



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0668NJ-1 for Neptune Township School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant clearly identified and reinforced the four core educational assurance areas and provided separate (four) overviews on how these goals will be achieved and implemented during the project period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an infrastructure for students and teachers that focuses upon personalized learning environments that are rigorous and aligned to the core standards; build upon the needs of students; and develop skills aimed at college and career readiness. • The creation of a collaborative professional culture with a focus upon student achievement, continuous staff development, and the application of data-driven decision making. • The development of a system of assessment and data collection that will enhance the decision making process in programs, student achievement in classroom and standardized areas, differentiation and personalization of instruction and curricula based on student needs, and accessibility of information to all stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, administrators, etc.). • A focus on college and career readiness with comprehensive services and information provided to students and families; supporting the college application process; support for students academically and emotionally; and the collaboration of community resources in supporting college and career readiness. <p>In addressing each of these four goals, I want to emphasize the applicant's attention in providing supportive information and a high degree of detail in addressing this particular program component (Vision), which included the timelines, resources and those individuals affected by each goal.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided a chart that identified those components that specifically aligned with their approach to implementing the plan. The chart referenced all required data and included the following supportive information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA Participants • Participating Schools • Raw Student and Teacher Data • Percentage Indicators of Participants in Separate Categories <p>This data and narrative information, which was provided in this chart, fully supported all of the applicant's eligibility and compliance requirements as listed in this section of the proposal. In order to ensure their support of a high-quality project, the following implementations will be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of an infrastructure that will provide a K-12 instructional continuum focus; the students' digital skills will be maintained on an electronic portfolio or "digital backback." • The development of a personalized learning plan supported by guidance counselors. • Competency-based learning in the core content classes and integrated personalized learning modules. • The creation of a professional culture committed to high student achievement, staff development, and data-driven decision making. • The creation of a coherent system of assessment and data collection; this will contribute to differentiation and personalized instruction and curriculum based upon student needs; and shared information with stakeholders. • The establishment of a college and career focused culture; providing supportive family services and information; support of the application process to colleges; addressing the social and academic needs of students; and career 		

focused collaboration and community-based support.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

As indicated by the applicant, there are no non-participating schools in the consortium. The proposal did include specific measures that will be addressed by the implementation of the plan:

- Increase student learning outcomes through personalized learning experiences
- Development of a comprehensive staff development program and effort
- Movement from an academic to a student-interest based perspective
- Data driven decision making
- Personalization and focus on college and career interests

The applicant did identify the intent to create LEA wide reform and changes, as previously noted, that will positively address these implementations featured within the plan.

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(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In addressing the performance on summative assessment, the applicant identified a focus on K-2 Reading and Developmental Reading, and District developed Math benchmark assessments.</p> <p>The methodology in determining proficiency and growth status information was reinforced with several graphs that included such indicators as subgroups, proficiency rates, and target goals. In addition, the applicant presented similar data that was referenced in separate charts that addressed students in Grade 3-12, and included ethnicity and language arts achievement information.</p> <p>The applicant addressed specifically aspects of decreasing the achievement gap with various subgroups (i.e., special education, African American, Hispanic, White, and economically disadvantage students). As referenced, the applicant will use the new state formula to address and determine achievement gap discrepancies.</p> <p>Also in support of the applicant's plan, there was focus to the graduation rates with the continual utilization in both a narrative and chart/data format. As an indicator in determining this goal, the objective of the plan will be to close the gap by half within the next six years. As with the previous identified areas, the applicant conveyed this information in a chart format.</p> <p>In determining college enrollment information, the applicant is presently using a program called Naviance to track students' applicant and enrollment; and serve as an instrument to gather students' interest beyond high school. In regards to this topic, data was again compiled with a chart utilized by the applicant.</p> <p>The applicant also conveyed information pertinent to the topic, post secondary degree attainment. It was indicated that the state's tracking of this specific data is rather new, the capacity to determine degree attainment is not presently possible. The applicant did not indicate or provide a contingent plan to assess this information (post secondary degree attainment).</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	13
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided information that addressed this area primarily in the form of a narrative. A focus on rigorous reform to prepare students for college and career readiness was referenced. In regards to the New Jersey's state initiatives, the applicant has adopted the national Common Core Standards. Also, units of study that were identified included by the applicant included the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments. Data driven systems to measure student performance growth, (NJSMART, Link-It and Measure Up), have contributed to the application with more data driven decision making by teachers. Data on an ongoing in-house basis is compiled by walkthroughs conducted by all administrators in each LEA.</p> <p>In regards to providing significant reforms, the School in Need of Improvement status, the Neptune Middle School has built programs to address low achieving students; as noted in the <i>School Community OutReach for Education</i> program.</p> <p>The applicant also referenced the success and utilization of PLC, the summer school academy, the assignment of high qualified staff to support personalized and effective instruction, the Basic Skills Improvement Program, and through administering pre and post assessment tests as methods to increase student learning and achievement.</p> <p>At the high school level, a reference to the implementation and application of block scheduling was indicated that has promoted personalized instructional time and improved academic performance. As indicated, the expansion of Advanced Placement courses and offerings has contributed with an increase in their performance and achievement. The cooperative relationship with Brookdale Community College, Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, and through the JumpStart Academies have been instrumental in providing students with the opportunity to participate in a dual enrollment program and engagement in student selected interests tracks.</p> <p>With the exception of percentages listed with references to Advanced Placement topic, the applicant did not include supportive data, charts and/or graphs to support information or evidence that related to this area.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5	5	5

points)		
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has fully complied with maintaining a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments as this information is freely and highly distributed and accessible (i.e., website, school board agenda and minutes, community budget forums, etc.).</p> <p>The Open Public Records Act passed by the state (New Jersey) in 2001, is used as the guideline for making documents available.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The participating LEA's have been compliant and responsive to State regulatory and legal reforms. As an example, the <i>Common Core State Standards</i> in <i>for Mathematics and English Language Arts</i> are State adopted.</p> <p>The districts have complied with requirements to utilize student based data to help drive instruction and evaluate teacher performance while retaining an autonomous process. The applicant continues to participate in different monitoring systems approved by the State (i.e., <i>Quality Single Accountability Continuum</i> and <i>Collaborative Assessment and Planning for Achievement</i>).</p> <p>Through the Federal Wavier process, the applicant has an accountability system that allows for greater autonomy for the LEA's; therefore, providing a better opportunity to implement personalized learning plans.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Administrators, teachers, families and students were engaged through various means to demonstrate participation and support of the project's development. Needs assessments and surveys were conducted by the LEA's. As an outcome of these surveys, a primary area of concern addressed issues of technology. Innovation Meetings were also held that included community representation from participants from various professional backgrounds. Additional stakeholder meetings were held that included officers from the local collective bargaining units.</p> <p>The proposal indicates an overall positive attitude and support to the grant proposal as indicated with a significant percentage of those stakeholders (i.e., parents, students and teachers) surveyed as favoring the plan. As an outcome of these meetings, a data analysis was applied to this information that contributed to revisions to the proposal.</p> <p>The applicant has indicated in a chart format a series of stakeholder meetings that were held throughout the LEA's identified in the proposal. This documentation includes the location, number of participants, date and topic that were addressed at these planned sessions. In addition, a separate chart was submitted that provided verification of those stakeholders who submitted letters of support for the proposal. This response of supportive letters indicated that the LEA's fully complied with the requirement to secure signed documentation from designated and key stakeholders in the region serving the applicant's region.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has clearly identified through the process of needs analysis the four significant goals that need to be addressed in successfully implementing the proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of early interest in students that will increase the enrollment and participation of the JumpStart Academies program. The focus will be to establish more interest in the middle school grades through personalized career exploration opportunities at this developmental level. • Increase the diversity of student participants in the JumpStart Academies and Duel Enrollment program. As these programs primarily serve only honor students, the intent and goal are to provide participation from a diverse student population through the development of personalized learning plans. • Increase the utilization and availability of technology for student use on a daily basis. A goal of increasing technology application will contribute to support of individualized learning and the creation of digital portfolios. The results of a parental survey regarding the implementation of mobile technology devices and resources met with significant success, as indicated. • The expansion of individualized learning to earlier grade levels. A goal of the proposal will be the 		

