



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #1101MS-2 for Stone County School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not include a comprehensive and coherent reform vision for this criterion. The narrative for this criterion lacks a credible visionary approach to academic reform for the district. Instead, the applicant lists a set of arbitrary goals created by an unidentified RtT committee. The application's lack of details and the omission of a clear unifying vision does not compelling prove that the plan will be able to successfully implement reform to improve the districts core educational assurance areas.</p> <p>Although some of the goals listed refer to a few aspects of the core assurance areas like increasing principal and teacher effectiveness, the applicant overwhelmingly fails to address what approach the district will utilize to fulfill their stated goals and accelerate student achievement.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not include a detailed description of the process that was used to select participatng schools.</p> <p>Some of the data supplied for this criterion was difficult to critique because the data provided was vague.</p> <p>-The applicant states that the selection criterion for student participation included students who are " on free and reduced program, basic or below on state assessment, students on tier process, IEP students"; yet, the charts categorizing these groups do not match</p> <p>The data provided to show the total number of students from low income families and who are high needs is unclear and inconsistent. The totals for the student categories do not match for all of the subgroups.</p> <p>The applicant correctly utilized the template chart for criterion A.2. for providing total numbers of participating students in the section for criterion A.3.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant neglects to include a logic model or a clear theory of action. The plan lacks a framework for implementing the myriad of goals outlined in this criterion. As a result, the proposed plan is obscure and unrealistic.</p> <p>The applicant states in criterion A.1 that the participating students will include grades 3 to 12. However, some of the activities and goals listed in this criterion include K-2 students.</p> <p>-The district will provide all teachers in K-2 tablets and classroom E-reader sets; this is inconsistent with the applicant's guideline that the project will target grades 3 to12</p> <p>Many of the goals and activities described in the plan should lead to meaningful reform and improve student performance.</p> <p>-The applicant outlines an adequate plan for parent engagement that should support district wide improvement; besides providing services like job training and financial advice to parents, parents will also participate in teacher professional development</p> <p>-Teachers and instructional coaches will work together to infuse the Common Core Standards into school curriculum by 2014</p>		

Some of that activities expected of administrators seem inappropriate.

-For example, the plan states “All Administrators will...monitor Student Progress/Improve Support System”; no explanation is given about what is means to “improve support system” and it seem illogical to expect administrators instead of teachers to monitor student progress

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

The applicant's goal for increasing summative assessments is 3% annually. Although this goal is achievable, it is not ambitious. In addition, some of the data included for performance measures seem erroneous.

-On the MCT2 Language assessment for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the applicant states that ELL students have a baseline score of 100% and the goals for all four years of the grant is 100%; the baseline score appears to be an error and the goals of 100% is completely unrealistic

Overall, the district would like to increase the graduation rate by 2% annually. This increase does not seem ambitious for their IEP student population since their baseline graduation rate is only 19%.

The applicant totally omits goals for college enrollment rates.

The applicant's does not convincingly prove an overall clear record of success for the last four years because some of the evidence provided is vague.

-The chart to show 8<sup>th</sup> grade improvement is difficult to interpret because the applicant did not provide sufficient data in the key and on the chart labels; the chart overall is poorly presented and lacks explanation

The applicant successfully demonstrates enhanced student performance in Science from 2008 to 2011.

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	4

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates limited success in showing enhanced student performance in the district.

- The applicant demonstrates enhanced student performance in Science from 2008 to 2011.

However, the applicant overwhelmingly fails to prove a clear record of success for the last four years because much of the evidence provided is vague.

-The chart to show 8<sup>th</sup> grade improvement is difficult to interpret because the applicant did not provide sufficient data in the key and on the chart labels; the chart overall is poorly presented and lacks explanation; for example, the percentages for the y axis are not identified and the first bar in the chart is not sufficiently labeled

The applicant claims that two elementary schools that were placed on “academic watch” for performing below standard were able to improve after implementing school wide improvement plans. However, the applicant fails to provide specific details about how the principals were able to implement ambitious and significant reforms in these schools to turn them around. The applicant also neglects to provide assessment data that documents the success of school reforms.

The applicant provides sufficient details regarding how student performance data is made available to parents and educators.

-Reports are sent home via students

-Student/Teacher Portal implemented in last 2 years which makes data available electronically

