



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0451VA-1 for Roanoke City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's stated reform vision focuses on reportedly foundational work already begun over the past four years. The reform focuses on preparing students for college or career, turning around the lowest achieving schools, closing the achievement gap, developing robust data systems, recruitment and retention of effective teachers and administrators, and personalization of instruction for individual learners.

The applicant has approached college and workplace readiness through an awareness program.

The applicant cites use of the Roanoke Technical Education Center degree and certificate programs at a local community college. The applicant reports that this program centers on "hands on" learning projects that incorporate instruction in workforce readiness skill development. The extent to which this program is an innovative ambitious program, versus a remnant of the 'tracking' vocational education era is not clear. The applicant's Community College Access Program does provide a tuition free two-year college program to students who meet the requirements. This vision is lacking ambitious goals for college readiness.

The applicant proposes closing the achievement gap by adopting a more rigorous ten-point grading scale for all courses and requiring student athletes to maintain a 2.0 grade point average. The connection between student athlete grade point average, and an achievement gap is unclear.

The applicant also lengthened their school day, and has taken steps to improve attendance. Schools in the applicant district were renovated and reconstructed, reportedly with state-of-the-art facilities for learning.

The applicant was able to review its data systems through a recent grant, and subsequently revised their data tracking software. The applicant also developed a "Parent Portal" to provide access to student grades, assignments, absences, and other information for parents.

The applicant has reportedly sought to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and implemented a new performance evaluation system for teachers. The administrative evaluation component is currently being developed.

The applicant has implemented a "pay-for-performance" system with the stated aim of encouraging retention and recruitment of highly quality teachers. The connection between the pay structure and retention and recruitment is unclear.

The applicant has approached the personalization of education through the implementation of *Response to Intervention*. While this program is gaining national appeal, it seems more reactive than proactive in terms of providing personalized learning opportunities. The applicant also utilizes the *Eight-Step Instructional Process*.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants envisioned design incorporates a scaffolding system for students in grades 5 and 9 to assist with transition points. The participants in the program will be identified using available data sources, and the criteria includes those students eligible for free and reduced lunch eligibility, performance on Standards of Learning tests, minority status, and principal, counselor, or teacher recommendation.

The applicants proposed project incorporates approximately 400 instructional project-based staff members from across the division. These individuals reportedly represent the best and most highly qualified teachers available. The applicant has

developed this personnel structure with the intent of keeping class sizes low (15-20 students). The project will be scaled up each year until all schools and grade levels in the division are participating.

Project is aimed at identifying students that are at-risk of failure, and providing services for identified students including differentiated learning. One question arose, is that by waiting to implement enhanced supports in transition years, has an insurmountable gap already developed?

There are segments of the project area who are reportedly “strongly encouraged” to take advantage of the project. This approach seems questionable, as it’s unclear why their participation was not determined during the development of this proposal. The applicant reports that the project will affect all schools in the division. All schools except two meet-or-exceed the standards for high-needs schools. The two other schools have students that meet the criteria for inclusion in the project. The applicant anticipates that staff that will become trainers for future teachers as the project expands (through a train-the-trainer model).

The applicant proposes targeting students that are “at-risk of failure early on in their academic careers but exhibit advanced potential as indicated by data from multiple tests.” The use of IQ testing in the attempt to target potential high performing students is antiquated, flawed, and inconsistent with the focus of this competition. Consider, for example, the well documented long-standing legacy of cultural bias in standardized intelligence testing.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided details of a quality plan and specified their goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The applicant reports that the project will utilize a transformational model to improve overall academic achievement and organizational effectiveness. The project will reportedly be scaled up starting with fifth and ninth grade, and then each year until all schools and grade participating. The applicants envisioned design incorporates a scaffolding system for students in grades 5 and 9 to assist with transition points. The participants in the program will be identified using available data sources, and the criteria includes those students eligible for free and reduced lunch eligibility, performance on Standards of Learning tests, minority status, and principal, counselor, or teacher recommendation. The applicants proposed project incorporates approximately 400 instructional project-based staff members from across the division. These individuals reportedly represent the best and most highly qualified teachers available. The applicant has developed this personnel structure with the intent of keeping class sizes low (15-20 students). The project will be scaled up each year until all schools and grade levels in the division are participating. The project is aimed at identifying students that are at-risk of failure, and providing services for identified students including differentiated learning. One question arose, is that by waiting to implement enhanced supports in transition years, has an insurmountable gap already developed?

There are segments of the project area who are reportedly “strongly encouraged” to take advantage of the project. This approach seems questionable, as it’s unclear why their participation was not determined during the development of this proposal. The applicant reports that the project will affect all schools in the division. All schools except two meet-or-exceed the standards for high-needs schools. The two other schools have students that meet the criteria for inclusion in the project. The applicant anticipates that staff that will become trainers for future teachers as the project expands (through a train-the-trainer model). The applicant proposes targeting students that are “at-risk of failure early on in their academic careers but exhibit advanced potential as indicated by data from multiple tests.” The use of IQ testing in the attempt to target potential high performing students is antiquated, flawed, and inconsistent with the focus of this competition. Consider, for example, the well-documented long-standing legacy of cultural bias in standardized intelligence testing. The applicant also states that students may not be identified through test scores alone. There may be some who should also be considered for inclusion into the project based on other data. The applicants reports that services for identified students will include differentiated instruction based upon best practices, co-curricular activities, and intervention counseling. The applicant also states that services may take place during the school day, in alternative special classes, or after school. The applicant also proposes providing mentors to assist students in making decisions about their academic careers and future plans. The plan also includes outreach to parents to provide information about opportunities and student achievement. The use of informational sessions, campus visits, and academic discussions of future expectations seems promising and congruent with the competition’s intent. The use of mentors and supports are extended over various grades.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants reported data on on summative assessments is positive and the projected status and growth seems feasible in relation. *The applicant has listed different projected goals for the various subgroups. This approach seems controversial and has the potential to be intervened with by the courts. The lack of extremely pronounced gaps makes this decision more suspect. The long-term projected goals are less than 100% as well. Given much baseline data in the 80s and 90s, it's unclear why the applicant did not develop higher standards. The applicant proposes ongoing and continuous tracking of student gains throughout the project. The applicant is also proposing to integrate services, for example, mentors would then work with the school counselor, teacher, and/or the appropriate community service provider. The applicant describes the overarching goal of the project as the improvement of student performance to the extent that all students will be college and career ready by the time they reach their senior year. Subsequent goals include meeting the federal accountability standards dictated under the No Child Left Behind legislation; increasing enrollment of high school students in college-level courses; increasing student participation and success in advanced classes; project participants meeting an 80% graduation rate by the 2014-2015 school year; having a minimum of 60% of project participants enrolling in a Community College or other institution of higher education; and having a post secondary degree attainment whereby 90% of all graduating seniors enter a community college or other institution of higher education by 2020. The activities, timeline, deliverables, and responsible parties are outlined in Appendix I.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant reports not being located in a Race to the Top state and consequently having not adopted Common Core standards. According to the applicant the division's strategic plan focuses on reforming its instructional process around five major areas. These areas are college or workplace preparation, closing the achievement gap, recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, a system of integrated data systems, and utilizing all available data to identify appropriate interventions where needed to implement strategies that personalize learning experiences of students. The applicant reports that the "initial groundwork to achieve the vision around the four areas was modest but set the foundation for further refinement and demonstrated that closing the achievement gap and improved student achievement was a reachable goal." The applicant's school system has made sporadic progress in closing the gap. However the gap between some groups has both closed and then expanded. For example, the gap between white and black students had closed, but then in the 2011/2012 school-year the gap exceeded the 2003/2004 school-year.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant reportedly utilizes a balanced scorecard approach to report to the public on five specified categories, that include teaching and learning, management of resources, community engagement, achieving their vision, and student achievement. Scorecards are reported annually for the previous year and posted on a website. A scorecard was provided in the appendix. The applicant also publishes an annual "Equity Report." This report is oriented toward staff, parents, and community on staffing, funding, enrollment, and federal accountability achievement. An annual financial report is published on the schools system's website. This report has salary and demographic information. The applicant reports that through a \$75,000 grant the division has been able to review its data systems and replace and outdated student data tracking software with one that allows for tracking, reporting, and curriculum development linked to state and national standards. The applicant reports tracking financial and personnel (human resource) data and provides staff position control, evaluation, hiring and tracking. Access of the data at is dependent upon the rights given to the individual user.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant "division" consists of 24 school sites, including 17 elementary, 5 middle, and 2 high schools. The student population is characterized by ethnic and socioeconomic diversity and consists of 5,743 (43.86%) black, 5,410 (41.32%) white, 1,008 (7.70%) Hispanic, 361 (2.76%) Asian, and 572 (4.36%) mixed or other races as determined by a 2011 Virginia Department of Education survey.</p>		

The applicant cites prior success as evidenced for future implementation. The applicant also cites the expenditure of \$111 million to rebuild two comprehensive high school facilities as part of 'continual work' relevant to the proposed project. The applicant also reports being committed to making continual progress relative to student achievement and preparation for college and career readiness. The applicant cites regulatory and statutory requirements under the Virginia Administrative Code as providing autonomy for decisions concerning education matters with the State Board of Education, and that the *Code of Virginia* § 22.2-16 provides flexibility relative to implementation of the project. The project's general instructional decisions will reportedly be in the hands of project administration.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's state is not a collective bargaining state. The applicant reports that, 'since the planning process started over four years ago, there exists no single piece of evidence available to document the development of the project proposal.' In addition, and more problematic, the applicant state is not a collective bargaining state, reports that due to project evolution there is no evidence of 70% buy-in available. There are letters of support provided by some partners; a 'sample of letters' can be found in the appendix.

