



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1287CT-1 for Norwalk Public Schools

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 comprehensive and clear reform vision that is directly tied to the core educational assurance areas. The district has also provided unique assurances that all revenue streams will be used to support the vision outlined in the application.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has presents adequate information describing the selection of participants and schools. This description includes a systematic and reasonable approach to implementing and scaling up the program to ultimately included all students in the district (11,055). All schools in the district are identified and the participation rate of high-need students is clearly defined and articulated by the applicant.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application includes a well articulated and clear plan to scale up the program and support district wide change. Strengthening this plan is the district's intent to channel all funding sources to support the goals of the project and the ambitious scope of student impact articulated.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the district presents achievable annual goals, the level of ambition is lacking. While sub-group achievement goals increase overall scores and sub-group performance indices (SPI) are anticipated to remain static throughout the grant period or show increases of 3% or less.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the district cites specific programs as demonstrating evidence of success that can be leveraged to continue to improve student outcomes, specific data regarding how the initiatives improved outcomes is not always provided.</p> <p>The district also includes evidence that teachers are supported by the technology to inform instruction (Mobi and formative assessments) but there is no evidence provided that supports performance data being made available to students and parents in a way that would improve participation, instruction and services.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The district provides some evidence that budget practices and presentations are made available to the public through website postings, and video presentations. The district does not fully meet the criterion due to the high level of reliance on web based publications given the high percentage of low income families (47%) who would potentially not have access to such information.		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The district provides adequate evidence that it has the autonomy to implement personalized learning environments. The district cites specific state legislation that supports and encourages districts and high schools to personalize learning in public education.		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: The district provided evidence to support that parents, students and school officials were actively engaged and included in the development of the proposal. This engagement and involvement included the creation of Race To The Top teams that included a variety of stakeholders in the development process. The district also included written documentation from community leaders that demonstrates support for the proposal. The district does not provide evidence that either collective bargaining representation or at least 70% of teachers supported the proposal which significantly weakens the response for this criterion.		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: The district has identified the current status in implementation and the strengths and challenges that it faces while initiating personalization in learning for students. A plan has been developed and articulated within the application for continued needs and gap analysis.		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: The district has a comprehensive plan to engage students in meaningful learning through four specific goals with strategies developed for each goal. Well represented within the strategies are teacher support, development and increased access to data for parents, students and educators. While the district does reference personalized learning sequences no specific information was given that would support that the district has a plan available to support such personalization.		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The district demonstrates evidence of having a high-quality plan for teaching and leading through the articulation of a coaching model of administrative walkthroughs and observations, development of a professional development plan that is relevant and meaningful to teachers, and the pilot of a new evaluation system (SEED). The plan also speaks directly to improving student access to effective teachers and principals in low-performing and turnaround schools though the plan speaks to assigning teachers to high need students rather than improving teacher outcomes and scaling up access for all students.		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	6
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has provided minimal evidence that the plan will be supported through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. While the district states that school leadership teams have input with regard to the development of schedules and staffing, this assertion is made through a limited statement with no corresponding evidence. The district also states that students are given the opportunity to earn credit based on mastery rather than seat time through the administration of common formative assessments (CFA) though it does not indicate how often these CFA's are administered or how a student would move forward once they have achieved mastery. Similar limited responses are given with regard to access for English Language Learners and Special Education students.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provides minimal evidence of meeting this criterion through district past practice of supporting and making decisions through input gained from workgroups of relevant stakeholders. The district also speaks to technical support but does not specifically describe how this support is provided to parents, students and others beyond that statement. The district also identifies that it has a plan to increase access to data for parents and students through the implementation of a new data system within the district. Interoperability of systems is an area that will be addressed in the coming months.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district meets this criterion through the articulation of strategies to provide feedback regarding progress towards project goals. The plan is clear in its approach to use existing data teams to support and monitor the plan. The district does not specifically state how it will share information with the public or others outside of these data teams beyond stating that data reports will be created.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district outlines a flow of communication that makes the District Improvement Planning Team the hub of activity and communication within the district. While it is clear how existing stakeholders will inform and be informed about the plan, there is no evidence with regard to communication of potential stakeholders or members of the general public.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district provides adequate evidence that there was a rationale for selecting performance measures, but the measures themselves are sparse and lack detail beyond restating the criteria provided in the grant application. Performance measures are overall achievable but are inconsistent in terms of ambition with some measures resulting in static or low increases (<5%) over the span of the grant period.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district has a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTT-D funded activities through an evaluation process that will utilize a cost benefit analysis model applied by an independent evaluator. Evaluator tasks are outlined and are generally balanced with regard to internal/external stakeholders and designed to directly evaluate the desired outcomes in comparison to the anticipated benefit for each age group or stakeholder group.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The district presents a substantial request for funds that is made somewhat reasonable when supported by an in kind match through various revenue sources within and outside of the district. Funding is targeted disproportionately towards human resources with an emphasis on hiring teacher leaders and a program administrator which speaks to difficulty with sustaining the staffing beyond the grant period. Non-recurring expenditures are clearly identified and explanations for positions are given though rationale is not always clear. The plan itself consists of continuing many initiatives that are already in place and as such does not fully justify a \$29,556,070.00 request.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The district does not provide evidence of a high quality plan for sustainability of project goals after grant funding has been exhausted. While the district is willing to provide matching funds, the district will still experience a \$29,000,000.00 shortfall at the end of the grant most likely causing positions created by the grant to be cut. Significant funding within the grant is targeted to creating and supporting these new positions and the loss of them would significantly reduce the likelihood that the project goals would continue after 2017.		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The district meets the Competitive Priority through a description of existing partnerships with several community partners to support children in at-risk subgroups. Thorough population level desired results are provided and include specific strategies to meet goals and objectives. These performance measures are achievable and generally ambitious with increases in performance of over 6%.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The district has met Absolute Priority 1. The district articulates a clear vision and plan for improving student outcomes and increasing college readiness. The district also provides for the decrease in achievement gaps for sub-groups through its performance measures and learning goals.		