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not prove that the district practices a high level of transparency in LEA in regards to school level expenditures and actual personnel salaries. Summations of district wide expenditures for instruction and student support are provided, but the applicant did not address if school level expenditures were made public at all. Similarly, summations of district wide expenditures for teachers are presented, but the applicant did not provide evidence that actual salaries for teachers are made public.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Overall, the proposal successfully demonstrates evidence of effective state wide conditions and autonomy necessary to implement personalized learning environments.</p> <p>Passage of the <i>Mississippi Healthy Students Act</i> passed in 2007 and creation of the State Board of Education's Office of Healthy Schools supports the district's effort in connecting student wellness with academic achievement. The state's recent adoption of the Common Core and College Readiness Standards has instigated the district to prepare adopt these higher standards and implement higher goals for student performance and achievement.</p> <p>In addition, the Mississippi Board of Education sanctioned several goals that require LEAs to increase student achievement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-For instance, one goal is the district must decrease student dropout rates</li> <li>-The Board also sanctioned the Tier Program which places social workers and clinicians at school sites to address students' social- emotional needs</li> </ul>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal includes a description of the variety of meetings that were held with key stakeholders such as parents, students, staff and the community. Nonetheless, it does not appear that these stakeholders were actually engaged in the development of the proposal; thus, it is unclear if stake holder feedback was collected and if stakeholder recommendations influenced program design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Evidence of sign in sheets for meetings were omitted in the Appendix</li> </ul> <p>Teacher and student surveys were conducted and the applicant reports that the majority of both constituents support the proposal. However, it does not appear that any feedback was collected specifically to improve the proposal's design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Evidence of the survey was not included in the Appendix</li> </ul> <p>The applicant does provide letters of support from students, a teacher, a superintendent from a local district and the president of the parent/ teacher association.</p> <p>The application does not include any evidence of support from the local collective bargaining unit.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a brief account of how district and school needs were assessed by a committee. A description of this committee membership and the process in which they undertook that resulted in the included analysis is omitted. As a result, it is not feasible to conclude that this was a high quality plan.</p> <p>A myriad of goals and activities to accomplish each stated goal like increasing teacher effectiveness through professional development and implementing Common Core Standards are contained within the plan. However, the applicant does not present any underlying rationale to justify the overall proposal. Thus, the goals and proposed activities to address the district's needs and gaps are disjointed and lack a strong vision and framework.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Plan requires middle school students to create individualized career plan; plan is further developed in high school by the counselor, career coach, parents and the student; a variety of career oriented courses; technology skills and career oriented projects will be introduced in elementary school to pave the way</p> <p>A program called Teen Leadership will be implemented in the high school. The curriculum focuses on assisting youth with goal setting, and positive decision making skills. A College Career Coach will be hired with grant funds to manage all of the career and leadership activities.</p> <p>The plan includes a vague description about the implementation of new instructional programs and testing resources. The applicant does not give concrete examples of what type of programs will be utilized; thus, it is difficult to access if these new curricula will lead to deep learning experiences.</p> <p>The applicant states that newly acquired online coursework will personalize students learning experiences. For example, advanced placement students will be able to work at their own pace.</p> <p>Teachers will improve their ability to structure lessons to increase student achievement by differentiating their lessons with data and support from Instructional coaches. The applicant does not clearly state where this data will come from and how it will be shared with students, teachers, parents and instructional coaches.</p> <p>The plan includes a list of activities for parents, teachers, and students at each level (elementary, middle and high schools) based on Brown University's "Changing Systems to Personalized Learning" theory. While the number of activities is numerous, they are vague and lack detail; thus, it is not convincing that all of these isolated activities will have the impact of improving student learning.</p> <p>- For example, in order to address goals around student application of knowledge and problem solving, the applicant includes "use skills needed to resolve conflicts with other people" as an activity; this activity as stated is too broad and lacks pertinent details needed to evaluate its effectiveness</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	7
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In order to improve instruction and increase teacher capacity, teachers will participate in Transformation School Reform which will teach teachers how to personalize learning environments.</p> <p>-The applicant does not provided any evidence that this program is effective</p> <p>The applicant provides lists of activities that teachers will implement to practice real world application and differentiation. However, the plan lacks any specificity and clarity about how professional development will be reformed and implemented if RTTD funds are awarded.</p> <p>-For instance, the plan states that teachers will "work collaboratively to develop a clear, comprehensive plan to integrate technology into the curriculum as a means to motivate and support students' conceptual understanding and independent application of the core curriculum"; yet no details are provided regarding how often, when and where this support will take place. Although many of the objectives are appropriate, the applicant's lack of detail does not convincingly demonstrate that the activities will be implemented effectively.</p> <p>Overall, the proposal's plan to support teachers in increasing their overall effectiveness to implement personalized learning and to frequently measure student progress towards meeting college and career ready standards lacks details.</p> <p>According to the applicant, principals will evaluate teachers 10 times a year to provide feedback and make recommendations regarding their practice. This high level of monitoring does not seem feasible given the extent of the other activities the plan proposes.</p> <p>The plan does address how teachers will support high needs students by meeting with parents and crafting an individualized learning plan to address the students' specific needs.</p>		

### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	7
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Although the applicant includes a copy of their district's organizational chart, the plan fails to describe how this organizational design will facilitate personalized learning for students or provide for grant activities at all schools.</p> <p>The applicant states that the school leadership team is already responsible for school schedules, calendars, personnel decisions and budgets. However, the applicant fails to include details about who serves on the school leadership team or identifies their decision making process and timelines for implementing grant activities were omitted.</p> <p>Although the plan includes providing online curriculum to students so that they can demonstrate mastery, it does not specifically state if students will not have to complete a minimum amount of hours for a particular course.</p> <p>The plan requires teachers to adapt digital curriculum in order to make it accessible to all students with special needs. The Special Education Director is responsible for providing data to teachers about students with special needs and developing individual learning plans to determine necessary accommodations.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan successfully outlines several strategies that will be implemented to ensure that parents, students and teachers have access to necessary resources to implement the applicant's proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students will be issued laptops; district is in negotiations with internet provider to provide access to low income families; online training will be provided to parents on student laptops and on district website</li> </ul> <p>The district's upgraded student management system will eventually be connected to a state data base called the Mississippi Student Information System which will allow stakeholders access to data such as academic programming data, monthly student and personnel reports, graduation requirements and college-career and remediation plans.</p> <p>The plan does not address how it will ensure that stakeholders will have appropriate levels of technical support.</p>		

### E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant outlines a comprehensive plan for monitoring grant activities and identifying areas of improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A specially appointed committee will convene every 9 weeks to monitor grant activities</li> <li>-The principals and Project Director will collaborate to develop personalized professional development plans for teachers who receive poor evaluations</li> <li>-Parent engagement will be gauged by program evaluations, surveys and sign in sheets</li> </ul> <p>The proposal requires principals and teachers to monitor teacher and student portfolios on a weekly basis for feedback. Given all of the other responsibilities they must complete, the frequency of these activities does not seem feasible.</p> <p>School reform will be appropriately measured by performance on summative and formative data such as assessment scores and graduation rates.</p> <p>The applicant specifies that RTTD generated reports and activities will be published in the local newspaper on an annual basis.</p>		

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant includes innovative strategies to support ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Every 9 weeks the district will sponsor community events that will highlight successful grant activities</li> <li>-Each school will adopt a business and publish material throughout the year to display at business location site; grade levels will rotate these duties</li> <li>-Grant staff will attend and present at conferences</li> </ul>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant includes extensive data which highlight 11 performance measures. These measures reasonably fulfill the required performance measures based on the applicable population as required in criterion E.3., however there are some presentation irregularities, descriptive shortcomings and an omission of one the required performance criteria.</p> <p>In most cases, general target objectives appear ambitious and reasonable. There are some examples of impressive current academic performance such as 8th grade math with a baseline of 75% growing to 85% by 2016/17 with impressive alignment amongst sub-groups. Similarly, the performance measure criterion (c) for grades 9 -12 based on US history &amp; English proficiency was impressive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-An increase from 78% to 90% for all students by 2016/17</li> </ul> <p>There are two charts showing the percentage of students whose teacher is "highly effective" . One chart uses proficiency "above mode growth QDI" as a performance measure and the other uses "MCT2 &amp; SATP". These performance measures were not clearly explained. Also, the data in each table is identical which seems highly unlikely.</p> <p>Furthermore, a chart for the percentage of students whose teacher is "effective" is not included as required.</p> <p>The table for grades 4-8 uses "discipline referrals" as an on track indicator for College and Career readiness is inappropriate and does not pertain to college &amp; career readiness.</p> <p>Some of the indicators in the tables lacked explanation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The table for grades 9 - 12 for criterion (b.) uses "10th language" as its on track indicator; it is unclear what this means</li> <li>-The table for grades 9 - 12 for criterion (d.) uses "Algebra 1" as its indicator without explaining the level of achievement required for proficiency</li> </ul>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides limited details regarding how it plans to evaluate the effectiveness of RTTD funded activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For example, the proposal states that student technology usage will be evaluated by student projects, presentations, reports and digital performance; however, the plan did not specify if teachers will collaborate to develop common scoring standards for these students projects</li> <li>-In addition the applicant states "Successful implementation of a personalized learning environment will evaluate the school reform plan"; this statement is vague and does not convincingly demonstrate the school reform plan will be effectively evaluated</li> </ul> <p>Professional development will be evaluated using a few indicators that should measure effectiveness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-These measures include teacher evaluation forms, student performance in classrooms, and student performance on assessments</li> </ul>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)



