



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0894AZ-1 for Tucson Unified School District (TUSD)

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant's vision is the reinvention of math instruction for all grade levels K-12, including personalized learning for all students and educators. This reform vision is driven by a dramatic increase in student poverty in a very short timeframe, with a corresponding drop in math achievement. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 51,710 students enrolled with 71.8% poverty (from 32% just 12 years ago), 76.7% minority. Steady decline in math achievement. Two-thirds of district schools are rated only C or D on state labeling system. District office has evolved through a strong decentralizing trend, returning to "rebuilding, envisioning and the development of district wide initiatives." The four key goals for re-inventing mathematics are: 1) new and improved instructional strategies and content knowledge aligned with Common Core, 2) broad teacher effectiveness across all grade levels, 3) a "nimble" data system that can inform teaching and learning, and 4) strategic alignment of professional development and educator evaluation systems. The application does not directly mention the core assurance areas or a tie-in with the state's RT3 initiative; however, standards, data, and effective teachers are all part of the reform vision. The district is predominately poor and minority, yet the vision does not specifically address how personalized learning will contribute to increased equity or tasks based on student academic interests. Overall, given the evidence provided, focusing the reform vision on one part of the curriculum (math) but using it to drive system wide improvement across all grade levels seems particularly well-conceived. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The application provides a list of the participating schools and number of participating students, while focusing on how the math initiative will support LEA-level and school-level reform. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The district is returning to a greater role in providing frameworks and components for learning through a district vision process led by the superintendent and deputy superintendent. The applicant underscores the scope of the challenge ahead in making "cohesive, systemic, and sustainable" change by committing to its implementation across 92 schools with 2,560 educators. Part of the process in selecting all district schools to participate is the recognition that one of the goals is system re-invention; they are committed to moving the entire district to a new model and not perpetuating an existing, failing model. The proposal outlines supporting high-quality implementation by embedding math instruction with personalized learning, incorporating equity and quality, providing broad access and variety, merging instructional strategies with student engagement, and bridging assessment and instruction. As a vision, these principles are appropriate and establish a useful benchmark for evaluating their overall application. Part of the process of selection also included brainstorming and planning sessions with a cross-section of staff and specialists, focus groups, and student and parent surveys. "A widespread dismal attitude towards mathematics" helped drive their decision. Given the evidence presented, applicant's approach to implementation seems particularly sound and strong. 		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The application outlines a high-quality plan for district-wide systemic change centered on the cultivation of a cadre of 		

highly proficient mathematics teachers. (Important portions of this plan are Table 2 and accompanying text that appears in A(4).)

1. The application demonstrates knowledge of the requirements for systemic change citing seven key actions and building their approach on those actions.
 2. The plan builds on successes and processes already in place, including the district wide Essential Elements of Instruction model.
 3. The central focus of the reform plan is selecting and training a cadre of highly proficient math teachers, then deploying them broadly throughout the district in a looping plan where they stay with students for two or more years. In the elementary grades, these cadre teachers, paired with another non-math-teaching teacher, will teach math to two classrooms (and no ELA), thus matching a higher percent of students with more highly proficient teachers of math, as some research recommends.
 4. The plan also includes professional learning communities (PLCs). Already in use in the district, evidence is provided that PLCs are seen by district teachers as popular and productive.
 5. The district's Quality First Learning Model is a system diagram demonstrating the interconnectedness of the elements of quality instruction with the goal of delivering successful, high-quality instruction to each student the first time. This model underscores that student success is dependent on many factors, including stakeholders outside the district, and established a useful framework for district-wide change.
 6. The application describes the details of a plan for developing a cadre of 320 highly proficient teachers will be supported.
 7. Section A(4) includes an impressive, multi-page Timeline for Implementation aligned with the five parts of the application.
2. The response fails to provide any information on two important aspects of district-wide change: 1) how the development of the 10% cadre will be extended to improving math quality for other math teachers and students, and 2) how the math initiative will lead to district-wide change including personalized learning in other subjects. However, given the high-quality of the plan overall, this response deserves a high score.

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

1. The annual goals for all four required areas as well as college enrollment are provided and seem ambitious yet achievable given the reform strategy.