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The applicant cites data indicating disparities in socioeconomic diversity of the students served by the schools system as a whole; with 21.1% of families with children 18 years or younger living in poverty. The information on the entire system makes the targeted areas less clear. The applicant also cites a growing homeless population, with the "Division" currently serving 141 students identified as homeless. The targeted schools have 13.14% of the student population identified as students with disabilities. The applicant also reports one of the highest dropout rates in their state. As part of a regional refugee and immigration center, the division serves 1,153 English Language Learners (ELL), representing over 40 different languages.

The applicant's project address the stated needs/gaps with related the goal of making federal accountability set forth by No Child Left Behind, increasing enrollment in college-level courses, increase student participation in advanced classes, meeting an 80% graduation rate, and a minimum of 60% of participants enrolled in an institution of higher education.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided details of a quality plan and specified their goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants project is reportedly intended to guide and personalize instruction. The proposed method is to scaffold student progress from the elementary grades through high school and into the college or the workplace.

The ‘scaffolding’ proposed is based on the work by Vygotsky and Bruner. The idea is that instruction must be developmentally appropriate. The applicant proposes to target ‘transition points’ throughout the students’ career. The applicant plans to focus on the transition points with the sharing of data, ideas, experiences, and providing school and college tours, parents’ nights, and after school and summer bridge and enrichment activities to ease students transitions. A model for this approach is provided in Appendix B.

The applicant has provided details of a quality plan and specified their goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The applicant is proposing to evaluate students for inclusion in the project. The evaluation process would be conducted at the school-site in coordination with administration. Students would be evaluated through multiple test scores, recommendations, etc. Selected students would be assigned a mentor. Mentor-to-student ratios would vary from school to school depending on the number of students involved. Response to Intervention teams would, according to the applicant, monitor student progress and report to the assigned mentor. In addition, there is a proposed eight-step process used to develop lessons, monitor instruction, and personalize instruction for their students. The applicant also proposes meetings between the site administrator, student’s teacher(s), and mentor at least once every reporting period using available data to develop a personalized learning plan. The applicant reports the need to review changing data to ensure that students’ learning experiences are of variety, high-quality, and linked to college and career readiness. Nonetheless, the connection between data collection and programming is vague. It’s not clear what data is collected, how it’s collected, and how the structure will be adapted in response to the data.

The applicant reports that at the beginning of sixth grade they provide parents/guardians with information on how to assist their child with homework, understanding of Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, and options for course selection and how “Carnegie Units” affect high school graduation and college and career readiness. There is also a “Parent Academy” used to inform parents of changes and to serve as a reminder of the rigor of the corresponding grade and the expectations of participating students.

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

20

10

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided details of a quality plan and specified their goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The applicant has listed a project design with ongoing professional development for both administrators and classroom teachers. The applicant states that professional development will be linked to performance evaluation. This appears to be contrary to the intent of the competition, which focuses on staff buy-in as opposed to external pressure. The applicant proposes to measure student success and make mid-course corrections when needed. The applicant mentions ‘collective teaching practice’ but specifics are not addressed or outline. The applicant states that teachers will utilize journals to reflect and monitor changes in student progress. The applicant proposes using student’s interest in smaller, hand-held computing devices to integrate them into their core subject areas and increase their academic achievement on standardized tests.

The applicant proposes the integration of hand-held technology into math, science, English, and social studies instruction to modify teaching strategies to promote critical and creative thinking. How this will occur is unclear. Nonetheless the applicant aims to purchase of *iPad* tablets, related charging stations, management laptops, wireless network access points, headphones, software, and professional development. The applicant states that the project success will be measured through a variety of methods including, but not limited to, monitoring of improvement in student standardized test scores in core subject areas. The applicant will also assess success through student and teacher efficacy inventories, professional development evaluations, and classroom observations. The applicant believes that “students’ excitement for the devices will be high as the *iPad* and MP3 player market has exploded among the elementary through college age students.” This does not speak to the academic value of the devices. More problematic, it’s not clear how these devices are connected to the transition points and scaffolding mentioned earlier. The applicant believes that technology can be used to monitor student data and to integrate various technologies available to support individual student needs and to promote college and career readiness. The applicant states that administrators and site-based leadership teams have access to the newly implemented teacher evaluation instrument and related walkthrough checklists.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided details of a quality plan and specified their goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The applicant report that the school system in which the proposed project is situated modifies and adjusts its central organization chart as needed to insure that the most efficient method of providing support services to all schools. A current organizational chart is provided in the appendix. The applicant reports that administrative teams in each building provide flexibility and autonomy of most operational and instructional factors. School-level budgets, for example, are controlled at the school site level. According to the applicant, students are provided ongoing opportunities throughout the school year to demonstrate mastery of standards. However, this demonstration of mastery seems limited to testing. Teachers and school administrative teams can establish their own tests. It's not clear from this section, if there is sufficient autonomy over factors such as school personnel decisions, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators. There is control over school-level budgets.</p> <p>There is limited information on the opportunity for students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. It's also not clear if students have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways outside of testing. Learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners are not specified in great detail or seem limited.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is working form existing policies and infrastructure. Educator are supported through professional development and resources made available through an online system. The applicant states there is wireless access to provide information to parents and students. The extent to which there is information in different modalities (i.e. Spanish, accessible to individuals with disabilities, and so forth) is unclear. The applicant reports development of a plan to offer guidance to individual school sites and corresponding leadership teams. The applicant reports providing direct non-instructional support and administrative teams in each building with flexibility and autonomy. This flexibility reportedly includes personnel decisions, staffing models, roles and responsibilities of their respective staff. In addition, the applicant claims that school-level budgets are also controlled at the school site level. The applicant reports that students are provided ongoing opportunities throughout the school year to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. The applicant reports learning resources and practices that are adaptable and accessible to all students. The applicant reports that data and content are provided on a website and are divided into a student portal, an employee portal, an online professional development tool, and community access that includes a parent access portal.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's proposed plan for continuous improvement was developed by Edward Deming the 1950s, originally for use with industrial manufacturing and business processes. It's not clear that this is the type of clear and high-quality approach that will allow the applicant to continuously improve their plan. There are not specific mechanisms designated for timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals. The plan by Deming is very general, and unclear as to exactly how corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant will be structured. In addition to the previously mentioned plan, the applicant proposes using an eight-step process to implement continuous improvement based on aggregate class performance and "pupil learning plans." The applicant reports that the eight-step process repeats ongoing throughout the instructional cycle, and that this cycle ensures continuous process and adaptation where needed to improve instruction and student achievement. The applicant reports that data and content are provided on a website and are divided into a student portal, an employee portal, an online professional development tool, and community access that includes a parent access portal. The applicant reports that access is also provided via the internet through the local library System for those that may not have Internet access at home. According to the applicant internet access is also provided at the federal housing projects. The applicant claims there will be ongoing</p>		

communication with all stakeholders on the progress of the project. The applicant reports that through various data collection methods, systems information will be gathered and results shared with all stakeholders. The applicant states that information such as ongoing professional development opportunities, new technologies, and staff changes will be distributed through multiple media channels including, a website, letters and bulletins to parents and community organizations, and information posted through local television.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has developed structures and strategies to communicate feedback and progress goals and corrections to internal and external stakeholders. The applicant has developed an ‘Eight-Step Instructional Process’ that involves data collection, learning plans, timelines, instructional focal points, adjustments, tutorials, enrichment, maintenance, and monitoring.

The applicant states “Ongoing communication with all stakeholders on the progress of the STEPS project will act as a meta-analysis of the success of the project.” The specified communication process reportedly involves various data collection methods, systems information that are shared with stakeholders, distributed through multiple media channels including, a website, letters and bulletins to parents and community organizations, and information posted through an education access channel on television.

The primary shortcomings in this section are the identification of potential communication barriers, and limited information on engaging a vast range of stakeholders in a manner that allows for two-way communication. While the dissemination of information is specified, there is seemingly limited engagement with teacher organizations, students, and parents in a manner that allows their concerns to guide project adjustments.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

According to the applicant sixty percent (n = 3,577) of eligible students across all subgroups will participate in the project across grades 5-12 by the fourth year of the grant. The applicant also states that 95% percent (n = 5,664) of eligible students in enrolled in the project will be assigned to a ‘highly-effective teacher’ as defined by federal and state guidelines. The applicant projects that sixty percent of all eligible fifth grade students across all subgroups will show a minimum of 1.8 year gain in reading by the end of the fifth grade. The applicant’s performance measures also target discipline problems, which they aim to reduce by 20% percent for all eligible fifth grade students across all subgroups by the end of the fifth grade as compared to the previous year.

The applicant has a target goal of eighty percent (n = 4,770) of all eligible participating students across all subgroups to complete Algebra I by the end of the eighth grade. Another performance measure specifies that eighty percent of all eligible participating students across all subgroups will be on-track to college and career readiness the end of the eighth grade. This is determined completion of at least two credit-bearing Carnegie Unit courses. The applicant has established the goal of eighty-five percent (n = 5,068) of all eligible twelfth grade participating students across all subgroups submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The applicant has established the goal of eighty percent (n = 4,770) of all eligible participating students across all subgroups will be on track to college readiness by the end of the eleventh grade as exhibited by completion of 75% of all Carnegie Unit courses and corresponding credits toward graduation. The applicant has established a goal whereby eighty percent (n = 4,770) of all eligible participating students across all subgroups that plan to enter the workforce after graduation will be on track to career readiness by the end of the eleventh grade as exhibited by completion of 75% of all Carnegie Unit courses and corresponding credits toward graduation. The applicant has also established a goal whereby eighty percent (n = 4,770) of all eligible participating students across all subgroups will successfully complete at least four courses in mathematics by the end of the twelfth grade in order to be on track to college/career readiness. The applicant has also established a goal whereby ninety percent (n = 5,366) of all eligible participating students across all subgroups have successfully complete social-emotional skills training in conflict resolution by the beginning of tenth grade. Additional performance measures involve teacher and principle effectiveness.

