



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1221NY-1 for Rensselaer, Columbia, Greene Board of Cooperative Educational Services d/b/a Questar III

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This consortium has set forth a plan to further enhance and enrich the practices already put in place through the Race to the Top State competition. Personalized learning would take place with tablet technology provided to every student, teacher, coach, and principal. All participants, including parents, have input into an individualized learning plan based on the student's strengths, needs, and interests. This technology will create a K-12 virtual learning platform which will include distance and online learning opportunities. Individual Learner Profiles (ILPs) are co-created each summer with teachers, students, and parents. It becomes an electronic portal through which the student can access learning at any time and teachers, parents, and administrators can access records as needed. These tables will provide interactive language arts and mathematics lessons and activities that encourage critical thinking and content mastery.</p> <p>The consortium also proposes an early warning system that will identify students in the middle and high schools that are beginning to show evidence of falling behind. It is planned that through this early identification, interventions and attention will be directed to the student before the problems become larger. Teachers will experience a shift in their role as they become interventionists who are attuned to student needs early on.</p> <p>The Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) currently submit their student data through the North Eastern Region Information Center. The new plans include connecting with the consortium's Connect Portal to ensure that accurate and timely information is processed and resubmitted to the participating districts and schools. This online data portal will also have an increased capacity to match student data into college level data.</p> <p>The consortium recognizes the need for improved communication with parents and other stakeholders to ensure the success of their plan. The plan includes a partnership with the local public broadcasting system (PBS) to create public service announcements that educate the public about the new standards and their meaning and what the new outcomes will look like. The "commercials" will be recorded at a local school's studio and be broadcast throughout the entire area served by the consortium.</p> <p>The consortium received money from the Race to the Top state competition which was used to hire experts in literacy, mathematics, data analysis, and teacher and leader evaluation. The increase in funds will broaden this scope to include additional instructional coaches in language arts, math, data, personalized learning environments, problem-based learning, and technology integration. The research included in the proposal states that teachers are much more likely to try ideas presented by coaches than heard through workshops, so the new instructional coaches will play a vital part in the increase of teacher effectiveness.</p> <p>This introduction to this proposal is very verbose and does not contain relevant information. There are many ideas presented in this section but it is unclear which are the four main goals, and which if any have already been started. Because of this lack of clarity and definition this section was given a medium rating.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>When choosing schools to be a part of this proposal, a multi-step methodology was put into place. All school districts were initially screened by comparing district-level results of the state English Language Arts standardized testing across elementary and middle grades. Using this data, the percentage of students who reached proficiency for a single grade in grades 3 through 8 was calculated, along with the overall percentage of proficiency for all students across grades 3 to 8. These proficiency rankings were then compared to state results, which were set as the cutoff point. Ten of the districts ranked above the state standard and eleven of them fell below.</p>		

Next the performance of sub-groups across the districts were analyzed using the same data files. Student demographics were compared to the eligibility requirements of the grant. The ten schools whose results were above the state standard served the fewest low income families, while the other eleven schools served the most.

After these screenings, seven of the eleven districts met the criteria for selection into the consortium. Four of these district as classified as high needs/resource capacity district in urban settings. The other three districts serve a disproportionate amount of high needs students. These calculations of high need were based on the sum of students with disabilities, non-white subgroups, low income families, and students with limited English proficiency, and these groups represent 95% of the students who will be served by this grant. The total number of participating students is 13,412, of which 6,738 are low income and 12,709 are high need. It is estimated that 1,073 educators will be participating in this project.

The district conducted a thorough evaluation for each school and considered multiple perspectives to determine which schools would be best served by this proposal, therefore this section received a high score.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal includes plans for the participating districts to become leaders and implement their changes and growth throughout the area. All participating districts have signed an agreement to reform their entire districts. The consortium will rely upon its experience of regional scaling of project-based learning from its previous work with Tech Valley High School. This school used a variety of programs to empower teachers, provide communication, and form networks. A structure currently in place is the RttT Superintendents' Sub-Committee which is a group of superintendents who are guiding the implementation of the common core learning standards, annual professional performance review, and use of data to guide instruction, that was provided for by the Race to the Top state grant. It is proposed that these superintendents would then disseminate information to the other participating districts.

This section was given a medium score because of its lack of specifics and buy-in from other non-participating districts. There is not a clear and supported plan to include all of the initially non-qualifying districts into the project following the grant period. The reliance on superintendents to disseminate information is not a sufficient plan that will likely entice other districts to participate.

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

This proposal includes four goals with three to five objectives for each goal. Performance on summative assessments will be increased through the use of Individual Learner Profiles for each student. These ILPs are created by teachers, students, and parents during the summer to determine the learning goals for the student for the following year. This electronic record follows the student through the entire school system. Goals are constantly updated, progress is monitored, and the design ensures mastery of content to provide college and career readiness. The proposed early warning system will also be established at middle and high schools to immediately identify a student who is falling behind in his or her goals. Teachers will then be able to intervene early and provide corrective instruction to ensure the student catches up. This system will also track absentee rates, tardiness, grade point averages, credit accumulation and assessment performance. The new technology component is designed in part to demonstrate the districts' new culture of high expectations for all learners. Teachers will also be provided with extensive professional development from newly hired specialists and coaches to realign and map their curriculum, improve instructional strategies, and use data to guide instruction.

The new technology system is intended to portray the schools as accessible, safe, and friendly places where parents and community members are welcome and can exchange information with teachers. This improved communication along with planned events and activities to promote greater multicultural understanding are designed to reach out to formerly underserved families, provide home-school partnerships, and connect families with community based organizations. Parents, students, and the community will be realigned as learning partners. The overall goal of this objective is to decrease achievement gaps and increase graduation rates.

The participating districts will use the new centralized data system to analyze their graduation and dropout patterns in conjunction with longitudinal student data in an effort to find indicators of student dropouts. The districts will then use the system to identify high-risk students, flag them in the database, and provide additional resources to assist these students through school.

This application does not directly address its goals for college enrollment in the narrative portion of the application.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Many of the districts within this consortium have demonstrated success in the implementation of teaching initiatives. Ten years ago a model of embedded professional development was used which created a collaboration of schools and local colleges. The focus of the initiative was to measure the role that instructional coaches can play in the facilitation of best practices. The study was ground-breaking and was recognized two years later by the state education department as having one of the most significant increases in student achievement.</p> <p>Another model that demonstrates a track record of success is the Student Achievement Enhancement Program, that provided in-service training for superintendents, administrators, and teachers on the use of student achievement data in formulating instructional plans. The program looked at data related to test items, the poverty index, and subgroups well before it became a state-wide initiative. In the following years a pilot program was begun in partnership with a large number of administrative departments within many districts to identify the issues and causes that impede student learning. Each district was taught how to analyze the student data and benchmark longitudinal data.</p> <p>This consortium has a proven track record of success in improving student learning, implementing significant reforms, turning around low-performing schools, and making student data accessible and meaningful to administrators, teachers, and parents. There is no mention of reform related to high school graduation rates and college enrollment, so the section was given a medium rating.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Each district within the consortium publishes personnel salaries at the school level through a state-wide website designed for transparency in state information. Visitors to the site can analyze and compare data from districts throughout the state, including payroll and contracts.</p> <p>Each member LEA posts all budget related information on their websites and in the board of education minutes. The minutes include the titles and salaries of all employees hired in the member LEAs. Any interested party can access this information through the state website and/or individual LEA websites.</p> <p>This consortium and each of the districts and schools which are part of this project do a thorough job of providing transparency in all financial matters, including salaries and expenditures. This section is rated high.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Prior to the submission of this grant, each superintendent, school board president, and local teachers union leader signed a Memorandum of Understanding which included the parameters of the proposed program changes and their support for them. This memorandum was then submitted to the state department of education. Participating LEAs pledge their adoption of the instructional shifts contained therein and also agreed to adopt an annual professional performance review, using state approved teacher and principal rubrics for evidence of student achievement. The proposal demonstrates the commitment of each district and LEA, along with state approval and support, to implement the changes in instructional practices outlined within.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	1
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The consortium used an online survey to collect feedback and opinion from stakeholders. While it is unclear how the respondents heard about the survey, exactly 50% of the responses came from within the school community, including teachers, principals, district leaders, superintendents, and board of education members. Another 13% who identified themselves as "other" included some teacher assistants, school psychologists, maintenance staff, school nurses, and union staff and it is unclear who else is included in this group. Students comprised only 1% but parents made up 33% of the respondents. Community members more than doubled students at 2.6%.</p>		

Given these numbers, some of the results are surprising. According to Table 3, there were 372 responses to the survey, which makes the percentages of respondents unclear. For example, 2.6% of the respondents were community members, yet that would mean approximately 9.672 people are in this category. Next it is stated that 77% of community members ranged between unfamiliar to having a basic knowledge of the new standards. This means that probably 7 people responded in this way, which is much too small of a sample size for the data to have any meaning. This consortium took these statistics to mean that an aggressive communication strategy is necessary to convey information for this "array of audiences" which is not a conclusion that can be drawn from this data.