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	10

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. The application states that the district has "a varied track record of success," then focuses on individual reform efforts at a number of noteworthy schools.
 1. One school, C.E. Rose K-8, installed a research-based data focused system in 2002 that contained many of the elements contemplated in the current reform proposal. Student performance data is not provided.
 2. The introduction to the application states that the district has experienced six superintendents and interim superintendents during the past twelve years. The current leadership joined the district in 2011 and has instituted a wide range of reform initiatives, including a reading across content areas initiative, a professional development program, math innovation team, instructional leaders, and school improvement initiative (per section B(5)).
 3. In SY 2010-11, the decision was made for the district to turn around schools. Half a dozen schools are described in varying stages of reform; while these initiatives are recent, the applicant states that promising results are beginning to appear. No quantitative data is provided however.
2. No evidence is provided of making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents.
3. While the applicant acknowledges a varied record over the past four years, evidence suggests a strong, comprehensive reform implementation since the arrival of new leadership in 2011, justifying a mid-range score.

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

1. The applicant states that most expenditure information is made public in aggregate, rather than school-level, form.
 1. Extensive financial reporting is compiled by the district, then combined by the state into a range of reports and comparative analyses.
2. Internal district reports are created at the school level, but are not typically made public, without a Request for Public Information.

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

1. The application provides a strong description of Arizona's tradition of local autonomy as well as the current state framework under which the applicant believes it has sufficient conditions and autonomy to implement its reform proposal.
 1. The Governor's Arizona Ready Funding Task Force developed principles that support local autonomy.
 2. Charter school and open enrollment laws give districts significant latitude, including the flexibility to sponsor charter schools as new schools or as part of an existing school.
 3. Seven state education mandates, including school labeling, mastery provisions, staff performance evaluations, Common Core, and STEM, combine as enablers of the applicant's proposal.

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

1. The applicant demonstrates strong evidence that a wide cross-section of stakeholders and community resources were engaged in the development of the proposal.
 1. A table of several dozen participating stakeholders is provided.
 2. Numerous forums and consultations are described. A two-day planning retreat was professionally facilitated.
 3. Math perception data was gathered from students and parents and strongly influenced the design of the math strategy.
 4. Representatives of the teacher's union participated; several active union teachers were involved in ongoing meetings.
 5. Letters of support are included.

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

1. The applicant's reform proposal is founded on a broad-based gap analysis, including an inventory of significant math and other deficiencies. Furthermore, the implementation timeline presented in an earlier section describes the hiring of an external vendor to assist with a math needs audit and the selection of the math cadre.
 1. Teachers report strong support for professional learning communities but attention is required to make them more productive more of the time.
 2. The district's data infrastructure is poor; student data is not centralized or readily available to teachers, staff, or parents.
 3. Fixing these gaps is part of the reform proposal.
 4. The math gap includes some very basic things including difficulty recruiting math teachers and having math courses staffed by substitute teachers.
 5. The gap analysis process also highlighted successes, including the district's new professional development program and its reading across content areas initiative.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. The math reform proposal responds to known gaps, leverages local successes within the district, and lays out a comprehensive instructional strategy for re-inventing math instruction, and generating district-wide system change.
 1. The math outcomes are aligned and inspired by Common Core and the skills needs for college and career success.
 2. The proposal (with the aid of RTT-D funding) addresses deficiencies in the physical technology infrastructure, enabling blending learning.
 3. The district's looping/cohort model will address social-emotional and relationship needs of students, especially high-need students.
 4. The district will develop a library of formative assessments, personalized learning plan formats, and data collaborations (teacher to teacher, teacher to student, student to parent, etc.).
 5. The new data environment and collaboration will enable students to own their own learning and develop meta-cognitive skills.
 6. For students of low-income or high-need, the proposal includes augmenting the math strategy with services through a partnerships with the public library system (computer access) and LaFrontera (social services), as well as added resources through the district and a community education coalition.
2. The application presents a well-constructed reform strategy and math model that addresses the many requirements of this section. Only in the area of high-quality instructional approaches and content (including digital learning content) is the proposal light on details.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. The application provides a well-thought-out plan for increasing teacher quality throughout its workforce by 1) training and leveraging a cadre of 320 highly proficient math teachers, 2) deploying them throughout the district using a looping/cohort model to increase student access to the scarce supply of quality math teachers, 3) augmenting them with advanced instructional tools and technologies, and 4) marrying these teachers and tools to other math teachers through the district's successful professional learning community tradition.
 1. The professional development of teachers will utilize personalized learning approaches, thus modeling the use of new methods and tools – an obvious but ingenious plan.
 2. The district underscores its own important role in teacher development and personalized learning – creating the necessary platforms, systems, and resources so all teachers can readily improve their instruction and adopt personalized learning.
 3. The district will revamp its math teacher lab program so that it will provide opportunities for new math teachers to co-teach with highly proficient teachers, while also giving high-need students extra “jumpstart” time.
 4. The applicant gives particular detail to its plans for the crucial assessment side of personalized learning, as well as how teacher and staff evaluation will be structured.
 5. Throughout the math re-invention strategy is the principle that “teaching must no longer be a private act” – every aspect of the plan supports teacher-to-teacher connections.
2. The plan for teaching and leading provides solid responses to all aspects of this section and does so in a way that, if well-executed, is likely to support high teacher quality, continuous improvement, and sustainability well into the future.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. Under new district leadership since 2011, the applicant has taken affirmative steps towards creating a more focused, high-performing, and efficient district. The application emphasizes that the RTTD reform proposal is being fully meshed and integrated with an ongoing School Master Plan effort and court-ordered Unitary Status Plan.
2. The district believes that disciplined program and project management, and overall organizational capacity, are foundational to the success of reform initiatives and the district in general. Investments in these capacities are being deliberated built into the RTTD implementation planning, including the establishment of a new Project Management Office. RTTD has been positioned as a transformation opportunity in which each RTTD program or component has two purposes: achieving RTTD goals and developing sustainable organizational capacity beyond RTTD.
3. To counter silo-ing and align all district resources to achieve these goals, the applicant reintroduces its Quality First

