



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1061TN-1 for Shelby County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant builds the proposal on previous work in the four assurance areas as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennessee is a RTT state and has focused work underway in the four assurance areas. • The state has adopted Common Core State Standards. • Tennessee participates in the American Diploma Project . • All eighth graders take the ACT Explore, all tenth graders take the ACT Plan, and all juniors take the ACT. • The <i>Data to Decisions</i> Initiative is within the current scope of work for SCS's and MCS's participation in Tennessee's RTT. • MCS initiated its Teacher Effectiveness Initiative (TEI), funded by the Gates Foundation and local partners in 2009 • Highly effective teachers from MCS and SCS high schools will be hired to conduct summer and Saturday educational activities. • The state's persistently lowest achieving schools includes 15 high schools which will be within the merged school district, enrolling more than 7,100 students. • This initiative is focused on high schools which will allow the merged district to retain its School Improvement Grant (SIG) focus on elementary and middle schools which are persistently lowest-achieving. <p>Because it is unclear as to whether the reform vision captures and articulates a clear and credible approach to deepening student learning and increasing equity through personalized learning for all high school students, Shelby County Schools scores in the medium-high range in this section.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant defines the parameters of the project as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal of the proposal to prepare ALL high school students in Shelby County to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. • The project will serve approximately 44,000 students and 2,700 teachers in as many high schools as possible, with services to focus primarily on students for whom individualized data sources indicate the greatest need. • It is estimated that 78% of these students will be high-need. • The two districts employ 2,644 educators within the participating schools; in addition, 41 educators are employed by the two participating charter schools. • A total of 92,796 MCS students and 16,806 SCS students were low-income according to 40-day enrollment records, indicating a total number of 109,602 low-income students within the consortium. <p>It is unclear as to the process that the applicant used to select high schools as the participating schools.</p> <p>While the Transition Steering Committee is in charge of the merging of the districts and the plan is to serve all high schools in the two district, the applicant states that the project will serve "as many high schools as possible." Therefore, this places Shelby County Schools in the medium range in this section.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes a set of common agreed upon definitions and projects that target improved student achievement and</p>		

increased placement of effective teachers and leaders as evidenced by:

- All aspects of the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative depend on the Teacher Effectiveness Measure which in the revised measure (TEM 3.0).
- TEM requires 35% of the effectiveness score be based on growth in student learning.
- Shelby County Board of Education approved TEM 3.0 for implementation in 2013-14 by the merged district.
- Three projects focus on hiring, placement and improved working conditions for teachers.
- One project addresses student access to personalized resources through online tools – for example, Reading Plus, Stanford Math, and ACT Kaplan.
- One project enhances parent and community involvement in college and career readiness.

Because the proposal lacks a high quality plan for scaling up reform which includes Key Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Party for each goal, Shelby County Schools scores in the low-medium range in this section.

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

The applicant outlines its vision as follows:

- The focus of Shelby SPRINTERS is Grades 9-12.
- LEA-wide goals are given for SCS and MCS as separate districts (the two school districts are scheduled to become a merged district at the completion of the current school year).
- Baselines may be recalculated in 2013 to reflect schools in the merged district at that time.
- A total of 92,796 MCS students and 16,806 SCS students were low-income according to 40-day enrollment records, indicating a total number of 109,602 low-income students within the consortium.
- Algebra I percent proficient/advanced w/goal of LEA 1: 60% to 70% and LEA 2: 34% to 50 % by EOG
- English II percent proficient/advanced w/goal of LEA1: 68% to 76% and LEA2: 37% to 53% by EOG.
- Algebra I gap in percent proficient/ advanced for BHNA v. All, Ed v. non-ED, SWD v non-SWD, ELL v. non-ELL goal ranges from .1 to 2 percentage point reduction per year.
- High school graduation rate w/goal of LEA 1: 89% to 92% and LEA 2: 72% to 79%.
- College enrollment rate w/goal of LEA 1: 79% to 87% and LEA 2: 60% to 68%.

The following components are insufficient in this section. They are as follows:

- Goals are achievable but not necessarily ambitious.
- Equity data (BHNA) is grouped, but not disaggregated by subgroup.
- ED v non-Ed gap is 20% and 29% and annual goal is only 2 percentage points per year.
- When/if data from the two districts is merged for a combined baseline, it may create quite a different picture. Large schools v small schools etc.

Therefore, Shelby County Schools scores in the middle range in this section.

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	11

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant portrays a clear record of success in advancing student learning and achievement as evidenced by the following:

- In August 2012, 24 schools within SCS and MCS were designated as reward schools – three for placing within the top 5% of proficiency across the state and 21 for showing the greatest gains in proficiency.
- Among the 24 reward schools are the county's two "middle college" high schools, where students can earn up to two years of college credit while still in high school.
- An analysis of 2012 proficiency rates and annual improvement in the state's five largest districts included data on both SCS and MCS. Each of the end-of-course exams included in the analysis, SCS's proficiency rate exceeded the state proficiency rate.
- In four of the six exams, SCS had the highest proficiency rate of any of the five largest districts.

- Proficiency rates in MCS significantly trailed those across the state by an average of 21 percentage points.
- The Teacher Effectiveness Initiative is showing signs of success, including within the district's persistently lowest performing schools.
- The Striving School Zone (SSZ) was created in 2007. Of the 27 schools designated as "Striving Schools" that first year, only three remained in SSZ by 2010, and two of those are in "Improving" status.
- MCS piloted *Education Beyond the Classroom* in collaboration with United Way of the Mid-South and thirteen community partners. The initiative extends academic programs across the county at selected sites through the sharing of interventions and other programs that enhance and promote the academic performance of students in grades K-12.

The applicant provided no evidence or data to demonstrate success over the last four years. In addition, aside from "Education Beyond the Classroom" there is no evidence of making student performance data available to students, parents, and educators. Therefore, Shelby County Schools scores in the middle range in this section.

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

The application clearly lays out the expenditures for each participating school including actual expenditures for 1) instructional and support staff, 2) instructional staff, 3) teachers, 4) non personnel.

The proposal states that State and federal funding for instructional and classroom use is publicly disclosed at the district level. However, it is unclear as to the specific expenditures that are publically available.

The Shelby County Schools scores in the middle range in this section.

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

The applicant describes sufficient autonomy to implement the proposal as evidenced by:

- Shelby SPRINTERS is closely aligned with Tennessee's legal, statutory, and regulatory environment to promote college and career readiness among the state's students.
- Tennessee is a member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), a 23-state consortium dedicated to developing assessments that will measure college and career readiness.
- In 2010 the 106th Tennessee General Assembly passed the Tennessee First to the Top Act and the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010.
- These two laws created measures directed at improving student performance and graduation rates, thereby promoting readiness for college and career.
- The emphasis on college and career readiness is evident also in Tennessee's ESEA Flexibility Request (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).
- In Tennessee, documentation of an RTI-like process is required before a student can be referred for consideration as being learning disabled thus resulting in personalized learning environments.
- Tennessee's First to the Top reforms have led to changes in Tennessee law regarding teacher effectiveness and teacher tenure. TCA §49-1-302 established the Teacher Evaluation Advisory Council which developed criteria, guidelines, and procedures for new teacher and principal evaluation systems.
- As required, this RTT-D application was submitted to the State for review.

Shelby County Schools scores in the high range. Nothing is missing from this section.