The remaining questions appear to have all been multiple choice, which was also inappropriate. For example, one of the questions was "What things would help you to know more about and/or help with making the college and career readiness/common core standards be a part of your school?" Respondents could choose between attending a workshop, watching a video, observing classrooms, investigating online resources, communicating with others, seeing student work, and/or hearing from students. This open-response type question did not allow the respondent to respond in his/her own words. A particularly biased question was "Which of the events and resources do you believe would be most effective in enhancing learning opportunities for K-12 students? Select all that apply." More than half of the available answer choices were parts of the four goals of the proposal, and some of the remaining answer choices were inappropriate, including "More television programs" and "More educational video games".

There is no mention of how this information was used, but it is apparent from the questions that it was written and conducted after the proposal had been written, therefore it did not allow for engagement in the development of the proposal. There is no evidence of the proposal having been revised based upon the data received. There was no communication from the collective bargaining representation during the development of the proposal.

There are letters of support in the Appendix of the proposal, however several of the responses noted that they only received a brief overview of the proposal and could not base their opinions on this sample. A form return letter was included for the respondent to fill in and return. There is an outlined box that asks for comments, but this box measures a mere 4 and 3/4 inches by 2 and 3/4 inches. This is hardly an invitation for meaningful response. Only one of the returned responses used this box, and it contained only two sentences that filled the box. Another letter stated that its writer "had a chance to skim through it briefly" and is a follow-up letter to an earlier response that expressed strong dissatisfaction that their district was not included in the application among other items. Six of the ten pages in this section of the appendix are copies of letters sent by the representative of the consortium and not responses back.

Because this section includes questionable survey methods and results along with letters of support (and lack of support) from parties who were not given the full proposal to read, this section is scored low.

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

5

1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The application states that the first "six to seven months" of the project term will be dedicated to determine the readiness level to implement personalized learning environments. Six tenets are assessed, including district leadership, school leader practice, curriculum development, teacher practices, student developmental health, and family and community engagement. It then says that four of the seven participating districts will be required to undergo a diagnostic visit, but it does not indicate if this requirement is because they have not been previously assessed or because they were rated poorly on an earlier evaluation. The data from this diagnostic test will be used to determine effectiveness, provide guidance on next steps for improvement, and could be adapted to include the technology capacity of participating schools.

These proposed diagnostic tests would be more appropriately performed before the proposal was written, as the needs of the district would need to be measured and this test indicates that has not been done. One of the major goals of the proposal is to supply tablets for every student, teacher, and administrator, and yet there has not been a study to measure the technology capacity of the participating schools. The assessment planned does not even address this important issue, but the proposal states it could be adapted to include this information.

There is no explanation of the logic behind the proposal or any identified needs and gaps that the plan will address. This section received a low score because the tests described are tests that would be appropriate before a proposal is written, and the feasibility of one of the major goals of the proposal has not been considered.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application includes a plan to provide tablet computers to all students, teachers, and administrators, by which students will receive personalized instruction. The application has not specified how much class time, if any, will be devoted to these teaching tools or to the maintenance and upkeep of the technology. The plan states that consortium coaches will provide a series of workshops with students on the use of metacognitive strategies and maximizing the technology to assess progress. Since these tools will be used with even the youngest students, a considerable amount of time will need to be devoted for training students and their parents, but it is unclear how this time will be taken from the usual instructional hours. It might be more advantageous to allow these students' homeroom teacher who knows each student individually to teach these tools and techniques.

This section frequently goes off topic as it discusses training the teachers will receive, rather than staying focused on the students. While teacher training is an important component to this technology-based learning, this application fails to fully address the student learning that will take place when it continues to refocus on teacher training.

The section regarding exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives is incomplete. The application states that students will be exposed to the global community by having access to the internet. While many students already have this technical capability, it requires teachers who develop lessons that integrate global learning to make this exposure meaningful. The application also states that the participating districts have diversity in its ethnicity and race, English language learners, and students with special needs. While diversity within the school is noted, it does not substitute for global education, which instructs students about the geographic, political, and social aspects that influence societies around the world.

The application states that students are assured of high quality content through the digital resources aligned to grade level and skill development. None of the proposed apps are listed or described, or how topics of a more personal nature, such as speaking and human connectedness, will be addressed. There is no explanation of how these apps will be selected, how it will be ensured that all of the curriculum will be presented and assessed, and what approaches will be engaged for those students for whom this method of learning is not effective.

This section focuses exclusively on one piece of the whole project - the technology-based student learning plan. The other pieces ultimately affect student learning outcomes as well, and their inclusion in this section would be appropriate and their absence is noted. The concepts of using technology to allow students to self manage their learning are strong, but further explanation would be expected here. For this reason this section has earned a medium rating.

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

20

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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium's plan includes the goal of providing personalized learning environments for all students by equipping students and teachers with tablet technology to provide personalized action items which can be accessed any time of day. This plan ensures that all students are constantly monitored to be on track with college and career ready standards and are continuously supplied new learning opportunities that are aligned with their needs and interests.

In describing the consortium's plan, the application discusses how all teachers will contribute to students' equitable access; demonstrate competencies in the design and use of data-driven instruction; have a deep understanding of how to adapt instruction to provide this personalized learning environment; and use feedback to improve instruction. The application further states that the consortium will use an "array of technologies" to revolutionize the plans, but it does not mention what this array includes, other than tablets and a centralized data base. A community of teacher leaders has been formed to lead this effort, and the application mentions a timeline that will be used to make this transition. This timeline is not included in the application and therefore its efficacy cannot be measured. The project's plan to effective implementation includes vague descriptions of proposed strategies that are lofty but would require a generous amount of time to develop and put into place, and it does not seem plausible that this project could proceed before this training takes place.

The application describes how groups will be mapping curriculum, making these maps accessible to the region, sharing resources, and placing professional developers who will model the effective use of these instructional tools. A Coaching Academy will be offered to teacher leaders and those will complete the academy will become trainers for other teachers. The application states that grant funds will ensure that regional maps are immediately accessible, however this is unclear because these maps have not been created yet and would require tremendous resources of personnel and time to complete.

In section (a)(iii) the application describes a program which has already begun: Designing, Scoring, and Processing the Use of Growth and Locally-Selected Measures, whereby teachers designed assessments and 18 instructional areas at different grade levels. The application further states that this group should be "armed with the technologies" to support each other in real time. These specific technologies are not described here, and the only technologies mentioned in the entire grant proposal are tablets and a centralized database. It is unclear how this technology is needed for work that has already been completed and what technology would be used. The proposal continues

by stating that principals will also be given tablets to store and receive data that is generated by practices observed in the classrooms. It is unclear why tablets are needed in this case and how this technology would be advantageous over current technology.

The consortium states that a centralized database will provide a range of reports at the district, building, classroom, and individual student level but it does not clarify what this range would include or define the specifics of the reports. Students' individualized learning plans would be contained in the portal and could supply information that would guide instructional choices. Sample graphs are included in the application, stating that these graphs would provide more actionable data, however the graphs supplied are too vague to demonstrate that ability. The supplied graphs show 5 strands of mathematics and how they grew over a one year time. If this data is about an individual student the teacher would need more specific information as to what the student has already learned and what he/she is ready to learn next, which cannot be found in these general data. The second graph shows 3 strands of language arts data across two years, again implying that it is one student's data, which would give no specific information to teachers to guide their instruction. If this data is not about an individual student but is about the students' progress in general, such as by class or building, the information becomes even less personalized and useful. The application fails to describe the reports that will be generated and how these reports can be used to guide instruction in a personalized learning environment.

In the same section, (b)(ii), the application states that the consortium will conduct an analysis to determine what each LEA will need to update their policies and network. This analysis would be more beneficial if it were performed before the grant proposal was written, so these needs could be considered in the overall plan and budget. The same section states that content provided by the shared network will be "teacher tried" and vetted, but it does not identify who would provide this analysis and when.

The districts' school improvement data will be housed in the central database to enable all participants to find current actionable responses. The consortium will provide assistance with how to find and use this data. The consortium will also develop a cycle of continuous improvement by providing the training and access to a Continuous Improvement Progress Review instrument, an Audit of Enacted Programs, and a Program Evaluation Toolkit. Descriptions are not provided for these tools so it is unclear what these tools are, what information they will provide, and how they would be beneficial to the project.