Learning model and uses it as the organizational framework for RTTD implementation, led by a director.

4. To ensure that school leadership teams have sufficient flexibility and autonomy, the central office is putting itself “in service” to the principals and their teams. This is not a laissez-faire approach, however; the applicant demonstrates that it has given considerable thought to the support that participating schools will need, including but not limited to extensive professional development in all aspects of the change.
5. The application then describes current examples of mastery, alternative learning opportunities, and programs for students with disabilities and English learners -- building on these existing assets to describe how it is plans to integrate these elements into a system of greater opportunity and value for each student.
 1. Existing dual credit opportunities are discussed.
 2. The district offers a variety of CTE programs and partnerships which it will significantly expand and enhance under its RTTD personalized learning initiative.
 3. Two high schools are mentioned as sites where blended learning is already in place, noting that the increased collaboration fosters critical thinking.
 4. With respect to students with disabilities and English learners, the applicant emphasizes that personalized learning is the cornerstone of specialized instruction and accommodations. As a large urban district, Tucson already has a substantial range of resources and programs for these students. The district is including its Exceptional Education and Language Acquisition departments in all aspects of its RTTD initiative.
6. Based on the evidence provided, the applicant has demonstrated that it has the practices, policies, rules – and the commitment – to successfully integrate them into a new system of personalized learning for all students.

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

1. The applicant uses this section to describe a suite of integrated data systems that is currently in development or planned in conjunction with the RTTD project which will replace virtually all existing systems. These new systems, when completed, would fulfill all requirements of this section.
 1. A major IT Infrastructure Modernization Initiative is already underway, funded by federal E-Rate funds and district funds, to be completed by mid-2014.
 2. IT staff are being reorganized into a technical support unit for academic customers; going forward, end-user devices will be on a 5-year lifecycle program and maintained by the device vendor.
 3. Data systems are designed to fully support a Comprehensive Assessment System and an Evidence-Based Accountability System. Among their many features, the systems would support longitudinal digital student data notebooks (similar to digital portfolios) for each student as well as teacher data notebooks.
 4. The systems are designed to enable easy exporting using open standards protocols, as well as full interoperability from a “systematically engineered” integrated system.
 5. While some RTTD funds would be spent on creating these systems, other funding sources have been or will be committed as well.
2. While the applicant’s current data systems are integrated on an ad hoc and unreliable basis, the applicant has outlined the modernization of its technology and data systems to fully support its personalized learning initiative. While the system is not currently in place, the district is already making investments in this modernization and has fully integrated personalized learning requirements, including assessment, evaluation, and accountability, into the system parameters.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. Building off its professional learning communities and other organizational structures previously presented for the RTTD proposal, the continuous improvement process is anchored in regular and systematic data collection, evaluation, communication, and collaboration.
 1. Summative evaluations will be based on five or more math assessment tools including state and national assessments.
 2. Process evaluations will include measures of project-related resources, school climate, student and school data, and educator evaluations.
 3. A school-based model for communication, called Data Dialogues, will be used to create expectations and

routines for four crucial relationships: teacher-to-student (daily), teacher-to-teacher (weekly), teacher-to-administrator (weekly), and district-to-staff (quarterly).

