarding the steps of the process and which stakeholders were involved, leading to a high, though not perfect score for this section.

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

The application includes every student in every school in every LEA as participating students from the beginning of this grant and therefore does not require scaling beyond the current proposal.

The application includes a credible high level plan describing timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties for LEA-wide implementation.

- The approach builds on existing wide-spread 1:1 laptop programs (90% of grade 5-12 have this), the existing virtual school with adaptive, self-paced, mastery-based learning for remediation, and the curation of digital tools and content to enable local LEA's and schools to shift to problem-based learning with strong student interest-based components enhanced by digital learning tools and digital learning courses
- The approach includes extensive professional development that includes new teacher training through local schools of education that includes certification in teaching in this sort of personalized environment
- The approach uses student data and student interests and aspirations to inform instruction and learning paths

Although a more detailed plan would increase the credibility of the overall approach, the thoughtfulness of the high level plan and the success of these approaches at a smaller scale supports its validity, leading to a high score for this section.

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

The applicant's vision is highly likely to result in improved student learning and performance

- The application has set ambitious but achievable goals of 2%-4% annual increase in summative assessments resulting in the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency at the end of the grant in the mid- to high- 80's
- The LEAs show high graduation rates (90%-100%) for most schools and has set ambitious, achievable goals to raise the schools at lower graduation rates by approximately 10 percentage points over the time period of the grant
- The application includes the highly ambitious goal of nearly doubling college enrollment rates over the time period of the grant for an overall college enrollment rate of 55%

The application does not address decreasing achievement gaps by subgroup

The approach laid out by the applicant is highly credible for achieving the performance goals laid out. Though there is not enough detail to support doubling the college enrollment rate, this section still receives a high score.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	7

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application does not demonstrate a clear record of success in the past four years in improving student achievement. However, the application does describe some specific pilot results demonstrative of how the overall approach, when scaled widely, can have significant impact.

- A pilot program of 61 high school students at risk of graduating late or not graduating, led 80% to graduate on time through credit recovery using the virtual high school
- The application includes positive results from student surveys among a highly transient and extremely poor population using the virtual high school

A pilot program using trans-disciplinary problem-based learning brought student average grades up from a C- to a B-level.

The application does not describe a track record of significant reforms in low-performing schools

The application demonstrates a track record of making student performance data available to stakeholders in meaningful ways

- There are 5 effective sources of student data that are used by stakeholders including on-line parent portals providing real-time access to grades and homework as well as a more complex tool that provides parents and educators real-time access to grades, attendance, disciplinary actions, transcripts and summative performance assessments

The applicant lacks a track record of success in improving student achievement over the past 4 years, however the outcomes of the specific programs to be scaled within this proposal are promising. Therefore, this section receives a medium score.

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

The applicant has demonstrated evidence of a high level of transparency

- Actual personnel salaries for school-level instructional and support staff, instructional staff only, and teachers only are made public through each district's web site, the local newspaper, and reporting to the NCES Common Core Data.
- Since some LEA's are very small and one person may have numerous roles, (district superintendent, elementary principal, bus driver) in which case salaries are published together
- Also due to the size of some LEA's, with many areas across schools being supported by one person, financial information is published at the district rather than school level
- Budgets, and any changes to them are published publicly and audited

The application does not include evidence of the detail of budgetary information, however the level of transparency described still lead to a high score for this section

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

The application has demonstrated evidence of sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments proposed

- The South Dakota Department of Education has provided flexibility to eliminate Carnegie units, modifying common core standards training to be project-based learning-based, utilizing flex credit, and sharing resources across LEA's
- Legislative measures have been enacted in support of incentivizing teachers in critical subject areas and evaluating teachers and principals
- Most of the learning practices described in this proposal have been piloted within the LEA's already
- The proposal has strong letters of support from the governor, legislators, and the South Dakota Secretary of Education

The legal and regulatory environment combined with the specific stated intent by the secretary of education to provide whatever flexibility is necessary to implement this proposal leads to a high score for this section.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application has demonstrated evidence of meaningful stakeholder support

- The process included surveys of teachers and principals.
- The process included high quality engagement with each LEA and partners such as institutions of higher education in meeting together to set goals and craft the proposal
- The process has the support of the collective bargaining groups for each LEA, evidenced by signatures
- The process included the use of a collaborative project management tool used to collect feedback and modify the proposal in response to input
- The application has letters of support from stakeholders including legislators, the Governor of South Dakota, Superintendents, partner institutions, institutions of higher learning, community organizations, and the business community

The application does not explicitly include support from parents and students.

