



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0254TX-1 for United Independent School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant lists overarching grant goals that are consistent with the four assurances. For example, the commitment to adopt rigorous standards consistent with statewide initiatives matches with the goal to have students on track for college and career readiness. It is not entirely clear, however, how each of the activities included in the description of the overall vision contribute to these goals. For example, the reference to “personalized learning tools” does not include an explanation of how tools will be selected matched to individuals, and then made available. Overall, this section scores in the middle range of available points.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) The applicant selected all schools in the participating districts due to the consistency among them with regard to a high percentage of low-income students and English Language Learners. With pervasive deficits in student performance in these groups across all schools, this selection criterion is appropriate.</p> <p>(b) The application includes a list of all schools that will be included in the proposed activities. The list contains appropriate and complete data on the population to be served.</p> <p>(c) The proposed activities will serve 90,346 students based on current enrollment figures. Of those, 82.68% are low-income students. Additionally, with the school districts included in the proposal being along the Mexican border, a high percentage of students are also English Language Learners.</p> <p>Having thoroughly addressed the selection criteria, the applicant scores at the top of the high point range with no deductions .</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant includes a description of its Theory of Change that lists activities, outputs, and outcomes – all relating back to the goals of the proposed project. The activities are restatements of the four core educational assurance areas rather than developed and structured lists of events and milestones that will mark accomplishment of those assurances. For example, the line for Teacher and Leader Effectiveness includes no description of the plan or how it will be developed and implemented. Also, every time Personal Learning Environments are mentioned, it is not clear how they relate back to specific student needs.</p> <p>Overall the gaps of information from Inputs to Activities to Outputs and to Outcomes leave this section of the proposal in the low end of the middle point range.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The data presented for children aged 0-3 years are unclear. The narrative at the beginning sounds at time as if the percentages included are participation rates, proficiency measures, or growth figures. As such, the extent to which this information represents ambitious yet achievable annual goals is unclear. Also, the applicant does not discuss the rationale for the percentages included in future years. An understanding of how those percentages were selected (and why they vary by district) would be helpful.

(a) The data for current performance on 3-12 grade state assessments show areas of accomplishment and areas of need. The applicant provides little context for the pages of data included here. As such, not enough of the academic need of the population to be served by the proposed project is included in the vision.

(b) The applicant is thorough in providing data showing achievement gaps among the various subgroups. Again, however, very little is provided in the way of narrative to place the significance of these gaps and the direct strategies for eliminating them into the vision for the proposed project.

(c) The applicant shows the gaps in graduation rates among the population to be served. However, no narrative places the extent of this need into the context of the vision for how those rates will be increased.

(d) The applicant explains that the college-going rate within the consortium schools is higher than the state average and then proceeds to provide data showing the gaps as they exist among various subgroups within the individual districts served.

Overall, the applicant provides a tremendous amount of data but needs to better explain how the information as it stands fits within the goals, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the project. To the extent that this section contributes to the project vision, a score in the medium range is merited.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant partially demonstrates evidence of past success in advancing student achievement.</p> <p>(a) The applicant provides aggregated data for each school district showing the overall growth in academic achievement during the last four years. The data do not provided disaggregated information for grades, subjects, or subgroups.</p> <p>(b) The applicant provides lists of awards, gains, and initiatives for each school district in the consortium. This information does not explain, however, the extent to which these initiatives have led to any gains at specific low-achieving schools.</p> <p>(c) The applicant states that student performance data are included on the district website, but one of the biggest areas of concern is the lack of connectivity in the areas served by the proposed project. As such, this does not contribute much to transparency and accountability.</p> <p>Overall, this section contains several strengths but not enough disaggregated data to fully meet the selection criteria. Accordingly, a score in the medium range of points is awarded.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a) Salaries are posted on various websites, but the applicant does not specify which ones.</p> <p>(b) The applicant states that actual personnel salaries are available through many formats and identifiable down to the classroom level.</p>		

- (c) Teacher salaries are included in the information released to the public.
- (d) Salary information released to the public includes stipend figures as well.

Overall, the applicant meets the selection criteria by demonstrating a commitment to transparency with financial information. Where data are not currently published as described in the notice, plans are in place to make them available. Even with the minimal shortcomings of this section, the applicant receives a score in the high range.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides the state context and statutory evidence showing that the LEAs have sufficient autonomy to undertake the activities described in the proposed project. However, the context for specific personalized learning environments is not explained. The documentation included shows that the state provides districts with flexibility, but not that the districts in this consortium have implemented policies and practices conducive to seizing upon that flexibility.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates more of what the state has made possible than what the LEAs have made possible relative to the selection criteria. As such, the applicant receives a medium score for this section.