Total	210	145
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Race to the Top - District



Technical Review Form

Application #1287CT-2 for Norwalk Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that is clearly grounded in the four core educational assurance areas. The applicant provides evidence under each of the educational assurance areas to explain the district's approach to accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity. For example, the applicant clearly links the importance of several initiatives in developing a cohesive birth to 12th grade system of curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development. First, the applicant describes the importance of the adopted Common Core State Standards in establishing a set of consistent, high quality K-12 academic benchmarks. Second, the applicant provides a clear explanation for the importance of instruction, a student response system that will help teachers to have just-in-time, valid and reliable assessment to inform instruction. Third, applicant highlights how the district will use the recently developed Connecticut Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plan to monitor and assess teacher and principal effectiveness and to ensure the equitable dissemination of highly effective teachers and principals throughout the LEA. Finally, the applicant provides a clear explanation of how the district's prior work with low achieving schools and successes with personalized learning pilots will become a comprehensive plan for integrating personalized learning environments into all the district's schools.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a concise process for the selection of all schools within the district for implementation of its reform proposal. The applicant includes a list of the 19 participating schools and indicates that over the lifetime of the grant all initiatives will reach the 11,055 students enrolled in the district, including 47.40% of low income families. The applicant also provides a chart with a breakdown of high need students who scored at Level 1 (basic) and 2 (below basic) on the state mastery tests. The applicant highlights that data from the School Performance Index will be used to target the schools with most needs for first year of implementation, schools with moderate needs in year three and schools with the least needs will be phased in during year three. According to the applicant, collectively all of the schools meet the competition eligibility requirements.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a clear, straight forward explanation of how the theory of change provides the foundation for improving student learning outcomes for students in the district. In addition, the applicant provides a detailed, high quality goal plan to describe how the reforms will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform. For example, the applicant's plan provides for the phasing in of different levels of the proposal over the life of the grant before full implementation over all schools takes place in year three or four. For example, the goal of providing tools and resources for teachers and students to personalize the learning environment includes a year 1, 2, and 3 breakdown that culminates in fully wireless access points in each of the 19 schools in the district by year 3.</p> <p>The four overarching goals are broken down by goal, strategies, activities, timeline, deliverables, and person(s) responsible. The chart also provides a timeline that is subdivided by yearly strategies. The yearly breakdown allows for specific details and provides a good picture of overall implementation of meaningful reform by year four.</p> <p>Finally, the applicant discusses how all entitlement resources in the district such as Titles I, IIA, and II, along with the funding from a number of local foundations will be aligned to ensure that all reform initiatives are based on the same conceptual framework as this proposal. Having a unified focus for deploying reform initiatives is needed to ensure the success of the</p>		

reform effort.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides extensive data for each participating school in a variety of areas including performance on summative state assessments with performance targets/annual measurable objectives. Performance targets vary by school and appear ambitious yet achievable annual goals.

In a similar vein, graduation rate projections are provided using both the traditional and extended graduation rate. For one high school—Brien McMahan-- the extended rate does have all subgroups graduating 90% of subgroup members by the end of the granting period; this makes the target more challenging for McMahan, but the increased subgroup rate presents a better affirmation of the robust nature of the reforms across subgroups than the extended graduation rate projection for Briggs High School where no subgroup is projected to have greater than a 73.4% graduation rate. Having a extended graduation rate where almost 26% of students don't graduate does not appear ambitious.