The application states that more students will receive instruction from effective and highly-effective teachers and principals by providing teachers and principals with reflective practices around student performance data and classroom observations, the use of embedded coaches, and through principals' networks. It is not directly stated how these practices will increase the actual number of students who receive instruction from qualified and highly-qualified teachers and principals. There is not mention of plans to include hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas.

Because of the deficiencies described in the above paragraphs, this section has received a medium rating.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium plans to develop a Consortium Advisory Board, which will consist of LEA superintendent-appointed representatives who will meet monthly to measure the progress and success of the project. These board members will represent each LEA and are charged with ensuring their districts have the resources needed and to bring to the table any needs or concerns. The board will also allow LEAs to share best practices and provide inter-district support. The Grant Program Manager will visit all participating schools on a monthly basis to measure progress and determine any needs. These systems of equal representation and support will ensure that each district successfully implements the program and that there are available resources when problems occur.

The member districts and schools will maintain their autonomy with all school-based decisions, such as schedules, calendars, personnel and staffing, responsibilities, and budgets. The application states that the Consortium Lead LEA will provide additional resources and support to ensure the grant activities and projects succeed at each school, but it does not describe what these resources might include or how this support might be used. Districts have the flexibility given to them by the state to use ten possible teacher evaluation rubrics and six possible principal evaluation rubrics, and are free to choose from these options. The project provides an individualized learning plan for each student through the use of technology, which creates opportunities for students to progress at their own pace. Students who demonstrate mastery of standards will progress to the next course. The application states that students can demonstrate mastery in multiple, comparable ways, but it is unclear how that would be possible using tablets. These resources are easily adaptable to meet student needs and can adjust to different

abilities in reading and math. Tablet applications will be available in different languages to support English learners' needs, and applications that are specifically designed for use by students with disabilities will be purchased.

While this application does not fully explain each of the components in this section, it has described how it will effectively provide support to all schools, provide flexibility and autonomy to schools based upon state guidelines, allow students to progress at their pace and earn credits through mastery, give students opportunities to demonstrate their mastery, and provide support and services to make these systems adaptable to all students. This section has been given a high mark.

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

10

9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium has developed plans to ensure that all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, principals, and superintendents, will have constant access to the portal which provides all of the resources that are developed or purchased through this grant. Some money has been set aside to ensure that districts' online infrastructure and families' internet capabilities will be supported, although no documentation is provided to show any evidence that research has been conducted to measure this need.

Grant money will also be used to provide training and support to all participants in the member districts. These trainings for parents will consist of live orientations and professional development workshops, online webinars, and videos. Support to teachers and other educational professionals will include live and online professional development, webinars, articles, videos, and other venues. The number of approaches to impart knowledge of the system has been carefully considered and provides a variety of approaches that should enable all stakeholders to receive the training and support they need.

Parents, students, teachers, and administrators will have constant access to student data, although no mention is made of exporting this data to other systems. All LEAs and schools will use one common portal which enables them to have inter operable systems for all important and relevant data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>This application includes a spreadsheet of action items, stakeholders, and process outcomes for each sub-objective of the project. General action items for each sub-objective are all included within the same cell of the spreadsheet, with all stakeholders involved with any action item listed in the following cell, and process items in the last cell which generally follow the order of the action items. There are no timelines listed for any action items, and the items are not placed in chronological order or in order of importance. Only the final action item cell includes any method of publicly sharing information, and these include inviting community partners to town meetings and helping these community partners find ways of supporting student achievement. There is no specific item or group of items that identify how the consortium will share information with the general public and how it will report on its investments. The spreadsheet in this section also fails to mention a plan for how the results from these process outcomes will be used to modify or improve the program. Because this section does not address its continuous improvement process adequately in this section, it has been rated low.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application lists seven components of the initial objectives which involve communication and engagement from internal and external stakeholders. Bullet items are listed under each component to list the strategy which will be utilized to achieve its goals. Most of these strategies are clear and coherent, with measurable goals that will lead to improvements in the project. All of the bullet items are ways in which ideas and information will be communicated from the project management to the stakeholders. The final paragraph describes the formation of feedback focus groups to be held quarterly but the members of these groups are not identified. The groups are charged with 1) assessing the progress and impact of the project which could not be performed by the group unless all members are fully informed of all goals and given full access to all data, and 2) "receiving" ideas, input, and concerns, which implies again the communication is one-sided. Because this section describes communication from the project management to the stakeholders, without an emphasis on communication in the opposite direction or how these ideas could be utilized, it received a medium score.</p>		

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application lists nine performance measures for this project. More than half of the performance measures are repeated almost verbatim from the measures included in the instructions, however the measures do follow the guidelines. While only nine measures are included, many include the applicable populations joined together, for example in measure i, "The number and percentage of K-212 students who demonstrate physical well-being and motor development as measured by achievement of Student Learning Objectives in physical education."</p> <p>The instructions indicate that each performance measure must include its rationale, how the measure will provide formative leading information, and how it will review and improve the measure. Instead, this application lists a common rationale for all measures, stating that they are aligned with the RTT-D initiatives, represent data that is warehoused with integrity and checked for accuracy, and correlated with the College and Career Readiness trajectory.</p> <p>The application also includes the required spreadsheets that list the performance measures and the anticipated growth over the years of the grant and beyond. The spreadsheet is mostly empty, with the baseline data completed for less than one-half of the measures, and no growth anticipated for any measure for any future years.</p> <p>Because this section fails to meet the requirements for each performance measure, it has received a medium rating.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application includes an appendix which lists each of the goals and its plans for evaluation, and this information is also summarized in section (E)(4). All of the summaries in this section list deliverables for the four goals and sub-goals, and all are measured by the number of positive responses. There is no plan included that describes how these numbers will be used to evaluate effectiveness of the program or improve the results. Because the responses do not include the required information, the section is rated low.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application includes a budget with identical information in narrative and spreadsheet format. Within the budget there are unaddressed issues:</p> <p>The Program Manager, Project Office Administrator, Parent Outreach and Engagement Coordinators, English Language Arts / Literacy Coaches, Mathematics Coaches, Personalized Learning Environment Coaches, and Data Coaches will all be hired at the beginning of Year 1, with a complete year of employment before the program is actually begun at the student level. There is no indication why many of these full-time positions would be necessary before the program is begun. All of these positions are to be filled by experienced professionals who will only be working through the life of the grant, at which point employment will end. There is no description of the expenses required to recruit, interview, hire, and train these individuals. There is also no mention of the difficulty in filling these temporary positions at moderate pay levels.</p> <p>Teacher salaries to attend professional development after school, Saturdays, and prior to the beginning of the school year do not begin until Year 2 of the grant. For teachers to implement the program in Year 2, they will require training in Year 1. The number of teacher training hours is listed at 5,460 hours, with no indication as to the number of teachers involved and the number of training hours per teacher. Given the extensive knowledge required to successfully maintain this project, as described in earlier sections, this number seems especially low. However, there is no information or explanation provided to verify it.</p> <p>Computers are purchased for all of the positions listed in the first paragraph of these comments, except for the computers for the Parent Outreach and Engagement Coordinators. These positions begin in Year 1 but do not receive their computers until Year 2, with no explanation.</p> <p>More than \$500,000 per year is budgeted for the Wireless Technology Infrastructure which retrofits all of the districts to support wireless tablets. The narrative states that the most needy districts will be served first in Year 1, with the remaining districts retrofitted in Years 2 - 4. While it is unsure what constitutes the most needy districts, it is also unclear how the</p>		

remaining districts will be able to handle the demand for wireless service if they need retrofitting, especially if it is not completed until Years 3 or 4 of the project. Should the districts' wireless technology not be able to support the demand of every student, teacher, and administrator in every school potentially at one time starting in Year 1, the success of the entire project is in jeopardy.

In the contractual services section, "a consultant" will be hired to develop the personalized learning environments and modules for English Language Arts and Mathematics for four grade clusters, K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. It is doubtful that a single consultant would have the depth of knowledge, instructional expertise, or available work hours in one year to develop these programs. It would appear that the consortium is aware of this need because the budget includes \$500,000 for the first year, \$300,000 each for the second and third years, and \$150,000 for the fourth year. This discrepancy needs to be further addressed to determine if these consultants would become consortium employees or if an outside firm would be utilized.

The remaining expenses in the budget appear reasonable and ordinary, with no discrepancies noted. Because of the discrepancies noted above, this section has been rated medium.