	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget seems reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal; however, there were some areas of explanatory weakness.</p> <p>The commitment to have an instructional coach for each school to be responsible for all training, strategies and teacher planning is a solid allocation of funds to improve the teaching process. Also, a notable positive related to this area is the consideration made to the training of instructional coaches included within the travel budget.</p> <p>One College-Career Coach with responsibility for Teen leadership skills, college career activities, college career student plans and parent meetings is allocated in the budget. It is questionable as to whether this is enough to support a strong level of service input across the entire college/school population and parent community.</p> <p>The equipment budget of \$2.0 million gives a reasonably clear breakdown of equipment expenditures. However, the entire expenditure occurs in year one, with zero balances shown for the following 3 years and therefore provides no provision for unforeseen future equipment expenditures in the event of breakdown or other unanticipated additional needs.</p> <p>Budget item 12 shows "Funds from other sources used to support the project" of \$462,000 and it is vaguely explained that these funds will pay for an assistant and two technicians. There was no clarity as to whether the technicians would provide support in IT roles including user training and instruction; therefore addressing a key challenge to any institution rolling out a new IT services platform.</p>		

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal's sustainability plan explains how several key grant positions will be paid for by district funds. However, the applicant fails to describe how the district will reallocate funds within its budget to cover the cost of these salaries.</p> <p>Similarly, the plan states that state funds will be utilized to pay for the technician's position without explaining which part of the state's budget will be used.</p> <p>The plan does specify that costs for new laptops and tablets will be covered by district technical funds and Title funds.</p> <p>The plan notes that curriculum software purchases were a one-time cost.</p>		

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Stone County Hospital has a partnership with the district to provide sports training for middle and high school students. The district would like to expand this partnership by offering a special PE course for students who are over 15 pounds overweight. The hospital will provide a trainer who will assist each student develop a personalized physical fitness plan.</p> <p>The desired performance result for this project is that all students will achieve their targeted weigh loss in two years. The applicant does not fulfill the criterion 2 for the Competitive Priority because the plan does not include an educational outcome.</p> <p>The applicant fails to address criteria 3 to 5 for the Competitive Priority.</p> <p>The plan's goal that all students will achieve their targeted weight loss in two years is both ambitious and achievable.</p>		

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score

Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met
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Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not meet Absolute Priority 1 because it failed to create a plan that was coherent and comprehensive in regards to improving the core educational assurances. Many of the proposed activities included in the plan had the capacity to positively impact student achievement in the district. However, as a whole the plan lacked a theory of action and a strong vision which are both necessary to implement long term educational reform. The plan briefly mentions Brown University's "Changing Systems to Personalized Learning" as a framework for the project's goals; but it fails to use these ideas as a basis for their reform plan. Clear connections between activities proposed to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student performance were never made. Although the plan included an upgrade in their data management system and the acquisition of online curriculum and student laptops, the pathway connecting the use of data and technology to the development of personalized student learning environments were never clearly constructed and defined.

Total	210	101
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #1101MS-3 for Stone County School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application included core educational assurance areas in a very brief format. Although the goal of the district is to, "improve learning and promote high levels of achievement of all students by building an inclusive community of learners among school staff, parents, the community, and support parents," the vision presented in section A1., does not provide a comprehensive and coherent reform vision as defined by the Federal notice. The section does not include the inclusion of a design of a personalized learning environment with 21st century tools, through a multi-faceted approach.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	4
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Stone County School District's application included limited information on the rationale regarding the selection of students and teachers in grades 3-12, other than the students in those grades being counted in accountability reporting. The selection of grades 3-12 to participate in the reform plan is questionable as a means to achieving SCSD's stated goal of "a world class education system for every student in the district." The "Ed students" data referenced on Appendix A2.2 p. 38 was blank. Pages 39-58 in the appendices were blank.

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

SCSD's goals and activities focus on the importance of recruiting and strengthening highly effective personnel at all levels. The additional goals also meet the requirements of the notice, but lack specificity within the description of the actions listed under each goal. SCSD did not include a logic model or theory of change of how the plan will improve student learning outcome for all students served as required within this section. However, a theory of action was revealed within section (C) (1) Learning

as Brown University's, "Changing Systems to Personalized Learning."

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

The application included limited goals (performance on summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps and graduation rates) within this section of the application. As an example, the data listed in SY 2011-12, page 43, the percentage proficient/advanced in English II SATP for black and IEP students is tragic - 12% and 11% respectively. The data indicates a wide achievement gap and equity issues that currently exist within the district.

There was limited or no data or information included for the following requirements:

- limited performance on summative assessments for all students in grades 3-12
- data table on decreasing achievement gaps was not understandable
- incomplete graduation data for all sub-populations
- no data on college enrollment

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	4

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided limited information to demonstrate a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching. The three graphs included within the section were unclear and ambiguous as supporting evidence of applicant's clear record of success in closing achievement gaps, raising student achievement, high school graduation rates and college enrollment rate.

The applicant did not provide information on the district's practices in achieving ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools. A limited description of the process for schools designated with an Academic Watch or below standing was presented that included a review of data. Parents are called for a conference when their student scores basic or below to develop a remediation plan.

Limited information was provided by the applicant to make student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. The superintendent and principal meet with parents to discuss a school's standing and interventions being used for improvement. Student performance data is provided to parents through a portal.