The applicant has specified age-appropriate measures of students’ academic growth, age-appropriate measures of non-cognitive indicator of growth, measures of college- and career-readiness, and grade-appropriate social-emotional measures.

The applicant provided evidence regarding how the measures will provide timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action. The applicant also provided information regarding how it will review and improve measures over time.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposed plan for continuous improvement was developed by Edward Deming the 1950s, originally for use with industrial manufacturing and business processes. It's not clear that this is the type of clear and high-quality approach that will allow the applicant to continuously improve their plan. There are not specific mechanisms designated for timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals. The plan by Deming is very general, and unclear as to exactly how corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant will be structured. In addition to the previously mentioned plan, the applicant proposes using an eight-step process to implement continuous improvement based on aggregate class performance and "pupil learning plans." The applicant reports that the eight-step process repeats ongoing throughout the instructional cycle, and that this cycle ensures continuous process and adaptation where needed to improve instruction and student achievement.

The applicant proposes communication with all stakeholders as a meta-analysis of the success of the project. The applicant also proposes "various data collection methods" and systems of information to gather and share results.

Information in this section is not well specified. For example, it's not clear that adjustments will be made systematic. The applicant uses examples, such as the following, "...a student's Personal

Learning Plan provides that the student uses an online tutorial to improve reading skills for nine weeks. However, in looking at the gain it is realized that the gain expected outside of the acceptable range set by the instructional team. The design may be modified to allow the student to work in a collaborative reading group." It's not clear that these adjustments will be made, who is responsible, or that there are resources allocated to ensure that adjustments are carried out.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant and supporting school system believe the project and plan are sustainable well beyond the grant funding period. The applicant report having weathered a 14-million dollar shortfall without reduction in primary instructional services. The applicant is projecting that economic-conditions will improve and that the project 'division' will have continue growth through 2020. The applicant reports that data on the success of each component of the project will be reviewed each quarter at minimum. In relation, the applicant is proposing reducing funding in unsuccessful areas and increasing funding in areas that are more successful components. The applicant suggests that due to the train-the-trainer model there will be a reduction in cost for training beyond the grant funding period. The applicant also believes that as the project becomes institutionalized the need for top-down administration will be diminished. The applicant reports that over the past four years community partner agencies contributed on average \$400,000 annually in in-kind support for existing grant programs.</p> <p>The applicant's budget, including the budget narrative and tables identifies all funds that will support the project. The budget appears sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant has also identified funds that will be used for one-time investments. These funds are primarily for technology (ipads and related equipment) and used in the first year. The strategies used to ensure long-term sustainability of personalized learning environments are the least clear factor in the budget narrative.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided details of a quality plan and specified their goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The applicant and supporting school system believe the project and plan are sustainable well beyond the grant funding period. The applicant report having weathered a 14-million dollar shortfall without reduction in primary instructional services. The applicant is projecting that economic-conditions will improve and that the project 'division' will have continue growth through 2020. The applicant reports that data on the success of each component of the project will be reviewed each quarter at minimum. In relation, the applicant is proposing reducing funding in unsuccessful areas and increasing funding in areas that are more successful components. The applicant suggests that due to the train-the-trainer model there will be a reduction in cost for training beyond the grant funding period. The applicant also believes that as the project becomes institutionalized the need for top-down administration will be diminished. The applicant reports that over the past four years</p>		

community partner agencies contributed on average \$400,000 annually in in-kind support for existing grant programs.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes partnerships with a broad spectrum of community businesses, organizations, and service providers. The applicant proposes a model of scaling up of services used to extend services to the project locations. The connected agencies will reportedly provide behavioral, nutritional, and extracurricular support for project participants. In addition, connected agencies will reportedly allow students to have opportunities and experiences with other cultures in order to reduce cultural bias and classroom behavior problems, assist parents/guardians have needed language and translation support, provide support opportunities for parents/guardians who have academic challenges to become role models of learning for their students through participation in literacy and GED programs, provide scaffolding beyond the school day as well as providing community service agencies which could refer student and their families for assistance, and provide activities before school and after school based on the individual needs of the participants. According to the applicant data from the partnerships would be two-way. A logic model showing the connection between the community partners and the personalization of instruction is provided in the appendices. The applicant reports a number of partnerships. The reported desired results of these partnerships include ensuring that students participating in the project come to class ready to learn by meeting their nutritional needs, ensuring that all students entering high school are at grade level and on track to be college and career ready, ensuring that all students participating in the project have opportunities and experiences with other cultures in order to reduce cultural bias, ensuring that all students participating in the project have opportunities to attend college regardless of their economic status, ensure that all students participating in the project and their parents/guardians have needed language and translation support, and providing support opportunities for parents/guardians who have academic challenges to become role models of learning for students through participation in literacy and GED programs. In addition, the applicant claims that partnerships will assist in providing scaffolding beyond the school day as well as providing community service agencies to which teams could refer student and their families for assistance. The applicant proposes to track the selected indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the consortium. The applicant proposes using data to target its resources in order to improve results for participating students. The applicant claims that a percentage level must be reached to achieve mastery in a given activity, that data would also be tracked by the partner and evaluated by the team to make midcourse corrections or adjustments to make the experience more personalized to the individual participant.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant comprehensively addresses how they will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments designed to improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards. The applicant had proposed methods to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student. The applicant has established an approach to increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The applicant reports a number of partnerships. The reported desired results of these partnerships include ensuring that students participating in the project come to class ready to learn by meeting their nutritional needs, ensuring that all students entering high school are at grade level and on track to be college and career ready, ensuring that all students participating in the project have opportunities and experiences with other cultures in order to reduce cultural bias, ensuring that all students participating in the project have opportunities to attend college regardless of their economic status, ensure that all students participating in the project and their parents/guardians have needed language and translation support, and providing support

opportunities for parents/guardians who have academic challenges to become role models of learning for students through participation in literacy and GED programs. In addition, the applicant claims that partnerships will assist in providing scaffolding beyond the school day as well as providing community service agencies to which teams could refer student and their families for assistance. The applicant proposes to track the selected indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the consortium. The applicant proposes using data to target its resources in order to improve results for participating students. The applicant claims that a percentage level must be reached to achieve mastery in a given activity, that data would also be tracked by the partner and evaluated by the team to make midcourse corrections or adjustments to make the experience more personalized to the individual participant.

Total	210	114
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0451VA-2 for Roanoke City Public Schools

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 demonstrates that it is proposing the Scaffolding and Transitions to Enhance Pupil Success, or STEPS. The project for this grant is the culmination of foundational work of the Roanoke City Public School Division approved by their school board in 2009. They are focusing on preparing students for college or career, turning around the lowest achieving schools in their district, developing data systems that give access for all educators to track and monitor student achievement, and recruiting/retaining effective teachers and administrators. The final component of their vision is to personalize instruction for learners.

The applicant has built foundations already in the above areas. They have a career awareness program for middle school students, which focuses on types of careers and college preparation. They also have vocational programs that work in tandem with the schools. To close the achievement gap, the applicant developed a more rigorous ten-point grading scale, and lengthened the school day. They have replaced principals at the least effective schools, and renovated aging schools. Through a grant from the Virginia Department of Education, they have replaced their outdated student data tracking software with eTracker. This system allows tracking, reporting, and curriculum development. They also have developed a parent portal. The district has completed the implementation of a new performance evaluation system, and currently developing one for administrators. They also received a grant to implement pay for performance, which they believe will encourage retention and recruitment of highly qualified teachers. With the implementation of Response to Intervention, or RtI, the district focuses on individual student needs. They are also using a process to ensure teachers model best practices in their classrooms.

With the above foundation, the STEPS project will begin with students in grades 5 and 9, with a grade added throughout the four year cycle. The lowest third of students in the district will be required to participate in this program, an anticipated total of 5,962 students. It will also include 400 educators, representing the most qualified teachers available. The applicant uses a table to break down the schools involved, demonstrating the total number of students, STEP students, and the percentage of Free and Reduced lunch students from each school.

The students will be identified by assessments, provide services for them in a myriad of ways, though instruction, flexible services, summer programs, and mentors to assist. Parents will be provided information, although it doesn't list a plan. They do have goals, with timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

Overall, the applicant does articulate a credible approach to increasing student learning, and shows how they have built the foundation for it in previous years. Some of the goals are broad, and not clear about what will occur in terms of the core

areas, putting this candidate in the medium range.

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

10

5

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant submits a table that demonstrates the number of schools that will participate in this reform. They do not describe the process used to determine these schools. As listed in the first section, there will be 400 educators participating in this grant, and 5,962 students. 100% of the students participating qualify for Free and Reduced lunch. The applicant sets goals for subpopulations in English and Math for grades 5 and 8, with a baseline goal in math for 5 grade of 87.78%, with a final goal of 91.26%. In Reading for 5 grade, the overall baseline goal is 81.18%, with a final goal of 94.26%. In eighth grade, the baseline goal for math is 72.82%, with a 4 year goal of 76.31%. In reading, the baseline goal is 79.91%, with a final goal of 91.48%. They also demonstrate for the same groups how they will decrease achievement gaps, with 4 year data in math, closing the gap by 28 points. Data was not available for reading. To increase graduation rates, the overall plan is to increase by 15 points by the end of the grant. College enrollment is equally ambitious, with a goal of increasing the overall rate by 25% by 2016-17. The goal is for students to obtain a postsecondary degree from 768 students, to 980. Clearly, this district is setting ambitious but achievable goals. Overall, this applicant is in the medium range.