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

The applicant engaged meaningful, diverse stakeholder involvement in the design of the proposal as evidenced by:

- On October 1, 2012, a focus group of 44 people was held including representatives of both districts. Among those in attendance were parents, students, teachers, counselors, and principals from seven high schools and four middle schools
- The complete list of suggestions was reviewed by the grant development committee and incorporated into the learning plan
- Application was submitted to the offices of the City of Memphis Mayor, the Shelby County Mayor, and the Mayors of the municipalities of Arlington, Bartlett, Collierville, Germantown, Lakeland, and Millington

- MOU reflects participation of the Shelby County Schools Education Association and Memphis Education Association, the local collective bargaining association representing MCS teachers through June 30, 2013
- An electronic survey was distributed to certificated staff of all high schools included in this proposed initiative and results were attached in appendix
- Letters of support included from a wide variety of partners and stakeholders

Strong stakeholder engagement results in Shelby County Schools scoring in the high range. Nothing is missing from this section.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant addressed identified needs and gaps that the plan will address. For example:

- MCS successfully attained goals in achievement, gap closure, or both, but experienced declines among particular groups of students.
- The district has been charged to ensure all groups of students show improvement this year.
- MCS is tracking gaps in performance on both Algebra I and English II tests.
- Widespread needs and gaps were identified by the Transition Planning Commission Learning Taskforce including: 1) Improve literacy and numeracy skills for all students, 2) Monitor progress of all students in the initial cohort of the merged district, 3) Provide reading and math interventions, 4) Increase enrollment in AP and Dual Enrollment courses.
- Only one in ten students college-ready in all four areas of the ACT.
- The greater Memphis area ranks 86th out of 100 metros in the country in its “education gap” – the gap between the average required education for open positions and the education of the average adult. Almost 58 percent of unemployed workers locally have a high school diploma or less, but only 27.3 percent of local job openings for January and February 2012 required a high school diploma or less.

Because the proposal lacks a high quality plan for an analysis of the current status in implementing personalized learning environments which includes Key Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Party for each goal, Shelby County Schools scores in the medium range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a detailed plan for improving teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment as evidenced by the following:

- The personalized learning environment envisioned for Shelby SPRINTERS will engage and empower all learners, particularly high-need students and their parents.
- Each student will have a personalized plan for progress to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration.
- At-risk identification and service will begin with rising ninth graders. Twice a month, during homeroom in eighth grade, these students will have formal advisement.
- The ACT Engage data will offer students and parents helpful and easily understandable summaries of the students’ psychosocial strengths and needs.
- The Shelby SPRINTERS Passport (SSP) will provide a quick overview of the student’s personalized learning goals and his or her progress in meeting those goals.
- The SSP will be a point of reference during the student’s formal advisement twice a month and during the mandatory parent meetings held twice a year throughout the student’s high school career.
- A web-based platform will allow parents and students to access their individualized learning plans through a secured login and password system.
- Each SSP/ILP component will be structured to include guiding prompts and probing questions that enhance students’ goal setting, planning, and reflective skills. Students will address Academic, career, and personal/social domains and transition planning.

Online learning tools will be selected which adapt to students' current level of achievement – for example, Reading Plus, Stanford Math, ACT Kaplan, and Educational Program for Gifted Youth (EPGY).

- Summer and Saturday activities for students with the greatest need for services will be provided including summer bridge programs for rising ninth graders and those who are not on track for college and career readiness and Sprinter Summer Camps designed to provide supplemental academic support in the Humanities and STEM, project-based learning and assessment, mentoring, team-building, and counseling.
- Through MOUs, community partners will be able to offer students access to the district's online tools during after-school and weekend hours.

Appendix I “timeline” provides an overview of the activities, timeline, and responsible party - all components of a high quality plan for improving teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment. However, the high quality plan is missing key goals and specific deliverables.

Because it is difficult to determine if each student will have access to a rigorous course of study and the applicant failed to make a direct connection between college and career ready standards and a student's course of study, Shelby County Schools scores in the mid-high range.

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

20

10

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant thoroughly addresses providing all teachers and administrators support to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college and career ready standards as evidenced by:

- The State Teacher Effectiveness Initiative (TEI) has been expanded in order to reflect the tandem process of preparing leaders and to reflect local developments such as the Transition Planning and Steering processes for the SCS/MCS merger as well as state developments such as Common Core Standards.
- The district will build on their current work in improving the retention of their best teachers.
- The district is implementing a new career management process which brings attention to underperformance, supporting teachers and leaders where appropriate and dismissing when necessary.
- The two districts have agreed to adopt the revised TEM (TEM 3.0) for evaluation of teachers.
- The PD model for all schools will include various levels of peer coaching for team-based collaboration as well as individual support primarily targeted at new and low-performing teachers.
- The three levels of one-on-one professional development form the foundation of the tiered coaching model which include school-based Learning Coaches; school-based Master Teachers (50% release time); and the district-based Performance Improvement Team or PIT Crew.
- The district will implement a new base compensation structure in 2014-15 that is determined by teacher role/performance rather than service time and degree attainment. Teachers will be provided performance-based group bonus opportunities for group attainment of student learning growth goals.
- The district will strategically place the best teachers and leaders where they are most needed and improve school culture to create conditions that foster effective teaching and learning
- Teachers will receive CCSS instructional support through professional development opportunities which will be available for teachers year round and will be tracked through “My Learning Plan,” a professional development management system.
- New technology systems being developed through the district's current Race to the Top scope of work will enable real-time queries of human capital data linked to student achievement and budget information. The Passport for Learning will also be linked to the technology platform.

The applicant does not completely address the following areas:

- Appendix I “timeline” provides an overview of the project activities, timeline, and responsible party, however, the proposal lacks a high quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from highly effective teachers and principals which includes Key Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Party for each goal.
- It is difficult to determine if college and career ready data will be used to inform student progress and inform the practice of educators.
- Limited evidence of the alignment of learning resources aligned with college and career ready standards.
- No evidence of processes or tools to match student needs with specific resources and thereby provide a continuous feedback cycle.
- Minimal evidence of training, policies, tools, data and resources for meeting individual student academic needs and focusing student progress toward meeting college and career ready standards.

Therefore, Shelby County Schools scores in the medium range for this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant fully addresses practices policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCS Board Policy 4.603 (Promotion and Retention) states that “All students in grades PreK-12 will have an EXCEL Plan that documents their academic performance.” To this end, MCS has contracted with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to use their EdPlan software to create EXCEL plans. The software creates a profile for each student, housing all relevant data (for example, formative and summative assessments and grades). • MCS Policy 4.20141 (Modified School Calendars) states that “Memphis City Schools promotes the use of modified school calendars with intersessions when they are used to meet the specialized needs of its student population. • MCS Board Policy 4.6055 (Awarding Units of Credit) outlines policy statements regarding the awarding of “credit by examination to students who have taken the equivalent of high school level courses” and “out-of-school experience credit.” • MCS Board Policy 4.209 (Alternative Credit Options) seeks to address inequity of access to coursework in some schools by ensuring that all students have exposure to on-line learning and/or training before graduation. <p>Providing the specific board policies strengthens this section as it is very clear that school and district leaders have sufficient flexibility to implement policies that provide the environment for personalized learning including allowing credit as demonstrated by mastery and by alternate routes.</p> <p>However, developing and approving the joint policies while simultaneously implementing this project adds a degree of complexity to ensuring the governance structure is solid. In addition, the board policies provided to demonstrate full access by Special Education and ELL students are compliance driven and may indeed need updating. Therefore, Shelby County Schools scores in the bottom of the high range in this section.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant addresses school infrastructure components that support personalized learning as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project supervisor hired to manage Shelby SPRINTERS will report directly to the project director, Assistant Superintendent. • The Assistant Superintendent is a key member of the Transition Steering Committee. • Supporting the Assistant Superintendent and Project Supervisor will be a Management Team that will include a key staff member from SCS or MCS in each of the five project areas. • The management team will meet on a monthly basis and will advise the Assistant Superintendent and the project supervisor of developments potentially affecting initiative success. • On a quarterly basis the external evaluator will meet with the management team to review formative evaluation information and to prepare for quarterly meetings with the wider advisory council. • Each secondary student and his or her parents or guardians will have access to a real-time progress report, including the student’s individual student information, course requirements, enrollment, fulfillment of requirements, Explore/Plan/ACT scores, attendance, suspensions, and other pertinent indicators of whether the student is on track to graduate. • Through school-based Professional Learning Communities and district-level PIT Crews, all teachers will know how to use new data sources and other resources available through the project to strengthen instruction and improve student outcomes for college and career readiness. • The <i>Data to Decisions</i> Initiative, scheduled for completion in Fall 2013, will ensure that information about students’ learning is available to students, their parents or guardians, and other partners in students’ achievement of their learning goals. • The electronic tool selected by the merged district to serve as the students’ educational planning tool will also be an important communication mechanism. • The <i>Data to Decisions</i> data warehouse is a complete educational intelligence solution, providing a central repository of relevant data delivered via user-friendly dashboards and reports. 		