development of digital modules that will contribute to personalized instruction for all students.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has clearly identified various methods and areas that center upon the element of effectively communicating information that reinforces an understanding of the learning process and its importance to their success in developing a high quality plan. Guidance counselors were identified in assisting students in developing a rigorous individualized learning plans. Information to parents that support this understanding and purpose of learning will be conveyed by school personnel at such events as Back to School Nights, PTO Meetings, Parent Teacher Conferences, Advance Placement Convocation Night and class or grade meetings.</p> <p>The proposal indicates the different focus of personalizing instruction in accordance with the three levels of students; elementary, middle school, and high school. Teachers will be primarily responsible in developing individualized learning strategies. A focus on staff development for teachers was referenced to ensure the project's successful implementation. As stated by the applicant, the overall purpose of the plan is designed to promote critical thinking skills.</p> <p>Elementary Level: The utilization of mobile technology will provide on-line resources that will facilitate the needs of each student.</p> <p>Middle and High School Levels: The development of a platform that creates a personalized learning plan with a focus on college or career readiness.</p> <p>The proposal will focus on the digital classroom specific to K-2 students with supportive and proven instructional practice applied by teachers that will prepare students for digital learning opportunities with blended personalized learning environments established for grades 3-12.</p> <p>The effort to promote the JumpStart Jr. Academy will help middle school students to be introduced to college and career readiness standards. The JumpStart Academy concept will continue through the high school with students provided an opportunity to participate in this enrichment academic endeavor in these focus areas: Education; Medical Science; Environmental Science; Engineering; Communications; Law and Criminal Justice, and Performing Arts.</p> <p>The LEA's serve a diverse school population. The personalized learning approaches will expose students to various domestic and international issues within modules. On-line learning and the utilization of mobile technology devices will promote all students with opportunities to participate in live learning events and learning activities with international students.</p> <p>Career readiness will be assessed on an ongoing basis as assessments will be designed to align with district curricula in all subjects. As noted by the applicant, the participation and engagement of students in collaborative performance tasks will contribute to building their creativity, critical thinking and problem solving skills.</p> <p>A significant component of the proposal allows students to develop a personalized course sequence plan option, which will be driven by student choice and interest. The offer of 160 credits to be taken by high school students will contribute to the flexibility and success of this individualized concept that allows for such non-traditional features as early graduation, testing out of a course for credit and increased self-paced completion of courses.</p> <p>The LEA's utilization of information systems, PowerSchool and Genesis, will contribute to the electronic means of tabulating grades and transcripts. The daily synchronization of student data and the use of LinkIt will allow for student data assessment available to teachers at all grade levels.</p> <p>High needs students, including ELL students, will be accommodated with supportive services and resources to better accommodate their individual needs. As noted, the use of mobile technology devices will help to create learning experiences that personalize addressing the needs of these students.</p> <p>The applicant emphasized the importance to complement the goals of the proposal with extensive staff development initiatives that will be designed to support the implementation of all goals that align with the project. The programming and staff development chart supported the applicant's efforts and contributed to their effort in addressing this component of the proposal in a positive manner.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has identified content areas, time frame/schedule, and goals that relate to a program and staff development initiative that will be designed to enable teachers to successfully implement the project while fulfilling each goal. The Project Activity Plan chart identified the activities, deliverables/purpose, responsible person and the timeline to address each item. The proposal includes referencing implementation indicators, which include the technology infrastructure, professional development needs, and data warehouse and assessment system, that are necessary to ensure that all schools will possess the needed resources to enable personalized learning at each site. In addition, the development of curricular items that includes digital backpacks and a progressive curriculum, which featured digital storytelling and reporting, student portfolio development and choices based on student interest were referenced.

A common thread addressed by the applicant throughout the proposal centers upon the pedagogy skills of teachers in personalizing instruction for students by continuously using a data driven approach.

The significance to form partnerships with community stakeholders was referenced that supported student growth in areas of college and career readiness matters. The applicant identified partnerships that have been established within the LEA's.

The applicant emphasized the plan to enhance the current curriculum with the implementation of mobile technology devices that will promote such learning activities as science laboratory experiments, mathematics manipulatives, writing and research methods and the development of a digital portfolio.

The need to establish benchmarks in mathematics and reading will be assessed at various times throughout each year in the elementary grades. As an outcome of this data, the establishment of collaborative learning groups will be established that personalized instruction and guided practice opportunities in the classroom. Also as indicated, the application of Quarterly Assessments will help teachers in monitoring the strengths, growth and weakness of each student. Data collection was identified as an integral component of the project.

Teachers and administrators will experience feedback on those evaluation tools that have been developed to assess their performance. The District Evaluation and Advisory Committee formed at each LEA will uses this evaluation information in making informed decisions. The intent of outcomes derived from these evaluation efforts will help to identify needs that will be addressed by each individual's Professional Development Plan and Professional Growth Plan. The intent of this plan is to contribute to these professionals being reflective in their positions and will lead to increase effectiveness in their respective roles.

A significant goal of the project has been identified with the infusion of high quality digital resources that teachers can use in their delivery of instruction. The development of performance-based assessments will serve as indicators that help to align skills that students need to be college and career ready. The focus on Professional Development Plans will provide data that will help to determine the success of digital learning models in addressing student needs and academic achievement. The applicant indicated that the thrust of professional development training will occur in the summer. The establishment of learning environments is a primary goal indicated by the project.

Leaders, leadership teams and committees will be established and afforded training to accomplish this task. In compliance with the State, LEA's are in the process of developing teacher evaluation systems that comply with all requirements. The District Evaluation Advisory Committee has provided feedback to help in the decision making process in developing a new evaluation tools for teachers. In addition, staff development and training continues to be a major priority in developing the knowledge and skills of all leadership team members serving in the LEA's. A goal of the proposal will focus upon the training of leadership members in areas that relate to the use of mobile technology, digital, personalized instruction and promote continuous student achievement. A primary purpose of the applicant will be their focus on identifying teachers and principals as highly effective. A review of performance data will play a significant part in the hiring and staffing of each school in the participating LEA's.

In summary, the applicant demonstrated evidence that addressed all indicated areas in this component of the project.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided evidence that addressed the organizational and governance structure by developing a Table of Organization chart for each LEA. As referenced, all district policies are located on the websites of each LEA; therefore, transparency for all stakeholders is accessible.