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

10

4

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The member districts of the consortium will have the tools, training, and trained personnel to sustain the project beyond the term of the grant. All districts in the consortium are expected to support the budget or to find additional funding resources. The member districts are also required to maintain the technology and the technology infrastructure after the grant funding. A spreadsheet is included that estimates the combined expenses for each of three years following the grant for each LEA, which range from approximately 23 million to 93 million dollars. There is no description of the uses of these funds or how these budget assumptions were made. There is no support included from state or local government leaders. This section is scored as medium low because of the lack of explanation of expenses, lack of outside support, and lack of statements from any of the LEAs stating that the sustainability budget is reasonable and or manageable.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

This section is not included in the application. It has not been scored.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

This proposal includes a goal that provides personalized learning environments for every student within the consortium of districts. The goal of the project is to provide a tablet to each student, teacher, and administrator, to enable all students to access an individualized learning plan of virtual activities that meet his or her educational needs. Teachers will be trained how to provide these technological learning platforms, access and assess the data, re-evaluate student goals, and mentor students as they learn to take responsibility for their own education. Administrators will be trained to evaluate teachers and their classrooms, access and assess student data, and make leadership choices based upon student results. Students will learn to use the tablets to access their online lessons at any time and use them to advance their learning at their own pace. Parents will be trained to access their child's data and learn to interpret the results. It is expected that significant learning will take place because each student's lessons will encompass the child's interests and learning needs, and would be fun and engaging to complete, thereby increasing the rate of student learning. Teachers would become more effective through the extensive professional development they would receive prior to and at the onset of the implementation, including training on differentiating instruction for each child and interpreting and using data effectively to formulate instruction. All student groups are expected to succeed, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, for whom modifications will be made to make the technology and programming accessible. The expectation is that the grant will continue past its initial grant

period, and each following year would enable each graduating class to have had an additional year of this personalized learning to meet college and career readiness goals.

Total	210	118
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	10

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

This supplementary budget proposal is to create a Reading Bus which will provide reading instruction in communities of lower income students. The research included in the proposal states that students who begin school from impoverished neighborhoods have less exposure to text and vocabulary, and fall further behind as the school years progress, and a student who cannot read by third grade is four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than a proficient reader of the same age. Children living in poverty are thirteen times less likely to graduate on time than more proficient students. English language learners must not only make up this lost time, but must also do so while learning a new language, usually without support at home. Because of this learning gap and its long-term implications, the consortium has proposed that a Reading Bus be created that will provide extra services for these low-income children. A full time Reading Bus Coordinator would be hired, along with two part time reading teachers, two part time reading teacher assistants, and bus driver services.

This proposal is worthy of consideration but requires further investigation than is provided in the application. The proposal gives no indication as to the number of students who would be served and whether these students would be served often enough and for enough hours to making a meaningful contribution. The proposal also states the the Reading Coordinator will communicate with the children's reading teachers to supplement the instruction they are receiving in the classroom, but there is no indication of how many teachers in the consortium would be involved. Another issue that is not addressed is that while the Reading Bus would be making community visits, these young children will need to be transported and escorted to and from the bus, and some of the parents could be unavailable or do not have reliable transportation.

The Reading Bus currently has state and federal funds totalling over \$11,000,000, and this proposal is requesting approximately \$600,000 in additional funds. Before this project is funded more information about the number of children served and the additional hours of reading instruction they would each receive should be examined to determine if the request is cost efficient and whether the program has a reasonable chance of success.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1221NY-2 for Rensselaer, Columbia, Greene Board of Cooperative Educational Services d/b/a Questar III

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does set forth a coherent reform vision for the Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Counties Board of Cooperative Educational Services (Questar III Board of Cooperative Educational Services). The focus of this reform is Connecting Students, Parents, and Educators through Personalized Learning. This vision will be supported by technology and Individual Learner Profiles. Another focus area of the Board of Cooperative Educational Services' (BOCES) vision is the assembly of an

early warning system to flag the need for just-in-time interventions needed for students. Within the Questar III Board of Cooperative Educational Services' vision is the use of instructional coaches to provide collaborative, embedded professional development for teachers.

The Questar III Board of Cooperative Educational Services' reform vision is not comprehensive because it does not state in its vision elements that include accelerating student achievement and increasing equity through personalized student support based on student academic interests. The reform vision does not specifically address all four core educational assurance areas. For example the applicant does not address in its vision lowest achieving schools or recruiting, retaining, and rewarding teachers and principals.

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a high-quality description of the process that the applicant used to select schools to participate. The applicant first used a comparison of district-level results of the New York State test of English Language Arts for students across elementary and middle school grades. Performance of sub groups was also analyzed as part of the screening process. Demographic information was also used after the testing data was analyzed.

The applicant includes a complete list of the schools that will participate in grant activities as well as the total number of participating students as 13,412 and that among these 6,738 are low income. The applicant identified that 12,709 students were of high need.

The applicants approach to implementing its reform proposal was of high quality.

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

10

7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides support for a somewhat high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform. For example, the applicant includes the persons responsible for the oversight and implementation of the objectives and activities and includes activities such as the scale up use of the Questar III Connect Portal.

However, the applicant plan does not include timelines or deliverables as part of this plan. Without those elements it is difficult to determine if meaningful reform will occur.

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

10

10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates by ambitious yet achievable annual goals that the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity. For example, objective 1.1: To achieve acceleration, the participating schools will institute comprehensive and systematic use of Individual Learner Profiles for each and every student. Another goal is to facilitate the shift of classroom teachers from a traditional educator role to one of lead learner and community collaborator. These goals connect clearly to student learning and increased equity.

The applicant also includes goals in the area of graduation rates. An example of that goal that is both ambitious and achievable includes the graduation rate goal which begins with a baseline of 59% and increases to 74% by 2017.

The applicant does provide student outcome measures to address decreasing achievement gaps, for example, in Table 2, fourth grade math assessments will be used to measure both all students and the sub groups. The proficiency goals appear to be both ambitious yet achievable. The Economically Disadvantaged students will increase 11 percentage points over the four year period.

The applicant includes in Table 4: College Persistence: the percentage of high school graduates enrolled in public New York State Institution of higher learning within 16 month of graduation. Using the 2006-07 data as a baseline the applicant

indicates that in four years that percentage will increase by 4 points.

The applicant's vision is most likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity based on the comments included.

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>Although the applicant indicates that several successful efforts have occurred within some of the districts in the consortium, the applicant does not indicate how these efforts have provided a clear record of success in advancing student learning and increased equity by closing achievement gaps. For example the applicant indicates that teachers who had worked with embedded coaches were asked to rate the effectiveness and quality of the professional development and estimate its observed impact on student achievement. 83% of teachers rated the experience as superior or above average. The applicant does not, however, indicate what results those efforts had on student achievement.</p> <p>Although the applicant included in the application the Race to The Top annual report of 2010-2011, which included successes for students, the report did not address the participating schools specifically. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the efforts at the district level had a positive effect on local student achievement data or improved student learning outcomes and closed achievement gaps.</p> <p>The applicant does include School Report cards that indicate the prior successes over a two or three year period. For example, in Public School 2 the annual attendance rate improved from 90% in 2007 to 92% in 2009. The applicant does not address improving student outcomes in relationship to high school graduate rates or college enrollment.</p> <p>The applicant does not address if the efforts in staff development supported the achievement of ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates a relatively high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices and procedures through the use of the SeeThroughNY web portal. This Portal appears to include actual personnel salaries and information on expenditures.</p> <p>The applicant does not establish that the information regarding actual personnel salaries at the school level is for instructional staff only and for teachers only. The information regarding these expenditures is not included in the narrative as being supported by the websites that are referred to by the applicant.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is basing the support for sufficient autonomy on the Memorandum of Understanding that each superintendent, school board president, and local teacher's union leader signed.</p> <p>The applicant also supports that successful conditions are in place to implement the personalized learning environments as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding's and the Race to the Top Scope of Work that has been submitted to the New York State Education Department as part of the participation in the state's Race to the Top Grant.</p>		

The applicant does provide to the full extent that the districts are willing and able to implement the project as established by the Memorandum of Understandings and Race to the Top Scope of Work information.

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

10

7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided evidence of somewhat meaningful stakeholder engagement through the use of an on-line survey. This survey asked questions that provided input into the districts' approach to developing the proposal. However, the applicant does not make it clear how the proposal was revised based on this engagement and feedback.

The Memorandums of Understanding provide evidence for the collective bargaining unit's support for the project. For example, the Memorandums include the implementation of a teacher, principal and superintendent evaluation system no later than 2014-2015. It appears that each bargaining unit's president signed the Memorandum of Understanding.

Although the letters of support are form letters and each is the same, these letters are signed by a variety of stakeholders that support the project's efforts.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does provide a somewhat high-quality plan for analysis of the applicant's current status in general and the logic behind the reform proposal. This plan is to use the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness to yield information regarding the effectiveness of a school as it relates to six tenets.

Although this plan includes a timeline, persons responsible for the various activities, and some deliverables, it does not address specific reference to the current status in implementing personalized learning environments.

The overall plan is credible but is only addresses the districts' general effectiveness and not needs and gaps in implementing personalized learning environments.