Clearly, the proposal sets up an infrastructure to ensure successful implementation of the project. All stakeholders have access to data, communication is well-planned and frequent, and data systems are robust and accessible. The application would be strengthened by including teachers and other school staff on the Transition Planning Commission. Shelby County Schools scores in the high range. Nothing is missing from this section.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal includes a process to provide timely and regular feedback to initiative implementers on progress. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the lead LEA, Shelby County Schools will contract with an experienced and objective third-party evaluator to develop and conduct an evaluation of the work supported by this project, including a formative evaluation that provides information useful for continuous improvement. The third-party evaluator will advise SCS and MCS as needed in gathering goal and performance measure data, which include measures of the quality of investment in professional development, technology, and staff. The evaluator will construct and distribute questionnaires to stakeholder groups – students, parents, teachers, and community stakeholders – and conduct focus groups of principals and key administrators to gain information on initiative projects. Teacher curriculum review committees will analyze and audit curriculum based on new data. These committees will modify, adjust, and revise the curriculum reconciling demands of new state and national standards along with current research and formative evaluation data emerging from the initiative. Formative evaluation data related to the initiative will be among the data made available to PLCs within high schools. <p>Because the proposal does not address how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments, Shelby County Schools scores in the bottom of the high range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal includes planning and communication with internal and external stakeholders as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Advisory Council will include stakeholder representatives from a minimum of five post-secondary institutions in the county, the four military branches with representation in the county’s schools, a minimum of six employers in the county, and a minimum of six community organizations partnering with the schools through <i>Education Beyond the Classroom</i>. The Advisory Council will include representatives of students, parents, teachers, counselors, and principals in the participating schools. <p>While the applicant described the makeup of the advisory council, the strategies to be employed for their role in ongoing communication were not addressed. Therefore, Shelby County Schools scores in the medium range.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal sets achievable performance measures as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant has identified 11 performance measures (8 required). All performance measures disaggregated by subgroup for each applicant. Some highly effective teacher and principal goals by 2014-15 as low as 35%. Many effective teacher and principal goals by 2014-15 100%. Applicable population for HQT is “all participating students” yet proposal includes only students enrolled in English II, their English II teachers, and their principals. The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup, who are on track to college- and career-readiness 		

as measured by a PLAN score of at least 15 in English and at least 19 in Math from 16% in 2011-12 to 24% by 2014-15 seems like low expectations.

- The percentage of participating students, by subgroup, who are proficient in Algebra I according to the state's End of Course exam goal from 41% in 2011-12 to 56% in 2014-15 seems like low expectations.
- The percentage of participating students, who are college-ready in all four areas according to the ACT goal from 10% to 18% seems like low expectations, especially given and is the key performance measure of the initiative.

Because the applicant did not address how it will review and improve the measures over time, Shelby County Schools scores in the medium range.

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

This section is strengthened by identifying valuable research criteria such as:

- To determine "impact on student learning," the proposal identifies the following research questions: What impact do the projects have on student achievement and staff behaviors, including personnel retention, recruitment and willingness to share effective practice and students' engagement in remaining on track for college and career readiness?
- To determine "promising practices," the proposal identifies the following research questions: How has the initiative contributed to the district's merging, its participation in Teacher Effectiveness Initiative reform, the state's adoption of Common Core Standards, and the state's First to the Top initiative?

Because the proposal limits the evaluation of the effectiveness of investments to "observation by the external evaluator" and the measures to be used in evaluating the effectiveness of RTT investment were not specified, Shelby County Schools scores in the medium range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal clearly sets out a detailed and well thought through budget overview and budget narrative for each of the following 5 projects:

- Project 1: Data driven teacher leader placement. Requested budget =\$8,697,104.00. Other funding =\$718,166.00. Funding to support improved recruitment and hiring of "high potential" teachers and leaders; raise the bar and improve the process for granting tenure; Increase the retention of effective teachers and leaders, and increase the turnover of the most ineffective teachers and leaders
 - Majority of project #1 costs are summer school stipends which does not clearly align with the purpose and goals of the project.
- Project 2: Data-driven professional development. Requested budget: \$440,311. Other funds = \$542,444. Funding to support the teacher and leader evaluation process; Connect professional support opportunities to individual need; Create new and differentiated career paths; Compensate teachers based on differentiated roles and performance
 - Other than shared expenses for grant administration, funds in this area are for substitute pay to allow flexible scheduling for parent consultations regarding student passports and to provide for peer-mentoring by highly effective teachers. Again, this does not clearly align with the purpose and goals of the project.
- Project 3: Common Core Resources. Requested budget: \$1,704,999. Other funds = \$542,444. Funding to support improved school culture to create conditions that foster effective teaching and learning; create new structures and tracking systems to support students and their parents as they advance through high school; provide resources that facilitate success in implementing Common Core Standards; and adapt the new technology platform.
 - Budget appears to be aligned with the purpose and goals of the project. Might have been a mistake in calculations for Saturday School site managers. Proposal states "paid at \$350/hour."

- Project 4: Personalized Learning Environments. Requested budget: \$20,430,881. Other funds = \$744,000. Funding to support a new Annual Learning Goals Individualized Check-up process; utilize individualized planning tools; provide online developmental and enrichment support to all students; provide summer and Saturday activities for students with the greatest need for services
 - Budget appears to be aligned with the purpose and goals of the project. Unclear why student computers, iPads for attendance, and 10 eReader replacements would be an annual purchase? The quoted cost of \$5,000 per computer for computer labs seems excessive. The calculations for 50% of cost for iPads, estimated at \$700 per iPad with 1 iPad for each of 43 schools and two additional iPads for each of the 6 regions does not = \$77,000. \$30 per student for advising materials each year seems excessive (\$4,860,000 is 23% of this budget).

- Project 5: Community Support. Requested budget: \$8,708,284. Other funds = \$600,000. Funding to support increased parental involvement in the college and career readiness process; expanded community partner use of online tools for individualized developmental or enrichment support; and summer college activities for rising seniors and transitioning graduates.
 - Budget appears to be aligned with the purpose and goals of the project. Same comments as in Project 4 regarding annual purchases of equipment and iPad calculations. Costs for tri-state college bus tours estimated at \$5,000 per charter bus (covering a full day of transportation and meals for approximately 64 students), assuming 172 charter busses per year (4 per high school) seems excessive, but is a great idea.