The applicant indicated that the schools have the ability to access the educational needs and to make budget requests in terms of supplies and personnel. School based budgets are primarily developed by each school's principal with input from department chairs. In addition, principals have the flexibility to transfer funds (10% threshold limitation), as needed. School calendar schedules and events are developed by each principal and then submitted to the superintendent for special consideration before moving to the board of education for final approval. Also, building administrators take an active role in personnel decisions that include interviewing, selecting and assigning staff. The applicant referenced that various levels of the administration combine to form interview committees in regards to this process.

The applicant did not specifically indicate or define what is considered an "active role" in those personnel decisions relating to interviewing, selecting and assigning staff. In addition to this area, the composition of who constitutes both the various levels of the administration and the interview committee members were not clearly defined.

The applicant again referenced the *JumpStart Academies* and the *Duel Enrollment* relationship with Brookdale Community College where students are provided opportunities to earn credit by demonstrating a mastery of standards. The applicant limited their response in this area as those examples listed reflected references to literacy areas in the elementary setting and to systems and data collecting, though the request was made to provide "multiple times" and "multiple comparable ways."

Students are provided opportunities to demonstrate mastery of standards at various levels and methods, as indicated:

- Elementary: Literacy Areas as indicated in such programs as *Accelerated Reader*, *Reading Egg*, *Raz Kids*; and *DRA2*
- Systems Applications for Data Utilization: *LinkIt* and *Measuring Up*

The applicant has established policies that indicate the learning resources and instructional practices that are accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and ELL. As an example or evidence, Policy 2423 was listed by the applicant and addressed the process for which students are identified for ELL services. Also, Policy 2464 was described that addressed protocols for a gifted and talented program.

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

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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant addressed Policy 2520 that ensures that instructional supplies, materials and equipment necessary for course or program implementation are provided to all students and educators.

Skill building and assistance programs have been available to students as referenced: NJASK; HSPA; and SAT. In the elementary schools NJASK is offered after school, while Saturday sessions are available for middle and high school students. Parental support programs are offered through Title I funding, and the Parent Advisory Councils have afforded workshops on instructional programming. The applicant did not provide evidence that referenced the availability of transportation for students that would support after school and/or Saturday support sessions. In addition, there were no specific references in accommodating parents or families without Internet home access.

The applicant identified Policy 2360, which centers upon the use of technology in regards to employee training, support for computer maintenance and software site license agreements. This policy also makes parents aware of the programs and technology used in each school. In regards to teachers, the PLC's and staff development days have been utilized to support training in technology application.

As referenced, all high school students were trained in the **Naviance** system during their homeroom period.

Also contributing to the use of open data availability, parents and teachers have access to the LEA's online grading system. Programs that were referenced supporting students online skills included **Study Island** and **Read 180**, which targeted assistance in the area of language arts.

The applicant referenced data systems, Power School and Genesis, that rendered information in the areas of student attendance, scheduling and grading. Information that includes budget, accounting data, and personnel is maintained through such programs as Systems 3000. Also, the applicant provided information that identified the program Teachscape that is used by the Lead District to promote and facilitate instructional improvement.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant clearly established and identified a strategy to continuously monitor the effectiveness of the plan and to make improvements or revisions on an ongoing basis. In an effort to address the diversity of the population and the various levels served by the plan, the establishment of S.M.A.R.T. goals were developed. These four goals were identified and supported with implementation indicators that referenced in stages separate benchmarks that ensured the success of achieving each of the following goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The development of an infrastructure that supports the implementation of the proposal that supports personalized learning, meeting individual needs, and focusing upon college and career readiness. 2. The establishment of a collaborative professional culture committed to academic achievement and data-driven decision making. 3. The creation of a coherent assessment system and data collection that ensures responsible decision making, promotes classroom and standardized assessment, differentiation and personalization of instruction based on student needs, and to ensure accessibility of data for all stakeholders. 4. The establishment of a college-going and career-focused culture while providing services and opportunities for students and parents, support of the college application process, support toward the academic and social needs of students, and utilize collaboration with community based organizations to support college and career readiness. <p>The applicant demonstrated compliance of these goals through the development of four charts that centered upon what would be monitored and measured. In addition, the charts included a section that provided the sharing of reflections that addressed the sequence and method of implementation of each goal as supported by their Implementation Indicators.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has indicated an approach that will provide various means to communicate the project's progress and to ensure engagement from varied stakeholders and groups. Concepts and efforts that were referenced to maintain ongoing communication, contact and support included the utilization of the Technology Department; while disseminating information in a grant generated newsletter, Technology Updates, approach on a monthly basis.</p> <p>The CMEA will hold quarterly meetings with a formal grant committee. A primary purpose of these sessions will be intended to analyze data through the grant's Performance Measures. Also, Information Feedback Meetings will occur annually to communicate grant information with all stakeholders including staff of each LEA. It was noteworthy to see that through the comparison of local "benchmarks" and standardized tests results would be a focal point for discussion and review at the Information Feedback Meetings.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In complying with elements that constitute performance measures the applicant emphasized the clarification and determination of two significant indicators that impact academic success: Highly Effective Principals and Highly Effective Teachers.</p> <p>The applicant used as a baseline 2012 state standardized test data to determine considered highly effective. In regards to principals, the state's Annual Measurable Objectives school profile will be a factor determining the "highly effective" status.</p> <p>In addressing the areas of performance measures, subgroups, baselines, college-career readiness factors, age-appropriate and non-cognitive indicators, enrollment statistics in the JumpStart Academies and through established target goals, the applicant developed several charts that provided data and related information that addressed and supported their findings within these areas. It was noted that only the two largest groups of students were used in determining their proficient percentile against the total number of students, but not all subgroups (e.g., racial, ethnic, ELL, etc.) were identified by the applicant.</p>		

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

The applicant referenced the importance of utilizing "resources" that will drive the project's success while ensuring that assessment and evaluation determinants will be a significant component in this process. Elements of focus that were included in generating information that will assist in determining revisions to the project included the application to data-driven decision making through, digital portfolios, pedagogy, and feedback surveys.

The applicant will utilize quarterly and annual meetings to collect additional data, including Performance Measures and Measurements of Continuous Improvement, and to communicate relevant information to those stakeholders in attendance.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided supportive documentation that identified budget criterion and cost projections that were associated and aligned with their proposal. An Overall Budget Summary Table was submitted that addressed all budget categories for each school (i.e., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, training stipends, funds generated from other sources, and total expenditures).

The applicant's narrative budget overview reflected the "needs" to accomplish the project's "goals." Major budget items that were identified in this area included technology hardware, software and infrastructure, staff development programs and curriculum costs. These items were further referenced in a Budget Table format that included both the primary and additional associated criteria and location in the application. A concentrated focus of budget related costs for each school served also included supportive narratives and charts that clearly identified personnel related factors, including the positions, titles, salaries and related costs; travel expenditures and projections; training stipends; curriculum and supplies; contractual expenses; infrastructure; software and purchasing of license procurements; and hardware.