Overall, the application has demonstrated meaningful stakeholder support in many areas, but lacking student and parent endorsement, this section receives a medium score.

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

The application has demonstrated evidence of a high-level plan for analyzing the current status and gaps.

- The consortium has identified six main areas which need to be addressed to implement personalized learning environments
- The applicant has identified 3 levels of readiness among the LEA's
- The applicant has identified timelines, deliverables, and responsibility for conducting a detailed gap assessment for each LEA
- The applicant has identified timelines for project implementation that varies based on each LEA's level of readiness, with those who are further along becoming examples and providing support to those starting further behind

The applicant has done a thorough and thoughtful analysis of gaps and developed a highly credible approach to addressing the gaps among a consortium of LEA's at widely varying levels of readiness, leading to a high score for this section.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has demonstrated evidence of a high quality plan for improving teaching and learning that includes several different levels of personalization, particularly for high need students.

- The plan includes a program for goals setting beginning in the 8th grade, and personalizing many choices, including school options for struggling students, course selection, virtual self-paced learning for remediation and acceleration, career exploration, and mentoring opportunities that supports all students in identifying their interests and career goals and understanding the options and steps for achieving them
- The approach includes formative and summative assessment data and longitudinal data available to educators, students, and parents to help students understand where they are in their learning and to choose approaches to meet their goals
- The approach shifts the practice of the involved schools to become based on transdisciplinary problem solving to deepen student learning and engagement as well as develop skills and traits needed in the 21st century such as collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving
- The plan provides an example of using learning progressions mapped to common core standards for reading to provide detailed feedback and sequencing information to students

However, the plan for the degree of personalization in each of the approaches, problem-based learning and blended learning, have some limitations

- Most learning will still be classroom-based where the personalization comes from supporting students in how they display mastery through project-based learning, not in personalizing the sequence of instruction
- The plan makes mention of using digital content to support self-paced learning and access to a wider variety of courses, though the detail provided for this refers primarily to after-school enrollment or virtual school as an alternative to brick and mortar school, not personalizing pace, sequence, and options within the classroom
- The plan refers to multi-age cohorts in the lower levels making it possible for students to progress more slowly without feeling as though they are held back, but there is little detailed description of the mechanisms for personalization that will support a different pace within the classroom
- The most personalized opportunities exist for students undergoing remediation, and though there is mention of using the same systems for acceleration, there is not detailed discussion of how this will be integrated with project-based learning and online content access for most students

Nevertheless, within the personalized environments that are described in this proposal there is clear evidence of access to key personalization elements:

- There is a personalized sequence of content available for students who are seeking credit recovery and which will be used for acceleration under this proposal
- There are several high quality instructional environments included in the proposal including classroom based problem-based learning, fully virtual on-line learning, and partial on-line supplements through synchronous classes and online content such as Kahn academy.
- The proposal focuses on creating a repository of high quality digital content available to every school and curated by the educators in the consortium
- There is feedback to students regarding their performance. Though the plan focuses primarily on summative assessments, grades, and other traditional methods of feedback, there is also mention of more frequent formative assessment, particularly for reading.
- The goal setting that students do from the 8th grade on, combined with data regarding that student's performance, along with (for some students) feedback from adaptive assessments are used to help students select courses and career exploration opportunities, as well as quickly complete credit recovery currently, and accelerate learning under this proposal

The proposal has its roots in high-quality strategies for high-need students, leading to a high-quality approach for helping to ensure they are on track toward college and career readiness

The proposal acknowledges the need for training and support in the use of the tools and resources provided, but does not describe an explicit plan for providing this training. Nevertheless, since many of the approaches have already been piloted within the consortium it is reasonable that these training opportunities are already part of successful pilots and will be scaled.