Therefore, Shelby County Schools scores in the high range.

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

The proposal provides little evidence of a plan for sustainability of the project goals after the term of the grant. In fact, the applicant states that "Because the districts will merge in 2013, currently it is not possible to fully outline a high-quality plan for sustainability."

The applicant provided the following examples of sustainability:

- Regular reports will be issued to Shelby County Board of Education on progress in building sustainability of high school projects through this initiative.
- The number of computer labs available in partnering organizations for student use will grow from 12 in Year 1 to 48 in Year 4.

Several key pieces are incomplete in this section:

- No evidence of a high quality plan for sustainability which includes Key Goals, Activities, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Party for each goal.
- No evidence of state and local government support for sustainability.
- No post grant budget submitted by applicant.

Therefore, Shelby County Schools scores in the low range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The proposal includes integration of public and private resources in partnership to augment the school's resources to address the social needs of high risk students.

The project includes the following components:

- The Transition Planning Commission views the merger of MCS and SCS as an opportunity for all people in Shelby

County to be invested in the success of all students in Shelby County.

- The district is responsible for creating a culture among district staff and school leaders that values partnership with community organizations, partners, and volunteers.
- Shelby County Schools will draw on current strengths of MCS and SCS to build a public and private partnership that will augment schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools.
- The applicant identifies 9 population-level desired results – directly aligned with the RTTD initiative (“All students have afterschool support for homework” is repeated).
- As part of the evaluation, the external evaluator and data specialist will track the selected indicators at the aggregate level.
- Student-level progress in achieving the results related to these indicators will be tracked using the Passport data collection.
- Data will inform the location of several programs and services within the initiative. For example, each summer two summer bridge programs will be planned for each region. These bridge programs will be placed in schools where students are least likely to have highly effective instruction during the school year in key subjects.
- If the data supports expansion of the model to the middle school in future years, the Advisory Council may grow to include greater representation of middle schools.
- The management team – with a representative from each of the five key projects will meet on a monthly basis, and an advisory council will meet on a quarterly basis. At each of these meetings, there will be a focus on continuous improvement, with a formal continuous improvement report made at each advisory council meeting.
- The performance measures selected for this initiative are a blend of measures of academic success and measures of a variety of socio-emotional factors in that academic success. Data reviewed at the aggregate level will include not only district-held data but also data from the Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County and the U.S. Census' American Community Survey.
- Staff of the two districts are receiving joint training through RTT-S in the Data to Decisions Initiative and will be responsible for facilitating use of data in PLCs to build staff capacity.
- The teachers and counselors who lead Saturday and summer programming will be given data snapshots of their students' progress according to the students' Passports.
- ACT Engage will yield valuable information for students, parents, and school and district personnel.
- The Advisory Council will be the primary avenue for identifying and inventorying school and community needs and assets including Urban Youth Initiatives, Leadership Memphis, and Memphis/Shelby Achieves.
- The applicant provides a comprehensive list of achievable performance indicators – directly aligned with the RTTD initiative.

Shelby County Schools scores in the high range. Nothing is missing from this section.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant meets the criteria for Absolute Priority 1 as evidenced by:

- The applicant presents a cogent and comprehensive plan to improve learning and teaching through personalized learning.
- The initiative is based on a major area of concern within the community – under preparedness of graduating high school students.
- The merging of Memphis City Schools (MCS) and Shelby County Schools (SCS), scheduled for completion August 1, 2013.
- The Transition Planning Commission was recognized by the Tennessee Department of Education Commissioner for the diligence of the TPC in producing an innovative plan focused on the outcome of the students.
- The RTTD initiative focuses specifically on the needs of the county's high school students, too few of whom are college-ready and 47% of whom do not attend college in the fall semester following graduation.
- The application proposes to serve approximately 44,000 students and 2,700 teachers with services to focus primarily on students for whom individualized data sources indicate the greatest need. Based on 2011-12 enrollment figures, it is estimated that 78% of these students will be high-need (34,098 out of 43,885) and 65% will be low-income (28,323 out of 43,885).

Several reform efforts are underway within the state of Tennessee and the two LEAs which make up the 2 district consortium. These include America's Diploma Project, Common Core Standards, the *Data to Decisions* Initiative, the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative, and the School Improvement Grant.

- Both districts have implemented strategies aimed at improving the retention of the best teachers. In the leadup to the merger, SCS and MCS are working together to build on these strategies.

Total	210	148
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has designed a supplemental project that directly supports the goals of the primary proposal (college and career readiness of the districts' high school students).

This project includes:

- The goals of the supplemental project are (a) to enhance the career-readiness of students of both participating districts (SCS and MCS) who have intellectual disabilities, and (b) to expand local capacity to provide career-readiness services to students who have intellectual disabilities.
- The optional budget supplement project will be open to eligible high school students from all participating schools in SCS and MCS.
- Requested RTTD budget: \$1,953,540.00 Other funds = \$734,000.
- In the four years of the optional budget supplement project, the project will serve 80 participants, at a per-student cost of \$24,419.
- Budget states targeted group of approximately 250 eligible students (application says 80 students).
- MCS and the University of Memphis piloted a program, College Campus Transition Program. This program provides MCS students with mild to moderate disabilities an opportunity to interact with same-age peers in a college and community environment.
- An opportunity to build capacity of the existing program, enhancing its sustainability, and increasing its ability to serve two cohorts of students per year.
- University of Memphis has also recently established a new two-year certification program, TigerLIFE TigerLIFE (Learning Independence, Fostering Employment), for students with intellectual disabilities .
- Highly qualified tutors will be hired to work with current and past participants of the College Campus Transition Program in order to prepare them to re-take Gateway exams required for their receipt of a regular high school diploma
- Graduate assistants from the College of Education's Special Education program will be hired and trained in Work Based Learning and as a Division of Intellectual Disabilities Services Supported Employment Job Coach. Each graduate assistant will work with two College Campus Transition Program students, providing job coaching.
- Three para-professionals will serve as job developers. Job developers will receive training in Work Based Learning and DIDD's job coaching/developer training and will be supervised by a faculty member of the College of Education's Special Education program in consultation with district-level staff of the LEAs
- Contracted job developers will perform task analyses of all job placement opportunities identified by the University of Memphis.
- Equipment purchased for the video library will include 3 iPads and a server Participants will be able to load videos on their personal smart-phones to use as a reference in the performance of their on-campus jobs.
- During the period of the optional budget supplement project, the University of Memphis and the LEAs will develop a sustainability plan for maintaining and updating the video library.
- Laptops are used to complete career interest inventories, research careers, and build electronic portfolios as well as for tutoring and mentoring activities.
- iPads are used to capture video, audio, and close-captioned demonstrations of tasks to be completed by participants during their on-campus and in-the-community job experiences (a video library of a minimum of 25 jobs).