In summary, the information and documentation that was submitted in regards to budget issues reflected reasonable and rationale support that aligned with the development and implementation of the project. The applicant provided specific explanations that related rational for expenditures (e.g., personnel, curriculum, staff development, supplies, materials, etc.) that related to the implementation of the project and revenue sources over the four year grant period.

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

As indicated by the applicant, the alignment of the grant coincides with the New Jersey Department of Education goals that include the educational initiatives which are currently being presented by the state. At the local level, all participating LEA's have demonstrated a commitment to personalized learning that has already been demonstrated with the implementation of infrastructure related to the project in each location. Stakeholders have indicated their support through the feedback received from surveys at various organizations and meeting sessions.

The applicant did anticipate areas of cost considerations for sustainability purposes that will need to be funded and supported to achieve continuous support of the project. These identified areas of focus within the budget includes personnel costs, technology updates, maintenance costs and professional development. Each LEA is prepared to share the cost of reoccurring personnel support for at least three years beyond the life of the grant. Technology costs will gradually be absorbed into the local district's budgets. The LEA's anticipate annual evaluations of the school's technology needs, and will utilize a focused needs approach to ensure professional staff development training that will help to determine the project's long term support.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identified a pattern of formed partnerships that have been established through years that have supported the social, emotional, behavioral, health and academic needs of students by providing services to supplement programs and efforts provided directly by the LEA's.

In regards to established partnerships, the applicant provided a myriad listing of private and public organizations at each level (i.e., elementary, middle school, and high school) who have served students in the LEA's over the years. These organizations included a diverse listing that provided supportive services for students from across a large spectrum (i.e., health care needs, family assistance, recreational and fitness, educational and tutorial support, career exploration, cultural and ethnicities awareness, socialization, clubs and activities, sports, fine arts, and etc.).

As the goals of the proposal aligned with strengthening and improving educational outcomes and family and community support services, the applicant provided a Competitive Preference Priority: Population-Level Desired Results chart. The information highlighted on this chart included the grade levels, type of result (i.e., educational, family and community) and the desired results.

A baseline indicator was established with goal increments to be achieved at an increase rate of 5% per year. A Data Coordinator will be responsible to collate information and to share with stakeholders all outcomes or information. A Competitive Preference Priority: Performance Measures chart was included in this response area with a concentrated focus on various performance measures that were applicable to the grade levels, baseline, and target increase for participating students.

As the project is exceptionally data-driven, the applicant provided assessment data that displayed the disparity between various subgroups (economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students). A reference table was included that described how partnerships (*Teen Outreach Program, School Community Outreach for Education, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Prevention First*, and etc.) were integrated for purposes of supporting education and other services, as indicated.

The applicant reference the development of Student Staff Support Teams that supports the a school's at-risk student population and the SCORE program that supports parents and families as the type of support initiatives that support the LEA's students and families.

A table was provided in the proposal that listed the annual ambitious and achievable performance measures of the project.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided significant and relevant data that supported the implementation of a well developed and comprehensive proposal that promotes personalized learning and student achievement. The four core educational areas were addressed with strategies indicated that would meet with success. The various charts and statistical information applied to this proposal contributed to a data-driven decision making effort on the part of the LEA's. The focus on staff development, as indicated throughout the proposal, is a strong indicator that the goals of the project would be highly supported and met with success. Also, through the enhancement technology resources the applicant has made a priority goal to improve upon the college and career readiness of students.

In summary, the applicant has a high-quality plan that is well grounded in a learning organizational and community that would show positive results in this project.

Total	210	203
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0668NJ-2 for Neptune Township School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided a clear and focused plan to address the issues of a consortia of New Jersey schools. Coastal Monmouth Education Alliance (CEMA) was established to assist small districts, some with one only school, with diverse demographics including economic , ethnicity, and language diversity. The small districts lack the economy of scale to bring about the changes that are needed to improve the quality of education in their districts. The lead LEA in the consortium, Neptune Township, has the experience, resources, and knowledge to serve as model of reform for this initiative. There are 10 schools in this plan to serve over 5000 students. The applicant outlines the benefits of shared planning and collaboration in the development of a plan that is focused upon instruction and program change. A needs assessment has been conducted to determine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats across the districts. Each district is unique but as with national trends share many of the same issues related to student achievement and success. Using the 4 core educational assurances as outlined in RTTT-D, efforts that transcend all of the districts while addressing unique needs is set forth in this plan. By working as a unit, the consortia of schools benefit from combined resources both internal and external to the district as well as the utility associated with efficiency of practice.</p> <p>The goals outlined in the proposal are distinct and precise with a focus upon clear student outcomes (e.g., development of an infrastructure that supports students using a personalized learning as the foundation for digital and e-learning opportunities). The plan addresses the diverse populations that defined the initial needs such as special education and English Language Learners; this demonstrates a tightly crafted proposal with a close alignment. A professional development model will support and provide educators with the skills and knowledge to implement the plan. The plan makes a point of using data to make instructional decisions using professional learning communities as the format. As well, a goal directed towards improving the graduation rate with students who are ready for career and college is outlined. The strategies for both teachers and students include an array of activities but in the context of student achievement and personalized learning. Using digital portfolios, multiple opportunities to use technology to support an enriched learning environment, and having mastery learning though differentiation increases the level of support for students and the promise of success. The plan is cogent, clear, and well articulated.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a chart that lists participating schools, grade bands, number of students including those that are high need as well as low income. A review of this data finds a high number of the consortia students fall into high need and low income range thus aligning with the goals of RTTT-D. The selected schools volunteered to be part of this initiative indicating a willingness to collaborate and work towards change. There was no narrative included that provided any additional details.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application is intended to be a model to address the needs of the specific schools that are part of this consortia. All schools in the consortia are participating with all students. The applicant provides a clear statement as to what the intent is</p>		

for this grant-- that is, to develop and provide a comprehensive professional development model focused upon personalized learning using technology to improve student outcomes. The applicant makes an excellent point when it distinguishes between academic personalization and student personalization; academic being the use of data to provide individualized learning experiences for students and student personalization being related to choice and interest. This is an excellent observation that refines the construct in such a way that dichotomizes the role of teaching and the role of learning and yet both are focused upon the student. The narrative although clear in what is provided does not have details or information that gives an indepth overview with regard to change.

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

The applicant provides examples of assessment for K2 in reading and mathematics (e.g., Development Reading Assessment or Running Records) that are common and frequently used for early grade assessment. The NJ Pass and Benchmark Data are referenced but not explained. Some additional information would have added to the depth and understanding of the various assessments used to gage progress towards goals. The applicant does explain the methodology to assess growth and how yearly indicators are determined; this was a good point to include since it provides information on the growth that is based on some formula rather than an arbitrary determination.

Benchmark goals are set for each school based upon baseline data and includes targets for proficiency status of subgroups of students as well; the inclusion of growth for individual subgroups of students; this plan drills down to a level of specificity that is excellent to consider. The applicant provides a plan to decrease achievement gaps within the consortia as compared to overall performance in NJ and provides a rationale and methodology for the determination of growth benchmarks. Large gaps are evident and not closed sufficiently as the end of the grant activities for special education, Limited English and subgroups.