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 fairly high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by providing Consortium Coaches to hold a series of workshops and embedded support around the use of metacognitive strategies with learners. That plan includes strategies on how to teach students to be explicit about learning intentions and success criteria. This will provide for the support to educators so that all students will understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals and identifying and pursuing learning and development goals linked to standards.

The applicant indicates that the use of blended learning modalities including technology will provide students with access and exposure to diverse cultures, context, and perspectives. The plan indicates that consortium staff will help establish opportunities for students to learn in mixed-grade activities. Although these activities are a part of the plan, they do not address how these activities will deepen individual student learning.

The applicant does provide for support for educators through staff development and coaching to help all students to master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting.

Although the applicant includes activities such as the Jump Start for the Personal Learning Environments (PLE) that are reviewed for each student in the summer before entering a new grade level, those activities are not directly tied to individual learning goals to ensure that the student can graduate on time and college- and career-ready.

The applicant defines a variety of high quality approaches for instruction which is based on regionally developed curriculum maps available through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services Connect Portal. This also includes digital learning. This instruction will also be evaluated by principal walk throughs as a quality assurance measure.

The applicant indicates that tablets with applications that graph and chart student progress to individual objectives will be part

of the instructional design and will provide for learners to visualize their progress. The applicant also provides several specific activities and strategies that are accommodations for high-needs population to include assistive technology when appropriate.

The applicant identifies that the Understanding by Design instructional model will be used to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them.

The applicant provides support for a somewhat high-quality plan, but does not provide specific timelines for the activities, thus the overall credibility of the plan is not fully supported.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	7
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plan for teaching and leading includes an effective approach to impacting teaching and leading within a fully implemented Personal Learning Environment.. The lead Local Education Agency (LEA) has created a regional collaborative community of teacher-leaders to cross-walk the Common Core Learning Standards against the New York State Standards to acutely illustrate the instructional shifts that must take place in classrooms. Professional development activities and strategies with the inclusion of orchestrated teams of teachers support this plan's success.

The Consortium will use grant funds to provide improved links for all educators to have access to a network dashboard to curricula mapping and sharing of hyperlinks to provide for individual and meaningful instructional methods. Although this effort will provide for opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, the applicant does not provide for activities and strategies that respond to student's academic interests.

The applicant provides in its plan frequent measurements of student progress toward the Common Core Learning Standards through to-be-developed technology supports. The Network Team Data Analyst will be helping districts to develop these systems.

The applicant does not include in the plan to improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the Local Education Agency's teacher and principal evaluation systems including frequent feedback on individual and collective effectiveness as well as providing recommendations, supports and interventions as needed for improvement.

The applicant includes in its plan how teachers will have access to actionable information that helps educators identify learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs. This includes a customized dashboard to provide teachers with each student's Independent Learning Profile.

Although the applicant includes the use of an open-source platform to provide open communications between parents, students, and educators, these activities do not provide for processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs.

The applicant indicates that the lead Local Education Agency currently uses an Effective Schools Survey to measure features of school culture and climate. The consortium will provide assistance with how to analyze and interpret the data into meaningful steps to make improvements.

The applicant does not directly address that training, systems and practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps will be provided for school leaders and school leadership teams.

The applicant does not include a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effectively and highly effective teachers and principals including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas.

The plan presented does not include goals, timelines, deliverables, or parties responsible for all elements of the plan. Therefore, although the plan has some strong elements as outlined above, it is not overall a high-quality plan. .

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a well developed organizational plan for the consortium governance structure. That includes a Consortium Advisory Board, a Personalized Learning Program Manager, and the Superintendents Sub-Committee on Race To The Top implementations. These efforts to organize will support the services to all participating schools.

The applicant provides practices and policies that will provide for participating member districts and schools to maintain their autonomy and the Lead Local Education Agency will provide additional resources and supports.

Policies are in place to give students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. These policies and practices will also give the students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times. This will be accomplished through the use of the online learning platform and the personalized learning environments.

Personalized learning environments that are developed will provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students. This includes the tablet applications that will be available in different languages to support English learners and tablet applications that will be specifically designed for students with disabilities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does indicate that the lead Local Education Agency will support efforts to ensure that all students, parents, educators, and building principals and superintendents will have access to the Questar II Connect Portal and that online infrastructure and families' home internet will be provided via hot spot cards.

The applicant defines appropriate levels of technical support through orientations and professional development workshops.

The applicant does not define how infrastructure supports will be implemented to provide systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format or provide for inter-operable data systems.

The applicant provides a somewhat high-quality plan that includes the persons responsible for the activities outlined. A clear timeline and key goals are not a part of that plan.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a clear and high-quality approach to address the continuous improvement process. This includes a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous process that provides timely and regular feedback. The applicant uses charts in the narrative and the Appendix D to define objectives, action items, the role of stakeholders, process outcomes and evaluation processes.

For example, in the goal area addressing the Early Warning System, the applicant's objectives include: "Verification of data to ensure that uploads accurately reflect the student population". This action is implemented by Building principals, data coaches, and guidance staff. The Process outcomes for this action include documented protocol for routine uploads, migration, verification, and data cleaning from each Local Education Agency. The applicant addresses all major goal areas in the same manner.

The applicant does not provide a strategy for publicly sharing information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top-District.

The applicant provides a somewhat clear and high-quality approach to continuously improving its plan, but the sharing of that information both with the stakeholders and among the consortium is lacking.

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

The applicant includes seven objectives that include strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with

stakeholders. For example, Objective 4.1, "Realignment of focus on community, parents, and students as learning partners who can access powerful tools to promote student growth."

The actions to address this objective includes designing and holding forums for partners to learn about Race to the Top goals and Personal Learning Environments and to facilitate discussions on their roles in moving students forward on a college- and career-ready trajectory. However, the applicant does not clearly indicate how these forums will be used for two-way conversations rather than the district just informing the stakeholders of the progress.

This appears to be a fairly clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant uses TBD, to be determined, for several of the measures including the number and percentage of participating students by subgroup who are on track to college- and career-readiness based an on-track indicator. This does not support ambitious yet achievable performance measures as it is difficult to determine if these efforts will produce results. For example the applicant uses TBD for the number and percentage of participating students who complete and submit the FAFSA form.

The applicant does identify clearly the rationale for the performance measures as being that they are aligned with Race to The Top initiatives, represent data that are warehoused with integrity, and that they correlate with the College- and Career-readiness trajectory.

The applicant does include 13 performance measures. That number meets the requirements for the grant. Although the applicant includes one health related indicator based on physical and motor development as measured by achievement of Student Learning Objectives, the applicant does not provide baseline data for this indicator nor a plan to address that performance measure. Therefore it is difficult to determine if the applicant is addressing the non-cognitive requirements of the performance measures.

Since there is insufficient amount of data provided, the use of the performance measures does not support a clear high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan.

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

In Table 6 and Appendix D, the applicant does provide plans for evaluation of the effectiveness of Race to the Top-District. The applicant includes the question, "What deliverables will demonstrate achievement of outcomes or impact of activities?" and responds to that question by indicators of success. For example, for the Early Warning System a measurement of success provided is that there is a 20% increase from baseline data on the number of students offered distance and online learning for credit recovery and an increase in number of students who graduate on-time.

The plan presented is not all inclusive since it does not address compensation reform. There are no goals or objectives or activities that will address how teachers' compensation will be addressed in providing students with more effective teachers and administrators.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that the budget request is for \$29,985.00, this is not aligned to the budget overall summary when a request of \$29, 985,098.00 is indicated.

The applicant does not delineate by specific project in the overall budget summary project list what expenditures will be needed for each major goal. The applicant only states that the entire amount of the grant will be addressing the over all project of Connecting Students, Parents, Educators through Personalized Learning.

The applicant does provide a chart that indicates that local member education agency's will take a major responsibility to budget for sustainability for the project.

Other than the funds from the local participating member Local Education Agency's the applicant does not include any other funds that will be used to support the plan.

The funds allotted for personnel appear to be reasonable and sufficient to support the development of the plan. For example, the applicant indicates that the Math coaches with a minimum of 10 years of experience would be paid at the base of \$72,000.

The applicant does indicate how the technology hardware budget, though spread over a four year period will be a one-time expenditure with the districts addressing future technology and upkeep.

The applicant does not include in the budget or budget narrative how the districts will address the goal regarding an increase of students being served by effective and highly effective teachers and administrators. Therefore, it is not evident that the plan is reasonable or sufficient to support that goal.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes a chart that indicates how the member Local Education Agencies will contribute to the on-going expenditures of the grant for a three year period. For example Hudson School District will provide \$65,014,658 during the 2016-2017 school year in support of the on-going project.