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

The applicant did not include a narrative of increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. The evidence included was descriptive and easy to understand, but not complete in demonstrating a high level of transparency.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant details how Mississippi has made great strides in statute and policy for statewide reform. In addition, SCSD has been addressing the goals from the MDE's RTTT grant at the district and school levels. The state and district are to be complimented for addressing the obesity challenge.		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
(B)(4) Reviewer Comments: Stone County School District's application lacked detail regarding the number of participants involved in community meetings, faculty meetings, or parent meetings. Appendix pages 67-81 were blank. There was no letter of support from the teacher's association within the letters on pages 82-88. There was information on how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback.		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
(B)(5) Reviewer Comments: The application did not demonstrate evidence of a high-quality plan in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reformed proposal. The application lists needs that appear as outcomes from brain storming sessions. No data is listed regarding the current status.		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments: The SCSD application listed pages of bulleted learning activities that lack evidence and cohesion in demonstrating a high quality plan for improving learning. Genuine reform is focused and includes measurable outcomes. Many of the activities listed do not require fiscal resources, rather they are imbedded in a district's culture through an improvement plan or strategic plan that is based on data and input. The theory of action from Brown University is research-based, the application lacked an implementation plan to address the specific needs of the students in Stone County School District to graduate high school college and career ready.		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	7
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant does not provide a high quality plan to improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready.  The district planned to implement a new professional development system in 2012-13.  The application includes information on technology devices and tools, rather than specificity on how the activities will be carried out and what data will be collected.  Without a more robust discussion of the implementation components, the plans do not appear to be achievable as presented.		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	7
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application included limited information on how the central office would provide support to achieve the plan. There was more discussion on technology devices, rather than practices, policies and rules to achieve the goal of students graduating college and career ready. There was no information provided on competency based learning, other than through the online curriculum. This narrative in this section does provide evidence of a high quality plan.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not provide a high quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.</p> <p>A plan was detailed regarding access for students to be charged a \$50 upkeep fee for issued laptops, to be waived for economically disadvantaged students. Online tutorial videos for parents will be developed and placed on laptops. Community and parent trainings will also be offered. Incomplete information was included to address appropriate levels of technical support for students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>No information was provided regarding access to informational technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format. There was no information provided ensuring that the applicant and schools use interoperable data systems.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan detailing a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. The application includes monitoring activities with a limited plan for measuring the progress to improve results and communicate the results regarding the effectiveness of the investment with stakeholders. The details for monitoring lacks the metrics or rubrics for determining success in each area. The application did not include information on the next steps once the monitoring information had been gathered. Limited details were provided on processes for ongoing corrections and improvements. Information was limited regarding the sharing of the results of various data including achievement scores, and evaluations in a report included the superintendent, school board and the local paper. No information was provided on collecting or sharing the information on the quality of the applicant's investments funded by RTT-D.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application includes a description of for a communication and engagement plan for internal and external stakeholders were good ideas, the plan did not include a detailed or robust plan including responsible parties and timelines.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Performance measures listed did not meet the target number of 12-14. The rationale for selecting the performance measures was not described, nor was description on how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. Lastly, the applicant did not indicate how it will review and improve the measure over time if the measures are insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

The application does not include a high-quality plan to evaluate effectiveness of the plan. There are no goals or measurements listed. There was no mention of working with community partners, compensation reform or modification of school schedules and structures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided limited information on the funds from other sources used to support the project. A large percentage of the budget is for the purchase of over 2,000 laptops, 80 projectors, e-readers and tablets. The focus of the grant was focused on the one-time purchase of technology devices, rather than systems changes to meet the core assurances. Many of the appendices pages were blank, which may have included more information.

The applicant did not provide sufficient information regarding the sustainability of the project. The application included information that district, state and federal funds will be utilized to purchase new devices.

It was unclear if SCSD has conducted a technology infrastructure analysis to reveal whether the the district can support the wireless access needed with so many devices running concurrently.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Limited information was found on sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. Appendix pages 39-58 and 67-81 were blank.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	1

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

No information regarding the competitive preference priority was found.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not	Not Met

	Met	
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Stone County School District did not present a high-quality plan that coherently and comprehensively addressed how it would build upon the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improved learning and teaching. The application did not provide enough evidence of ambitious yet achievable goals, performance measurements and annual targets.</p>		
Total	210	87



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #1101MS-4 for Stone County School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant identified the following goals in their RttT-We Believe proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit and retain strong school administrators in each school and the central office</li> <li>Strengthen teacher effectiveness through professional development, modeling, coaching and mentoring</li> <li>Increase the graduation rate, decrease the dropout rate, and increase postsecondary enrollment and success</li> <li>Provide a rich and rigorous curriculum based on the <b>Common Core Standards</b> and individual learning for each student to improve achievement scores and decrease achievement gaps</li> <li>Develop a strong parent and community involvement plan</li> <li>Develop school reform plan for the district and school improvement plan for any school receiving Academic Watch</li> <li>Expand the student management system to include individual student data to be used for grades K-12 and shared with parents</li> </ul> <p>The applicant did not provide "comprehensive" and "coherent" information that clearly articulated a clear and credible approach to their designated goals. Though the applicant touched upon each of the core educational areas in a cursory manner, the goals were stated in a succinct manner with little or no focus to the approach or strategy to be taken to achieve each one.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided information in a narrative format that described the method of selection which involved a Race to the Top Committee. The committee identified the participant's to include all students in grades 3-12 within the district. The criteria impacting this decision centered upon participation in the state assessment test which indicates achievement growth. In addition to the state assessment data, students were identified with the highest needs according to socioeconomic factors and those enrolled in special education courses or receiving IEP's.</p> <p>In addition to a narrative overview, the applicant utilized a chart that listed statistical information (i.e., Ed students, high needs students, and total enrollment data) that pertained to each school. The number of teachers assigned to each school was also provided. The category of Ed or ED students was not fully defined.</p>		

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant identified those positions or individuals beyond the grade 3-12 who will benefit from this project. Those individuals who were identified included all teachers in grades K-2. The project will provide staff development training and technology resources to all district teachers. The applicant referenced indicators that will be applied in using a transformation reform approach to the district's vision for the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit and retain strong school administrators in each school and within the central office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent hiring of a new superintendent of schools/All principals be highly effective</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strengthen teacher effectiveness through professional development, modeling, coaching and mentoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of effective teachers/Professional development</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase the graduation rate, decrease the dropout rate, and increase postsecondary enrollment and success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College-career coach at the high school/College-career software/Laptops for all students grades 4-12/Tutors for at-risk students/Technician</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide a rich and rigorous curriculum based on the <b>Common Core Standards</b> and individual learning for each student to improve achievement scores and decrease achievement gaps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategies developed to link the curriculum and learning to community resources and opportunities/Collaboration building</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop a strong parent and community involvement plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent engagement activities/Parent Careers &amp; College Information Night/Technology training/Partnerships/Participation in staff development</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop school reform plan for the district and school improvement plan for any school receiving Academic Watch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School improvement teams/Data analysis</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expand the student management system to include individual student data to be used for grades K-12 and shared with parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personnel additions that includes a data manager and a technician/Increase technology capacities</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The applicant conveyed information that pertained to this area with a list of goals that included information on <i>delivery</i>, <i>timeline</i>, <i>responsible person</i>, and <i>activities/goals</i> that serve as indicators of each area.</p>		