4. The applicant will use a tiered accountability system, with each tier committed to supporting and monitoring the tier below in a “structured, ongoing, and collaborative manner.”
2. The application does not fully address how it will publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by RTTD.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. The application describes the collection, analysis, and reporting of program progress with quarterly and annual milestones. While communications with internal stakeholders has been addressed here or in previous sections, the application does not describe how communication and engagement with external stakeholders, including parents, will be managed.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant has provided performance measures and annual goals, aligned closely with its focus on math as a gateway skill and on college/career readiness as crucial to long-term student success.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

1. The applicant envisioned a professional development plan for each teacher and an existing software system to track and monitor PD activities. That system will enable analysis and evaluation of the PD system.
2. The district intends to catalogue and evaluate all technology programs in use in the initiative, link usage information to student performance data, then use that analysis to make informed decisions about best products, methods, and student-product fits.
3. These analyses are complemented by observation teams, an external evaluator, and other management/leadership processes overseen by a grants manager/director. Previous section of this application stress the empowerment and support for school leadership teams in evaluating and refining their implementations.
4. The applicant appropriately discusses PD and technology as two areas of evaluation that are more logically done at the district level, yet it has not described an overall district evaluation system for other district-level aspects like compensation reform and modifications to school schedules and structures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The budget and budget narrative are closely aligned with the reform proposal and give reasonable and sufficient detail and rationale for the investment decisions. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The budget (\$39,997,384) is divided into Grants Management (9%), Curriculum and Instruction (63%), Evidence-Based Accountability System (21%), and Comprehensive Assessment System (7%). 2. Approximately half of the Curriculum and Instruction budget is allocated to professional development; the rest to devices and learning materials/products. 3. The Evidence-Based Accountability System (\$8 million) is a new classroom-through-district academic intelligence system. Roughly half the cost is purchases and licenses; the remainder is personnel including systems integration staff. 2. Sources of non-RTTD funds are not shown and the discussion of strategies to ensure long-term sustainability is provided in F(2). 		

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The application does not present a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties) for sustainability. 2. The application lists several deliverables (products created with RTTD funding) that will have ongoing utility: the online library of instructional videos, formative math assessments, devices and system, math curriculum aligned with standards and personalized learning environments will be in place, college/career programs will be developed, and summer teaching lab structures will be in place. 3. In addition, the investment in professional development will leave semi-permanent systems and competencies in place that will not require ongoing investment at the same level. 4. The district's ongoing master planning and a mandated Continuous Improvement Plan are mentioned as vehicles for addressing future funding. 5. The application states, without evidence, that the proposed plan will result in a community of stakeholders taking ownership and perpetuating the work. 6. In summary, the applicant's observations in this section, while helpful, are not equivalent to a high-quality plan. 		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not found. 		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: <p>Strengths: To drive system-wide change in a large urban district with rapidly rising poverty, low student achievement, and under-performance, the applicant has developed a comprehensive math re-invention strategy centered on a cadre of 320 highly proficient math teachers and the professional development and supporting district-level and school-level systems to leverage their impact in all 90+ district schools. Weaknesses: The district does not have a clear record of success over four years; however, judging by the quality of its proposal, new district leadership that arrived in 2011 has the vision and capability to direct dramatic change.</p> <p>The applicant has taken a persistent district-wide failing – Math – and used it as the rationale and focus of an outstanding personalized learning strategy that seems both pragmatic and visionary in driving the math achievement improvements the district desperately needs, while simultaneously creating favorable conditions for expanding and deepening personalized learning throughout the full curriculum.</p> <p>The deficiencies of this proposal are far less substantial than its strengths. Failure to adhere rigorously to each and every selection criterion reduced scores in several sections. The absence of strong evidence of a clear record of success during the last year or two under new district leadership was also a factor. Finally, the applicant did not submit in the Competitive Preference section and lost points accordingly.</p>		

Total	210	177
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0894AZ-3 for Tucson Unified School District (TUSD)