The applicant uses the goal and objective pages in Appendix D, to support a fairly high-quality plan for sustainability. That plan includes activities or actions, stakeholders (persons responsible), process outcomes, and evaluations. The plan does not include timelines for the action items. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the sustainability of this project.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

None available.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Although the applicant does present a coherent overall plan to address personalized learning environments, the plan is not comprehensive. One of the areas that has not been addressed by the applicant is how the plan will expand student access to the most effective educators. This issue is not addressed in the actions or the budget.

Since the applicant does not include timelines for the planned activities and evaluations, it is difficult to determine whether the plans will find success over the four year period. Without these timelines it is also difficult to determine the sustainability of the plan after the four year period.

These two elements are essential to the overall impact of the project, therefore, the absolute priority 1 has not been met.

Total	210	144
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

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	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	15

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposal for the optional budget supplement for the Reading Bus is designed as a separate project that, if not funded, will not adversely affect the applicant's ability to implement its proposal.

The applicant clearly defines the rationale for the specific area that the applicant will address. The focus for the rationale is the low reading achievement scores in both the state and the Questar III BOCES districts. The rationale is also based on the lack of enriched vocabulary and exposure to text in low income families and communities. The proposed Reading Bus project will address this readiness gap.

The applicant provides a high quality plan for this supplemental project. This includes in chart form the objectives, activities, responsible parties, expected outcomes and timelines. This plan would be carried out throughout the consortium, therefore is addressing the needs in more than two LEA's.

The proposed budget appears to be adequate to support the development and implementation of the activities including the purchase of the vehicle as well as the personnel budget to provide for the Reading Bus Project Coordinator, Reading Teachers, and Reading Teaching Assistants that will provide services to the students.

The overall plan is a credible one to address the issues of the area.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1221NY-3 for Rensselaer, Columbia, Greene Board of Cooperative Educational Services d/b/a Questar III

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a medium score for articulation of a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. There is an overarching goal of connecting students, parents and educators through personalized learning, available anytime, anywhere. The reforms center around Individual Learner Profiles (ILP's), updated annually and accessible electronically throughout the school year, providing a base on which to build personal learning environments.

The 19 participating LEAs will use the consortia's Connect Portal to support blended learning in participating schools. LEAs submit their data through North Eastern Regional Information Center (NERIC). The new Connect Portal will be aligned with and interoperate with the state's P-20 Data Portal and have the increasing capability to match K-12 student data to college level data.

The proposal says they will restructure the very fabric of the classroom, but does not provide an adequately detailed vision for how they will do this. The proposal also does not make strong enough connections between how implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards (called Common Core Learning Standards in NY State) will be implemented in such a way as to drive radical improvement in student achievement.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is receiving a medium score for approach to implementation.</p> <p>Questar III identified the 11 districts in its region whose students performed below proficiency standards on the New York State test of ELA (data was included in the application). They then selected 7 of the 11 districts who met further criteria: 4 that are classified as high need/resource capacity districts in urban settings, and three more that serve a disproportionate number of high needs students. The 26 participating elementary and middle schools meet the eligibility requirements. Overall, 95% of the participating students are classified as high need.</p> <p>The total number of participating students is 13,412. Among these, 6,738 are low-income participating students, and 12,709 are high need participating students. An estimated 1,073 educators will be participating in this project.</p> <p>Although schools were selected based on student need, it does not appear that there was any screening for meeting conditions necessary to ensure high-quality school-level and district-level implementation.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is receiving a medium score for LEA-wide reform & change.</p> <p>The model proposed in the current application will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools first by ensuring fidelity to implementation, then by disseminating and sharing practices with non- participating schools in the region. To ensure fidelity, Questar III BOCES, serving as the consortium LEA, has asked participating districts to enter into an agreement to reform their entire systems.</p> <p>Dissemination and sharing of practices, including scaling up of the Questar III Connect Portal that is supported by the data migrated from the Northeast Regional Information Center, will include similar processes as have been used by the districts previously, including Snapshot Tours; Study Tours; teacher shadowing; Project Based Learning institutes; Meeting of the Minds (MoMs), which are deep dives into specific content for teachers; and webinars towards achieving the scale-up goal. Existing and new regional networks will also be used to share and disseminate learning, including RTT-D Advisory Board, RTT-T Superintendents' Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Although the proposal does touch on ways to disseminate learnings, the proposal does not include a high-quality plan for scaling reform and translating into district-wide reform. Activities, deliverables, timelines and persons responsible were not identified.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is receiving a high score for LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes.</p> <p>Questar III has set out ambitious but attainable goals for performance on summative tests, decreasing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates and increasing college enrollment for each of the LEAs in the consortium.</p>		

To achieve acceleration and reach these ambitious results, the first goal is to create personalized learning environments. The participating schools will institute comprehensive and systematic use of Individual Learner Profiles (ILP) for each and every student. Annually the ILP is co-created during the Personalized Learning Jump Start session in the summer before the approaching academic year. The ILP is a living electronic document where goals for students are continually updated and progress monitored by families, teachers, and students to ensure mastery of content, acquisition of skills, and momentum on a college and career pathway.

Additionally, an early warning system (EWS) will be established at the middle and high school levels to flag when a student is not on track to graduate in time and college and career ready.

Also, the consortia aims to create school culture/climate that pervasively demonstrate high expectations for learners as resilient and capable of meeting college and career ready standards. Tablet technology will be provided to building principals who will use these to store and retrieve data. Educational leaders will be provided with support to explicitly guide instructional staff and challenge limiting beliefs about student outcomes, and tirelessly engage all of the educational community to contribute to the achievement and success of each and every learner.

The second goal is to facilitate the shift of classroom teachers from a traditional educator role to one of lead learner and community collaborator. K-12 Teachers will be provided with embedded professional development from Literacy Specialists, Math Specialists, School Improvement Data Analysts, Personalized Learning Environment Coaches, Technology Integration Coaches, and Project Based Learning Coaches; and will be supported in making instructional shifts by the region's RTT-D Program Manager, Building Principals and Teacher Leaders. K-12 teachers will develop a student-driven personalized adaptive sequence of instruction in English Language Arts and Math content areas designed to enable students to achieve their individual learning goals specified on the ILP through leveraging student interests and experiences. Teachers will include a blended type of instruction where digital technologies are integrated with traditional teaching methods aligned with college- and career-ready standards as appropriate for the content area and individual learner. Teachers will use individual student data to determine progress towards individual learning goals in ELA/Math and make instructional modifications based on needs of learners. Teachers will use technologies as opportunities for community learning centers to educate, train and connect parents and community members to the progress of learners and to encourage life-long learning within families and communities.

Students will monitor their progress towards individual learning goals using digital formative assessments and metacognitive activities guided by their teacher. Through student led Inquiry Hubs that are shared across classrooms and schools via Questar III BOCES Connect Portal, students will be able to showcase, share, collaborate, ponder, comment and otherwise interact with the academic content as well as one another through a shared network accessible through their tablets or by desktop.

The 3rd goal is to create rigorous and Common Core aligned student-driven personalized learning paths to increase student engagement, achievement, and growth. Districts will work with local business partners to offer hot spots in key areas of participating school communities where free internet access is available.

Achieving these objectives will support the LEAs in achieving the targets set overall and hopefully by student subgroup. Other than the Early Warning system and possibly the local municipal hotspots to provide internet access to the district's portal and performance management system, there are few objectives specifically targeted at addressing needs that would directly impact the achievement gap.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a medium score for demonstration of a clear track record of success.

(a) Evidence was not provided showing improved student learning outcomes and closing of achievement gaps over the last 4 years.

(b) Evidence was not provided showing ambitious and significant reforms in persistently lowest-achieving or lowest performing schools.

(c) Student performance data is available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction and services.

Questar III did provide examples of programs and services that resulted in increased student achievement and educator satisfaction. As one example, in 2009, district teachers who had worked with embedded coaches provided by Questar III were asked to rate the effectiveness and quality of the professional development and estimate its observed impact on student achievement. 83% of teachers rated the experience as “superior” or “above average”. Student data was not provided as evidence.

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

The applicant is receiving a high score for increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments.

Each LEA in the Questar III BOCES RTT-D Consortium makes public the personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, through SeeThroughNY, a web portal sponsored by the Empire Center for New York State Policy. Any user can access salary information for each district and school level employee. Furthermore, each member LEA posts all budget related materials on their websites and, as part of their Board of Education (BOE) meeting minutes. These minutes generally include the position titles and salaries of all employees hired in the member LEAs.

The applicant does not provide information on whether actual non-personnel expenditures are available at the school level.

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

The applicant is receiving a High score for state context for implementation.

Each LEA participating in the Questar III BOCES RTT-D Consortium has sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments because each superintendent, school board president, and local teachers union leader, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and designed a preliminary Race to the Top Scope of Work submitted to the New York State Education Department as part of their participation in the state's Race to the Top grant. Each district is capable of migrating and exporting from data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction. Each district has pledged as well to recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals.