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
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<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant addressed this area (performance on summative assessments) with the submission of a chart that indicated goals for improved student outcomes that started from a baseline, indicated by subgroups (i.e., White, Black, ED, and IEP), and goals. The summative assessments being used by the district in regards to this topic included at the high school <i>SATP English II</i>, <i>SATP Algebra I</i>; and at the middle and elementary schools <i>MCT2 Language</i>, and <i>MCT2 Math</i>.</p> <p>The applicant also including information and data, included in a chart format, that were applied to decreasing the achievement gap. Specific methodology for determining an achievement gap will involve comparisons of district to State gaps with a goal to decrease this gap by 2% each year.</p> <p>The applicant included data, in a chart format, that identified the district's graduation rate with the growth projections or goals for each year of the project.</p> <p>The applicant did not show evidence that addressed the college enrollment rates or projection figures in their response to this category.</p>		
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B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	7

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided examples and information that demonstrated a record of success that indicated advancements in student learning and achievement during this four year time frame:

- The district was one of just seven districts during 2011, in the state, selected as a **Most Improved District**. In addition, the district was the only one within these seven honored district's in which all of its schools earned the status of a **High Performing School**.
- One of its elementary schools received the **Title I Distinguished School Award** in 2008 for closing achievement gaps for subgroups.
- Within a two year period, 2009-2010, two elementary schools placed on Academic Watch improved academic achievement and turnaround by earning the status of a **High Performing Schools** the very next year; this was accomplished through improvement plans that were developed by the principal and staff at each school.
- The achieved honor of earning the status of National Board Certification has been accomplished by 25 district teachers.
- The district have teachers who have served on state and nation committees; the high school's language chair represents the state on the Language Committee for PARCC Assessment.

The applicant provides opportunities to making data available to students, parents and educators in ways to inform and improve participation, instruction, and services:

- Parent conferences are held to develop a remediation plan for students who score basic or below on achievement tests. At the beginning of each school year these parents meet with the superintendent and principal to discuss the student's academic concerns and further interventions being used or considered for improvement.
- Performance data through achievement score reports, progress reports and report cards are provide to parents made available through the parent/student portal; parents are required to register to this site at the central office in order to secure a username and password to access this account. The applicant did not indicate the number of parents who register for this access site.
- A student's daily work and weekly test are sent to parents through students.
- Students who are not progressing in their course work, their parents are notified by the teacher, then a conference is scheduled with the parent and student.

The applicant did not indicate any reference or actual data that focused upon the high school graduation and college enrollment rates in their response to this area. In addition, the purpose of the enclosed charts were unclear.

In addressing this area the applicant lacked sufficient data and specific supportive information in detail that would lead to implementing a successful reform plan.

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

In addressing this area, the applicant provided a District Details for 2010-2011 school year, and a Fiscal data chart for 2008-2009. The following budget categories were identified with amounts:

The Total Revenue: Amount; Amount per Student

Revenue by Source: Federal; Local; and State

Total Expenditures: Amount; Amount per Student

Total Current Expenditures: Instructional Expenditures;; Student and Staff Support; Administration; and Operations, Food Services, other

Total Capital Outlay; Construction

Total Non Elementary-Secondary Education and Other

Interest on Debt

In regards to specific information that related to those requested areas focusing upon personnel salaries and non-personal expenditures, the applicant conveyed limited information that was accessed from the district's Civil Rights Report. In response to this topic, a chart format was utilized to convey the following personnel expenditures at each of the district's four schools:

Instructional Staff-Teachers-Expenditures (total)

In their efforts to respond to this area of increasing transparency, in LEA processes, practices and investments, the applicant did not provide a narrative and other supportive documentation that addressed or provided evidence in making this fiscal information public, by school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, and school administration. The applicant did not include a description of the extent to which they already makes available the four categories of school-level expenditures from State and local funds, with the exception of the Civil Rights Report information indicated.

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

10

9

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant referenced the state's **Education Reform Act of 2006**, which supported the **Mississippi Dropout Prevention Plan**. Also, the state adopted in 2007, the **Mississippi Healthy Students Act**, which increased physical activity and health education instruction for students in its K-12 schools. The association between student wellness and achievement was a major outcome of these mandated programs.

The state has adopted rigorous standards and graduation requirements to ensure high expectations for students. The state made revisions to its curriculum frameworks and the methods to assess student that has impacted the development of an accountability system designed to promote elevated student learning goals that closely align with NAEP assessments. As the state has earned a B+ on the Standards, Assessments, and Accountability Scale in the **Quality Counts 2010 Report Card**, the state has committed to participate in the CCSSO and NGA Common Core State Standards Initiative. The applicant listed the state's Common Core Standards, as noted in the state's Department of Education RTTT state application with implementations referenced by the district.

The following information provides an overview of the goals associated with the Common Core Standards and the applicants implementation factors with those related categories:

1. The development and implementation of a common, high quality assessments with a consortium of states (PARCC and the State Consortium for Board Examination Systems). The applicant implemented these standards in all schools with the assurance that students in grades 3-12 read on grade level; impacting closing achievement gaps. In addition, the district works with PreK centers to improve reading readiness, and implemented remediation programs in K-3 grades to increase reading skills.
2. The improvement of achievement scores in mathematics and science on state and national assessments. The applicant has initiated reform efforts aimed at adding Stem classes, and after school and remediation programs to decrease these gaps. In addition, tutoring and comprehensive math and science programs have been added to the high school schedule.
3. Increase the number of high school and postsecondary graduates, decrease the achievement gap between groups of learners, and adopt the NCEE State Board Examinations System. The state required all district's to develop dropout plans. The applicant implemented the Tier program in support of this goal, which involved the placement of social workers and clinicians placed at each school to address problems that are associated with the learning process. The high school added AP classes and dual enrollments to allow students the opportunity to gain college credit and readiness.
4. The development of a statewide longitudinal data system that provides accessibility, usability, and transparency. The applicant implemented a student management system which includes longitudinal data.
5. The development of a formative assessment system and professional learning community to foster continuous data-based, instructional decision-making, and to ensure accessing information related to the overall district and school improvement. The teachers and administration receive staff development training in the use of data-based instructional decision making.
6. The development of a comprehensive plan to recruit, prepare, mentor, create an effective induction plan, and increase

their effectiveness through a value-added model of evaluation. The applicant has developed an effective induction plan that is supported by mentor teachers and evaluation data that identifies their strengths and weakness.