The applicant also has ambitious yet achievable college enrollment projections with both high schools projecting over a 90% rate of enrollment in 2 or 4 year colleges at the end of the grant period.

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	15

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides sufficient evidence to support a clear track record of success over the past four years in increasing equity in learning and teaching. The applicant provides several examples from the last two years such as the success in the Birth to 3 Home Visitation Model, providing access to primary health care and development services. According to the applicant, a local foundation has agreed to double the parent and therapeutic teams available for the initiative based on the success of this model.

A second initiative highlighted by the applicant is the Building a Collaborate Culture, a three-year grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to build collaborative culture in a student centered environment. This initiative is targeted to the comprehensive high schools and the alternative high school. The applicant makes a good case that this initiative has helped the high schools begin to use formative assessment, implement a student success planning system, and implement a graduation capstone experience. All of these strategies are research-based reforms to improve student achieve at the high school level.

The applicant also discusses the success the district has experienced over the last 10 years using the SIOP (Sheltered Observation Protocol) Model Implementation. The applicant used the evidence provided by SIOP participation to focus on improvement efforts for the district's highest need/lowest scoring elementary schools. According to the applicant these targeted schools increased the percent of students scoring at proficiency from 58.2% in 2009 to 71.1% in 2011. High schools implementing the SIOP model, had an impressive 11% increase in grade point averages from 2010 to 2011 and a 21% in attendance over the same period.

Finally, the applicant notes the implementation of such initiatives as the common formative assessments (CFA) and Naviance Succeed to support students, families, and school staff to promote student achievement and post-secondary success.

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

The applicant provides evidence of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. According to the applicant, all financial information including actual personnel salaries of all school-level instructional staff and non-personnel expenditures at the school level is updated annually and posted on the district's website. An annual budget book is also printed and distributed and posted on the district's website. The applicant also notes that focus group meetings are held throughout the year to get feedback on budget preparation.

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

The applicant provides demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under various state requirements to implement a personalized learning environment as described in this proposal. For example, the applicant notes the 2007 Connecticut General Assembly's enactment of accountability legislation that gives authority to SBE and Commissioner of Education to intervene in low achieving schools and districts. In addition, the applicant also describes how the 2010 SBE began the reform process in the state's secondary schools by giving students additional supports, new experiences and more rigorous graduation requirements to establish a context for districts to implement personalized learning environments. Additional measures described by the applicant help to demonstrate that the district has sufficient autonomy such as the adoption of national academic standards, Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as well as the Connecticut Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).

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

10

8

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence of stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal. According to the applicant, the development of the proposal was based on the District and School Improvement Plans, the district's Technology Plan and the CCSS Transition Plan. A RRT District Task Force, comprised of a variety of educator and community members helped to develop the proposal. The applicant was right on target about the importance of using existing documents such as school improvement plans and technology plans to help ensure alignment of the proposal with existing goals and objectives within the district.

In addition to letters of support and the signature of the local teachers' association, the applicant also describes an extensive feedback loop including circulation of drafts to a variety of stakeholders, conference call discussions among stakeholders. The letters of support are from a broad spectrum of community, business and educational leaders. There is not sufficient evidence provided to determine the level of overall teacher support for the proposal.

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

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a two-tiered high quality plan for the analysis of the district's current status. First, the applicant provides compelling evidence of a strong need for reform within the district such as less than half of the 11th grade class taking the PSAT in 2009, a decline in SAT scores to below the Connecticut and the All-Public Schools average. The applicant also provides evidence of the socioeconomic and financial challenges facing the district such as the free and reduced lunch poverty measure of families with children has doubled from 19.31% in 2002 to 43.65% as of Oct. 1, 2010. The applicant also notes the total minority population of the school system is now 60%, with 37.7% coming from homes where English is not the primary language. Against this backdrop, the applicant provides a detailed, high quality Goal Plan that provides details on activities and timelines, and designated persons or groups of persons who will be responsible for the achieve of the four goals described in the proposal. The applicant does a good job of describing goals that are designed to satisfy needs or close gaps in the districts efforts to create personalized learning environments for all students.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a high quality plan to improve learning by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career- ready. For example, the applicant describes an approach around four well rounded goals that include focusing on building and sustaining internal capacity to personalize environments, providing tools and resources to teachers and students, garnering the power of the district's community resources, and strengthening the district's Wrap-Around Services. Under each of these goals, the applicant provides clearly described strategies and activities that are critical to the successful implementation of the goal. Goal #2, for instance, deals with providing tools and resources to teachers and students, a strategy for accomplishing the goal using 21st century technology tools to personalize learning such as using data for collective projects that develop multi-user skills such as goal setting, teamwork, critical thinking, communication, and creativity and problem solving.