The MOU was not accompanied by other evidence.

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

10

10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for Stakeholder engagement and support.

The Consortium invited students, families, teachers, and principals to share their opinions, thoughts, and ideas about Personalized Learning Environments (PLE) in the context of New York State Regents Reform, including, Common Core State Standards, Data-Driven Instruction, and Annual Professional Performance Review. The school districts opted to use an online survey instrument to collect feedback and opinions. Stakeholders were also invited to send a representative to a community-wide forum wherein the Mayors or Supervisors of each city and township involved as well as regional and state leaders gathered with educators to provide comment about the Consortium proposal.

The districts have collective bargaining representation. The application is signed by the local teacher union or association president (where applicable).

13 letters of support from key stakeholders are included in Appendix C, which indicate their support. The letters were all form letters, potentially indicating low level of engagement in the process.

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

5

4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for Analysis of needs and gaps. There is a high quality plan that includes timeframe, activity, deliverables and process. The school review process is carried out by an Integrated Intervention Team (ITT). ITT conducts principal interviews; reviews school policies, assessments, school schedule, all curriculum plans, professional development plans, teacher observation feedback as well as budget data; and visit 7-10 classes using the classroom visitation tool. This process will be used to ascertain the current status of implementing personalized learning environments, based on the six tenets found in the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE). The plan does not identify who is the responsible party.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for Learning.

Questar III is employing many strategies to enable schools to transform learning by personalizing the learning experience.

The Proposal states that to make sure students understand that what they are learning is key to success. Through training students to use metacognitive strategies to understand that what they are learning, and then to assist them in reflection about

what they learned is key to their success in accomplishing specific academic goals. The Consortium Coaches will provide a series of workshops and embedded support around the use of metacognitive strategies with learners and how to maximize the use of technology to show students how to assess their own progress.

Participating students will be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest through technology integration, project-based learning (PBL), and instructional methods that draw upon students Individual Learning Plans (ILP).

Through the use of blended learning modalities, all participating students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. Consortium staff will scaffold and help establish opportunities for students to learn in mixed-grade activities and competency-based blended content programs.

Each student has access to a personalized sequence of instruction in English Language Arts and Math content areas designed to enable them to achieve their individual learning goals specified on the ILP through leveraging their interests and experiences. The first opportunity begins with JumpStart for Personalized Learning Environments in the summer before entering a new grade level.

Curriculum maps developed regionally will be available through the Questar III BOCES Connect Portal and include description and links to a variety of high-quality instructional approaches that Consortium teachers can retrieve virtually as well as have modeled for them by embedded Coaches.

Students are assured high quality content, including digital learning aligned with Common Core Learning Standards through their teachers' ability to access the Questar III BOCES Connect Portal that continually updates alphabetical lists of available digital resources aligned to curriculum maps in content and grade level.

Tablets with applications that graph and chart student progress to individual objectives will be part of instructional design and allow even the youngest learners an opportunity to visualize their progress toward a very personalized academic goal. Personalized learning recommendations based on students' current knowledge and skills is common in current vendor software applications and each participating district will have local control over which applications are best suited to their school culture and climate.

The Consortium will work closely with the Questar III Special Education School Improvement Specialists (SEIS), which provides targeted support and technical assistance to school districts based on an identified district need. Specific needs have been determined based on data collected by New York State Educational Department (NYSED) related to educational programs and academic performance of students with disabilities within each district. It is unclear if this is adequate, as Special Ed data represents the worse achievement gaps in the district, by far.

Training and support to students are aspects of quality instructional planning that will be fostered among participating teachers who will learn how to use an Understanding By Design (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004) instructional model. This ensures that students understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them by checking to ascertain to what degree students know where they're going (the learning goals), why the material is important (reason for learning the content), and what is required of them (unit goal, performance requirements, and evaluative criteria).

The proposal is less specific about how students will be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest. It is also less clear how students will be provided frequent ongoing feedback that they use regularly to tailor their learning. ILPs are only formally updated yearly. Although they can be accessed and added to throughout the school year, it was unclear how this would be used to inform day-to-day instruction schedules, coursework and interventions.

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

20

16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for their thoughtful and thorough plans for developing Teaching and Leading. Specifically of note,

(a) (i) K-12 Teachers are provided with embedded professional development from Literacy Specialists, Math Specialists, School Improvement Data Analysts, and are supported in making instructional shifts by the region's Race to the Top Coordinator, building principals and teacher leaders. K-12 teachers will also develop student-driven personalized sequence of instruction in ELA and Math content areas designed to enable students to achieve their individual learning goals through leveraging student interests and experiences.

(ii) The lead LEA, Questar III BOCES, created a regional collaborative community of teacher leaders to cross-walk the CCLS against the 2005 New York State Standards to acutely illustrate the instructional shifts that must take place in classrooms.

(iii) It is also the intent of the Consortium to revolutionize how teachers and building leaders are using assessments, particularly common interim, benchmark, or other local formative measures to monitor student learning acquisition of content knowledge and skills. A Network Team Data Analyst has helped districts to develop systems to scan, manage, analyze and interpret the data at a class-wide, school-wide and district-wide basis and at the individual student level to monitor student progress toward predetermined learning objectives.

(iv) The Consortium's approach to impacting teaching and leading within a fully implemented PLE is to launch simultaneous processes to ensure all participating educators use, among other things, feedback from performance evaluation systems to improve constructivist pedagogy and reflective practices. The Consortium proposes to leverage an array of technologies to revolutionize conventional methods and expedite processes, synchronize existing and emerging practices, and propel educational excellence throughout its region.

(b) (i) The Consortium's Questar III BOCES Connect Portal will provide an integrated system via customized dashboards to provide educators with easily interpretable information from multiple measures to identify optimal learning approaches. The Portal will provide a range of reports at the district, building, classroom, and individual student level for retrieval by teachers or principals, as appropriate. Reports for examination of teacher attendance, discipline, grades, test scores, interest inventories, and student generated responses to what he or she believes is important to learning.

(b)(ii) The Consortium proposes to address the infrastructure and professional development needs of teachers to ensure effective use of web resources in teacher planning and in meeting student needs during instruction. First, the school/district infrastructure is critical to integrating technology-based resources, and the Consortium will conduct a gap analysis to determine what is required for each LEA to update their policies and network. Through a regionally shared network where content is "teacher tried" and vetted, high quality learning resources can be made accessible.

(b)(iii) Consortium partnership with Questar III BOCES Model Schools program will also identify the processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and seek feedback about the effectiveness of the resources students are using to achieve their individual learning objectives. An open-source platform, such as Moodle, includes tools for collaboration between students, peer communication or teacher-student communication, evaluation and assessment. E-Learning for middle and secondary level students will be available through the Questar III BOCES Connect Portal to allow for more dynamic and personalized teaching.

(c)(i) The lead LEA currently uses an Effective Schools Survey to measure features of elementary, middle, and high school culture/climate. There is no mention of systematically using the teacher or administrator evaluation system to provide feedback.

(c)(ii)The Consortium will address the participating districts' needs to develop a cycle for continuous improvement by providing three key tools and the training necessary to use these tools effectively, including a Continuous Improvement Progress Review instrument, an Audit of Enacted Programs, and Program Evaluation Toolkit.

(d) The proposal did not specifically address how they will leverage the number of highly effective educators and leaders to reach more students or provide a high quality plan to do so.

The planned expansion of the LEAs portal provides unique, valuable resources to support teachers journey towards a new way of teaching in the 21st century.

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 applicant is receiving a medium score for LEA practices, policies and rules.

(a) The Questar III BOCES RTT-D Consortium: Connecting Students, Parents, and Educators through Personalized Learning will develop a Consortium Advisory Board with member LEA superintendent appointed representatives who meet on a monthly basis to ensure that all grant activities and projects are on target per the grant timeline. The lead Consortium LEA, Questar III BOCES Deputy Superintendent will act as chair of the Advisory Board and provide leadership and support in the implementation of all grant activities and projects to all member LEAs.

(b) Participating member districts and schools will maintain their autonomy with school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and support personnel, and districts and school-level budgets.

(c) Consortium member LEAs will create opportunities for students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery via personalized learning environments and online learning courses, not the amount of time spent on a topic within the flexibility that the New York State Education Department allows under online learning regulations and other relevant regulations. It is unclear whether this can or can not be done under NY state law. There is no proposed timeline for this work.

(d) The personalized learning environments and online technology will offer the platform to ensure that students are able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Students' mastery of knowledge and skills via the online learning platform will be assessed with ongoing formative assessments and state assessment results in addition to immediate feedback established within the personalized learning modules developed for K-12 and tablet applications purchased for use to support students' learning needs.