7. A commitment to ensure that all students have opportunities to learn in a school setting where effective teachers and leaders are employed, regardless of the school's past performance. The applicant trains students in effective instructional strategies that utilize data from SAM's and MSIS. In addition, this data is shared with parents and students to help develop instructional plans.
8. Limit barriers to achievement with a focus on health and wellness, as well as families and communities. The applicant has developed a wellness plan to address this area. In addition, the district's food services have received grants that has enabled the development of healthy student programs.

In summary, the applicant provided various indicators during the implementation of these Common Core Standards that addressed successful conditions and sufficient autonomy that would enable them to help meet success.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant held four community meetings to address elements of the project and to seek input from these stakeholders; these sessions merited 100% from those attending. Parent meetings also resulted in meaningful informational sessions which addressed such issues or concerns as special education support, and technology needs, and computer and web access.

Faculty meetings were held to address elements of the project and to seek input from teachers; these sessions reflected that 93% of teachers supported the project. As the high school teachers reflected concerns with aspects of implementing college and career readiness instruction, the staff development programs that were planned to support this focus helped to relieve their doubts. In addition, the applicant did not address specific information that addressed the reasoning and rationale of those teachers who chose not to be supportive of the project.

In regards to students, information relevant to their concerns and input was accessed through a survey. The results from the survey reflected a 86% support of the project from those responding students. Students indicated by 92% their positives views toward the use of laptops impacting increases in academic achievement. A copy of the survey was not included in the proposal; the grade level of those students survey were not indicated; and the conditions or methods of how it was administered were not clarified.

The applicant provided supportive letters of support from a wide representation of various stakeholders in the community. Most noteworthy, the partnership with Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College will impact college and career readiness and increase the number of students applying to an institution of higher education.

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

The applicant utilized a committee to analyze data that indicated the status of implementing a personalized learning environment. The findings of this committee identified several requirements that already are in place in the district:

- Special needs titled classes
- Compulsory classes for students who scored basic or below on the state assessment
- Inclusion teachers supporting classes with special education students
- Credit recovery program
- Staff development initiative addressing teacher effectiveness
- Test bank aligned to the curriculum
- Remediation plan for high needs students
- Tier Process in place
- Technology classes supporting Tech Discovery and Stem

The following areas identify the areas of need that will help to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student:

- Academic software curriculum to assist students to work at their own pace, receive credit, and decrease achievement gaps

Laptops for students; access academic programs and support college-career readiness

Professional development for inclusion and regular education teachers addressing IEP's

Tutoring support for high needs students; impact AP participation, dual enrollment, and to pass the state assessments required for graduation

Professional development for data driven decision making and determining academic needs of students

Storage for personalized college career plans for student, parents, and teacher access

E-readers to increase reading skills in all subjects

E-books

The following references were identified by the applicant toward increasing the effectiveness of educators:

Administrative support

Development of classroom management skills, effective pedagogy, personalized college-career plans and environment analyzing student data prior to the start of each school year

Professional development of common core, college-career readiness by stages

Develop teacher time to meet and collaborate with each other at school and staff development days

Develop time for new teachers to network and build support, commitment, and leadership in a learning community

Provide instructional coaches to support and model effective teacher strategies, professional development plans for teachers, and to analyze data

Provide principal software to view professional development participation, evaluation of data and improvement plans

Utilization of improvement plans for ineffective teachers and employ methods to terminate teachers who do not meet high standards

Provide teachers with resources to meet success in the classroom; whiteboards, digital resources, tablets, projectors, etc.

Inservice and train teachers to effectively utilize all available resources

The applicant addressed several specific areas to decrease achievement gaps across student groups as follows:

Provide training to support teaching skills, adaptations, and support across multiple ability levels and intelligence

Incorporate special education student's IEP in all instruction and activities

Provide assessment software program to access students, provide diagnostic report and prescription for individual students

Provide a program for students with dyslexia and other language processing disorders

Professional development to address college and career readiness plans

Develop a School Parental Involvement Plan for each school

Acquire career software for students to utilize through high school

Acquire advanced technology software for career studies for all high school students

Secure a Career-College coach to train teachers on how to incorporate career skills throughout the curriculum; counsel students on college and career plans, financial aid assistance, scholarships, and wellness program support

As the applicant referenced these myriad topics to analysis relevant data; specific outcomes, approaches and plans to address these areas were not included in their response; therefore, essential components needed to provide for a high-quality plan (e.g., activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible persons) were not evident.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided information that addressed this topic that included an informative narrative addressing how learning and teaching will be impacted by personalizing the learning environment while providing all students the needed support to graduate college and be career ready. As indicated by the applicant, the following elements are essential factors that are necessary components to develop an environment for personalized learning; however, the applicant did not specify a connection between how each of these areas contribute to supporting college and career readiness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal autonomy to implement a school setting that supports personalized learning</li> <li>• Develop a partnership with all stakeholders</li> <li>• Provide a safe and nurturing environment where mutual respect contributes to students being able to learn</li> <li>• Educate the whole-child with a focus on academic, social, emotional, and physical needs</li> <li>• Develop consistency while maintaining high expectations and academic standards</li> </ul> <p>In order to implement a school environment that promotes personalized learning, the applicant will create teacher teams with the guidance of the district curriculum coordinators in an effort to align the Common Core Standards with the current framework assessment. Professional development sessions will support best practices teaching strategies to include the new standards for all teachers and continues yearly.</p> <p>Technology strategies have been developed for implementation in the elementary schools for students to successfully design a career plan portfolio. This information will be accessible to parents on the student/parent data website for their review. In the eighth grade, students are required to expand their individual college-career plan; this includes selecting course work needed to graduate and for career choice matters. A teen leadership concept is planned within the project that will be implemented in the high school setting. The College Career Coach will provide training and support to teachers; as college and career themes will be developed in the curriculum, student council, all clubs and extracurricular activities. The applicant did not define the strategies and individual's held responsible to implement this initiative.</p> <p>The significance of utilizing data was emphasized in creating a data driven decision approach to personalizing learning. Teachers will have access to both individualized student and class data from such sources as <i>Accelerated Reader</i>, <i>STAR Reader</i>, <i>MCT2</i> or <i>SATP</i> state assessments, science state assessments, and writing assessment data to determine a student's area of strengths and improvements. Testing resources will also include the evaluation of instructional programs and data from the classroom setting. Other noted areas of focus will be the support toward collaboration with teachers, as teachers will develop their lesson plans according to the needs of students. A newly developed online curriculum will be provided that will support individualized pacing factors with each student. The applicant did not specify or describe information related to the strategies on how this approach will be met. Also, there were no indications relating to those subjects and grades levels that would be impacted in this online endeavor.</p> <p>Teachers will be responsible to develop remediation plans for all high needs students. Instructional Coaches will be utilized to address areas of improvement and provide support and training to teachers, as needed. The applicant did not convey strategies that would enable these components (e.g., remediation plans and utilization of instructional coaches) to be successful and how these areas connect to college and career readiness.</p> <p>The applicant indicated the need to include parents and students at each grade (e.g., elementary, middle school, and high school) level; however, their expectations were not specified. The activities that will be designated in meeting the needs of students at each level were included in this plan. Parent training will be provided on the design and purposes of developing a personalized learning environment that will increase student achievement. The applicant did not demonstrate a cohesive plan or framework to implement these activities.</p> <p>In conclusion, it was duly noted that the responsibility of implementing these plans and activities throughout grades K-12 will be the administration, teachers, parents, and students; however, the delegation of these stakeholders in regards to their responsibilities in these implementation areas were not indicated. The references to Brown University's plan to personalize learning indicated no rationale or reasoning how these areas will specifically impact the project's goals and the needs of students; this approach lacked originality on the part of the applicant in developing their plan.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has indicated that all principals and teachers will attend training sessions in the Transformation School Reform process, which includes learning and developing strategies for a personalized learning environment to be achieved. A focus of teachers will include the demonstration and implementation of high-level cognitive demands in their methods of instruction. Also, teachers through technology resources will enhance their utilization of real world applications in focus areas of student research and to differentiate instruction that will be intended to improve student learning. A collaborative learning approach will contribute to the development of a clear, comprehensive plan to further integrate technology into the curriculum; this integration is designed to increase student interest and motivation, and support their understanding and independent application of the curriculum.