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

10

6

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates that they have a transformation model of implementing goals, and how they will implement this with all schools throughout their district. They have an evaluation system in place, which they plan to tie to an incentive system, and strong professional development that will serve all of the educators. There is a personal learning environment for each student, in which students, parents, and educators have an on-going monitoring system in which they can effectively serve student needs, and disseminate information out to all stakeholders.

Overall, the applicant proves that they will scale up and sustain this program to involve all the schools in this district, with an overall score in the medium range.

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

10

6

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant sets goals for subpopulations in English and Math for grades 5 and 8, with a baseline goal in math for 5 grade of 87.78%, with a final goal of 91.26%. In Reading for 5 grade, the overall baseline goal is 81.18%, with a final goal of 94.26%. In eighth grade, the baseline goal for math is 72.82%, with a 4 year goal of 76.31%. In reading, the baseline goal is 79.91%, with a final goal of 91.48%. They also demonstrate for the same groups how they will decrease achievement gaps, with 4 year data in math, closing the gap by 28 points. Data was not available for reading. To increase graduation rates, the overall plan is to increase by 15 points by the end of the grant. College enrollment is equally ambitious, with a goal of increasing the overall rate by 25% by 2016-17. The goal is for students to obtain a postsecondary degree from 768 students, to 980. Clearly, this district is setting ambitious but achievable goals, but they do not mention what the State ESEA targets are to compare their data against. This places the applicant in the high medium range.

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	6
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant demonstrates that they are closing achievement gaps by focusing on their priorities of closing the achievement gaps in reading and in math. The state of Virginia has revised its mathematics standards to be more rigorous, even though they have not adopted the Common Core State Standards. With the new standards, the district has seen a decline in mathematics improvement across the district, as well within its sub groups. In reading, the district has made better progress in closing the gap, with the district going from 68% to 84% in the years between 2004 and 2012.</p> <p>The applicant states that overall, student achievement has risen, and as of fall 2012, all of its schools are accredited except one. Graduation rates have risen from 61.8% (2008) to 75.7% (2011). The dropout rate has also decreased from 20.6 to 12.2%, and post secondary enrollment has risen.</p>		

The district has attempted to service its lowest achieving elementary school, setting up 34 community partnerships that assist with the neighborhood reforms, as well as academics. No mention was made of other schools in need of service. They also established a program that targeted African American males before 5 grade, to provide supports, as well as a summer program that extends the regular learning year.

The district received a grant that helped establish a data system that allowed access of data to all stakeholders, to track and monitor progress. A parent portal was added as well.

The applicant does demonstrate that they have closed the achievement gap in reading, although in math it did decline. The district implemented stronger standards for math, that may explain this decline. They did not address how they would achieve reforms in the persistently lowest schools, except to give an example of one school in which they attempted to do so. They do have a data system in place that allows access to student data for all stakeholders, providing a means to change instruction, although nothing specific was mentioned. This places the applicant in the medium range.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant publishes a scorecard in which they annually report to the public about resources, community, their vision, and student achievement. They are posted on the district's website. They also publish an equity report, which updates stakeholders on staffing, teacher turnover, funding, student enrollment, and achievement. This is also published on their website. A financial report is posted on their website as well.

Personal salaries are reviewed annually and posted on the district's web page. Once the budget has been approved by the district school board and the City Council, it is made available for public review.

Although the applicant spoke to each facet of this section, they did not mention or list actual personnel salaries, or non-personnel ones. They do publish their scorecards, but they are only made available on their district website. For a district that is high in poverty, it seems inadequate to just use this one method.

This places the applicant in the low range.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	2
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant mentions that they have laid the foundation for successful conditions by the expenditure of 111 million to build the district's new high schools, and the work of community partners with their low income school. As far as autonomy, they state that they are supported by the Virginia School Improvement Initiative, and that regulatory and statutory requirements rest on the Virginia State Board of Education, but that the Code of Virginia does provide considerable latitude in implementation instruction, and places general instructional decisions in the hands of the local school board.

Overall, the applicant is lacking in ways that they demonstrate successful conditions for reform. No mention is made of data, personnel, or strategies that will support successful conditions. They briefly state they do have autonomy in instructional decisions, giving the applicant a score in the low range.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	2
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant admits in the process of the STEPS project, no single piece of evidence was available for this application, since they state most of the planning occurred at the school level. As they developed the project, they did seek feedback from all stakeholders, through surveys, letter writing, and local media outlets. Virginia is not a collective bargaining state, and the applicant could not demonstrate evidence of 70% of educators supporting the project. They did attach letters of community support in the appendix.

Overall, the applicant was unable to demonstrate evidence of how all stakeholders committed to this project. It seems as if the applicant was also unable to obtain 70% of support from its educators, the reason being that the project developed from multiple smaller projects. This indicates lack of initiative to provide what is needed to show proof in this application, placing the applicant in the low range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates that their district of 13,094 students is one of high poverty (67%) and a transient population. They have one of the highest dropout rates in the state, and serves as a regional refugee and immigration center. They admit that closing the achievement gap for specific subpopulations has been difficult. They state that they will analyze the current status of the needs and gaps to determine what changes that will be made, but do not list any specific ones that have been done to date. They plan to address 6 needs/gaps, with goals, which range from student participation and success in advanced classes, to STEPS graduates will meet or exceed a 80% graduation rate by 2015. There is a timeline in the appendix which lists the tasks, target dates, and responsible parties.

Overall, the applicant does not deliver a high quality plan in addressing this section. They mention that they are having difficulty closing the achievement gap, but if you view the timeline, it really doesn't have any specific detail on how they will address, modify, and implement their projects, except to mention that they will look at data. Ipads are mentioned in this timeline, and there has been no mention of why or how they plan to use them, leaving one to believe they were inserted into the timeline as an afterthought. This places the applicant in the low range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates that research shows that specific students have significant transition points during their school career that place them in danger of dropping out. The STEPS project that is the key component of this reform gives these students scaffolding supports to help them successfully transition, and be college and career ready. Mentors help to support these students, and the educators use the Plan, Do, Check, Act instructional cycle that monitors instruction and learning, and can modify if needed. Each student will have a Personalized Learning Plan that gives the student target goals for learning. Parent education is also an important facet of this plan, with a parent academy being held at the beginning of sixth grade (a key transition year) to keep parents apprised of changes. In seventh grade, the students are exposed to various college and career opportunities. This cycle continues through high school, with mentors, RtI teams, and individual learning plans helping the students to successfully prepare for college or a career.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant does not address how the student himself will understanding how learning is the key to their success. They do not mention standards in this section, but do give support in seventh grade and beyond that support their learning plans. They plan to use the Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle as the method that will keep the students on track and learning, with assessments occurring quarterly. They do refer to summer programs to "boost" students who regress during the school year, but this plan lacks a clarity and a consistency in addressing the facets of this section. This places the applicant in the low medium range.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates that professional development will be made available to all educators participating in this reform. They will work on best practices, tying professional development to their evaluation system. The strategy of scaffolding will be explored, and a Personalization Academy will be developed to work on group instruction of personalization for their students. No mention is made in this section on how they will measure progress of college ready and career standards. The school administrators will have access to a newly implemented teacher evaluation system, including walkthroughs using the Teachscape program, which will give a quick snapshot of each classroom. Principals will tie the Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle to assist teachers in their practice, and they plan to use this cycle with administrator evaluations as well.</p> <p>The applicant believes that technology and its use is the way to draw more students in and help them become successful. So they propose to use technology to support their instructional objectives, but do not state how, except to say that they want every student and educator in the STEPS program to have a iPad. There is not a plan to how this will impact instruction, or how educators can use it to modify their teachings, except to say that the students will be excited about this addition.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant does meet most of the key components of a high quality plan for this section. Although professional development is a strength, they are vague about some instructional practices that they plan to achieve. The tenets of the plan are vague, and do not specify how it will increase the number of students who will receive instruction from effective teachers. This places the applicant in the low medium range.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	6
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides an organizational chart of its organization in the appendix. They divide their central office into two categories: operations, and teaching and learning. Administrative teams are given flexibility and autonomy by most factors that are not state statute or school board policy.</p> <p>Students are given ongoing opportunities throughout the year to demonstrate mastery; through state and district tests. Although they mention that these tests are accessible to all learners, they do not address how students can be flexible in obtaining mastery.</p> <p>They try to ensure that all stakeholders have access to resources, data, and tools that will support the STEPS program. They do this through school, through internet access at the public library, and community access at federal housing units. All data systems that the district uses are open data structures, which gives all stakeholders the ability to export and use data in other learning systems.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant was brief and gave a very broad overview of this section. It was hard to determine what else the students could do to master subjects besides take assessments, and no adaptations were given to subpopulations who need them. This places the applicant in the low medium range.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>They try to ensure that all stakeholders have access to resources, data, and tools that will support the STEPS program. They do this through school, through internet access at the public library, and community access at federal housing units. All data systems that the district uses are open data structures, which gives all stakeholders the ability to export and use data in other learning systems.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant did not give a lot of specific information to clarify their overall goals in this area. This places them in the low medium range.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant uses the PDCA model to ensure continuous improvement in their district. (Plan, Do, Check, Act) They plan to use the same model to monitor and adjust program implementation and monitor student progress. Teachers will also use an eight step process that will implement continuous improvement, looking at test data, developing a timeline, choosing an instructional focus, frequently assessing, giving tutorials and enrichment. They will also use this process to maintain and monitor progress.</p> <p>They do plan to share the information of how the STEPS project is progressing through multiple media channels, such as the RCPS website, letters and bulletins to parents, and information on TV.</p> <p>Overall, the plans do address how they plan to continually improve, but it is lacking in the follow through needed for a high quality plan. This places the applicant in the medium range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant intends to have ongoing communication with all the stakeholders of the STEPS project, using multiple media channels to share with all entities in this reform. This is a broad plan, with little specific information about how they intend to</p>		

implement and modify it. This places the applicant in the low medium range.