Goals to close the achievement gap are low in some instances (e.g. students with disabilities); however, growth plans will close some of the gaps but there is not evidence that those in the greatest area of need will show substantial growth. The graduation rates show an interesting point in that African American attainment was higher in 2011 and showed a marked drop in 2012. The graduation rates projected at the end of the grant are below the 90% that is somewhat standard in many school districts; it would have been ambitious to set a goal of 100% or at least 90% that to set a goal that is achievable but not overly ambitious in nature. Using a formula to determine growth percents is arithmetic in nature and standardizes the process; however, goals should be a stretch and at least to a level that is comparable to other similar divisions.

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	14

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides information that outlines the limitations as well as the strengths of each invested LEA's. The applicant, CMEA, a consortia comprised of local LEA's in New Jersey outline the initiatives they are involved with and how those initiatives will support and enhance their efforts for success. For example, the consortia had adopted many of New Jersey's initiatives such as Common Core State Standards. These standards are embedded into the local curricula along with performance tasks which are linked to the 2014 assessment on Readiness for College and Careers. The districts have begun the process of curriculum alignment which is a needed first step to ensure the success of this grant proposal. Trying to conduct a curriculum overall while implementing programs that support curriculum is not an effective step in reform efforts. The consistent approaches used by the consortia takes into account individual differences, strengths, and resources while working from a common foundation. A strength of the application is the acknowledgement of these differences as well as common denominators. The applicant does not provide a clear record of documented success over the past 4 year time frame.

The schools have prepared for the grant and associated activities by working on these common facets. For example, all school leaders participate in walk through; the data is aggregated by school and professional development can be tailored to the individual schools and teachers. This has been used to guide professional learning communities and personalized learning opportunities for students. The use of common data systems is another example of common strategies that will serve in the implementation of grant activities. The focus on data analysis for instructional change and to guide student individual growth will have a common platform to guide professional development as well as evaluate grant success.

The lead LEA in the consortia (Neptune High School) has demonstrated considerable success and will serve as the model for other schools. For example, student achievement has been improved in the taking and passing of Advanced Placement tests. As well, the school offers many support systems to student to enrich and extend their learning. The SAT prep and the

partnerships with local institutions of higher education have shown success. The many business and community collaborations involve the community in a community issue which is the success of their children. The applicant provides numerous examples of how individual schools in the consortia have begun the process of change. The focus upon the student is evident in the many programs and strategies that individual schools are taking to improve student outcomes. Parents communication has improved the school/home relationship (e.g., Belmar). Parent's and students can obtain testing data and course progress through an online portal.

The strength of this plan is the combined and concerted efforts of a group of schools that face common obstacles to success. Individual successes can be shared and replicated with other schools and common strategies to overcome similar obstacles shared as well. A strength of the application is the forthright approach to understanding the lack of experience and limited funding within the small districts but there is certainly no lack of an ambitious plan to improve the quality and outcomes for their students.

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

5

5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The information on salaries for teachers, instructional staff, and personnel are freely available on the distinct websites. As well, frequent and open meetings are held in which salaries are accessible and distributed. District budgets are available and posted on district web sites which makes for an open and transparent process. Expenditures, budgets, salaries are available for any school/district in New Jersey as part of the Open Public Records Act.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant outlines how the consortia of schools are currently working within the confines of state, legal, and regulatory requirements. The districts have adopted and implemented a timeline and curriculum that align with New Jersey's adoption of the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and Language Arts. The districts have maintained their flexibility while working to implement the standards required by the state. The consortia of schools has complied with state requirements to use student data to drive the instructional programs. The districts have developed their own plans and programs that are aligned to the New Jersey policies, standards, and procedures. The state takes on a more prescriptive approach to those schools that are in need of more state oversight or review; none of the schools in the consortia are labeled as Priority or Focus schools thus enabling them to have greater autonomy over their programs. A goal of the CMA is have the schools in the consortia labeled a Reward school through the use of personalized learning to support students and their success. Success at this level supported by RTTT funds will further the implementation of personalized learning in other districts.

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

10

9

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application provides a summary of the strategies that the CMEA and the local districts engage in to bring about an open conversation with all stakeholders in the community and thus, encourage active participation and engagement in the process. The applicant has conducted a specific needs assessment that focused on grant facets such as technology and school climate. By doing so at the front end, information and data could be used to hone the grant application and also indicates a proactive approach. The CMEA provides evidence as to the stakeholder meetings; an excellent data resource that documents involvement on different aspects of the application. Those surveyed indicate a strong level of support (greater than 92% for parents, students and teachers). As a result of the meetings, some changes were made to the application based upon input (e.g., Jump Start Jr.). Numerous letters of support are included although there is no mention of how collective bargaining units specifically. The applicant does not address to what extent how the collective bargaining unit was involved and supported the grant development.

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

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Stakeholders have been surveyed and the data analyzed and evaluated; this proactive approach has helped to guide and inform aspects of the grant activities from those most invested in the success of students- parents, teachers, schools and districts. The applicant provides background on earlier strategies to engage youth in personalized learning; this was done with a dual enrollment collaboration with the community college. Personalized learning opportunities take many forms from interest to skill to career and college preparation. The applicant outlines several programs that are grounded in personalized learning

that are currently in place and how those programs will be extended over the grant.

For example, beginning career exploration earlier such as middle schools and using online courses to support interest in an excellent use of resources will allowing for student interest to be developed. The technology survey given to stakeholders has informed the applicant as to the technology needs of students and how technology can support academics and personal learning. The plan provides some general ideas and general examples but lacks specific detail as to how this will evolve into a high quality plan overall, Other plans to continue to identify needs and gaps is not overtly stated.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	19

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a description of increased communication on the improvement of learning through various means (face to face and online strategies). The goal is to begin the planning for student and parents early so that personalized learning is understood and recognized as a valuable strategy to improve both the quality and outcome of education. The applicant outlines strategies that begin in elementary school with a continuum of development-- this is a strength of the application. As skills and interest develop the ability to tailor the learning trough multiple technological platforms is a plus.

The application provides a description of how this will look at each level (elementary-digital backpacks for example; middle school-student self course selection; high school-online or traditional learning through the development of an individual learning plan) . This plan will allow for choice. student interest, and work towards the use of the latest technological tools to deliver the content. The focus upon student interest will align with the career and college preparation goal outlined in the proposal. The development of academies will allow students to be immersed in deeper content of their interest using the latest technology using real time live event learning. As well this will open the doors for students to learn about other cultures and expand their understanding of diversity (e.g., e-pals and service learning). The use of digital portfolios will document individual work as well as collaborative work that foster skills needed for the workforce and college. Collaboration is a key component as are performance assessment. These are excellent strategies to engage students of all ability levels include high needs or ELL learners. There was limited evidence on how parents are involved in student learning. .

The applicant provides an in-depth narrative of the various strategies to promote engagement and student interest through a personalized approach (e.g., Skype, service learning-pals). Professional development for teachers is intensive and extensive as outlined by the chart provided. The professional development plan used a job embedded approach to have teachers take what is learned back to the classroom for immediate use with students. The research to practice will allow for teacher learning with use in the classroom for authentic learning experiences. The professional development plan while providing an overview did not clearly distinguish in the various topics for professional development; there seemed to be some repetition and little variation.