Another goal, garnering the power of the district's community resources, explores strategies and activities to extend the support and vision for personalizing the learning environment beyond the classroom. For example, the applicant describes working with a private foundation to complete the wiki interface of *AfterSchool & Beyond*, an interactive database. According to the applicant, the database will allow students to post their best work, and educators could post homework, group work, etc.

Finally, the applicant also highlights research-based reading and mathematics intervention strategies that provide support for high-need secondary students such as Read 180 and Intensified Algebra in the middle schools. Naviance Succeed, a web-based guidance and career system, is a powerful innovation described by the applicant as providing support and guidance to students, families and school staff to promote student achievement.

The applicant describes many innovative educator and student aids, but not enough information is provided regarding on-going training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes an approach to teaching and leading that provides for all participating educators to engage in a variety of training focused on the proposal's goal of building and sustaining the district's capacity to personalize the learning environment through the implementation of the CCSS/A. The applicant also provides a list of research-based characteristics of the professional development model that ensures professional development is relevant, effective and job-embedded.

The applicant provides a high quality Goal Plan that provides details on activities, strategies, timelines, and designated persons or groups of persons who will be responsible for achieving the four goals described in the proposal. Included in the goal chart are professional development activities that support educators' capacity to support personalized learning environments such as Training Teacher Leader Teams for implementing the CCSS/A.

One especially insightful strategy is described by the applicant as building the capacity of a cadre of educators within the school. The applicant defines the #1 priority of the district as having a "school of coaches"; these teacher leader teams will meet weekly at the beginning of the grant cycle.

In addition, the applicant describes the importance of the new teacher/administrator evaluation system (SEED) model in providing information on teacher/administrator performance that can inform student learning. The applicant describes the options of schools at the end of the 2013 pilot. The SEED model requires both the teacher and administrator plans to use 45% of Student Growth and Development as a basis for evaluation in addition to including peer or parent feedback for teachers and stakeholder feedback for administration.

Finally, the applicant provides a detailed plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. The plan outlined by the applicant is aligned with the district's new Accountability Model and links the definition of highly effective to teachers and principals in schools that achieve the "excelling" target. The applicant describes a plan that requires the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals to increase based on projected annual performance measures dictated by the State Accountability System.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence that the central office has been organized to provide support and service to all participating schools through the functions of curriculum and instruction, pupil personal services, and human resources and finance departments.

According to the applicant, school level administrators create their own individual school schedule, make personnel decisions and develop staffing models for their own schools with guidance from the Central Office and Bd. of Ed. The applicant does not indicate the level of teacher and other stakeholder input into these decisions.

Students are described as being able to earn credit by demonstrating mastery on regularly administered classroom, school, district, and state benchmark assessments. The only method that the applicant describes for student to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways is through Common Formative Assessments (CFAs). The

applicant indicates these data are analyzed by content area by data teams using DuFours' Professional Learning Community (PLC) Model. The applicant is silent about how the analysis of data will allow students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery.

Finally, the applicant indicates that the co-teaching model is used to ensure that learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable and fully accessible to all students including students with disabilities and ELL.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes the LEA and school infrastructure that supports personalized learning by ensuring equitable representatives from a cross section of stakeholders on every decision-making committee such as District Improvement Teams, Budget committees and District Data Teams. The applicant also describes both District and school-based staff and community groups who provide technical, peer, and online technical support for students and families.

However, the applicant does not sufficiently describe how the district will provide access to content, tools, and other resources during out-of-school time. The applicant also does not adequately describe how parents and students will export their information in an open data format.

Finally, the applicant notes that the Nariance Succeed college and career system has been expanded to provide parent access. The district's website is also accessible from anywhere at any time and provides a variety of learning tools for students and parents' use.

Finally, the applicant describes a clear and achievable plan for ensuring interoperability of its data systems. According to the applicant the development of the LinkIt data warehouse will integrate all data from a variety of systems. The system will also integrate all college and career ready data from Naviance Succeed and the College Board.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant provides evidence of a level of continuous improvement process based on the district's involvement since 2001 with the CT State Department's District Improvement Planning process. Grounding the proposal's initiatives in the existing District and School Improvement Planning Process provides additional stability for the proposal and alleviates the creation of an additional evaluative process. The applicant clearly describes how the proposal's initiatives will become a regular agenda item at existing meetings of the District-Data Driven Decision Making Teams.</p> <p>The applicant does not adequately describe how information will be measured and publically shared. The applicant's description relies on existing structures within the district, but does provide sufficient information of how general public will be informed about the quality of the RTT-D activities.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant describes some strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders to foster continuous improvement of the proposal. In addition to a narrative, the applicant also provides a flow chart mapping the nature of information communicated from various external and internal groups. Yet, the applicant does not provide sufficient information regarding a feedback loop for information from the general public. The focus of the applicant's description appears to be overly focused on providing information to stakeholders, not receiving information.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has selected ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the K-12 educational continuum since the proposal covers the K-12 grade span. The applicant provides a clear, credible rationale for the selection of the performance measures that is aligned with the theory of action for the proposal: reading by 3rd grade, algebra-ready by 8th grade, and</p>		

college/care-ready by 12th grade.