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

In this section, the applicant spells out the performance measures, clearly listing the rationale, how they will measure the result, and how they will monitor it. They do use the table to list the number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup, with 100% of the students selected in the fifth and eighth grade participating in this initiative. They list the number of students whose teacher and principal are considered effective, and target the performance measures for the subgroups that will participate in the STEPS project. They list the students that are on free and reduced lunch, which is 100%. They define as well the number and percentage of participating students who are on track to college and career readiness, going from 475 students at the start of the project, to 2, 509 at the end of the four years. The applicant is not clear about what changes will be made if the measures are not successful with the first strategies they will implement.

Overall, the applicant does a consise and through job in defining the criteria in this selection, giving a clear picture of their goals and targets This places the applicant in the medium range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did demonstrate that they do have a clear plan and process in place to evaluate their project. They do have a evaluation and walkthrough program in place (Teachscape) to evaluate and support their teachers in this implementation. There is data collection mentioned, but it is not clear if there is a person in place that will oversee this process and support the teachers in disseminating and applying this to new teaching strategies and methods. There could be more specific information about how the applicant would evaluate the plan.

Overall, this places the applicant in the low medium range.

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 demonstrates through the use of a table in the appendix that there is a clear and defensible budget in place for this reform. The budget allowed matches up with the resources proposed. When strategies or programs are not effective, the applicant has a plan in place to modify or to change monies into other areas where the strategies have proven to be more effective. The "Train the Trainer" model, in which a core of effective teachers trains staff below them, is an excellent way to translate good effective practices to generations of future teachers, without a huge investment of money. Although there is a lot of personnel that is needed for this reform, the budget needed for this dissolves at the end of the grant, with the premise that the implementation is over, and the sustainability of the reform continues. Community members and their resources are also part of the budget and on going sustainability.

Overall, the applicant outlines clearly the components of their budget, proves sustainability, and resources, placing them in the high medium range.

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

The applicant believes that the STEPS program is sustainable well beyond the grant funding period, for despite a 14 million dollar shortfall, the district was still able to maintain its core mission without reducing services. They are anticipating that economic conditions will improve as well.

The applicant plans to review the STEPS project every quarter; looking to see what components of the project are viable, and which need to be modified. They can then move money around to support the more successful components. They feel as if the upper level personnel funds needed to initiate this mandate will decrease as the STEPS project becomes the norm throughout the district. They have also had support from Community partners, with funding at 400,000 over the last four years.

They also plan to seek out additional grant funding to support its efforts.

Overall, the applicant has a broad plan in place, but is not realistic when expecting that continued shortfalls will sustain this project. They also mention that economic conditions are expected to improve, but it seems unrealistic to base continued funding for this project on that aspect. They do mention community support for the district. No budget was listened in this section. This all places the applicant in the low range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that it has a close partnership with a broad spectrum of community organizations and providers. They have imbedded within the STEPS plan that these organizations will give services and support within the mandates of the project. They list within this section the population level desired outcomes, which all end with an educational target, ensuring that the students participating in the STEPS project are at grade level, have nutritional needs met, have experiences with other cultures, have the opportunities to attend college, have language and translation support, and provide opportunities for parents and guardians as well.

The applicant has two performance measures listed, that 80% of all eligible STEPS students will be on track to be career ready, and 85% will be college ready. The applicant fails to mention how they will identify and inventory the needs of the school and the community that are aligned with goals; how they will create an infrastructure, or how to engage families in decision making.

Overall, the applicant does identify partnerships, and lists population level results. They fail to address the other components of this section, placing them in the high low range.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Although the applicant does start off with identifying core educational areas ,and builds a foundation on what has been done up to this time to implement their reform, it seems to never coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on these goals. Their data is clear, but the rest of their plan lacks in rigor and clarity. They do a good job in identifying the components of their budget, and how they will sustain the reform after the term of the grant is over. The STEPS project does have a good basic premise, but never is defined enough to give a sense of precisely what the facets of it will be.

The mentors, and PDCA cycle to monitor success seems simplistic. Professional development and evaluation are clear, with an evaluation plan tied to incentives, and a walkthrough model for teachers.

Overall, the applicant does meet Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	88
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Race to the Top - District Technical Review Form



Application #0451VA-3 for Roanoke City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. The Roanoke City Public School Division (RCPS) states that its proposal envisions using the Scaffolding and Transitions to Enhance Pupil Success (STEPS) project for reform.
2. The mission and vision for the RCPS include "being a model for urban public education" and "graduating students prepared for life in a rapidly changing world." The applicant connects these statements to the overall reform plan goals, which include:
 - a. preparing students for college or career readiness (CCR),
 - b. turning around the lowest achieving schools and closing the achievement gap,
 - c. developing robust data systems that provide open access to track and monitor student achievement and make mid-course corrections where necessary,
 - d. recruiting and retaining effective teachers and administrators, especially in hard-to-staff areas, and
 - e. the personalization of instruction for learners.
3. For each item above (a-e), a foundational explanation was provided and examples were given to show how the RCPS has begun addressing the needs of the students. They include:
 - a. CCR:
 - implemented and required participation in a career awareness program for all 7th graders
 - established partnerships with colleges to expand learning opportunities
 - b. closing the achievement gap:
 - adopted a more rigorous 10 point grading scale
 - athletes required to maintain a 2.0 or higher GPA, lengthened the school day
 - redistricted the four Division quadrants for more equitable attendance
 - replaced principals at the least effective schools
 - c. developing robust data systems:
 - used a grant from the Virginia Department of Education to review and replace outdated student data tracking software with software that has expanded drill down capabilities for tracking, reporting and curriculum components linked to standards
 - working on horizontal and vertical communication between the various components utilizing the School Interoperability Framework (SIF) to allow movement of data between schools and administrative offices at the division level and from the LEA to the state, including demographic, attendance, discipline, academic information, financial, and personnel (human resource) information
 - a "Parent Portal" provides access to student grades, assignments, absences, and other pertinent information for parents
 All data systems are password protected and meet the Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements.
 - d. recruiting and retaining effective teachers and administrators, especially in hard-to-staff areas:
 - implemented a new performance evaluation system and working on an administrative and superintendent evaluation component
 - received a \$160,000 pay-for-performance grant
 - utilizes signing bonuses, especially for hard to staff areas
 - e. the personalization of instruction for learners:

- use of RtI
- use of the the Eight Step Instructional Process

4. In section (A)(3) [though not labeled as such], the applicant states that the RCPS has chosen to use the transformational model for implementation of the reform plan.

5. The applicant has set forth reform that articulates a project platform and goals for addressing student success through the improvement of existing structures and processes. A more expansive view of the applicant's reform vision that articulates a comprehensive approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests would assist in providing clarity. More information is needed.

This section is rated in the medium range.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. The RCPS reform plan (STEPS) will target grades identified as transitional. Scaffolding students will begin with grades 5 and 9. A grade will be added each subsequent year of the grant cycle.
2. Potential data sources for the identification of the participants are listed and include: free and reduced lunch eligibility, performance on Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, minority status (defined for the purpose of this grant as African American and Hispanic students), and principal, counselor, or teacher recommendations.
3. Additional participation explanation was given (i.e. "bubble students") and a chart listing participating schools and their free and reduced lunch data was provided.
4. The table/chart including the total number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, and participating educators is included, as required.
5. A graph (located in (A)(3) [though not labeled as such]) depicted the total number of non-duplicated students participating by year of the grant.
6. While the section (A)(2) is not labeled, a general timeframe is presented, a conceptual model and charted activities, timelines, person(s) responsible are located in the appendices, and a general view of personnel involvement is present (i.e. 400 instructional staff). However, additional explanation regarding the rationale for the implementation would provide clarity and would assist in linkage to the overall vision and goals.

This section is rate in the medium range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant states that the RCPS has chosen to use the transformational model for implementation of the reform plan to improve overall academic achievement and organizational effectiveness.
2. The following will be implemented to support the reform vision and goals and to impact student achievement and overall attainment of success.
 - a. Starting with fifth and ninth grade, the STEPS project will be scaled up each year until all schools and grade levels 5 through 12 in the Division are participating.
 - b. The evaluation systems will be expanded and improved to be rigorous, transparent, and equitable for all staff in the Division. This will include providing incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified staff and promote continuous use of data.
 - c. Staff will be trained to use data to personalize education for students and monitor gains across their academic career including

college and beyond.

3. The underlying instructional theory of scaffolding will be utilized to provide supports that:

- a. link the various components together,
- b. provide supports for both teachers and students, especially during transition years, and
- c. focus on on-going monitoring, and adjustment of approaches to instruction and learning through available data utilizing eight-step instructional process, RtI, and PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act).