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

The applicant provides a timeline of activities and training for teachers and educators. This chart (earlier section C1) focused upon teacher pedagogy and use of technology generally to develop personalized learning environments and plans for students. This alignment is somewhat weak in that does not provide details that clearly lead one to understand specifically what the teacher will learn and more over, what the teacher will actually do in the classroom. While the focus is upon the student and personalized learning the description and details do not provide the depth that makes the specifics overtly clear. The professional development plan includes training for all teachers and administrators in the districts and provides support to their delivery and development of personalized learning.

The applicant notes that the current curriculum is student centered, differentiated, and emphasizes practical applications. The curriculum will be extended through the use of the technology rich activities and programs that will be developed and personalized for students. this approach builds on the current curriculum and extends learning through alternate forms of delivery and assessment.

Assessment is frequent and formative in nature. The use of quarterly assessments provide another benchmark to assess student progress and goals of the grant. .

The teacher evaluation system is being developed and teachers and administrators will receive training on the system. A strength of the plan is aligning teacher professional development plans with data from observations and student success. The

applicant makes clear that the evaluation system is a tool designed for improvement based upon feedback and reflection.

The explanations of goals are clearly articulated and attainable. The goals suggested (4a) offer an increase annually by less than 2 points and does not appear to be a very aggressive goal. There is no plan to increase equity as the goal still suggests a discrepancy in the achievement gap for all subgroups.

The plan presented by the applicant for decreasing the achievement gap offers little narrative explanation of the data present. There is no explanation or justification of the goals set by the applicant. In several areas, the goals decrease from the previous year (3rd Grade Math).

The graduation rate doesn't offer a plan to close the gap between subgroups. The overall baseline and 5 year goal are not aggressive. The demonstration of less than 3 points doesn't appear to offer data that is attainable but not ambitious.

The plan narrative did not provide a detailed explanation for improving student outcomes. Each section within this unit was demonstrated through data and clearly identified, however not overly ambitious thus, justifying the reviewer's score.

It should be noted that the plan has hallmarks that are high quality; however, the narrative is not focused in places and somewhat general in nature. The lack of details that support the processes of evaluation--develop, implement, monitor, evaluate- and that guide the development of continuous improvement that maximizes student success lacks specificity in the details. The plan repeats information rather than extending the depth thus limiting the quality of the description in places.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant, CMEA, will provide structure and organization without infringing upon the governance and leadership at the district or school level. The applicant acknowledges the protocol of communication and structure. The MOU's outline the roles and responsibilities associated with grant activities and decision making processes. A strength of the proposal is the use of shared employees- those that function within the district and CMEA. The plan to have one leadership team in which all administrators of the consortia serve as well as CMEA leaders will foster shared ownership and collaboration.</p> <p>Districts will continue to maintain oversight over school and administrative areas such as calendars, staffing and so on. The district maintain their autonomy with regard to these administrative areas. There are areas for collaboration such as in assessment of students. Students can use alternate assessments and demonstration of mastery in lieu of traditional coursework and assessments. The applicant works in conjunction with districts and school to support and enhance learning for all students including gifted, special needs and ELL. A strength of the proposal was the acknowledgement of various populations that are often overlooked including resources for the classroom and teacher instruction. While the plan generally describes how the implementation will be supported, the plan is not overly ambitious in the goals that are set thus a reviewer score.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>District policies that are in place ensure that teachers have the necessary materials and supplies to support programs and students. There are external programs that support students and families in need as outlined by the applicant; these programs support students in multiple ways such as academic supports, health support, free and reduce lunch, and supplemental services. These services are available to all students in the consortia and other locally specific programs provide additional support services. Parents have access to technology support and training to assist them with online proficiency. One example was teaching parents how to access online student reporting and grades. By assisting parents with school related programs communication and perceptions improve.</p> <p>The applicant describes current practices within schools but does not elaborate in how it will provide additional support and services. The plan is descriptive in nature as to what is done now rather than what will be done in the future to support personalized learning for students. The plan describes how systems will be developed and used that link data and information</p>		

for collaboration and sharing.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant outlines a plan with specific goals that are articulated as well as implementation indicators. The plan lists strategies, measures to assess and evaluation. A review of each section finds that there is a lack of information or detail on the implementation and monitoring aspects. For example, the chart lists that teachers will provide instruction on mobile technologies under the monitor status; this is a teaching strategy and does not seem clearly explained as to what will be monitored, such as the frequency, level of engagement, what kinds of mobile technology. There are levels that are lacking in the plan using a taxonomy of cognitive skills. The goal is to use the technology to have students apply and use or create. The plan is descriptive and general in nature, there is no overt description of how each strategy is evaluated and under what contexts. The alignment of plan, do, study, act is a simple way to organize a plan for ongoing and continuous improvement. The plan does use data for improvement which allows for change in an effort to improve the outcomes for students..</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides strategies for communication (e.g. town meeting, information sessions, newsletters) to solicit input and feedback from stakeholders. Both internal and external constitutes are considered in the plan. The plan provides a description of how and what will be communicated, uses multiple strategies and seeks to include all stakeholders in the plan.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides charts that outline grade bands with cognitive and non-cognitive measures of success. The rationale for each assessment is described with the state assessment being the common cognitive assessment. Projected growth to meet targets was described for each band using a formula to increase the percent of students at the proficient level by 25%. What is lacking in the multiple charts is a consistent assessment of all subgroup performance with strategies to address all students.</p> <p>The charts lack a consistent organization in the use of assessments, strategies, and activities. A plan that uses a developmental approach in that skills, knowledge, and attitudes build upon one another are likely to be demonstrated with student success and achievement. The grade bands seem independent of one another rather than building upon what is assessed through teaching and learning. For example, it is not sufficient to set a graduation goal for all students when all students have not been included in the K12 description particularly when there are noted differences in achievement in subgroup populations. The application would have demonstrated a greater depth if the plan included all subgroups.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant plans to survey teachers, administrators and staff leaders to assess progress and make changes in an ongoing and systematic manner. The plan does address policy, practice and infrastructure. The plan does not consistently identify measurable outcomes that are targeted to student achievement or how activities will be evaluated within the context of the grant goals. However, while the plan does not overtly address efficiency and effectiveness in all areas, the plan outlines an overall process to assess progress that is sufficient and does articulate steps for continuous improvement.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant breaks the budget down into several small budgets to provide a overview of each area. The organization by project goals does provide a reasonable overview that seems doable. The budget seems high in personnel, travel and the use of consultants although for the scope of the project seems reasonable in light of the professional development, upgrades to infrastructure, and purchase of technology equipment for all schools in the consortia. It was a challenge to see an overall picture of the entire spectrum of costs. The applicant provides a description of the cost but lacks information in places. The grant outlines a process where by the grant funds everything the first year and then the districts budget for subsequent years..

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

10

9

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides information on how schools will participate in the costs of grant implementation, and support personnel and technology related costs over the grant period. The indicators and narrative explains how the project and project goals are to be sustained although some supporting information would add depth and clarity. The districts plan to build the technology infrastructure indicate a willingness to invest in the change that is needed for long-term sustainability.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has outlined a request to CPP- Population Desired Results- to offer programs and support systems to all students(for example, school safety both in and out of school). The development of partnerships are long-term as are the strategies to facilitate these efforts. The use of services that are currently in place such as the family resource centers found throughout the consortia will enable a streamlined approach to implementation and efficiently use in place resources.