Overall, this proposal provides for two important and credible shifts toward personalized learning, problem-based learning and self-paced virtual learning, along with the supporting processes for collecting and using data about student performance and interests as well as supports for implementation. Therefore, this section receives a high score.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application has demonstrated evidence of extensive professional development opportunities for all educators to improve their capacity to implement personalized learning environments

- The application includes multiple camps, workshops, courses, professional learning communities, and expert support in providing educators with the skills to implement the transdisciplinary problem-based learning program, teach with inquiry-based methods, effective use of formative assessment, self-evaluation, and authentic audiences
- The application provides a notable emphasis on professional learning communities where digital collaboration tools enable weekly meetings among teachers to collectively improve their practice and receive feedback and brainstorming around specific issues, an on-line management system to organize and discuss best practices, and monthly in-school evaluation of the project-based learning implementations
- Educators have access to multiple tools for collecting and analyzing student data at a summative level, for accessing

student-developed interest-based personal learning plans, and have on-line tutorials available on the use of these systems.

- The proposal includes the implementation of teacher and principal evaluation systems that include measures of student growth as well as observed practices

The application has demonstrated moderate evidence of access for educators to tools and data to accelerate student progress

- The proposal provides educators with access to personalized learning plans developed by students based on their interests and goal and access to student summative performance data, grades, and transcripts as well as LEA longitudinal data
 - However, there is not detailed description of how this data will be used to identify optimal learning approaches outside the expanded choices in courses (including accelerated courses) available through the virtual school
- The proposal includes the development of a curated repository of digital resources, including high quality content and the tools to create new digital content
 - However, the proposal does not have a detailed approach to matching student needs to specific resources and approaches, beyond providing access to the virtual school courses outside of the regular school day

The application has demonstrated evidence of training, policies, tools, data, and resources to enable the structuring of an effective learning environment.

- The training, policies, tools, and data are primarily applied to a PBL environment which is flexible and adaptable to student needs and interests and is credible as a method of accelerating student progress and intrinsically includes common and individual tasks
- The PBL environment will be structured to align with common core standards
- Feedback and improvement happen continuously through the use of analyzing student data and improving professional capacity through professional learning communities

The applicant does not describe a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instructions for effective and highly effective teachers, however the proposal describes an overall approach for creating incentives in hard-to-staff subjects, attracting more high quality teachers by providing them with the freedom to create personalized learning environments, and using virtual instruction to provide access to high quality teachers for more students.

Overall, the application proposes to provide assorted training opportunities that are credible in supporting teachers in shifting to a PBL environment and to working to shift their practice to increasingly personalized learning environments. There is a notable and highly credible emphasis on improving practice through professional learning communities that include frequent opportunities for reflection, feedback, and evaluation with feedback from experts and frequent evaluation of the PBL implementations in schools and classrooms. However, the application is weak in describing the methods and tools available to educators to match student needs with resources and to provide continuously improving feedback on how resources are meeting student needs. Still, due to the strong approach for professional development to shift instructional practice, this section receives a high score.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application describes a reasonable plan for project implementation. The application is very strong in policies that support personalized learning and structures that support problem-based learning, but is weak on plans for leveraging and scaling self-paced, mastery-based online learning.

- The application has identified responsible parties for the implementation of each of its subprojects and charges them with providing the appropriate support and services to participating schools.
- The application includes statements and evidence of strong support from the South Dakota Department of Education, including the intention to provide flexibility as necessary to implement this proposal and a track record of supporting mastery-based learning for credit recovery

The proposal has strengths and weaknesses with respect to providing students the opportunity to progress based on mastery

- The clearest example of personalized, mastery-based progression comes from the adaptive credit-recovery courses

available through the virtual school, but the plans for scaling this environment to provide the same level of personalization across subjects and grades are not well developed

- Mastery-based progression also comes into play through problem-based learning where students participate in authentic projects and have multiple options with respect to what products they will choose as their end results, demonstrating mastery. However, there is no strong description of how these options allow students to progress, even though those opportunities are alluded to within the context of flexible groupings within a school. These authentic assessments are personalized, but do not necessarily provide mechanisms for students to progress and earn credit.

The application is highly credible in the evidence presented that learning resources and practices for problem-based learning are fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities.

- Many of the elements of the proposal grew out of initiatives that were initially targeted toward programming for special education and students with disabilities and those accommodations have remained as part of the systems and processes incorporated by this proposal.