4. More clarification, regarding how the scaling up process will address potential gaps in implementation, is needed.

5. A five-pronged implementation approach is described and addresses preparing students to be successful (i.e. early identification of at-risk students, addressing individual student's needs, parent/family engagement through outreach opportunities).

6. A summer bridge program that provides remedial as well as enrichment opportunities for student participants, while preventing the typical "summer slump" is provided.

7. Each step of the reform project accelerates student progress toward high school completion and college and career readiness while taking into account individual student needs.

8. The evidence provides alignment of the vision, goals, and plan implementation. The narrative describes the process and the support measures to be in place for credible implementation. The activities, timeline, deliverables, and responsible parties are outlined in Appendix I.

This section is rated in the high range.

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

10

5

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant states that "The overarching goal of the STEPS project is the improvement of student performance to the extent that all students will be college and career ready by the time they reach their senior year."

2. The goals of the STEPS project are as follows:

- a. All schools will make Federal Accountability every year as set forth in the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.
- b. Increase enrollment and success of high school students in college-level courses by 10% per year while reflecting the diversity of students (e.g., grades 9-12 participation 1,600 to 1,760 to 1,936 students).
- c. Increase student participation and success in advanced classes by 5% every year while reflecting the diversity of students (e.g., grades 6-12 participation 1,600 to 1680 to 1,764 students).
- d. STEPS participants will meet or exceed an 80% graduation rate by the 2014-2015 school year.
- e. A minimum of 60% of senior (12th grade) STEPS participants will enroll in a Community College or other institution of higher education by 2014-2015.
- f. Post secondary degree attainment will be realized by 90% of all graduating seniors that enter a community college or other institution of higher education by 2020 (post grant).

3. The activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties are outlined in Appendix I.

(A)(4)(a)

1. Based on the summative assessment data, where baselines were provided, the results are not consistent as there seems to be a negative trend on both the ELA and math SOL tests for 5th and 8th graders. In section (B), it is stated that new math standards accounted for the drop in scores.

2. Taking into consideration the negative trend from 2010-11 to 2011-12, the goals seem reasonable, ambitious, and attainable (2% annually).

3. There was no explanation for this section.

(A)(4)(b)

While the decreasing achievement gaps chart provided specific baseline subgroup achievement data and denoted gaps and

desired targets for math and ELA for 2011-12, there was no explanation for addressing achievement gaps.

(A)(4)(c)

The graduation rates chart provided overall data regarding the baseline performance and desired targets. The targets seem reasonable (3% annually). There was no explanation/narrative for addressing the graduation rate.

(A)(4)(d)

The college enrollment chart provided data and desired outcomes. The targets seem reasonable (5% annually). However, there was no explanation/narrative for addressing the college enrollment rate.

(A)(4)(e)

A baseline and targets were identified.

The required tables were present. Additional information and goals were established and supported the reform vision, goals, and plan. Narrative/an explanation for the baseline data and targeted outcomes was not evident.

This section is rated in the medium range.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	12

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. While Virginia was not a Race to the Top state and did not adopt the Common Core standards, RCPS is committed to achieving academic excellence. The Roanoke City Public Schools has worked to maximize opportunities for students by developing a framework or scaffold on which to build success for all students through the use of its Strategic Plan. The Division Strategic Plan focuses on reforming its instructional process around five major areas.
2. The staff of Roanoke City Public Schools has, as one of its priorities, the closing of the achievement gap in mathematics and reading. Virginia has revised its mathematics standards to be more rigorous. The new mathematics standards were implemented last school year and students began testing in the spring of 2012. As such, the Division saw a decline in mathematics improvement across the Division as well across all subgroups.
3. When reviewing the past four years, Roanoke City Public Schools has shown a clear track record of success. Student achievement has risen overall, and as of fall 2012 all schools, except one, are now accredited.
4. Based on Virginia Department of Education division level cohort reports On-Time Graduation Rates for all students have risen from 61.8% (class of 2008) to 75.7% (class of 2011). The dropout rate has also decreased from 20.6% (class of 2008) to 12.2% (class of 2011). Post secondary enrollment has also risen over the past four years from 220 for the 2008 cohort to 289 for the 2011 cohort.
5. A targeted initiative was the move to make performance data available to administrators, teachers, and parents in order to inform and improve instruction and participation. Through an ARRA grant, the Division developed and began implementing a robust data system to: allow the examination of student progress from early childhood through postsecondary education and beyond; match teachers to students, protecting student privacy rights and confidentiality while providing valuable tracking and monitoring information about student progress; and provide information that informs teachers and administrators about student academic success and assists in planning and personalizing instruction. This system was expanded to include a parent portal that provides parents information about their student's academic progress.
6. The Reach Down, Lift Up (RDLU) program was implemented three years ago and targets at-risk African American males before fifth grade. The program provides a variety of supports, mentorships, and assistance before and after the school day, as well as a summer program that provides an extension of the regular year learning experience. The program offers identified students an "invitational nudge" to encourage participation. Next it develops a curriculum for success by personalizing educational goals and objectives around individual student needs.
7. While some areas of fluctuation have taken place, the overall trend for RCPS shows growth.
8. While the evidence provided supports a track record of success based on focused efforts to improve student performance through the use of aligned resources, additional information about the ways in which student performance data is made available to students and parents, in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services, is needed.

9. The initiatives presented align with the reform plan.

This section is rated in the high range.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. The RCPS states that every effort is made to be transparent relative to its processes, practices, and investments. The following are used to address transparency:
 - a. The Division utilizes a balanced scorecard approach to report to the public regarding progress in five categories: (1) teaching and learning, (2) management of resources, (3) engaging the community, (4) achieving our vision, and (5) student achievement. The scorecards are reported annually for the previous year and are posted to the Division's web site for parent/guardian and community review (example in Appendix C).
 - b. The Division also publishes an annual Equity Report. This report updates staff, parents, and community on staffing, teacher turnover, funding, student enrollment, and Federal Accountability achievement. The Equity Report is also published to the Division's web site for parent/guardian and community review (example in Appendix D).
 - c. A Comprehensive Annual Financial Report is published and posted to the RCPS website (<http://www.rcps.info>) in accordance with the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Reports are also made to the Virginia Department of Education as required. Virginia reports salaries and other demographics to be incorporated into the Common Core Data (CCD) through the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES).
 - d. Personnel salaries for the RCPS are determined based on degree, years of experience, and service type. Instructional staff salary scales are reviewed annually and posted to the Division web page. Salary scales for non-instructional personnel, like professional staff, are based on years of experience and type of service. The classified salary scale is also made public and posted to the Division web page.
 - e. Non-personnel expenditures are provided annually to each school and department. Once the budget has been approved by the RCPS School Board and the City Council of Roanoke, the budget is made available for public review. Prior to budget approval, Board meetings are announced in advance to the public, and citizens are invited to attend and provide comment on budget expenditures.

2. While the RCPS provides multiple avenues for practicing transparency, it is not clear how parents and other stakeholders are informed of where and how to access the information described in a-e above. It is also unclear if actual personnel salaries for individuals in the required categories, as defined in the notice, are made available to the public (since it is stated that salary scales are posted).

This section is rated in the medium range.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant states that the Roanoke City Public School Division has exhibited conditions for successfully implementing the STEPS project as evidenced by the successes of the past four years. Examples include: the expenditure of \$111 million to rebuild the Division's two comprehensive high school facilities and the continual work of the many partners assisting with the Hurt Park Promise Neighborhood project, despite the lack of federal grant monies for the project.
2. It is stated that "The Division is committed to making continual progress relative to student achievement and preparation for college and career readiness."
3. The applicant notes that "Federal funding for the STEPS project will greatly assist in rapidly accelerating the pace at which improvements can be accomplished."
4. The project is supported by the state through the Virginia School Improvement Initiative and its collaboration with the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII).
5. Regulatory and statutory requirements under the Virginia Administrative Code places autonomy for decisions concerning education matters squarely with the Virginia State Board of Education (Article VIII, Section 2, 4, 5, and 8 of the Constitution of Virginia). However, the *Code of Virginia* § 22.2-16 provides considerable latitude relative to implementation instruction, including projects such as STEPS, and places the general instructional decisions in the hands of the individual LEA School Board.

6. In section (D)(3), the applicant states that "Administrative teams in each building are provided flexibility and autonomy of most operational and instructional factors that are not prescribed by state statute or local School Board Policy. This includes personnel decisions, staffing models, roles and responsibilities of their respective staff. School-level budgets are also controlled at the school site level."

7. It is not clear how the applicant will promote/provide the environment for autonomy as it relates to implementing the reform plan (i.e. what level of autonomy will exist, who will have varied degrees of autonomy, how will the structure for autonomy be communicated).

This section is rated in the medium range.

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

10

2

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

1. Since the STEPS project has been developing over the past four years, stakeholder engagement and support have been ongoing.
2. With each component, input was sought from all stakeholders - district and site-based administrative teams, teachers, staff, parents, students, community business and organizations, as well as municipal government. Input was collected through a variety of means including, but not limited to, online surveys and questionnaires, letter writing, and through local media outlets. For example, in the Hurt Park Promise Neighborhood project leaders from various individuals and community organizations were contacted by phone and email to encourage attendance in community meetings.
3. The STEPS project lays a scaffold or framework around the various components that are in place and connects them through professional development, mentorships, and transition activities.
4. Since the planning process started over four years ago, there exists no single piece of evidence available to document the development of the STEPS project proposal. Much of the input, planning, and stakeholder engagement occurred at the school site level. Since the Division is divided into four quadrants (NE, SW, SE, and NW), quadrant meetings were often held to solicit input from the communities surrounding the given school quadrant.
5. Virginia is not a collective bargaining state. Due to the way the STEPS project evolved - from multiple smaller projects, no evidence of 70% buy-in is available. However, letters of support have been provided by some of its partners (Appendix E).
6. Evidence that 70% of the teachers support the initiative is not present.
7. Letters of support are provided.