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 district's proposal demonstrates a comprehensive and coherent vision of reform to a great extent. This is shown through a variety of ways. First, this vision is buttressed by key goals for re-inventing mathematics that are tied to the core educational assurance areas. Second, this vision reinforces the priority of personalizing the learning experiences for students and accelerating student achievement. This personalization is connected to the use of student data and building a high quality workforce of educators. Ultimately, the general rhetoric of the proposal as it relates to the goal of developing students who are mathematically literate. This singular focus suggests additional coherence to the reform vision.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's proposal presents an approach to implementation that will support a high quality of district-level and school-level implementation of their proposal. For example, drawing from the trends in the district's students' performance on state math standardized tests, the project has deemed it necessary to include all of their schools. They provide the list of schools with additional demographic information. In addition to attending to the state achievement scores, this project is also informed by student focus groups, surveys and other forms of data collection to ensure that this project supports a high quality implementation.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal provides a clear and high quality plan describing district wide reform and change. The strategy of this proposal is to address all of the sites in the school district so that it does not intend to ensure travel of the ideas and practices outside of the school district. Instead, this plan comprehensively seeks to improve the math performance of all students. This includes articulating what they call "Quality First Instruction" and as well as building professional development, technology, leadership and professional learning communities around the district's instructional model.</i></p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's proposal and reform vision articulated within suggest that increased equity and performance is likely for students' mathematics performance. This is evident by the district's awareness of the current performance of students in the district disaggregated by sub group and the accompanying goals of improvement. These gaps are identified not only with respect to standardized test performance, but also graduation rates, and college enrollment.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning; however, that the proposal does not make a strong case for or make it clear if improvement mathematics performance by students is a high-leverage target or an general indicator of student success, which would naturally carry along with it an commensurate increase in students' reading scores and academically-related behaviors.</p>		

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

	Available	Score

(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	7
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The project proposal does not demonstrate a clear track record of success. However, as a district of its size and the needs a significant portion of their student have, it is not completely out of step to notice this. The proposal however does note some success. For example, the proposal mentions what it calls “pockets of excellence.” These are isolated cases of schools succeeding. These schools, the proposal describes, are implementing many of the principles of the proposed reform project such as quality first instruction and the use of data. However, it is not clear if there are examples of schools in their district implementing the same program and not succeeding. These examples, if they exist, could provide useful information that this proposal can address. Moreover, as additional, but moderate evidence of success, the district has recently received School Improvement Grants, which suggest some experience of communicating their reform model and managing projects related to it. Ultimately, there is not extensive evidence to document their experience in increasing students’ success.</i></p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal demonstrates evidence of transparency in LEA processes and expenditures. This is evidenced by their release of an aggregation of expenditures by type and personnel salaries by functional group like teachers, instructional support, etc. However, it is not clear that this is done at the school level. The proposal notes that these data may be released through freedom of information act requests by the local media, but this does not appear to qualify as transparency.</i></p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal states that there are successful conditions for implementing personalized learning environments described in the proposal. They attribute this to several mechanisms. First, there are new funding incentives for school districts to increase student achievement. Second, the state laws encourage innovations such as charter schools and open enrollment.</i></p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal describes extensive and meaningful participation from a variety of stakeholders. For example, the proposal communicates that there were three different types of meetings—RTTT-D Team, Foundation Team and Small Group Meetings—that drew from a variety of district personnel and community representatives. These meetings were intended to both communicate ideas across levels of the district as well as elicit ideas both across levels of the district and across the different constituencies in the community, including those involved in the business and non-profit sector. Moreover, the planning process also included the involvement of the local union president.</i></p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal demonstrates evidence that the plan has sought to identify needs and gaps in their ability to implement this reform. Through a variety of data collection methods, the project identified needs in professional capacity for teachers to carry out and support personalized instruction and considers how professional development can address this. Furthermore, the project also identifies a technology gap which includes the resources and infrastructure to support personalized learning. Finally, the project proposal identifies the students’ mathematical proficiency as a gap that fundamentally needs to be addressed through high quality teachers and curriculum.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The project proposal describes a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching through personalization. This is evident</i></p>		

for several reasons. First, the proposal states the importance of the standards for mathematical practice from the Common Core State Standards. This provides a common framework for learning. For students, there will be a personalized learning plans. While these provide usable information about student understanding to teachers and administrators, it also intended to be a vehicle for students to reflect on their learning. Moreover, students' feedback will be elicited through focus groups to further understand their needs related to their needs as learners. This will also include a focus on college and careers.

While the proposal appears to be agnostic on the effective instructional approaches to support student learning, the proposal emphasizes the use of data to provide feedback to students and tailor the students' learning experiences.

It is also worth mentioning that the proposal does not include the parents as having a role in supporting student learning.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal presents a high quality plan for how teaching and leading will support and improve student learning. For example, fundamental to their program appears to be having the teacher know about his or her students. This is greatly facilitated by the mention of data, data use and a data system. Monitoring student data is intended to guide the instructional decisions of the teachers. Moreover, the looping model is put in place explicitly for teachers to build relationships with students and enable students to feel a connection to school-based or school related people and activities.