Because the proposal includes activities but does not include all of the elements of a high quality plan for the project

(missing Key Goals, Timeline, Deliverables, and Responsible Party for each goal), the Shelby County Schools supplemental budget request scores in the low-high range.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1061TN-2 for Shelby County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant sets forth a well thought out plan to build upon the current work of incorporating Data systems and empowering great teachers/leaders in the districts. The proposal will build upon and expand the work that the School Improvement Grant (SIG) which focuses on elementary and middle schools begun. Additionally, the proposal will continue and expand the work begun by the partnership with the Gates Foundation to increase teacher leader capacity. The applicant's vision to turn around lowest achieving schools lacks a unified course of action, the applicant has identified a key issue of student culture but is depending on the expansion of the current initiatives to impact student culture and improve student achievement in the lowest performing high schools. The applicant does not sufficiently address specifics to turn around lowest achieving schools resulting in the point reduction.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's narrative describes the process of school selection (Focusing on High Needs High Schools to extend the SIG work) and provides a table A2 identifying the schools as well as the number/percentage of participating students. The number of participating students and teachers is qualified by the statement, "in as many high schools as possible, with services to focus primarily on students for whom individualized data sources indicate the greatest need" This qualifier calls into question the applicant's confidence in their ability to fully implement the proposal as written.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents a proposed plan for reform which lays out key goals and activities and is overall creditable. Unfortunately, the narrative failed to present a time line, identify deliverables, or identify responsible parties. These are critical aspects of a high quality plan which makes the proposed plan actionable.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the applicant does set high goals for increasing the graduation rate and the college enrollment rate for the targeted high school students in the proposed merged district, the overall proposed growth is not ambitious. The applicant choose to set annual growth in ELA and math goals below TN's ESEA targets of "approximately 3 to 5 percent" annually for all students. Additionally, the applicant choose to propose annual ELA and math gap closure across subgroups lower that TN's ESEA target of 6 percent.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative establishes a clear track record of success. The 2012 standardized test results listed 24 schools from the combined SCS and MCS districts as reward schools with three schools scoring in the top 5% of proficiency across the state. Among those 24 schools was two middle schools who in 2007 was listed as a "Striving Schools" and the county's first Title I International Baccalaureate school. Additionally, three SCS high schools have been recognized by <i>Newsweek</i> as among "the best 1,000 public high schools in the nation." MCS schools have demonstrated a strong pattern of improvement over the last four years by exceeding the state's annual improvement rate on four of six exams. The applicant demonstrates the effectiveness of reforming persistently low performing schools through increasing teacher effectiveness. The narrative outlines the impact of the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative which has been in the districts since 2009. The initiative allowed the principals in the lowest performing schools are allowed to hire first from the pool of potential teachers. The results of the new hiring practices coupled with extensive input by teachers in the design of the evaluation model is that TN's Achievement School District has not elected to incorporate any of the high schools in MCS. Currently, the districts have an initiative to collaborated with community partners to provide academic information and educational plans to help determine if progress is being made.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a response with limited details about how each LEA processes and practices are made transparent to the public. The applicant identifies transparent in the following ways: a. currently both districts follow state and federal instructions by publicly disclosing funding at the district level and by indicating that personnel salaries are available upon request. There is a plan to merge data systems between SCS and MCS which will be rolled out in the 2013-14 School Year.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicants' narrative demonstrates high quality evidence that the proposed reforms are in compliance with the current trend of reform in TN, namely the Response to Intervention movement within the state. The narrative explains the correlation between proposed reform and RTI activities. Additionally, the narrative explains how TN's <i>First to the Top</i> teacher effectiveness and tenure reform will fold into the overall plan of district reform proposed in the application.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has strong evidence of stakeholder engagement and support as evidenced by: a.) 83%- 95.6% overall educator support as reported by each participating high school.b.) Stakeholder focus group of 44 people which included representatives from both districts, parents, students, teachers, counselors, an principals. This group made suggestions that were incorporated into the learning plan and provided positive feedback c. The applicant has attached numerous letters of support from community partners, post-secondary institutions, foundations, and organizations. Additionally, there are numerous letters of support from community based organizations. This is high level of stakeholder engagement and support demonstrates meaningful engagement in the development of the proposal.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a strong high quality plan for analyzing the current status of the participating districts/schools. Further, the applicant presents clear logic to support the identified reform strategies. Namely the applicant identifies on participating district as having the greatest need (MCS) in the following areas:</p> <p>a. Identified the key goals of ensuring that these subgroups show improvement (Native American, Hawaiian/Pacific</p>		

Islander, Economically Disadvantaged)

b. Close achievement gaps in key subgroups (Black/Hispanic/Native Am., Economically Disadvantaged, ELL, and Students with Disabilities).

Additionally, the applicant identified a crucial component of addressing these gaps as increasing high school counselors work time to 11-month to provide, "year end closeout, serve students during Summer months, and prepare student records and schedules for the next school year." The logic being that the additional time will articulate into improved student achievement in the following ways:

100% Graduation, 100% FAFSA completion, 100% Acceptance to an Education or Training experience after high school, 100% Matriculation.

Clearly the applicant has analyzed the currently available data for gaps and areas of need, then planned a proposal which will address the identified areas of concern

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has high quality narrative description for improving learning by personalizing the learning environment. The applicant presents the researched based logic behind the plan for reform then gives program specific detail to present a full view of the identified key goal of improving students' access to personalized resources for achievement in high school. The reform plan centers around the use of Shelby SPRINTERS passport (SSP) plan. The passport plan will provide students and parents with the tools needed to make informed academic decisions. Additionally, the SSP will provide each student with a support team to be a point of quick aid for academic situations. The web based plan which will be centered in a online data warehouse will identify the students Individual Learning Plan and ensure that the components of student interest and family engagement will be included in students plan. The online tools that will be offered for students will allow them access to Reading, math, and ACT support while the SSP will provide educators with the needed student data to make RTI decisions based on student needs. This plan ensures that high-needs students to have the necessary priority access to Summer Bridge activities as well as Saturday activities.</p> <p>The applicant referred to a Timeline in the Appendix, unfortunately the paper copy as well as the digital copy of the crucial component was unreadable (even using zoom in the PDF version) resulting in the reviewer being unable to completely evaluate the creditability of the implementation plan, resulting in the reduced points for an otherwise well described plan of learning reform.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's narrative has evidence of planning to engage and support educators in the training necessary to improve student's achievement through the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative which allows them to structure a learning environment to meet individual students' academic needs to accelerate student progress. Still, the applicant does not clearly connect educator professional development to increasing students' college and career data. The narrative details the impact of the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative (TEI) as allowing for smarter decisions about who teachers and leads the schools. Additionally, the applicant provides a detailed explanation of the support given to educators through peer coaches and Master Teachers as well as how the TEI provides for multiple career paths for educators. The applicant identifies key goals and broad general activities in improving school culture to increase student achievement. The applicant referred to a Timeline in the Appendix, unfortunately the paper copy as well as the digital copy of the crucial component is unreadable resulting in the reviewer being unable to sufficiency evaluate the creditability of the implementation plan, resulting in the reduced points for an otherwise well described plan of teaching reform.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>a). The narrative has a strong plan to provide support in the form of the Transition Planning Commission calling for a “portfolio school district.” This approach is visually depicted in narrative as “Estimate of what district will look like in 2013-14. Additionally, The applicant proposes that the LEA will offer the contracted serves of Public Consulting Group to make use of EdPlan software to create EXCEL plans for all students. This support system will provide necessary identifiers for school and parents to make academic decisions with the student’s best interest in mind.</p> <p>b). The narrative outlines a path to achieve calendar flexibility in school s. This procedure will allow School Leadership Teams to provide enrichment activities for the special needs of all students (regular, advanced, and at risk students). Sadly, there is no evidence in the description of Flexibility which directly addresses school personnel decisions, staffing models, or roles/responsibilities for educators. Nor any mention about budget flexibility. These are critical components which provide sufficient autonomy to positively impact the level of influence the proposed reforms will have improving student achievement.</p> <p>(c &d). The narrative presents a detailed explanation about the current measures which allow students the opportunity to progress by have an Early Admissions Program agreement with local universities. This program allows students to finish high school and achieve college credit at the same time. Additionally, students who remain in regular high school have the requirement to pass at least one on-line course with the opportunity for more on-line courses before exiting high school. The applicant proposes to expand the opportunities for students to take online courses by offering district sites before and after school and beyond the school year.</p> <p>(e) The applicant falls short of a detailed explanation of the adaptable and accessible nature of resources and instructional practices by choosing to list Board Policies without explaining the details the policies address. This is a critical component to ensuring all reforms will impact the truly high needs students.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a strong plan with a tiered model to ensure that the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning for all students. The plan has the following high quality details: Dr. Tim Setterlund will be responsible for planning, research, and transition leading up to and during the merger of SCS and MCS. Additionally, he is supported by a project supervisor and will be supported by the Shelby SPRINTERS Management team. This team will meet monthly to advise of and handle obstacles to implementation of the merger and expand reforms. Additionally, many stakeholders from inside and outside the schools will be included in the discussions. There are two missing elements in the construction of the management team; there is very little participation of parents (the narrative sites one parent will serve on the team) and no building level representation on the team. The proposal explains that equitable and universal access to resources will be provided to students via access to a real-time progress report, including individual student information, course requirements, enrollment, fulfillment of requirements, testing data, attendance, etc. This data will allow for sound support for families and students as academic decisions are considered. The levels of support are tiered and outlined giving details about Learning Goal Check-ups which will give mechanisms of school-based Professional Learning Communities and the PIT crews, as well as teachers and students to strengthen instruction and improve student outcomes.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a sound plan to continuously monitor progress. The plan is high quality in the model of providing timely and regular feedback on progress and in monitoring progress, however the narrative does not address how the general public will be informed or engaged in the process. The LEA plans to contract with a third party evaluator to develop and conduct evaluations of the work supported by this project. The third party contract will advise the LEA in gathering goal and performance measure data to include quality of investment in PD, technology, and staff. The data will be collected quarterly then shared with stakeholders through teachers Core Learning Teams, district PIT crew, and high school principals. The overall plan is sound with the noticeable lack of planning to inform the public, this is a critical component to ensure transparency.</p>		