This section is rated in the low range.

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

5

5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

1. Extensive demographic information is provided regarding the Division and the population served.
2. Given the unique needs of the student population, RCPS will target needs regarding behavior (social emotional development) through implementation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). The RCPS program will follow the implementation plan outlined in the CASEL Practice Rubric For School-wide SEL Implementation published by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). SEL helps children and adults develop fundamental skills for life. SEL teaches the skills necessary to effectively regulate emotions, relationships, school and work (including recognizing and managing emotions, developing care and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically). These skills allow children to calm themselves when angry or agitated, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices.
3. In implementing the STEPS project, the Division will analyze the current status of the needs and gaps to determine the changes that have been made to date and their effect in increasing student academic success. Based on current data, at minimum, the STEPS project will address identified needs/gaps with related goals.
4. Activities that integrate the various modules run parallel and spiral over the life of the grant and ongoing thereafter. The activities, timeline, deliverables, and responsible parties are outlined in Appendix I.
5. The proposed program interfaces with the STEPS program and supports the reform plan by addressing identified needs that impact student achievement and learning.

This section is rated in the high range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>1. The STEPS project serves as a foundation to guide and personalize instruction and to scaffold student progress from the elementary grades through high school and into the college or the workplace by providing scaffolding supports as the student moves through the transitions. Examples include: sharing of data, ideas, experiences, and providing school and college tours, parents' nights, and after school and summer bridge and enrichment activities.</p> <p>2. The STEPS project involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. evaluating students at grade 4 (incoming 5th graders) through a component called Reach Down, Lift Up (RDLU), b. having site review teams identify students through multiple test scores, recommendations, etc., c. assigning identified students a mentor, and d. monitoring student progress. <p>3. Throughout the STEPS project, the following will take place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Administrators, counselors, teachers, and mentors will use the PDCA project methodology to monitor and adjust the individual learning needs of the student participant. b. The PDCA or Plan, Do, Check, Act instructional cycle methodology is a flexible and critical monitoring method that provides the ability to inject and test new ideas into instruction and improve learning mid-course corrections. c. PDCA meetings will occur between the site administrator, the student's teacher(s) and the mentor at least once every reporting period (each nine weeks). d. The PDCA cycle will utilize all available data regarding the student to develop a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP). <p>4. The PLP will provide a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development targeted to college and career ready standards based on the needs of the individual throughout the student's academic career.</p> <p>5. Parent Academy is held annually at each grade level in order to keep parents informed of changes and to serve as a reminder of the rigor of the corresponding grade and the high expectations of participating students.</p> <p>6. Across the grade spectrum, students will have a wide array of instructional strategies and technologies at their disposal. Regular school year programs will utilize varied instructional methodologies (individual, small group, one-on-one, reflection, etc.) based on needs and learning styles of the individual student. The Summer Bridge Program will offer a menu of thematic and/or project-based options from which to choose. Roanoke City Public Schools currently uses <i>Moodle</i>, an open source system for instructional delivery via the Internet. <i>Moodle</i> will be expanded to offer courses specifically designed around participants in the STEPS project. Activities that integrate the various modules run parallel and spiral over the life of the grant and ongoing thereafter.</p> <p>7. The activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties are outlined in Appendix I.</p> <p>8. While the overall organization of the plan meshes with the desired outcomes and focuses on the reform project, and the applicant provided a clear description of how the identified components fit together to support the reform effort, more information is needed regarding how students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning, and will develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.</p> <p>This section is rated high.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	11
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>1. Embedded in the STEPS project design is ongoing professional development for both administrators and classroom teachers that will:</p>		

- a. focus on best-practices in teaching methodology and behavior management,
- b. link classroom teaching activity to state and national standards, including Common Core, and
- c. link to the performance evaluation developed by the Division.

2. An Academic Personalization Academy (APA) will be developed and conducted across all grade levels and subject areas participating in the STEPS project and will be composed of extended summer workshops and quarterly group sessions by level (elementary, middle, and high school) to provide group instruction on modification and personalization of instruction for their students.
3. Direct, just-in-time support will be made available through online tutorials using PD360.
4. Courses and materials will be made available to teachers through *Moodle*.
5. Individual teachers will utilize journals and personal reflection to monitor changes in their students' progress as well as their own interaction with those changes.
6. Special "Spotlight" seminars will also be offered at points along the school year that focus on specific topics such as management and interpretation of student data.
7. Technology will be utilized to motivate and bridge learning interests. More clarification regarding the rationale of technology use and its intended impact on teacher and student performance is needed (i.e. how there will be added academic value, plan for impacting teaching).
8. School administrators and site-based leadership teams have access to the newly implemented teacher evaluation instrument and related walkthrough checklists or "snapshots". While the evaluation instrument provides for both formative and summative evaluations, snapshots provide for a quick point-in-time checklist when there are only a couple of minutes to evaluate classroom instructional activities. Together these documents provide administrators tools to assist teachers to improve instruction and teacher effectiveness.
9. *TeachScape*, a classroom video and audio recording program, will be used as a means of capturing teacher-student interactions and instructional methodology for later viewing and discussion and to provide constructive feedback and professional development to teachers in the STEPS program. Additional units will be purchased for other participating schools if funds allow.
10. The success of this project will be measured through a variety of methods including, but not limited to, monitoring of improvement in student standardized test scores in core subject areas, student and teacher efficacy inventories, professional development evaluations, and classroom observations.
11. The applicant has provided evidence that the reform plan links vital components to support the reform efforts and that resources, processes, and practices support the reform effort. However, additional information is needed regarding the plan to recruit an retain efficient/highly efficient educators for hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science), and specialty areas (such as special education).
12. The extent of and plans to gain educator support for the initiatives proposed in (C)(2) are not clear.

This section is rated in the medium range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. The RCPS maintains that the Division modifies and adjusts its central organization chart as needed to insure that the most efficient method of providing support services to all schools is in place. The evidence provided includes:
 - a. A current organizational chart for the Division (Appendix G) with the school leadership and school personnel at the center
 - b. All other functions are divided into two functional supporting components: (1) teaching and learning, and (2) operations. The former provides support and guidance to the individual school sites and corresponding leadership teams. The latter

provides all direct non-instructional support to all facilities in the Division.

c. Administrative teams in each building are provided flexibility and autonomy of most operational and instructional factors that are not prescribed by state statute or local School Board Policy. This includes personnel decisions, staffing models, roles and responsibilities of their respective staff. School-level budgets are also controlled at the school site level.

2. Students are provided ongoing opportunities throughout the school year to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways at the site and division levels. Evidence presented includes:

a. SOL tests are provided at designated times or "testing windows" during the year established by the Virginia Department of Education.

b. The Division utilizes an online test bank and testing system entitled *Interactive Achievement (IA)*. *Interactive Achievement* provides a system of benchmark testing that is scheduled at the Division, site, and/or classroom level. Teachers and school administrative teams can establish their own tests, test windows, and test banks depending on the need. Tests may be given to the entire school, single classroom, or individual student.

3. Roanoke City Public Schools provide learning resources and practices that are adaptable and accessible to all students by:

a. providing accommodations as needed for students with disabilities and/or English Language Learners,

b. making every effort to ensure that parents, educators, and students have access to resources, data content, and tools to support the STEPS program both in and outside the school environment, and

c. providing resources on the Division's website: a student portal including access to *Moodle*, an employee portal that includes access to *PD360* (an online professional development tool), and community access that includes a parent access portal.

4. While an overall governance structure is in place, the operation of school leadership teams in participating schools, as related to flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school-level budgets, needs clarification.

5. It is not clear how students are given the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic.

6. More information is needed regarding how students have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways and how learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students are provided (items 2 & 3 above), as related to the proposed reform plan.

7. The overall connection of the responses in this section, as related to the reform vision, goals, and plan, is vague. More information is needed to determine whether the LEA practices, policies, rules support the implementation of a high-quality plan.

This section is rated in the low range.

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

1. The applicant notes that the Division and school infrastructure supports personalized learning by:

a. access via the Internet through the Roanoke Valley Public Library System (for those that may not have Internet access at home),

b. community Internet access at the federal housing projects. The Roanoke City Municipal Government has instituted a valley-wide WIFI zone which allows anyone with Internet access capability to obtain information off of the Division website,

c. making every effort to ensure that parents, educators, and students have access to resources, data content, and tools to support the STEPS program both in and outside the school environment (noted in (D)(1)), and

d. providing resources on the Division's website: a student portal including access to *Moodle*, an employee portal that includes access to *PD360* (an online professional development tool), and community access that includes a parent access portal (noted in (D)(1)).

2. Some components of the website are password protected to ensure student data confidentiality and security.

3. Technical support is provided during school hours, before school, and after school via in-person, phone, email, and online technical support.

4. In 2000, the Division made the decision that all data systems purchased would be interoperable and use open data structures. In addition, any systems purchased must be Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) compliant. This provides the ability for administrators, teachers, parents, and students to be able to export their information and utilize the data in other learning systems.