The proposal's approach to instruction, while not specified at the strategy level, does include interim assessments as a means of generating data about students and higher order questions will be encouraged. Moreover, a systematic professional learning is made explicit to ensure that teachers have the skills and awareness to carry out their model of reform. This professional learning will be supported by data coaches and coordinators.

The proposal also notes hybrid learning arrangements that will have implications on how teachers carry out instruction, come to know their students and build capacity to support learning in a hybrid environment. The element of the hybrid learning could be described further, for example, when it will be used and for which students.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal shows that the LEA practices and policies will facilitate personalized learning. This is shown several ways. First, the district's master plan that articulates the long term vision of success overlaps with the priorities of Race to the Top. This overall plan is guided by their notion of quality first instruction and is articulated by a logic model that they have created.

In order to ensure that school leadership teams have sufficient flexibility, the principals will be provided with professional development on all phases of the master plan. The proposal also states that school-based leadership will have input regarding human resource changes. However, it does not state that they will have autonomy or sufficient autonomy on personnel decisions.

The vision for instruction has moved away from a topic-based emphasis to a student learning focus which will enable students to progress on topics based on their mastery rather than time.

In order to meet the needs of students with disabilities, the district is implementing the framework of Universal Design for Learning that takes into account different facets of the learning environment. Moreover, the proposal demonstrates a great deal of capacity that the school district possesses in educating ELL students by monitoring their progress with assessments, using highly qualified teachers and utilizing RTI.

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

10

8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal demonstrates that the school district is building an infrastructure to support personalized learning. For example, the school district has launched a modernization project to ensure that all of the schools have the necessary infrastructure and network to support personalized learning. Moreover, the program of work would develop an integrated data system. This system would provide direct support at the classroom level to support personalized learning. This use of data will support a variety of purposes such as accountability, evaluation as well as guiding instruction. The systems are all intended to be

integrative in order to accommodate a variety of relevant streams of data.

However, it is worth noting that this proposal does not mention how parents might have access to their children's data, nor does it suggest a model of use by the parents that could support their child's learning

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	15
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district's proposal suggests a strategy for continuous improvement. First, this process is informed by an iterative model of improvement that involves planning, implementing, evaluating and deciding next steps.</p> <p>Moreover, their model of continuous improvement includes summative and process evaluation that are aims at different phases of their iterative model of continuous improvement. Finally, the proposal suggests that schools will engage in data dialogues in order to build a focus and common language around data.</p> <p>One other bit of evidence to add to the project's continuous improvement model is the tiered accountability system where one tier agrees to look over another tier. This creates interdependencies of accountability, which suggests additional opportunities to improve in the work that they are engaged in.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p><i>The proposal does not make a strong case for communicating and engaging with internal and external stakeholders. While there may be extensive engagement internally through the detailed model of professional development, the sharing of continuous improvement data will not be shared in a way to foster engagement. Annual reports will inform program staff and the DoE, however, there is no evidence of strategies to communicate and engage the internal stakeholders other than a general meeting listed and there appears to be no strategy for external audiences.</i></p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal describes ambitious yet achievable goals for the project and these goals are articulated through the performance measures that the district has chosen. These performance measures are linked to the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics, performance on assessments and the target grade level of students. Moreover, a rationale is provided for each of the performance measures. These performance measures will be used to catalyze data driven dialogues to make sense of student performance and suggest courses of action.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal identifies plans to evaluate the effectiveness of their RttT-D funded activities although these descriptions require more specification. For example, the district will use a software platform to monitor and evaluate the impact of professional development. This seems reasonable. However, the proposal does not state who is responsible for interpreting the evaluation the platform carries out. In addition, the proposal states that teachers' data notebooks can also be used for evaluation, but the proposal does not state who would do the evaluation or what framework would guide the evaluation process of the data notebooks. Finally, there is mention in the proposal of walkthroughs, an external evaluator and leadership members, to name a few, that would be involved in some evaluation work. These all seem like sensible people to carry out this role, but it is not clear how or in what way it all fits together.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget for the proposal presents a reasonable case for the money the district is requesting. For example, the proposal identifies all of the support the project is requesting and where that support will be coming from. Moreover, the proposal's budget appears to be reasonable and yet sufficient to carry out the work that they are planning to do. In addition, the budget is broken up into subparts to better communicate the money needed and requested for specific parts of the project, e.g. the evidence based accountability system or the curriculum and instruction project.