The plan provides strategies that engage parents and the community to identify students most in need of services such as those in high poverty beginning with early childhood and PreK activities. Both academic and other indicators of success such as reading readiness data will be collected and evaluated over the consortia of schools. Plans to consistently and continuously evaluate are outlined with benchmark for success articulated. The plan considers all students in the consortia thus making an impact upon a larger scale. The applicant has outlined processes and strategies to assess needs, effectiveness of implementation, and evaluation strategies for ongoing adjustments and improvements.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The plan outlined in this proposal provides a consortia of schools with limited resources the ability to developed a high quality plan of action centered on students and student achievement through a personalized approach. The outline has merit on many aspects and on those aspects provides a strong and clear plan of what needs to be one and why. For example, a needs assessment has been conducted and the data used to inform this plan. It seems that the initial plans have a very articulate set of strategies to focus professional development in technology, to assist students develop interests, and have choice over the content and delivery. What seems to be lacking in places is a clear picture of the steps that lead from the needs assessment to implementation and more importantly, monitoring and evaluation. The plan aligns with the goals of RTTT-D overall. In aspects of the plan there are ambitious goals and the plan is high quality.

Total	210	180
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0668NJ-3 for Neptune Township School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant provides a comprehensive and coherent vision that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly articulates goals and related components; Builds on core educational assurance areas; and Supports the development and implementation of personalized learning environments in all of the participating schools. <p>Specific evidence of meeting the criteria for this section is reflected in the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to develop an infrastructure that will allow for implementation of a K-12 instructional continuum; to create a collaborative professional culture; to create a coherent and nimble system of assessment and data collection; and to build a college-going and career-focused culture rooted in a commitment to positive youth development. <p>The highest score for this section is awarded because the applicant fully and effectively addresses all related criteria.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's approach to implementing the reform proposal clearly supports high-quality LEA and school-level involvement as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 10 schools are listed and their students in four school districts meet eligibility requirements and will participate in this consortium project, the Coastal Monmouth Education Alliance (CMEA); The schools cover the range of K-5 through HS, and the student population and subgroups are shown by individual school. Demographic information specifies that of the 5,223 total participating students 60% are high-need and 55% are low-income. The 547 participating educators include teachers, principals, and other staff. <p>A high score was awarded for this section because the application effectively addressed the related criteria.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application clearly states intended changes in professional development that build capacity for developing personalized learning and using mobile technologies are linked to student outcomes in all participating schools. Applicant briefly states a theory of change embedded in the proposed project. Regarding scale up, all schools in participating districts are included in the proposed project. Project goals, activities, timelines, and credibility indicators were easy to identify in the application, but deliverables and responsible parties were hard to find or were not provided. 		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

- Student performance on summative assessments is provided by grade level and specific measures in language arts and math are organized by student subgroup.
- Completed tables include ambitious yet achievable annual goals for improving achievement gaps, graduation rates, college enrollment, and postsecondary degree attainment.
- The intent to improve student learning outcomes over six years and to reduce the achievement gap by 50% are reasonably ambitious and achievable if the proposed activities are successfully implemented.
- A rationale for the following are not included in the application:
 - Why the target graduation rates are not equal for all subgroups.
 - Why the goals for Hispanic college enrollment are not equal to that of white and African American students.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant identifies examples of student success over past 4 years (e.g., NMS in math and NTHS in math and LA/English) from district improvement efforts, but a clear record of improving student learning outcomes across participating districts is not provided. • Examples of school improvement efforts in low-achieving schools include adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and implementation of Everyday Mathematics, Response to Intervention (RtI), and Out of School Time (OST) programs. • Applicant clearly specifies that student performance data has been made available to educators, parents, and students; however student use of performance data is not addressed. 		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>Applicant clearly describes transparency in district investments, particularly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information regarding personnel salaries, including disaggregates by category of personnel (e. g, instructional staff and teachers) are available in school board agenda and minutes, website postings, and district reports; and • entire district budgets, including non-personnel expenditures, are discussed at Board meetings and community forums, and posted on the websites of participating districts. 		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant clearly describes at the state level a balance of control-autonomy and supporting conditions that include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ a system that links student data and teacher performance; ◦ state requirements for data-driven instruction and teacher evaluation balanced by local control of processes for meeting requirements; and ◦ a state monitoring system (CAPA) focused on schools in need of improvement. • Also at the state level, applicant specifies that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ New Jersey is a recipient of RTT funds and has adopted CCSS, which also applies to the applicant's proposed project. ◦ Student data systems would be helpful in generating diagnostic information for use in personalized learning environments (PLEs). ◦ New systems for monitoring and accountability are creating more autonomy for local schools, with the exception of school in improvement/restructuring requirements. 		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant clearly describes engagement of students, families, principals, and teachers in the development of the proposal, which occurred 		

primarily through surveys and meetings that tended to focus on technology and climate issues.

- Application includes letters of support from representatives of stakeholder groups that include parents, teachers, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, institutions of higher education as well as government officials from Congress, the Senate, and the General Assembly.
- The role of the teacher’s union in proposal development was not directly addressed, although the head of the teacher’s union signed the proposal.

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

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant provides evidence of needs/gaps that are addressed in the project’s high-quality implementation plan (including goals, activities, deliverables, persons responsible, and timelines) including but not limited: interest in JumpStart Academies; diversifying student makeup of JumpStart Academies and Dual Enrollment courses; increased technology; and expanding individualized learning to earlier grade levels.
- The focus of discussion in the needs analysis tends to be on one participating LEA (Neptune Township School District) rather than on all four participating districts.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Toward engaging and empowering all learners, applicant clearly describes the following planned actions:

- Efforts that will be made to help students understand why they are learning, particularly related to college and career goals.
- Mobile technologies will be a primary vehicle for engaging students to pursue goals linked to college- and career-ready standards
- Collaborative learning, cooperative learning, and field experiences are examples of how students will be engaged in deep learning experiences.
- Mobile technologies and student portfolios will be used to expand student experiences and outcomes linked to diverse cultures and perspectives.
- Service-learning projects are among the ways in which skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, and resilience will be developed.
- Through means such as mastery learning and student portfolios, students will be engaged in a personalized course sequence with accommodations for student choice and interest.
- High-quality instructional modules developed by teachers will be delivered with various methods and paces within courses that range from seat-based to virtual to blended formats, the selection of which will be decided between students and their guidance counselors.
- Timely updated student assessment data aligned with the district curriculum in all subjects will be analyzed and used by grade-level PLCs to create individualized learning plans for students.
- Instructional accommodations will be specified in IEPs for special education and ELL students.

The “Programming and Professional Development Action Plan” charts focus primarily on educators, with the explicit assumption that, through this training, teachers will be able help students monitor their own learning and take ownership of the process and the pace.