5. While there are components of support available, more information is needed to determine the linkage of the reform vision, goals, and plan to the infrastructure supports and advancement of personalized learning efforts. Some Division support components seem in place; the way they will work together to build a cohesive support piece for implementation of the reform effort is not fully evident.

6. More information is needed to determine whether the implementation of a high-quality plan is supported by the LEA and school infrastructure.

This section is rated in the low range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. Roanoke City Public Schools utilizes the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) process to ensure continuous improvement. The PDCA process will be used throughout the STEPS project to monitor and adjust program implementation and student success to ensure continuous progress.
2. Instructionally, teachers will utilize The Eight-Step Instructional Process to implement continuous improvement based on aggregate class performance and on individual Pupil Learning Plans (PLP).
3. Twelve performance measures have been established, have specific, targeted outcomes, and are linked to the reform effort (a rationale provided for each performance measure).
4. In (E)(2) the applicant states that "Through the various data collection methods, systems information will be gathered and results shared with all stakeholders. Information such as ongoing professional development opportunities, new technologies, and staff changes will be distributed through multiple media channels including, but not limited to, the RCPS website, letters and bulletins to parents and community organizations, and information posted to the Roanoke Valley Public and Educational Access Channel (RVTV)."
5. Additional information regarding continuous improvement is located in (B)(5) (review comment #3).
6. More information describing the next steps/follow up of information/data gathered would provide clarity.

This section is rated in the high range.

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

1. Through the various data collection methods, systems information will be gathered and results shared with all stakeholders. Information such as ongoing professional development opportunities, new technologies, and staff changes will be distributed through multiple media channels including, but not limited to, the RCPS website, letters and bulletins to parents and community organizations, and information posted to the Roanoke Valley Public and Educational Access Channel (RVTV).
2. Items in the appendices provide additional documentation (i.e. Reach Down, Lift Up information on parent outreach).
3. Additional information can be found in section (B)(4), comment #2.
 2. With each component, input was sought from all stakeholders - district and site-based administrative teams, teachers, staff, parents, students, community business and organizations, as well as municipal government. Input was collected through a variety of means including, but not limited to, online surveys and questionnaires, letter writing, and through local media outlets. For example, in the Hurt Park Promise Neighborhood project leaders from various individuals and community organizations were contacted by phone and email to encourage attendance in community meetings.
4. Additional explanation regarding the ongoing use of internal and external stakeholder feedback for next steps/follow up is needed.

This section is rated high.

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

5

4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

1. Performance measures are provided for all STEPS students and for targeted grade levels. Each performance measure is accompanied by a rationale, targeted outcome, measure result, and how measured indicator. See the example below.

Performance Measure 11: Eighty percent (n = 4,770) of all eligible participating STEPS students across all subgroups will successfully complete at least four (4) courses in mathematics by the end of the twelfth grade in order to be on track to college/career readiness.

Rationale for Selection: Students who take and complete four Carnegie Unit mathematics courses by end of twelfth grade are better prepared to meet requirements for college and the workforce of the 21st Century.

Measure Result: Monitors progress to be on track for on-time graduation.

How Measured: Class schedules and report cards are monitored for appropriate enrollment and successful completion of identified Carnegie Unit courses and test scores on Standards of Learning Test

2. Twelve performance measures that align to the reform plan and support the reform effort have been established.

3. An explanation for reviewing and improving the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress has been addressed in other sections (i.e. (C)(1), (E)(4)).

This section is rated in the high range.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant has provided evidence that program monitoring will take place through multiple avenues. See the examples below.

- feedback from STEPS community partners and Division personnel working with students
- stakeholder surveys (climate)
- Gather feedback and data about services. Use data and feedback to plan modifications for next year. (Co-Curricular Services Calendar in the appendices)
- TeachScape will be used to provide constructive feedback and professional development to teachers in the STEPS program (C)(2).

2. The applicant has stated that budgetary adjustments would be made, if needed (F)(2).

3. More information regarding the use of leadership teams and decision-making structures to assess effectiveness and make adjustments would provide additional clarity.

This section is rated in the high range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
1. The applicant has provided a budget that contains narrative outlining the details of the requested funding.		
2. Expenditures relate to items proposed for the plan's implementation. However, there seem to be budgeted expenditures that are not fully explained in the plan (i.e. tutors across multiple content areas).		
3. Sustainability of personnel is a concern since more than 50% of the proposed budget relates to personnel expenditures. In		

(F)(2), the applicant did note that the project director and coordinators could be shifted to other positions.

4. It is noted that \$796,000 in funds from other sources would support the reform effort.

5. Noting one-time versus recurring expenditures would provide clarity.

This section is rated in the medium range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant plans to sustain the reform efforts by:

- a. shifting funding from unproductive STEPS components to support more viable components,
- b. downsizing and/or shifting personnel or tasks,
- c. seeking grant opportunities,
- d. in-kind contributions from community partners,
- e. potential increased funding through increased enrollment, as related to local, state, and federal revenues, and
- f. continued local support of plan initiatives already in place.

2. The applicant has provided a general explanation regarding avenues for sustainability to take place and has a starting point for implementing it.

3. Further explanation, through proposed activities, timelines, and persons responsible, is needed to validate the process that will be implemented to sustain reform and to ensure that the reform efforts are perpetuated.

4. Additional linkage to the plan goals would provide clarity and strengthen sustainability efforts.

This section is rated in the medium range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1. The RCPS has developed close partnerships with a broad spectrum of community businesses, organizations, and service providers through the establishment of 21st Century Community Learning Centers at fourteen schools serving the most high needs students.

2. Long-term partners include: Total Action Against Poverty (TAP), Apple Ridge Farm, Refugee and Immigration Services (a.k.a. Commonwealth Catholic Charities of Virginia), Boy Scouts of Southwest Virginia - Blue Ridge Council, Girl Scouts of Virginia - Skyline Council, Junior Achievement of Southwest Virginia, Southwest Virginia Second Harvest Food Bank (a.k.a. Feeding America - Southwest Virginia), Literacy Volunteers of the Blue Ridge, the Arts Council of the Blue Ridge, Taubman Museum of Art, Kimoyo LTD, the City of Roanoke Department of Parks and Recreation, Family Services of Roanoke Valley, Roanoke Adolescent Health Partnership (RAHP), Western Virginia Workforce Development Board, Virginia Tech University, Blue Ridge PBS, Virginia Western Community College, and Symion, Inc.

3. Scaling up of services will be extended to the STEPS project locations, as it has been done with the 21st CCLC projects in prior years.

4. These organizations will provide behavioral, physical, nutritional, and extracurricular support that can assist in providing services for the individual needs of STEPS participants. For example, Symion, Inc. provides conflict resolution training to youth and Feeding America - Southwest Virginia provides nutritional meals and snacks for students that otherwise might go hungry.

5. Desired results through partnerships include the following:

- a. Ensure that all students participating in the STEPS project come to class ready to learn by meeting their nutritional needs

before, during, and after school.

b. Ensure that all students entering high school are at grade level and on track to be college and career ready.

c. Ensure that all students participating in the STEPS project have opportunities and experiences with other cultures in order to reduce cultural bias and classroom behavior problems.

d. Ensure that all students participating in the STEPS project have opportunities to attend college regardless of their economic status.

e. Ensure that all students participating in the STEPS project and their parents/guardians have needed language and translation support.

f. Provide support opportunities for parents/guardians who have academic challenges to become role models of learning for their students through participation in literacy and GED programs.

6. Partnerships will assist in providing scaffolding beyond the school day and access to community service agencies that could assist students and their families through the Rtl referral process. In addition, partners would provide "menu items" from which STEPS participants could choose to participate. Such menu items or activities might be available before school, after school, on weekends, or a component of the summer bridge program, based on the individual needs of the participants.

7. Data from these partnerships would be two-way. If a percentage level must be reached to achieve mastery in a given activity, that data would be tracked by the partner and evaluated by the team to make midcourse corrections or adjustments to make the experience more personalized to the individual participant. Such partnerships will be able to provide a continuum of services that scaffold student progress and support the individual's unique needs while moving toward graduation and career and college readiness.

8. A logic model showing the connection between the community partners and the personalization of instruction is provided (Appendix H).

9. The applicant has established: the supportive relationship between the identified partners and the Division and the way the partnership(s) will support the reform efforts, as related to the vision and goals.

10. Six population-level desired results have been established and ongoing assessment and monitoring will be in place and will result in adjustments, as appropriate. However, it is uncertain if the 5 outcomes related to population-level desired results goals for students are feasible since the outcomes say ALL (100%). For the 6th population-level desired results goal relating to parents, there seems to be no target.

11. The applicant has linked building capacity of personnel to the plan by the following.

a. The PDCA process will be used throughout the STEPS project to monitor and adjust program implementation and student success to ensure continuous progress.

b. The STEPS project will take a multi-prong approach to professional development that addresses both short- and long-term needs of the teachers participating in the project. An Academic Personalization Academy (APA) will be developed and conducted across all grade levels and subject areas participating in the STEPS project. The Academy will be composed of extended summer workshops and quarterly group sessions by level (elementary, middle, and high school) to provide group instruction on modification and personalization of instruction for their students.

12. Communication regarding parent engagement is unclear.

This section is rated in the medium range.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant established a vision, goals, and reform project (A)(1). The community partnerships provide additional support for students and their families. Through the expanded implementation of the STEPS reform project, students will have access to additional resources that have the potential to impact their learning and achievement. An explanation of the PDCA continuous improvement process meshes with the integration of technology and other learning tools to strengthen the Division's plan as it

aligns to their reform vision and goals.

As is noted by the examples above, the applicant has met Absolute Priority 1.

Total

210

124