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a strong plan to <i>engage</i> internal and external stakeholders. However, there is little detail concerning what communication will occur or how that will impact student learning. The applicant plans to include post-secondary institutions, each of the four military branches, six employers, six community organizations who partner with the schools through Education Beyond the Classroom, as well as students, parents, teachers, counselors, and principal representatives. The final goal is to develop six separate advisory councils to ensure sustainability. The narrative does not detail how communication will flow from the councils or what form the council meetings will take. This is a critical point that needs to be considered and planned for to ensure feedback and sustainability.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the applicant did outline Performance measures, neither the narrative nor the accompanying Chart E3a-e provided any rationale for selecting the measures, nor has the applicant provided details which explain how the measures will be monitored to provide rigorous, timely, or formative leading information tailored to the applicants proposed plan or theory of action. Finally, it is not enough that Performance Measures are indicated in the application; the applicant failed to provide the requested and specific details for full positive evaluation. The applicant did not provide details to explain how the LEA will review and improve the measures over time if they are gauged to be insufficient as indicators of program success. These key components of the evaluation rubric should be in place to ensure that the chosen indicators are appropriate for gauging implementation success.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant briefly describes a plan to rely on a third party external evaluator to judge the effectiveness of the Race to the Top-District funded activities. The evaluator will observe key activities to better address two overarching questions; how do the activities impact student learning, and what are promising practices. This is a narrow approach which disregards key components of the applicant overall plan for improved student achievement. The applicant is not specific about the "key activities" that will be evaluated by the third party external evaluator. Evaluating the effectiveness of the investments is a critical component of the proposal, the missing detailed and specific activities that the evaluator will judge is crucial to ensuring effectiveness of the proposal.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Budget and accompanying narratives are very well thought out and detailed. The Overall Budget Summary and narrative is further broken into sub-budgets to give specific detail about each project (Data-Driven Teacher Leader Placement, PD, Common Core resources, Personalized Learning Environments, and community support. The narrative further explains that the proposal will have additional funding from other grants through the school year 2017. The applicant indicates that the proposal will have access to local and state funding sources as well.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant acknowledges that the participating districts face a certain level of uncertainty due to a planned merger. For this reason the applicant hesitated to outline a comprehensive plan of sustainability for the proposed reform. The applicant is relying on public attention to ensure that successful components will be continued. Sustainability of the proposal is a critical component of the proposal. The lack of specific details results in an overall weak plan for sustainability.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The proposal has a strong Competitive Preference Priority by utilizing a detailed narrative with applicable tables. The applicant provides a detailed description of the partnerships with the public through the use of First to the Top STEM competition, tnAchieves initiatives, and their adopter programs etc. Additionally, the applicant identifies the population level desired along with results in a table. The applicant address the use of data with a detailed description how to address student needs through the use of data to inform summer bridge programs and Saturday programs. The applicant proposals scaling the model to the middle school resulting in the better prepared 9th graders. The proposal will track progress through the use of the management team for Shelby SPRINTERS model. The applicant will make academic success and measures of a variety of socio-emotional factors a priority.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a proposal which coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on the core educational assurance areas through the use of Shelby SPRINTERS to create learning environments (with in the high schools) that will significantly 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; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of 9-12 grade participating students. Additionally, the proposal will increase the effectiveness of educators by expanding the progress made with TN's Teacher Effectiveness Initiative in order to expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups by providing tiered RTI settings for all 9-12 students.

Total	210	166
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	13

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a sound rationale for targeting the gaps in achievement between students with disabilities and all other students and lays out a highly ambitious proposal to expand an experimental program (College Campus Transitional Model) already in place between one of the districts and the University of Memphis to use same age peers in a college and community environment as peer tutors to assist mild to moderately disabled students in identifying career interests, build electronic employability portfolios, additionally, the students are able to receive job coaching and work with mentors/tutors to improve achievement on exit exams. The supplemental budget proposal would allow schools from both districts to include students and expand the focus on at risk students.

The proposal has specific activities outlined (highly qualified tutors, graduate assistants to serve as job coaches, and video libraries/equipment) as well as an identified responsible person and targeted goals of providing a variety of modes for students to achieve success, and developing an alternative route to achieve career readiness for students with disabilities. The proposal does loosely connect with the districts but do not expand the proposal outside of the currently identified school systems as required for full points.

The proposed budget is detailed and outlines reasonable expenses necessary to accomplish the stated goal and includes

the estimated number of students the projects and actives would serve.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1061TN-3 for Shelby County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is a consortium of 2 school districts which will merge into one district during the course of the grant. Currently the 2 districts are supervised by a single Board of Education. In addition, there is a Transition Planning Commission (TPC) with 21 appointed members.</p> <p>The districts are part of the state Race to the Top. The TPC reviewed this current work and made 172 recommendations within ten priorities. Planning to move forward from the state level priorities to the merged district needs is the basis for a coherent and comprehensive reform vision.</p> <p>The new mission of the district(s) is to be the premier school district, attracting effective teachers, leaders, and staff, all committed to excellence. This, coupled with a set of five commitments/beliefs, agreed upon by the Transition Steering Committee provides a framework for supporting the comprehensive reform vision.</p> <p>The applicant clearly states the 4 core educational assurance areas have shaped this initiative. By focusing on high schools, the merged district will retain its School Improvement Grant focus on elementary and middle schools which are persistently low achieving.</p> <p>The applicant presents a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that clearly builds on the 4 core areas.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states a goal is to prepare all high school students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. The applicant presents information stating that there will be services to 44,000 students, 34,098 high need students, 2700 educators, 28,323 low income students, 7,100 students from persistently low achieving schools.</p> <p>The applicant does not state a clear description of the process used to select the participating schools. Without this process, it is not clear why high schools were chosen instead of a different grade span.</p> <p>The applicant states that all high schools will be served and lists them on the chart. Within the narrative section, there is a statement that the applicant will serve as many schools as possible. This is confusing and inconsistent information which will impact the implementation since there is no clear description of the process used to select participating schools.</p> <p>It is unclear how the project will be scaled to include other schools and grade spans.</p> <p>The applicant focuses more on the success of the merger than students to be served.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not provide a high quality plan which includes goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, and responsible</p>		

party.