(e) Personalized learning environments developed under the Questar III BOCES RTT-D Consortium will provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. Tablet applications specifically designed for students with disabilities will be purchased and used as applicable with these students.

Although mentioned in the proposal description, there is not a high-quality plan, with activities, milestones, timeline and responsible parties for all of the items listed here.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is receiving a medium score for LEA and school infrastructure.</p> <p>(a) Questar III will ensure that all students, parents, educators, building principals, and superintendents from member districts have access to the Questar III BOCES Connect Portal with full access to all resources developed and purchased through this grant. As necessary, the grant funds will support the member districts' online infrastructure and families' home Internet capabilities via the purchase of "hot spot cards."</p> <p>(b) Grant funds will be used to provide face to face and online professional development to all actors in the member districts to provide teachers access to all student assessment and other relevant student data, students' personalized learning modules, online courses, and teacher professional development resources to include webinars, educational articles, videos, a parent portal, personalized learning modules, all student assessment data, necessary content specific resources, tools, and other face to face and online learning resources. All actors in the system will be provided with the appropriate levels of support in the use of the online portal that will include face to face orientations and professional development workshops on the use of the online portal, online webinars, and online video. Technical support was not addressed.</p> <p>(c) Making data exportable was not addressed.</p> <p>(d) The Questar III Portal says they use interoperable data systems.</p> <p>There was not a high-quality plan to address these areas that had activities, deliverables, timeline and responsible party identified.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is receiving a medium score for Continuous improvement process.</p> <p>Questar III describes a coherent, rigorous implementation, monitoring and improvement process for the proposed project that includes action items anticipated for each objective under every project goal, and delineates which stakeholders provide oversight, are implementers, or are participants in activities under each action item.</p> <p>The strategy does not address how it will measure and publically share information on the quality of its investments.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant is receiving a high score for ongoing communication and engagement.

Several strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders are included in continuous improvement monitoring under specific project objectives, including Institutionalizing systematic monitoring of student progress through the creation and use of Individual Learning Profiles (ILP).

One strategy to promote community awareness and involvement in sustaining personalized learning environments for students in the context of Race to the Top initiatives: schedule, advertise, and invite community partners to Town meetings. Questar III will provide support to share student work on the Questar Portal.

It was not specified how ongoing communication, both formal and informal, would happen with parent and community groups, nor students.

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

The applicant is receiving a medium score for Performance measures.

(a) Reasonable, rigorous annual targets allow the Consortium to assess if it is reaching the overarching goals of the project and truly making a difference for each and every student that attends participating LEAs. The rationale for the performance measures selected is (1) they are aligned with RttT initiatives; (2) they represent data that are warehoused with integrity and checked often for accuracy, and (3) they are correlated with the College and Career Readiness trajectory.

(b) The measures provide timely and formative information. Students monitor their progress towards individual learning goals using digital formative assessments and metacognitive activities guided by the teacher

(c) Not discussed.

Performance measures for highly effective teachers and New York State growth rate score were not available at the time of application.

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

The applicant is receiving a medium score for Evaluating effectiveness of investments. Measures were identified, however targets were not specified. The performance measures tend to evaluate whether the activity was completed (inputs), but do not do enough to assess results in student achievement (outputs), the ultimate effectiveness measure for the investments. There is also no mention of evaluating effectiveness with respect to the cost of implementation.

For example, in the Table in Section (E)(3), Performance Measures for Grades 4-8 -a (on page 112), for the Performance Measure "The number and percentage of participating students, by sub-group, who are on track to college- and career-readiness based on the applicant's on-track indicator", the table data is populated with *asterisks instead of the actual data, for each row and column.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for the Budget for the project. The budget ensures that member districts will have the tools and infrastructure in place to support the goals of the project and implement personalized learning environments. Member districts will also have ongoing professional development, including Parent Outreach. Funds invest in intensive coaching and professional development in year 1 of the project, sustain professional development in years 2 and 3, and then intensive again in year 4 to set the district up for sustained momentum after the project grant ends. Budgets and salaries look reasonable to accomplish the projects and goals. It appears that sufficient funds are also allocated to content and courseware, data systems, technology and technology training to support the goals of personalized learning.

The proposal plans for a 1 month intensive training for 2 lead teachers per grade in advance of year 1 implementation.

Budget items are appropriately identified as 1x vs ongoing. There is a deliberate focus on coaching and training that have been shown to have long-term impact.

There is budget to support 1:1 tablets for all educators and students, plus programs to extend access and devices to parents who otherwise don't have access. The one concern with the emphasis on tablets is the degree to which there is appropriate available content for all grades and subjects. Although increasing, many good programs may be better accessed from personal computers or laptops.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a medium score for Sustainability of Project goals.

The member districts of the Questar III BOCES RTT-D Consortium will be positioned to sustain the project goals after the funding as the Project has been deliberately written to build the capacity within the districts from the beginning of the grant funding as described in F(1).

Member districts will have the tools and infrastructure in place to support the goals of the project. Member districts will also have had the opportunity through the ongoing professional development to build the capacity of staff to sustain the project. Of particular importance here is the fact that PTA members will receive professional development side by side the Parent Outreach and Engagement Coordinators and teacher leaders will be identified and trained to be coaches during the last year of funding.

The grant proposal invests in intensive professional development throughout the grant to increase capacity within the districts and schools that will have a lasting and transformative success.

The district is investing a significant amount in 1:1 tablets for students and educators, but there seems to be inadequate funding for continued refreshing of devices after the grant. The program they are planning requires 1:1 computing, so without adequate plans for continuing to support device upgrades ongoing, these is a risk that programs relying on 1:1 computing may be difficult to sustain.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:
Not provided.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided a coherent and comprehensive proposal to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve teaching and learning through the personalization of the strategies, tools and supports for both students and educators. Throughout the application, the LEA has emphasized the rigorous and timely use of individual student academic progress and non-academic data to accelerate student achievement, deepen learning, and increasing the effectiveness of educators.

The lead LEA expands opportunity through extension of student and teacher learning outside of the classroom by way of existing and new technologies. This extension to anytime, anywhere learning, necessitates transforming pedagogy from traditional instruction to more of a facilitation of students' skill and knowledge acquisition, wherein teachers work alongside students to refine lessons, assessments, and monitor progress toward individual learning student objectives, achievement, and growth. It involves co-development of individual learning plans for each student based on their strengths and needs. It entices parents to contribute as partners in education in ways never available historically.

All of these serve to create personalized learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching.

Total	210	140
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	10

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is receiving a high score for the Optional Budget Supplement.

(1) The rationale for addressing literacy in the highest poverty communities is strong. Reading and literacy are at the heart of a successful career in the P-12 system. For a significant portion of the Questar III BOCES student population, literacy is a

pressing educational issue. 8 out of 23 districts in the 2011-2012 school year had grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency rates of less than 50%. Low income children in particular, face a "readiness gap" that drives the achievement gap which is cumulative over time. Poverty compounds this challenge for some groups such as English Language Learners (ELLs) as two-thirds of ELLs come from low-income families. The achievement gap widens as students' progress through their P-12 schooling continuum, texts become more complex and teachers spend less time teaching the act of reading. This supplemental project will focus on decreasing the early grade reading and literacy gap one community at a time by bringing reading right into the member district students' communities via a specially retrofitted motor coach/bus equipped with the latest technologies, e-books, and highly qualified reading staff. To assure that Questar III RTT-D Consortium students become master readers by third grade, the Reading Bus supplemental project will focus on addressing the early attainment of literacy skills of students in grades kindergarten through grade three in its member districts that are poverty stricken. By closing the reading gap, in the early grades, member districts will be able to realize their potential of closing the achievement gap and ensure equity for all students.

(2) There is a detailed, high-quality plan for the implementation of this project. The core activity of this project is the introduction of a traveling reading lab – basically a "Reading Bus," designed to visit all communities in the Consortium to extend the day, week, and year for early readers. The bus will be scheduled to make runs through the communities on a daily basis beginning at 2:30 p.m. to offer learning experiences in reading after school, during the weekend, during the spring and winter break, and during summer vacation. The bus will also serve as a site for special reading-related events such as visits from local authors and performances of student-created songs and theatre during the regular school day in the RTT-D Consortium member districts. The plan looks reasonable and achievable.

(3) The proposed budget, after the retrofit costs in year 1, are predominately for staffing the Bus with Reading specialists, coaches and tutors, and coordinating services with the school districts and communities served. These appear to be the appropriate personnel and costs for the plan.

The budget detailing requested RTT-D funds is clear, however it is unclear what Funds from other sources used to support the project are for. Whereas the Optional Budget request is for \$1,998,954.00 over 4 years, the Funds from other sources used is \$31,197,098.00 over 4 years. This seems extremely high and it is unclear what the funds are for or where they are coming from.