In an effort to monitor the student's college and career plan, teachers will hold monthly meetings with students to monitor their plan, then make revisions or changes to related activities to the plan, as needed. Course credit and graduation eligibility will also be monitored monthly; process to comply with this concept was not indicated. Teachers will meet with parents each nine weeks to discuss the college and career plan and remediation plans while utilizing individual data for the student. The plan to support this capacity was not indicated.

In the area of teacher evaluations, principals evaluate teachers at least 10 times a year. A post conference is held to discuss the teachers performance after each observation. The results of observations and evaluations can lead to commendations, professional development needs, or placing the teacher on an improvement plan. The applicant did not provide specific information that defined the parameters of these 10 evaluations (e.g., length of the visit, announced or unannounced, lesson plan development, informal vs formal observation/evaluation, etc.).

Teachers are charged with the responsibility to analyze all student data at the beginning of the year to determine achievement gaps. As an outcome of this student assessment, teachers are required to make a remediation plan with activities and programs to address each deficiency. A parent conference is required for parents whose child scores at the basic or below levels, or if the student is failing a class. These designated students who have exhibited academic deficiency are placed on the Tier Process. A significant practice initiated by the applicant was identified with the placing of all high needs students with a highly effective teacher. In addressing areas of school reform and professional development, the district stated its committed to work with every teacher on their pedagogy and skills related to developing effective teaching strategies. The applicant did not indicate specific information that address a school's culture and climate for the purpose of developing both a personalized and school improvement plan; also student's academic interest in making course choices was not clearly indicated.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In accordance with all MDE (state) and Federal Standards, the district complies with all mandated laws in regards to practices, policies, and rules.

The applicant did provide an outline a plan to implement the project. The key personnel who will be responsible in many significant components of the plan (e.g., principal evaluations, and supervise other grant funded personnel) will be the projector director. The four major areas of reform as referenced by the applicant includes the following areas:

- Strengthen curriculum, improve teacher effectiveness, and grow strong leaders
- Build accountability system to monitor performance
- Strive for a transformational workforce culture
- Provide principals with the authority to adjust the school setting to provide a personalized learning environment within state policy

The school leadership team has already been given the responsibility to develop school schedules, calendars, personnel decisions, and school budget. Policies will be developed and approved by the school board before equipment and hardware are purchased. The applicant referenced that the initial reform will provide principals with the autonomy to implement those changes that will contribute to the direction and success of the project. The implementation of an online curriculum will help to meet the needs of students through a remediation software program, and an alternative environment to learn that practices the personalized learning concept.

The applicant did not provide the specific timelines and responsible parties that relate to this area. In reference to the

expansion of the parent/student portal to include individual college-career plans, individual remediation plans, graduation requirements, completed course credit, course work needed, discipline and individual software programs for students, plus a filtering program that will be installed on all student and teacher technology devices, the timeline for these features to be developed and installed were not provided.

The applicant's response to this area of the project did not include information that pertains to addressing the needs of ELL students.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant referenced a \$50 upkeep fee that will be assessed to all students who will be issued laptops, but waived for students who are ED. The applicant did not indicate any further consideration in regards to this matter, including other possible exceptions and considerations that would include socioeconomic considerations and those families with multiple siblings enrolled in school, thus, imposing a possible financial hardship to pay such a fee.

In addition, the applicant did indicate an effort to secure an Internet provider who would decrease fees for low income families, this access matter has yet to be resolved. There could also be problems with limited Internet access simply by the demographics and geography of the area with no service providers; these considerations were not addressed.

The availability of technology support after school would possibly have limitations with student participation due to transportation availability, limitations, and resources.

The applicant did address information that indicated technological improvements that will contribute to the district's infrastructure and capacity to implement the project. A wireless upgrade will be provided to both elementary schools with funds from the project. The district's present student management system will be updated annually with a target date to be a full data system by 2014.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicated that a "We Believe Committee" consisting of the principal, IC, four teachers and two parents will be formed at each school. The committees will meet every nine weeks to discuss progress of the program. The school's principal will be responsible to monitor Teacher Portfolio plans weekly to evaluate professional development participation. The project coordinator will be informed of any teacher who warrants a rating that is not effective. The principal and project coordinator will collaborate in working with these teachers to improve their skills. Student portfolios will be evaluated by teachers weekly to monitor their progress.

Staff development programs will be evaluated by participants at the end of each training session.

Software performance will be reviewed by teachers and principals every nine weeks. Equipment will be monitored daily by teachers and students. Also, student results will be reviewed by teachers to ensure progress or support. The applicant did not provide specific information that addressed the rationale and procedure to implement these plans.

It was also indicated that parent participation will be monitored on an ongoing basis; the applicant did not indicate specifics and the purpose related to this matter.