The applicant does include a chart (change model) which lists Common Agreed Upon Definitions of College and Career Readiness, Common Core Proficiency at the High School, and Effective Teaching/Leading in High School impacting the 5 Projects which increase the number distribution of students, effective teachers/Leaders, number/distribution of on track for college and career success and increased number with effective teachers/leaders which result in dramatically improved student achievement and college and career readiness.

This chart and subsequent narrative describe components of the plan, but not comprehensively, or with a level of detail as it lacks a timeline, deliverables, person responsible and specific processes to be used to meet goals/objectives.

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

10

4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The State of TN has set targets at “approximately 3-5 percent annual growth for all students beginning with 2010-11 baselines and 6 percent annual gap closure across subgroups.”

Summative assessments being used are the state comprehensive assessment which is aligned with the state common core standards and criterion referenced end of course exams.

The applicant has not described ambitious and achievable goals in the four core areas. They do not equal or exceed the state targets for all subgroups.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Several reform efforts are underway within the state and the two districts in the consortium such as America’s Diploma Project, Common Core Standards, the Data to Decisions Initiative, the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative, and the School Improvement Grant.

The applicant has provided evidence of a clear record of success over the past several years. Prior documented successes include:

---Past success in raising student achievement has been demonstrated by both districts. For example, In August 2012, 24 schools within both districts were designated as reward schools – three for placing within the top 5% of proficiency across the state and 21 for showing the greatest gains in proficiency. One district had 20 schools and was the largest of any single school district in the state. Among these 24 reward schools are the county’s two “middle college” high schools, where students can earn up to two years of college credit while still in high school.

---Currently three of the district’s eight high schools are listed by Newsweek as among “the best 1,000 public high schools in the nation,” which are recognized as being the most effective at turning out college-ready grads. Newsweek researchers use six criteria to determine the 2012 rankings: the four-year graduation rate, college-acceptance rate, and number of AP and other high-level exams given per student account for 75 percent of the overall score; average SAT/ACT and AP/college-level test scores each count for another 10 percent; and the number of AP courses offered per student is weighted as the final 5 percent.

---In one district, proficiency rate exceeded the state proficiency rate, on four of the six exams. The second district demonstrated a strong pattern of annual improvement, exceeding the state’s annual improvement rate on four of the six exams and showing annual improvement in five of the six exams.

--Teachers were surveyed and showed greater confidence in their principal’s instructional leadership.

--Vacancies were filled prior to the first day of school because of new recruitment and hiring strategies.

---In 2011 non profits were able to access student data in order to provide support services. In 2012 more community agencies were part of the initiative.

---Students from persistently low achieving schools participated in robotics competition for the past several years.

---Of the 27 schools designated as "Striving Schools" in 2007 based on their AYP status, only three remained in SSZ by 2010, and two of those three were in "Improving" status.

---The data accessed by the non profits was not a coordinated data base or a pilot of an electronic data base. The applicant did not provide evidence of the data being accessible to the students or the parents. Teachers were also not mentioned as having access to a coordinated data base in the past.

---Racial and ethnic group increases were not addressed in this section.

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

The applicant has included a chart with personnel salaries disaggregated by teachers, instructional staff, and total staff. It also includes non personnel expenditures.

State and federal funding for instructional and classroom use is publicly disclosed at the district level.

The applicant piloted new transparency processes and practices with seven of its lowest performing schools. The pilot did not use the above four categories of information of school level expenditures and did not make it available beyond the pilot.

The applicant does have some experience with transparency of fiscal information by school.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

TN has been a Race to the Top State for the past 2 years. It has the mechanisms in place to support and require the applicant to meet the goals set.

The ESEA waiver provides greater autonomy and flexibility for schools and LEAs with proven success.

Once the merger of the two districts is complete and there is one set of policies and procedures, the district context will greatly improve.

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

The applicant included a description of the process and provided meaningful stakeholder involvement as evidenced by:

- a focus group was held for 44 stakeholders representing 11 schools in both districts.
- brainstorming from focus groups generated many ideas which became key concepts of the application ie. The Passport is one example
- MOU's are included from both teacher associations indicating support
- Mayors of the cities were afforded an opportunity for input
- An electronic survey of teachers at all high schools garnered a range of 83-95.6% support of the proposed components.
- Charter schools were also given an opportunity to review and comment on the proposal
- Letters of support are included from administrators, non profits, colleges/universities, etc.

The applicant has engaged the stakeholders in meaningful ways which has resulted in their suggestions being incorporated into the final plan. This involvement will lead to better implementation as stakeholders have already begun their participation.

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

The applicant has not provided a high quality plan which includes goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, and responsible party. Without this evidence of a high quality plan, it is not possible to award full points.

The applicant states that it will improve by closing gaps on specific subgroups of students.

The applicant does discuss the need for services and support citing first generation college bound students, low scores, and low income families as contributing to the needs.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	11

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has proposed a series of activities for learning that engage and empower all learners. The following highlights components which address the criteria of this section:

-- Learning will be through a personalized plan which will be monitored for progress to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration and allows students, within reasonable parameters, to design their own methods for learning.

---The Passport, a unique idea, will be used beginning in 8th grade to alert parents, students, and teachers of those who are in need of additional assistance so that the personalized learning plan can begin. The intent is to have a web based platform that will allow parents and students the ability to access their plans through a secure system outside of the school day.

---The learning is linked to college and career ready graduation requirements through the Common Core.

---Multiple measures of assessment—screening; formative to monitor progress and to modify program as needed; diagnostic; and summative measures will be used.

---Transition planning will be purposeful from grade to grade and school to school.

---Family engagement will be tracked, and there will be prompts to guide family interactions.

---Overall there are activities which will engage the learner and the family, and allow students to understand how to direct their learning.

---Students with high needs will be given priority for services.

There are weaknesses associated with this section:

---The web-based tracking tool of the Passport has not been identified. Since it has yet to be determined, it is not possible to know that there is a tool or the quality of one that will be found.

---The applicant does not speak directly to the resources available for students with special needs or those whose first language is not English.

--Neither the timeline included or the narrative meets the criteria of a high quality plan as it only has activities, responsible person/group, and months/years. The lack of deliverables and goals and the lack of specificity in beginning and ending dates will make the plan difficult to implement in a quality way.

The applicant does not provide enough information in terms of linking the activities to intentional outcomes/deliverables that have expected timeframes for implementation.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has proposed a series of professional learning activities to increase the capacity of teachers to personalize the learning environment for students and link the learning of the teacher to the learning of the students.

Components of the plan include:

---There is an observational rubric included for watching teachers through the lens of the Professional Learning Community artifacts and real time information.