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

10

7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The sustainability of the project is addressed in a variety of ways. First, the proposal argues that many of the deliverables can continue to add value to the district beyond the project. This includes the virtual library of videos demonstrating exemplary mathematics instruction. It also includes the assessments that will be developed through this project. Additionally, based on the significant focus on professional learning, this project will build capacity of the district's workforce that can carry into the future as long as the workforce stays. What is missing from the sustainability plan is how the district will manage the increased costs related to building the technological infrastructure. The data systems and technology tools for learning will require upkeep and training of teachers in the future. This does not appear to be addressed in the proposal.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

There was not evidence of this competitive preference priority in this project proposal.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The project proposal extensively addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to support personalization of learning. This is evidenced by the increased focus on data in the project, the data systems that the project will create to support personalization, new looping structures to promote teacher-student relationship building and building the capacity of teachers to personalize instruction.

Total	210	172
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	0

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

There was not a budget supplement section in this project proposal.



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0894AZ-4 for Tucson Unified School District (TUSD)

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments: TUSD has described a vision that incorporates the four core educational assurance areas. In this particular section, they did not mention the recruitment of teachers or turning around the lowest performing schools, however in later sections of this application, those two assurance areas are addressed. Their vision is clear and credible and presents a complete plan of implementation and evaluation of the grant.		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
(A)(2) Reviewer Comments: Based on the high percentage of high needs students (85.51%) in the entire district, the low math achievement scores across the district, and that there has been multiple leadership changes in the district in the past twelve years, it is very feasible to include the entire district in this reform initiative. Multiple stakeholder groups were brought together for brainstorming and planning the number of schools and goals to have in the plan. Student surveys were also given at all three levels to help determine what goals needed to be addressed.		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: There are several strongly supported activities that justify TUSD's theory of change, but as a high quality plan is defined, this section lacks persons responsible, goals, and is inconsistent with timelines. Scaling up through system wide professional development is specified and how they will reach their outcomes is described. The chart on their Quality First Learning helped to see all of the connected pieces.		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: The charts seemed confusing . It appears that, for example, the gap between Native Americans and the overall score on (A) (4) (a) seems to widen from the baseline year until SY 2016-17. It also appears that the same is true for (A) (4) (b) between Native Americans and the overall group. It is also confusing as to why the graduation rates for some schools is projected to decline over the period of the grant. Overall these do seem to be ambitious and achievable annual goals that do exceed the state ESEA targets, but there is inconsistency in the tables that actually show the gap widening		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	6
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

TUSD describes “pockets of excellence” across their district especially in the low performing schools. There are adequate descriptions of improving student learning outcomes, but no evidence was given of closing the achievement gaps or of raising college enrollment rates. There was not an adequate amount of raw student data given in order to determine the extent of the success across the district. There was no evidence cited as to making student performance data available to parents in ways that informed and improve participation, instruction, and services.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 There is only a moderate level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. Most of their reports are internal district reports by school. It is only made public by a Request for Public Information for release of individual personnel expenses by district or by section of district operations. Individual schools and departments receive budgeted and actual reports allocated to that school or department. Details are readily available to the school or department administrator. The extent to which they make this information easily accessible and transparent is minimal.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 TUSD has taken steps to implement many state regulations that support personalized learning, notably Move On When Ready. The state superintendent of instruction has given his full support to their efforts. There are also many fiscal incentives connected to raising achievement through personalized learning environments.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 TUSD’s efforts provided a wide variety of key stakeholder input and feedback. The president of the bargaining unit along with several teachers from the bargaining unit participated with representatives from community groups, higher education, and focus groups of students and parents who gave perception data regarding math achievement. There was also representation from numerous district science, math, and leadership teams and district level coordinators.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:
 There were extensive surveys of employees and discussion and planning sessions. The process indicated there are challenges regarding establishing successful professional learning communities.
 Needs were also identified concerning technology infrastructure and data collection. Math achievement was identified as the greatest gap and recruiting math teachers was tied to that. The chart in the application noting gaps and needs provided detailed evidence. The teacher surveys also made a strong support of current practices that should be continued and integrated into the reform initiative (Essential Elements of Instruction).