The overall school reform initiatives will be evaluated and determined by the implementation of a rigorous curriculum, teacher and principal effectiveness, student course work, implementation of all grant proposals, both formative and summative data, graduation rate, post secondary enrollment rate, decrease in achievement gaps, and by the percentage of students performing proficient and above. Principals will utilize various occasions to gather data to monitor and evaluate the project; faculty meetings, teacher evaluations, progress reports, report cards, and student input; this intent lacked specific information.

In addition, the leadership team will meet monthly with principals, IC's, and CCC. The data presented and shared at these sessions will help to monitor the project's success or the need to develop an action plan to address a problem. Also, surveys of all stakeholders will be administered annually to obtain further data. A yearly report will be developed and shared with the public that conveys all grant expenditures and other objective information that pertains to this project. Specifics related to these topics were vague.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has developed a structured plan to maintain engagement and communication with all stakeholders on an ongoing basis. A community celebration approach will be held quarterly at different school locations to provide updates and information of interest to stakeholders. All schools will also be responsible to adopt a local business and convey updates and information through pamphlets and displays at those sites. Presentations by students will be made and encouraged at civic and board meetings, EDP meetings, and local festive events, such as the Days in the Park.</p> <p>The project director will meet with partnership participants three times each year to provide updates. In addition, the project director will present to civic organizations, various local boards, community gatherings, and the Economic Development Partnership throughout the year. Also, the project director will be available to meet with parents, students, business or community individuals, as requested.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In complying with elements that constitute performance measures the applicant emphasized the clarification and determination of two significant indicators that impact academic success: Highly Effective Principals and Highly Effective Teachers.</p> <p>The applicant used as a baseline 2011-2012 test data (e.g., QDI,, MCT2, SATP, 8<sup>th</sup> Math &amp; Science, 10<sup>th</sup> Language, US History, English II, and Algebra I) to determine considered highly effective. In regards to principals, the success rate of their students, overall for each subgroup, achieve acceptable rates of student growth, school profile will be a factor determining the "highly effective" status.</p> <p>In addressing the areas of performance measures, subgroups, baselines, college-career readiness factors, age-appropriate and non-cognitive indicators, enrollment statistics in and through established target goals, the applicant developed several charts that provided data and related information that addressed and supported their findings within these areas.</p> <p>The applicant did not clarify how these performance measures will impact the project.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided the following responses to this area:</p> <p>Professional development will be evaluated by the new teacher evaluation standards provided by the Mississippi Department of Education, while using achievement scores. Highly effective teachers and principals will be determined by total and subgroups growth indicators.</p> <p>Technology usage by teachers will be incorporated into the new evaluation instrument used in the classroom. Student usage will be evaluated and determined student projects, presentations, reports and digital performance. Students will all receive training in technology application throughout the year. A senior project will be included in this evaluation process.</p> <p>The school reform plan will serve as the platform to evaluate the success of personalized learning environments. In addition, the meeting of all proposal goals over the four years of the grant will determine the level of success relevant to funding issues, activities, delivery and the responsibility of all participants.</p> <p>The applicant did not address how funded activities, such as professional development, technology employment, productive utilization of 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 school scheduling modifications will be demonstrated or met.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provided supportive documentation that identified budget criterion and cost projections that were associated and aligned with their proposal. An Overall Budget Summary Table was submitted that addressed budget categories for each school (i.e., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, training stipends, funds generated from other sources, and total expenditures).</p> <p>The applicant's narrative budget overview reflected the "needs" to accomplish the project's "goals." Major budget items that were identified in this area included technology hardware, software and infrastructure, staff development programs and curriculum costs. These items were further referenced in a Budget Table format that included both the primary and additional associated criteria and location in the application. A concentrated focus of budget related costs for each school served also included supportive narratives and charts that identified personnel related factors, including the positions, titles, salaries and related costs; travel expenditures and projections; training stipends; curriculum and supplies; contractual expenses; infrastructure; software and purchasing of license procurements; and hardware.</p> <p>In summary, the information and documentation that was submitted in regards to budget issues reflected reasonable and rationale support that aligned with the development and implementation of the project.</p>		

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant referenced that personnel associated with the project will be funded with the following resources in years 5-7:</p> <p>The district will fund the High School Instructional Coach, College-Career Coach, Middle School Instructional Coach, and the data and assessment managers.</p> <p>The state funds will be used to pay the technician.</p> <p>Title I funds will be used to pay both elementary school's Instructional Coach.</p> <p>Laptops will be purchased with state technical funds, district technical funds, activity funds, and PTO funds, as needed.</p> <p>Elementary teachers' tablets and assessment software will be purchased with Title funds, as needed.</p> <p>High school and middle school teachers' tablets and assessment software will be purchased with district and state funds, as needed.</p> <p>Career, advanced technology software will be provided with state technical funds.</p> <p>Professional development and travel expenses will be supported by Title I, district, and state funds.</p> <p>The applicant did not provide supportive information from district, state, or federal sources that indicated financial support beyond the grant's timeframe. In reference to a high quality plan, the applicant did not provide supportive or specific information that referenced activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant identified a program that addressed social and emotional behaviors that relate directly to obesity issues with students. A partnership was referenced with Stone County Hospital, which will be renewed on a yearly basis. The hospital will provide a trainer for all sports at the middle school and high school. The trainer will work with students individually on an exercise and strength plan to lose weight. These fitness classes will be started beginning in the 2013/2014 school year, as an elective course. Students participating in the plan will have a physical, health plan, exercise plan and target weight as a goal.</p> <p>The district will pilot this wellness program, which may serve as a model for other districts in the state. As Mississippi leads</p>		

the nation in obesity years, this program is intended to address a relevant need with students that has the capacity to be life changing. A table was developed that projected targeted goals (weight loss indicators) for each year of the plan.

The applicant did not reference a clear decision making process and infrastructure relevant to this plan; beyond a 15 pound plus weight requirement. In addition, the engagement of parents and families in seeking input into this course offering relevant to their child's participation did not occur. A student interest survey, informal or formal, was not provided or administered to indicate their interest to participate in such a program,

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not provide a comprehensive and high-quality plan that was designed to create learning environments that would contribute to improved instruction through personalized strategies that encompassed a supportive structure to warrant its success. Also, an outcome of the project did not fully address a fully developed focus relating to college and career standards that would increase college applicants; while improving upon each student's readiness to succeed in either their career path or college pursuit.

The project also lacked focused upon accelerating student achievement and by meeting the needs of all student. The significance of developing effective staff development training for teachers and administrators was featured in the applicant's plan, but did not include a highly developed approach.

In summary, the plan's vagueness lacked cohesion and a comprehensive detailed approach to address their success in meeting the four core educational assurance areas.

Total	210	139
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