The applicant describes how the measures will be supported with on-going school and district common formative assessments to provide formative leading information. The applicant also outlines a process for modifying the use of this formative assessment data to ensure they are predictive of state outcomes. The data reviewed from the performance measures is also used to determine how each school is characterized based on priority of need. The applicant describes a very detailed process of how the measures will be used and modified to drive student achievement.

Finally, the applicant's organization of the performance measures was quite helpful in evaluating the ambitious and achievable nature of the measure. For example, the applicant provides a clear, easy to read chart organized by grade span; this chart provides a summary of performance measure projected gains.

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

The applicant describes a robust plan for evaluating the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities that includes hiring an independent evaluator to develop a SROI analysis for the proposal. The applicant outlines a detailed scope of work for the evaluator that includes analyzing and measuring the major strategies and activities proposed by the proposal to include the impact of funding on student outcomes, relationship between RTT and student outcomes in low-performing schools; and efficacy of teacher training. The scope of work includes an explanation of how the applicant's theory of change will be used to used to develop a relationship between input and outputs for each of the four major projects described in the proposal.

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 provides a budget narrative with supporting tables that appears to be reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal's four distinct projects. The applicant divides the budget into the four projects and clearly identifies the budget totals, the matching funds for each project, as well as the one-time investments.

A thoughtful and reasonable rationale is provided for each of the four projects. Under each project, the applicant describes any other funding sources that will be used to support aspects of the project. For example, under project 4 "Strengthening Wrap Around Services", the applicant provides the total budget request for the project, but also discusses matching funds and identifies the source of the matching funds whether, state, federal or private foundation. In addition, the applicant aligns funding source to a specific component of the project. The Grossman Family Foundation, for instance, will provide \$3,500,000 over the course of the granting cycle to support Birth to 8 years Early Literacy and Family Support.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant notes that the district will examine current spending priorities and propose a plan for sustainability. According to the applicant, the to-be-developed sustainability process will use the district's continuous improvement program, in conjunction with the district and school improvement planning process. In addition, the applicant notes that during the first 2 years of the grant, the district will continuously review opportunities to support the program by repurposing existing state and federal funding. Therefore, the applicant provides some general guidelines be used to develop a sustainability process, but sufficient evidence is not provided to determine the overall effectiveness of a high-quality plan to sustain the project's goals. The goals, activities and strategies, timelines and people to be responsible for the sustainability effort are not included.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a clear and concise proposal to expand on an existing partnership between the district and several community organizations including the City of Norwalk, the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, and the Norwalk Children's Foundation. The partnership is named Norwalk Early Childhood Family Action Plan (NECC). Since the partnership is ongoing, the applicant did a good job of blending information regarding the previous accomplishments of the partnership with descriptions of how the continued partnership will expand. The partnership's history attests to the efficacy of the partnership and the support provided for Absolute Priority I.

The applicant also describes 10 desired results for the targeted population that impact both educational and family and community support. The desired results and strategies are reasonable and achievable and align nicely with the overarching goals of the proposal. For example, one desired result is to provide 40 students with access to community college classes through a partnership with Norwalk Community College. This desired result and strategies support the proposal's goal of increasing college enrollment rates.

Since the proposal is the expansion of an existing partnership, the applicant provides information on how the partnership already has a mechanism in place to track the indicators. According to the applicant, these existing processes will be built on to include identifying the needs and assets of the community and tracking the indicators in order to improve results and expand the professional capacity of educators. According to the applicant, these existing mechanisms will also be used to routinely access the progress of the partnership and to resolve challenges and problems.

Finally, the applicant describes a process that engages parents and families of the participating students. For example, according to the applicant, the primary goal of the Carver program is to engage the parents and families in student learning. Consequently, parents are interviewed prior to their children entering the program, and are involved as partners in planning and implementing the community learning center's programs.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses how the proposal will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments designed to improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, etc. The applicant provides a high quality plan including goals, activities, strategies, timeline and identification of responsible people to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student. The cornerstone of the applicant's proposal is a theory of action that focuses initiatives and resources needed to personalize education on reading on grade level by 3rd grade, algebra-ready by 8th grade, and college and career ready by 12th grade.