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 TUSD has a very feasible and detailed approach to improve learning and provides students the support to be college and career ready. They have included culturally responsive strategies and to meet the goals of this grant with high need students in an age appropriate manner. They have included looping as a main piece to promote healthy relationships and a safe learning environment, too. The personalized plan they will create with students and parents is formative and ongoing. There has been attention given to socio-emotional context, as well. Goal-setting, perseverance, critical thinking, communication are all a part of the expectation of working with the student and the family. Students will take ownership of their own learning and measure their progress toward their goals. Data notebooks and data talks will encourage family participation as well. Problem

based learning and mathematical practices integrated across disciplines will be a part of their reform. Focus groups of students will be formed to assess achievement gaps and learner needs to gain insight into attendance and drop out issues, equity, rigor and expectations, as well as other learner needs.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TUSD's plan for improving instruction and supporting student progress through teaching and leading first and foremost is modeled by the teachers themselves by creating and implementing personalized learning plans as teachers. A highly proficient cadre of 320 math teachers will be selected through a vetting process and given massive amounts of professional development. This will form the foundation of TUSD's plan to make sure that highly proficient teachers are with every student. The planned professional development is very focused on these main pieces: personal learning environments, looping, PLCs, Common Core Standards, and data analysis. TUSD has devised a plan of PD that continues to build upon their successes in some of their schools and is also building their capacity and sustainability beyond the grant period. District support will come through coaching and mentoring programs. A quite innovative summer program to help "jumpstart" students and to prepare new teachers in a co-teaching situation with a highly proficient math teacher will address both the learning of the students and the teaching practice of new staff. A virtual library of teaching techniques will be developed that will also live beyond the grant period.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

What is immediately present in TUSD's response to this criteria is the fact that they are aligning key initiatives together within this grant. Their School Master Plan, their Unitary Status Plan, and this grant proposal will all be connected in the activity of this plan called Evidence-Based Accountability. This foundational organizational alignment affects the entire district from the LEA central office governance level. A new Project Management office is being developed to ensure that there are enough staff and supports for each school to effectively implement this proposal with highly effective mathematics teachers. Autonomy is being given to each school leadership team to best implement the programs in the school to meet the specific needs of their students and teachers. None of this is meaningful unless ultimately it ensures personalized learning environments so that each student has the tools to learn in the manner that meets their capabilities at that moment in time. TUSD is ensuring this happens so that students will demonstrate mastery of standards multiple times and in multiple ways all based on the Common Core Standards and that mastery is based on meeting goals, not on amount of time. Individual Language Learner Plans are written for ELL students to help them develop all four domains of language use. The Essential Elements of Instruction that TUSD is using in this grant moves toward the implementation of the principles of Universal Design for Learning and the Quality First Learning for all students with disabilities.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

While there were many details shared in this section concerning the infrastructure supports for a personalized learning environment, it was unclear about how TUSD would ensure that all parents, regardless of income, would have access to the content, tools, and other learning resources in and out of school as well as the technical support. It was evidenced in their description that open data format, software, and interoperable data systems would be the gold standard for implementation.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	14

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Their plan for continuous improvement is ambitious. There are multiple measures both for summative outcome student learning data and formative process measures for interim progress and growth both for students and for the pieces of the

project. There is deliberate inclusion of student and parent feedback and input every year of the grant.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There are some lacking elements for this criteria in that their strategies do not include receiving feedback, but only one way communication of sharing information. There was not mention of sharing with the public, but only internal, partners, and Department of Education.

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

5

4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

TUSD has selected an ambitious and achievable set of performance measures. Their rationale for each one is sound and thorough. Lacking in their descriptions are explicit ways about how the measures will provide information to their theory of action for implementation success and how they will review and improve the measures if they are insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

This is a very complete and comprehensive plan for evaluating the impact of all grant activities, especially the professional development. There is a plan to link student performance to the most optimal and effective programs and who should be targeted to use them. Overall, the grant management team will be well qualified to determine areas of strength and areas of improvement that are needed.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: This description provided a clear picture of the reasonableness and sufficiency to support the development and implementation of TUSD's grant. Rationale for the investments and priorities was justified. There were some items that specified that TUSD would support the activity beyond what the grant would fund. The charts provided identification of funds that would be one time versus those that were ongoing. There is inadequate attention paid to strategies that will be necessary for the sustainability of personalized learning environments once the grant has ended, such as the Summer Labs for teachers and students.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: While there is a feasible justification of how the culture will be changed and institutionalized, there remains an uncertain discrepancy as to how some specific activities will continue to exist without the funding from the grant. There was not a budget in the application for a term after the grant ends with potential sources and uses of the funds		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: This is not included in the applicant's grant proposal. There is not evidence for resource alignment and integrated services in this application.		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

TUSD met this absolute priority by coherently describing how they would continue to build on the four core assurance areas. Their plan was of high-quality and clearly delineated personalization both for student and teacher. TUSD's goals are ambitious and achievable and most notably from their application, the development of highly effective teachers being with every child is worthy of notice. They have taken on a large task, but their budget and planning appear to be appropriate and comprehensive.

Total	210	157
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