Because the proposal has strong policy authority and flexibility, good structures and support for implementing problem-based learning, though weak mechanisms and practices for implementing personalized, mastery-based progress, this section receives a relatively high score.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal includes evidence that stakeholders, regardless of income, have at least some access, as needed to support implementation

- Most LEA's have 1:1 laptop programs in place for high school and are moving to middle school implementations, however this proposal does not address providing universal 1:1 access in grades and schools where it is not yet available
- Where students do not have Internet access at home, there are evening hours available at school for Internet use, however this proposal does not address provide equal home access for all students, regardless of income
- Distance learning courses and advanced placement courses are free of charge and available to all juniors and seniors
- The proposal includes the intent (however not a specific approach) to decrease the cost of dual enrollment to improve accessibility to more students
- The proposal intends to provide the most support to those LEA's with the highest need early in the program implementation, which implies extending access to virtual courses to those where it does not currently exist

The proposal does not specifically address providing technical support to students, parents, and educators

The proposal does not describe how or whether the selected information technology systems will allow parents and students to export their data in and open data format

The proposal does not address the use of interoperable data systems

Although the application provides evidence that most stakeholders, regardless of income, have some access, there are no concrete plans for ensuring all students have equal access to technology and the Internet. The application is also weak in describing plans for technical support and does not address open data formats or interoperable data systems. However, there is consistent access for all stakeholders with respect to the PBL prong of personalization. Therefore, this section receives a medium score.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application has demonstrated evidence of a strong approach towards rigorous continuous improvement

- The approach includes ambitious but achievable annual goals for student growth, but also includes ethnographic approaches to capturing the voice of the stakeholders more frequently and using this information to inform the improvement process
- The approach includes 3 levels of review, including programmatic review by the leading organization, several corrective action processes with their own inputs and feedback loops, and, finally, ongoing mentoring of program administrators by mentors from the business community addressing the various elements of formal project management
- However, the proposal's description of the review processes are lacking in detail particularly with respect to the corrective action processes.

The application has demonstrated a reasonable level of public sharing of the quality of its investments based on creating a web site for disseminating information, formal programmatic communications, and taking advantage of existing informal relationships among stakeholders.

The overall approach to continuous improvement is solid, though light on detail and therefore this section receives a high score.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application has demonstrated evidence of effective strategies for ongoing communication and engagement of stakeholders

- The proposal includes on-line access to implementation status information both as numbers and statistics, but also through stories of student success, as well as mechanisms such as chat rooms and social media to engage with all stakeholders
- The proposal includes dedicated personnel to interface and communicate with stakeholders including business partners and the department of education
- The proposal includes communication through staff meetings and meetings with other stakeholders and organizations
- The proposal includes formal programmatic communication between grant staff and implementation staff

However, the proposal does not describe feedback loops to ensure that the communications mechanisms are being used effectively, nor that the communications mechanisms result in external stakeholder engagement. Nevertheless, this is a strong approach with significant resources applied to communication. Therefore, this section receives a high score.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal has selected reasonable, ambitious, yet achievable performance metrics for students, however, it does not describe how these measures will be reviewed over time if they are found to be insufficient to gauge implementation progress

- The proposal has selected the required metrics of students that have access to high quality educators as well as reading, math, and attendance metrics and set these as academic and health/emotional leading indicators of success
- The proposal has also created a strong and authentic metric based on the unique elements of the specific programs included - career/college readiness is measured by the percentage of 8th grade students who have created personal learning plans and selected courses based on that plan
- Notably, the proposal sets targets for each of these metrics that depend on the state of readiness of each LEA (grouped into 3 levels) and which are achievable based on that level of readiness with the most prepared LEA's showing the largest gains soonest

However,

- The metrics are tracked by overall population and by subgroups which are aggregated rather than split out by subgroup. The rationale includes the small size of many LEA's, however since the aggregate numbers of "disadvantaged students" are in the thousands, it seems plausible that a finer-grained measurement is possible.

Overall, this proposal has selected appropriate metrics with reasonable rationales. Although there is not a specific discussion of how these metrics will be revised, the overall approach of continuous improvement is credible. Therefore, this section receives a high score.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not provide evidence of a plan for meaningful evaluation of the effect of the RttT-D funded activities, although there is a description of the goal to do so.