A high score is awarded in this section because the applicant clearly and effectively addresses the relevant criteria with the exceptions of (a) training support for students to help them self-regulate their own learning and (b) the role of parents.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The “Programming and Professional Development Action Plan” provided by the applicant summarizes project-related training by focus area, provider, participants, purpose, # of trainees, format, and time (when and duration).
- The applicant proposes that implementation of this action plan will result in increased capacity to provide personalized learning and teaching for all students in participating districts.
- Applicant states that individual schools will implement their own PD plan. While this approach surely has value in developing local ownership and credibility, joint PD with participating schools and districts was not addressed as a strategy for enhancing cost savings and quality of offerings.
- The “Project Activity Plan” while not highly detailed, includes the following information within each of the four project goals: activities,

deliverables, person(s) responsible, timeline, and implementation indicators. Through implementation of this general plan and broad goals, the applicant proposes that student progress in becoming college- and career- ready will be enhanced.

- With regard to teacher and principal evaluation, applicant specifies that: participating districts are in the process of developing new teacher and principal evaluation systems which will meet state requirements; the design and use of these new systems are intended to promote professional development and continuous improvement; and that, by implementing the new teacher and principal evaluation systems, participating districts in the project will be able to identify teachers and principals as effective and highly effective.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key strength of this application is that each LEA (in addition to the consortium of four districts) has a “table of organization” that provides a structure for necessary support and services to participating schools. • With regard to clearly stated policies and practices of participating districts, applicant specifies that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ For access to stakeholders, district policies are posted on their respective websites. ◦ Specific examples of scheduling school events and selecting new personnel provide evidence of providing schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy to make decisions. ◦ At the high school level, (NTSD) students are provided with multiple opportunities (times and ways) to demonstrate mastery rather than seat time in earning credit toward graduation. ◦ In order to provide learning resources and instructional practices that meet the needs of all students, (a) Policy 2423 provides for ELL students English language sessions and a bilingual program, and (b) Policy 2460 provides for special education students IEP and Least Restrictive Environments (LREs). • A shortcoming of this section is that the Neptune Township School District (NTSD), rather than all four participating districts, is drawn on as the primary example for citing LEA policies and practices that are supportive of personalized learning environments. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant clearly specifies that parents and students are provided support and access to content, tools, and other learning resources through strategies currently in place such as tutoring, workshops, Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), technology-related services, and access to data regarding student attendance, scheduling, and performance.</p> <p>More specifically,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and students have access to an online grading system. • Students have access to Study Island to practice skills and receive remediation exercises based on performance. • Teachers have access to data warehouses and assessment systems for diagnosis and providing interventions for improving student performance. • Power School and Genesis are interoperable data systems for district use in student attendance, scheduling, and grading. • Stakeholder access to budget data is not discussed. <p>A high score is awarded for this section based on commendable evidence that the LEA and school infrastructures effectively support personalized learning.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant comprehensively maps implementation indicators for 4 project goals and how they will be monitored, measured, and shared/reflected on both during and after the grant period for continuous improvement, including an impressive table that describes how the project goals and 		

indicators will be monitored, measured, and shared/reflected on.

- The addition of the reflection component to sharing is a positive feature for continuous improvement.
- While it is mentioned that the criteria for some measures are “to be developed,” the heavy emphasis is on quantitative measures (i.e., counts or percentages) rather than the qualities related to project goals. For example:
 1. measures for professional development focus on number of participants but did not include the level of participant engagement or results from particular PD strategies and programs for teacher activities linked to student learning;
 2. use of data systems focus on number of users but did not address issues such as how data are used or whether improvement results from data use; and
 3. student use of mobile devices focuses on technical aspects of student use but did not address issues such as how different technologies are regularly and deeply used by students in their learning or the extent to which students use mobile devices for games, music, and other activities that might be “off task.”

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant clearly identifies a variety of strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders, such as newsletters (electronic and print), “Technology Updates,” school newspaper, quarterly meetings of a consortium stakeholders group, and Information Feedback meetings.

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

5

4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- Application materials include evidence of goal-related measures in: completed charts for performance measures, descriptions of performance measure rationale, how specific measures are related to project goals, and how measures will be reviewed and improved over time.
- Applicant clearly specifies that, for the beginning of the proposed project, student proficiency status using state standardized tests will be used rather than student growth for academic achievement (a student growth measure is in the process of development at the state level).
- Applicant provides supporting evidence that the performance measures are achievable and reasonably ambitious for student achievement and for “effective” for “highly effective” teachers and principals. For example, for effective teacher, the baseline and target post-project objectives for “all participating students” are 34.8% and 43.6% respectively, compared to “economically disadvantaged” students (25.9%; 36.9%) and African American students (40.4%; 50.5%).
- The detailed charts omit the following student subgroups: ELL; students with disabilities; and Hispanic and "Other" racial/ethnic groups.
- Performance measures are not linked to an explicit theory of action.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant specifies that feedback surveys and quarterly meetings of the project Board of Directors will be used to effectively review evidence of RTT-D funded activities (such as professional development), to celebrate successes, and to make changes for improvement.
- Examples of project evaluation for productivity improvement include training, technology, and some other project components, but do not indicate attention to improvement in project organization, LEA policies/practices, or school infrastructure.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant clearly identifies two sources of project funds: RTTD grant (98% of total budget over 4 years) and LEA funds (2% of total budget).
- The project budget, which is constructed around the project goals, is clearly presented and an acceptable rationale is

provided for why it is both reasonable and sufficient regarding: personnel and office set-up; professional development; curriculum and program development; infrastructure (sub-budgets for 10 buildings); hardware and software (10 buildings).

- One-time investments and ongoing operational costs are clearly identified in the project budget, and strategies for the sustainability of PLEs after the grant period are clearly addressed.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	8
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant describes the proposed project as aligned with priorities and initiatives of the New Jersey Department of Education while focusing on the needs of participating districts and the priority areas of grant objectives.
- According to the project applicant:
 - participating districts will share the recurring costs of 4 grant-funded **personnel** (grant facilitator, 2 technicians, and data facilitator) after the grant is completed.
 - **technology-related** costs will be gradually absorbed into district budgets over the grant period by 0% Year 1, 25% Year 2, 50% Year 3, 75% Year 4, and 100% Year 5 (post-grant).
 - **professional development** is considered to be an ongoing cost of the participating districts, and the offerings post-grant period will be focused on the most current needs for PD in the participating districts.
- No detailed post-grant budget is actually provided by the applicant, specific technology-related costs for the post-grant period are not discussed in any detail, and linkages of the budget to a high-quality plan for sustainability are not fully addressed.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant provides a coherent description of sustainable partnerships with 41 local organizations and the private sector to address a broad range of student needs through services before, during, and after school hours. These partnerships support PLEs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- Population-level desired results and related performance measures are clearly identified by the applicant focus on integrated services for student safety/security, progress toward college and career, reductions in substance abuse, increases in student reading level, and increases in modules (for career and service-learning) completed by students.
- Six performance measures, designed within the project's overall performance measures, are clearly identified with target results by population group and project year (including post-grant year),
- Partnership activities are coherently described for tracking indicators of the performance measures and using the data to improve results over time (for students overall and for student subgroups)
- All schools and students in the participating districts are included in the project, so scale-up with the consortium is not an issue.
- Applicant provides a concise table that clearly specifies desired results, partnerships/programs, and services provided that address integratively the social, emotional, behavioral, health, and academic needs of students.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Applicant provides sufficient evidence that Absolute Priority 1 is met, that is, how it will create learning environments that:

- are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators;

- are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements;
- accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student;
- increase the effectiveness of educators;
- expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and
- increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	185
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