---The comprehensive professional development model includes levels of peer coaching, team based collaboration; technology will supplement and augment peer coaching and individual support . There will be greater access to resources, and a customized approach to professional development.

---Resources will be provided to facilitate success in implementing the Common Core Standards.

--There will be a professional development management system whereby teachers will receive targeted support to develop their own learning plan.

--The applicant will continue to use partners to recruit and staff theachers and leaders for urban school systems.

---The applicant intends to improve the process for granting tenure while working within current policy and legal frameworks which have been strengthened.

----Teacher retention will be monitored so that excellent teachers will be celebrated and recognized by the community at large.

---The 2 districts have agreed to adopt the revised teacher evaluation process.

--There will be performance based group bonuses based on student learning growth goals. This will begin in 2014-2015.

---The applicant is developing the technology platform needed for linking student achievement, budget information, and human resources information.

There are weaknesses in meeting the criteria of this section:

---Neither the narrative or the chart contains all of the components for a high quality plan. There are activities and a process but the deliverables/outcome and the specific timeframe are missing.

---There are no specific guidelines or training sessions mentioned for the purpose of site based professional development which is included as an option. Without that information, it is not possible to determine the quality of the sessions. There also is no information included about how site based teams will be trained to know about the content and process for developing high quality professional development.

---There is no evidence given that the learning resources are aligned with college and career ready standards.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: The two districts are aware of the need for joint policies and those will become effective August 2013. There are some policies already in place which facilitate personalized learning such as modified school calendars and a policy with procedures; central office support through a system that documents academic performance with alerts and customization capabilities; and credit through demonstration of mastery rather than seat time. The policies in place for students with special needs and for English Language Learners are described as compliance requirements. In fact those students with IEPs may be exempted from multiple pathways to credit policy due to their IEPs. While the regulatory and compliance requirements cannot be ignored, the applicant does not include information as to how the challenge of providing the same opportunities as afforded other students is going to be met. The districts will have challenges in the merger in terms of adopting one set of policies and practices and has noted this in the narrative.		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: The membership of the transition team is composed of senior level leaders from the two districts.		

There are no building level representatives, parents, (except for one) students, or community members on the transition team. It is unclear if the staff member from each of the 5 project areas represents those voices, which are the closest to the students.

There will be accessible, real time progress reports with all pertinent information and indicators for students, parents, educators and other stakeholders.

The applicant does not indicate how low income families without internet service, and/or those from other language groups will access the technology and how students will access it outside of the school day/year.

The applicant states that the level of technical support will be appropriate for students, families, and educators through yearly 'check-ups' with students and families.

The applicant does not have many of the mechanisms in place yet and plans for a Fall 2012 completion date. It is unclear if the pilot testing of this will already be completed or if the system will still be experiencing development issues. The applicant does not address how the system will be handled if/should the technology not be in working order.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant will coordinate an RFP process to find an experienced and objective external evaluator.

The evaluator will review early indicators of project success and report on a quarterly basis.

There will be both qualitative and quantitative data. For example curriculum revision and adjustments will be advanced only after the data is analyzed and reported.

The professional development will have ongoing embedded practices.

Formative evaluation data will be made available to Professional Learning Committees.

At the school level, agendas and minutes from staff meetings will be evidence of how data is used to inform instructional planning. The Performance Improvement Team crew members will have classroom level data directly related to teaching and learning.

The applicant has not selected an evaluator and does not include the RFP or selection criteria to be used for the selection. Therefore it is not possible to determine the quality of the external evaluator.

The applicant does not address how this process of continuous improvement will continue beyond the terms of the funding cycle.

The applicant does not address how the continuous model of improvement will be applied to the technology and technical systems that support the individualized learning and teaching.

The approach is not high quality because of the omission of information which is cited above.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lists stakeholder representation on the advisory council. The military and post secondary institutions are represented as well as community organizations.

The initial focus group that informed the application process will also be reconvened.

Missing from the list are business representatives. The applicant does not address how the business community input, ability to be engaged on an ongoing basis will be handled so that the goal of students being career ready will be met.

The applicant does not detail how often the groups will meet, how their input will be obtained (oral, written, electronically) or who will collect the information. This lack of information will make the implementation more difficult until the strategies are in place.

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

The applicant lists 11 instead of 12-14 performance measures.

The applicant has included a chart which details the measures by subgroup with numbers and percentage of students.

The applicant does not explain the rationale for selection, how the data from the measure will be used, or how the measure itself will be reviewed and changed as necessary.

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

The applicant indicates two overarching questions (with sub questions) in its evaluation approach:

Student Learning: What impacts do the projects implemented have on student achievement and staff behaviors, including personnel retention, recruitment, and willingness to share effective practice and students' engagement in remaining on track for college and career readiness? How is the impact different from prior interventions and do they vary by student, school or teacher characteristics? Do students from persistently low performing schools receive equal or greater benefit from the initiative?

Promising Practices: How are promising practices identified and disseminated? What are the outcomes for educators, students, and others in schools? Have all components been implemented? How has this project contributed to the state's reform agenda?

The applicant does not specifically address the evaluation of professional development and activities that employ technology, and to more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results, through such strategies as improved use of technology, working with community partners, compensation reform, and modification of school schedules and structures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has identified funds and given a budget breakdown by project. The applicant has also spread the personnel and evaluation costs across the projects. The budget is comprehensive and documents all expenses.

There are a couple of budget items that raise questions such as office computers for staff costs in year one and year four.

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

The applicant is unable to document a high quality plan for sustainability as the 2 districts will not merge until 2013. The public will continue to focus attention on these initiatives as the underpreparedness of the graduating high school students is now very public and the community, parents, educators, students and others have been engaged in this process.

The district is able to anticipate that the computer labs available through partnering organizations will grow from 12 in year one to 48 in year four.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The merging two districts are forging a permanent partnership and their work on this proposal and the subsequent implementation will assist in raising the academic achievement of all high school students across the two districts.

The applicant has not written a high quality plan as all of the components of a high quality plan do not appear in each section.

The applicant has completed a comprehensive needs assessment, done research on appropriate interventions and has involved all levels of stakeholders in the planning of this proposal.

The applicant addresses the culture of the merged districts and the importance of creating and sustaining a positive working culture.

In this section the applicant discusses expansion of longitudinal data collection, providing fine arts access to all students, expanding a STEM initiative, and forging even more partnerships to provide more student apprenticeships. The applicant is not specific in how the indicators of success will be tracked and does not

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has met absolute priority 1 as it explains throughout the application how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly 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 (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

What the applicant has not done throughout the application is include a high quality plan in each section which clearly, specifically, and comprehensively delineates the goal, activities, timelines, deliverables, person responsible and the assessment/evaluation of each particular goal.

The applicant has the opportunity to be successful because of the state supports and context and because of the districts' upcoming merger as this project provides the two districts with a common means of addressing student achievement which is different that either of them has exactly experienced.

Total	210	137
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

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

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has submitted an optional budget supplement in partnership with the University for the transition of students with mild to moderate disabilities. The program was piloted and now a new cohort of students is now completing the

program. The optional budget is to build capacity of the program so that it can be sustained.

The program will use graduate students and provide a personalized learning environment which includes job coaching, identification of career interests, created an electronic employability portfolio and mentors provided academic support which targets the core areas of this competition.

Currently, the students are not eligible for federal funds, but the applicant is requesting funds for low income student participation and will work to change the regulations and policies preventing low income students from accessing the funds.

The applicant documents the need as it discusses the pilot, and describes a variety of supportive activities, but the applicant does not include a high quality plan because all of the components of a high quality plan are not included.