- The proposal describes the intent to leverage existing data systems and business leader support to create a dashboard that will provide insights into trends and performance of various aspects of the program

Although there is no description of a plan for the evaluation of these activities, the overall approach of engaging the business community to design a "lens" on the investments based on a data dashboard that is fed by numerous data sources is strong. Therefore, this section receives a medium score.

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 budget is detailed, thorough, and adequate for supporting the implementation of problem-based learning and the associated technical and professional development supports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are extensive funds for the development of curriculum for problem-based learning • There are significant funds for educator professional development and the development of teacher-certification programs specifically targeted to the new models of instruction in this proposal • There are significant funds for developing additional enrichment programs for students • There is good funding for program management • There is reasonable funding for establishing partnerships with the business community to appropriately infuse program and change management practices into the LEA's • There is good funding to add the staff and resources necessary to make the multiple programs being leveraged and scaled by this proposal available to all LEA's <p>However, there is not adequate funding for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending the virtual school offerings to across subjects and grades for mastery-based credit and progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The budget assumes that digital courses can be developed at the cost of \$1,000/ course which suggests that these are not highly personalized approaches • Equitable access across grades and income levels to computers and the Internet 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application describes two highly credible approaches to sustainability, either of which would address ongoing support of the project after the term of the grant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first approach notes that the program costs per student are about 10% of the general fund expenditures and makes a credible argument that by sharing resources across 30 LEA's, 10% general cost efficiencies can be established to offset the cost of the program • The second approach involves creating a \$10,000,000 endowment in partnership with specific, engaged organizations with track records of multi-million dollar fund-raising experience <p>Although each approach has some risk associated with it, and bring up the question of why these financial opportunities were not previously exploited, they are credible and therefore this section receives a high score.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The application has identified a coherent set of community and business partnerships to support the goals of this proposal

- The partnership has two key elements:
 - Developing teachers and administrators to become more sophisticated implementers of the reforms described in this proposal
 - Increasing student and parent awareness and experience with career opportunities
- The partnership focuses extensively on helping teachers and administrators gain professional development, understanding of career and business opportunities for their students, and leadership development in many aspects of formal program and change management, all of which have an indirect impact on students by improving the capacity of their educators
- The partnership also offers service learning opportunities for all students as well as enhanced career awareness for students and parents

However, the application does not include responses to sections 2-6 of the competitive preference priority, particularly regarding augmented social/emotional/behavioral supports for students. Therefore, it receives a low score.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has coherently and comprehensively addressed the elements of Absolute Priority 1 to achieve meaningful reform through a shift in infrastructure, practice, and focus to personalized learning environments.

The proposal outlines two significant shifts that increase personalization:

- Transdisciplinary Project Based Learning is scaled from 8 pilot schools to all schools in the consortium, providing personalization by allowing students to self-select the products they will use to demonstrate mastery, deepening and accelerating learning through engagement with meaningful, authentic projects addressing local, regional, or global problems, and preparing students for college and careers through authentic work.
- Virtual and blended learning opportunities are scaled from the existing virtual school which provides adaptive assessment, on-line coursework, and mastery-based progress, primarily for credit recovery.

In support of these shifts, the proposal provides for:

- Tools for students in the 8th grade and above to identify their interests and use those to set career and academic goals and develop personalized learning plans to achieve them
- Data systems to collect and meaningfully share student performance data among appropriate stakeholders
- Professional development to increase educator effectiveness focused primarily on the shift to PBL for teachers and on program and change management for administrators
- Multi-age groupings in the lower grades
- Technology infrastructure to provide access to high quality digital content, collaboration tools, and on-line courses

Further, the proposed shifts are grounded in Common Core Standards and infused with a focus on career exploration and planning to increase rates at which students graduate from high school college and career-ready

Each of the two shifts are examples of personalized learning environments in and of themselves which, along with the supports described, merit meeting absolute priority 1. Even though the proposal doesn't provide details or plans for how these two elements will work together to provide deeper personalization for each student, it clearly demonstrates the intent to move in that direction through mentions of how digital resources will be used in the TPBL-based classrooms and of the opportunity to move to mastery-based advancement.

Total	210	154
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