Total	210	186
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1287CT-3 for Norwalk Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a vision for the project that builds on prior efforts in four core educational assurance areas. The applicant includes a theory of action and a graphical representation that depicts district efforts toward three goals. The applicant mentions that students will be provided the opportunity to accelerate learning and move through their education at their own pace, however, details regarding support for personalized student learning based on student academic interests are limited.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant states that the process used to select schools to participate in the project was based on need determined by scores on the School Performance Index. It is unclear if schools were selected based on grant eligibility requirements.</p> <p>(b) A list of 19 schools is provided and includes 12 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools.</p> <p>(c) The applicant reports that the total number of participating students is 11,055 and the percent of participating students from low-income families is reported as 47.40%. However, the applicant does not report the number of participating students from low-income families. The applicant provides a table that describes the number of participating students who are high-need students (301), and includes the number of participating educators (1,204).</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes a plan for reform that includes a theory of change that targets three area; reading pm grade level by 3rd grade, algebra-readiness by 8th grade, and college and career readiness by 12th grade. The plan involves coordinating all district entitlement resources to support this program, and offering educational programs at community learning centers, in order to close achievement gaps across the Birth to 12th grade continuum. The applicant mentions working with community partners who will provide extended learning opportunities, early college experiences, and social and emotional services. However, strategies to scale up meaningful reform efforts that support change beyond the participating schools are limited.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable annual goals for performance on summative assessments for each elementary, middle and high school involved in the project.</p> <p>(b) The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable annual goals for decreasing achievement gaps at each elementary, middle and high school involved in the project.</p> <p>(c) The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable annual goals for graduation rates each high school involved in the project.</p> <p>(d) The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable annual goals for college enrollment rates involved in the project.</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	7
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant describes examples of success in improving student learning outcomes in several areas and includes a description of a math program, a home-visitation program, and a district improvement plan that has shown positive</p>		

gains. For example, during the last three years, the percent of students scoring at the proficiency level in reading and mathematics has increased. However, specifics that clearly demonstrate a record of success in the past four years in regard to high school graduation rates and college enrollment are not described.

(b) The applicant mentions successful reforms in one low-performing school that brought up proficiency rates from 58.2% in 2009 to 71.1% in 2011. However, clear evidence of a compelling track record of success in the past four years is not provided.

(c) The applicant describes the implementation of a technology reform effort that includes Mobis, clickers, and interactive white boards that provide formative assessment data to teachers in real time, in order to meet students' needs. However, the applicant does not articulate if performance data has been made available to students and parents.

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

5

2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant states that all financial information, including actual personnel salaries of all school-level instructional staff and non-personnel is updated annually, while all budget proceedings and reports are posted on the district website. However, details regarding how actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's classification used in the F-33 survey of local government finances are not provided.

(b) Details regarding how the applicant makes information about actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only are not clearly specified.

(c) Details regarding how the applicant makes information about actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only are not provided.

(d) Details regarding how the applicant makes information about actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level are not provided.

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

10

8

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes the State context for implementation of the project and mentions a timeline for implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), supported by resources provided on the State website. Details include information on legislation that passed in 2010, that set the stage for all secondary schools to implement personalized learning environments. In addition, the application mentions that the State Longitudinal Data Base has been completed, along with resource guides for districts to implement CCSS in their schools. Details regarding ten core transformation strategies that were developed by the Superintendent's Association as action-oriented recommendations are also described. The applicant states that some of these strategies have been included in legislation, but does not identify those that reference personalized learning environments. It is unclear how the State context effects elementary and middle schools.

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

10

7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant states that a Race to the Top District Task Force, consisting of district, school and community representatives utilized the work of the District and School Improvement Teams to develop this proposal. These improvement teams consisted of teachers, administrators, union leadership and parents/community representatives from across the district. Other resources included support from a CCSS Transition Team, and Curriculum Office staff, who worked together on budgets. The applicant states that feedback was obtained from the Board of Education and the local teachers' union, as well as the State Department of Education, the Mayor's Office, and other agencies through conference calls, and a review of the final version of the proposal. Evidence of revisions made to the proposal following feedback from the State Board of Education is included, as is a letter of support. The applicant includes additional letters supporting the proposal from two vendors, an early childhood council, an education foundation and a local organization that works towards equity in education. The applicant mentions that a draft of the proposal was sent to the local federation of teachers and provides a signature in the assurances from the local teachers' union, however details regarding the degree of collective bargaining representation and direct engagement in the development of the proposal are not specified. It is unclear if teachers and members of the teachers union support the proposal.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes the current status of student achievement in the district in regard to a high percentage of graduating seniors (80%) who enroll in community college needing remediation. Descriptive data is provided regarding poverty rates, the minority population rates, and the percent of students from homes where English is not the primary language. However, specific information on the status of needs and gaps regarding student achievement among subgroups, for elementary, middle and high school students is not provided. Four goals for addressing gaps, along with the assumptions used to develop these goals are listed and include building capacity to personalize the learning environment through the implementation of the Common Core Standards and Assessments. Goal Plans for each goal are also provided in the appendix, and include activities, timelines, and persons responsible for achievement of each goal.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant describes a vision for personalizing the learning environment that includes completing a wiki interface called After School & Beyond for an interactive database that will allow students to collaborate and showcase their best work, while providing a forum for educators to share best practices, post classroom goals, and update schedules and lessons from a Mobil devise. Technology that supports personalized learning, such as clickers, Mobis, and interactive white boards are also mentioned to support critical thinking, and communication. The implementation of a guidance system called Narviance, that is designed to help teachers and parents design individualized learning plans that support advancement to college and career readiness is also described, along with College Board resources that provide personalized data to inform progress toward meeting college and career standards. A description of how the district plans to provide resources for students to collaborate with community volunteer professionals on solve real-world problems is mentioned, along with specifics about the implementation of a high-quality Common Core Standards aligned reading program and a cutting edge Algebra initiative. This program utilizes interactive animations of key concepts and problem solving, formative assessment, embedded test preparation, professional development and reports on student progress. The applicant articulates strategies for helping students stay on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements, such as summer academies, Family Resource Centers, and participation in a community leadership group that focuses on PreK and early education, summer activities for students at all levels in regard to summer school and summer jobs, and student behavior/academic difficulties, with special attention to gangs and violence. The applicant provides a plan to develop leadership teams with content expertise and experience with integrating technology tools into curriculum, instruction and assessment, in order to meet the goals of the project. However, details regarding accommodations for high-need students are limited.

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

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant provides a well thought out plan for professional development that includes training all administrators analyzing learning , curriculum planning, supporting teacher teams in the use of formative performance assessments, using rubrics for teacher evaluation, and building expertise in data-driven decision making. For example, the applicant clearly describes a strategy that involves having RTT Teacher Leaders work with teachers to support them in analyzing data, differentiating instruction, and determining progress.

(b) The applicant mentions a plan to support training teachers in analyzing data, however, it is unclear how staff will develop skills in utilizing some of the technology tools and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements. For example, it is unclear how Teacher Leader Teams will receive training in Narviance, College Board resources, and the Afterschool & Beyond interactive database. Interventions such as READ 180 and Intensified Algebra are mentioned in regard to providing teachers with actionable information and digital resources to meet student needs and prepare them for success.

(c) The applicant provides a well described plan for training all teachers and leaders in the use of real-time data, coaching skills, and processes and procedures for utilizing personalized learning environments. A description of a teacher evaluation pilot is included, that will provide feedback for refining the new educator evaluation system, in order to implement a new system in 2013-14. However, it is unclear how teachers and leaders will be trained on the components of this new model.

(d) The applicant mentions a plan for increasing the number of student who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, that is aligned with the State's new Accountability Model. However, specifics on how this will be accomplished are limited.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants describes six policies and practices that are in place to facilitate personalized learning. For example, the applicant states that the central office is organized to provide support and services to all participating schools, through the functions of Curriculum and Instruction, Pupil Personnel Services, Human Resources and Finance Departments, while school-based administrators create their own school schedules, and school-level budgets for approval by the Governing Board. The applicant states that credit is earned through demonstrated mastery on benchmark assessments that are administered multiple times. Results are analyzed by data teams working in Professional Learning Communities. A description of a co-teaching model that includes instruction aides is mentioned in regard to providing individualized attention special education and English learner inclusion. However, details regarding comprehensive policies specific to providing a personalized learning environment for every student at every grade are limited.

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

- (a) The applicant describes a plan to develop an internal data warehouse which will eventually provide access to data for parents and families, and states that work is underway to provide this for the Naviance Succeed system. However, it is unclear how participating students, parents, and educators will access some of the learning resources both in and out of school.
- (b) The applicant states that the needs of students, parents, educators and stakeholders will be addressed through the District Improvement Team and other committees, however details regarding how it will ensure these project participant will obtain appropriate levels of technical support for implementing project activities are not specified.
- (c) The applicant does not address how it will use information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems.
- (d) The applicant mentions that it is in process of ensuring interoperability of its data systems so that the LinkIT data warehouse will integrate all college and career ready data from the Naviance Succeed and College Board systems. There is also a plan to include birth to five year-old student and family information. However, details regarding when this will be available are not provided.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a plan for continuous improvement that includes incorporating the monitoring of RTT activities into the existing District Improvement plan, Technology Plan and Common Core Transition Plan. Strategies for regular feedback on progress toward goals include having the RTT Team present updates at school-based meetings, School Improvement Planning meetings, and monthly Technology Planning Team meetings. There is also a plan to have information about RTT initiatives presented at Early Childhood Council meetings, at a community organization's monthly meeting, and at Board of Education meetings. However, details regarding how information such as feedback from teachers and students will be captured and reported, in order to address gaps and make on-going corrections. For example, it is unclear how the applicant plans to monitor and measure professional development activities, in order to make on-going corrections. It is also unclear how existing data teams will share information with stakeholders.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a communication plan that includes a graphic with connections between internal and external stakeholders. However, details regarding strategies for developing ongoing communication and engagement are limited. For example, it is unclear how the applicant will gather input from external stakeholders in order to improve the project.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a description of performance goals that are based on the State Accountability System, a Kindergarten</p>		

Readiness Entrance Inventory, and a new teacher performance evaluation system. Tables depicting ambitious yet achievable goals, baseline data and reasonable targets for each year of the grant are provided. The applicant states that assessment data, graduation rates, and Narviance data to determine college and career-readiness by the end of 12th grade. It is unclear how the applicant plans to review and improve these measures over time. It is also unclear how some data will be analyzed and reported for data driven decision making about success or areas of concern.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant plans to hire a highly qualified evaluator to measure the impact of the project on students and families. This evaluation will focus on capacity building, tools and resources, community resources and strengthening wrap around services. Details regarding the scope of work for the evaluator are provided and include evaluating school climate, measuring graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and the number of student enrolled in remedial college courses. The applicant mentions measuring the efficacy of teacher trainings through the use of surveys and competency based testing. The evaluation plan is sound, and includes a cost benefits analysis and the collection of survey data, in order to improve the project.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant provides a description of all funds that will support the project and includes \$28,003,280.00 in matching fund, as well as \$29,556,070.00 federal grant funds.

(b) The applicant provides a budget narrative for each of the four proposed projects that includes specifics about each expenditure. For example, the applicant plans on spending \$4,716,000.00 in funding to support capacity building and professional development and provides the number and cost of teachers to be hired, the cost of an administrator, and the cost of fringe benefits for each year of the grant. Matching funds in the amount of \$1,419,256.00 will support this effort, along with \$349,814 per year from Title IIA funds and \$20,000.00 from a GE Capital Grant. Costs are reasonable and sufficient to support the project.

(c) The applicant provides a rationale for expenditures in four key areas, including professional development, providing tools and resources, community resources, and strengthening Wrap Around Services. External resources that support the project are mentioned and include examples such as a Capital Improvement Program that will fund new wireless access points and \$3,500,00 in support from the Grossman Family Foundation, that will support early literacy. The applicant describes funds that will be used for one-time investments versus ongoing operational costs, as in the case of a one time cost to send two teams of 10 teachers to a CCSS conference. The applicant also provides strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments., such examining current spending priorities, making online learning self-sustaining, and seeking and securing continued funding for wrap around services. Research on additional funders, led by the district's grants administrator will be completed during the first year of the program.

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

10

10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes over \$28,000,000 in matching funds that have been directed toward support for the project, and provides a strong plan for researching future funding sources. This plan includes the work of a committee made up of an administrator, representatives from partners, teachers, union members and the State Department of Education, who will conduct meetings on a semi-monthly basis to review opportunities to support the program.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a description of a strong community partnership with an Early Childhood Council, the Carver Foundation and a local community college that will work together to support the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students and families, with a priority on high-need students. Goals include ensuring that the needs of children from birth to nine years are met in order for them to be ready for school and life. Other goals focus on the health of students and families. Details are provided that describe a Provider Network Committee that conducts monthly meetings to foster collaboration on high quality preschool experiences and School Readiness requirements. Strategies that are part of the plan include tracking indicators, identifying assets, and developing professional capacity. Another initiative involves community learning centers that provide in-depth, hands -on, project based learning programs such as FIRST Lego (robotics), Shakespeare on the Sound, STEM projects and Maritime Aquarium. In addition, tutoring will be provided by professionals and volunteers. The goal of this effort is to engage 100% of families in learning process. However, it is unclear how the applicant plans to scale up these initiatives, or improve results over time. Population-level desired results are well-described and include a table that lists goals, strategies, desired results and persons responsible. However, details regarding performance measures for determining impact and methods for selecting and evaluating supports are limited. For example, the applicant states one goal and performance measure is to ensure that parents and student are engaged with education, but a method for capturing improvement in this area is included.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant clearly addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create personalized environments designed to improve learning and teaching. Strategies include building data systems to to measure student growth and inform teachers and principals, utilizing e-Instruction student response systems, implementing an online counseling system called Narviance that will provide students and parents with college- and career-ready resources to increase graduation rates and college readiness, and recruiting, developing and rewarding effective teachers through a new teacher evaluation system.

Total	210	156
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