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

The applicant provides letters of support showing that stakeholder support was considered. However, evidence provided does not include meeting agendas and minutes or evidence that feedback from stakeholders shaped the eventual proposal. With the consortium having just formed during the last six months, there is little evidence of ongoing collaboration upon which stakeholder support could be predicated. Overall, the applicant receives a score in the medium range for this section.

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

The applicant describes the lack of resources throughout the area to be served by the proposed project. This includes a description of the extent to which homes lack connectivity to the Internet. Since the applicant wants to use the proposed project to develop learning-on-the-go, home connectivity is a necessity for making the instructional environment seamless between school and home. Overall, the initiative to build the infrastructure is an attempt to improve the availability of personalized learning environments.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant plans to adopt early graduation plans across the consortium for students beginning in third grade. Strategies include a focus at the upper elementary grades on how courses relate to various careers. As students get older, they will gain more exposure to professionals and college personnel to better develop an understanding of their learning for college and careers. However, the applicant does not detail the training that parents and educators will receive to help students reach this level of understanding. Also, while the applicant mentions that the district is adopting Texas's new academic standards, there is no evidence that teachers have been properly prepared to transition to these new standards. As such, the quality of efforts to improve learning and tie curriculum to college and careers is questionable.

(b) The applicant describes a personalized instructional sequence, including the adoption of state college and career standards; development of personalized education plans; increased connectivity throughout communities to be served by the proposed project; and digital learning opportunities. However, nothing in the proposal describes the quality, duration, and frequency of the training that will be provided to teachers and other school staff to ensure they are equipped to help students meet these goals. For example, the applicant states that common assessments will be in place by 2013. The project does not provide for training of teachers to develop, assess, and evaluate the results of such assessments. As such, the quality of the product that will result is not certain.

(c) The states that students will be trained to use the data dashboards and to take control of their educational destiny. However, the mechanisms for the delivery of this training are not described. Additionally, it is not clear how the applicant will evaluate the extent to which students understand the tools and resources that are being provided to them.

Overall, this section provides a good framework for understanding how the proposed project will support increases in student learning. However, the lack of supporting details in places results in a score in the middle range.

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

20

13

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant provides a list of training goals and activities that include a focus on the development of personal learning environments, adapting instruction to meet college and career readiness standards, progress monitoring of student achievement, and the new teacher evaluation system. For example, for all four of these priorities, teachers will receive training in the data dashboard that is to be developed. However, the quality and duration of these trainings is not stated in the proposal. The applicant states that “training may occur in the form of face to face, coaching, modeling, job embedded, online, videos, Skype, and peer mentoring.” However, no explicit training plan appears to have been developed. Without knowing the quality and duration of the training to be completed, it is hard to determine the extent to which it is appropriate for meeting the applicant’s goals for the proposed project.

(b) The applicant provides a description of activities that are appropriate for helping educators have access and expertise in the use of data to evaluate and accelerate student progress. For example, the project narrative states that the data dashboard will have the ability to “track annual achievement goals for individual students, as well as ability to set strategies to achieve those goals and monitor progress.” The dashboard as described also allows teachers to align lesson plans and benchmark assessments to the college and career readiness standards.

(c) School leaders and leadership teams will also have access to the student data dashboards and meet monthly at the team, school, district and consortium levels to review results. The applicant states that “additional supports will be provided” where gaps are detected, but the project narrative does not explain what those supports will be.

(d) The applicant’s plan does not address how the proposed project will ensure that all students have high quality teachers or how project activities will improve the quality of teaching in hard-to-staff schools or subject areas.

Overall, the applicant receives a score in the middle range for this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant describes a governance structure including an executive committee, a steering committee, and key support positions within each district. It is appropriate for each superintendent in the district to serve on the executive committee because they are ultimately responsible for reporting project progress, outcomes, and evaluation to all stakeholder groups. It is not clear, however, why the applicant has not selected members of the steering committee. Roles of this group include operationalization of the proposed project. As such, having those people in place prior to potential notification of a successful application would be critical to the success of this transition. Also, the applicant does not

include details about the management of the project at each site. With so many schools in the four districts, this information is also critical.

(b) The applicant describes the role of site-based teams in terms of developing flexible scheduling. Teams consisting of principals, counselors, teachers, parents, and students at each participating site will develop a flexible scheduling plan and present it to the consortium in June for approval.

(c) The applicant reiterates Texas law on proficiency-based promotion but does not describe how districts included in this consortium implement these rules. As such, it is unclear how much flexibility students have to earn promotion based on proficiency rather than seat time.

(d) The applicant states that each district in the consortium uses strategies to differentiate instruction, allowing students multiple avenues for showing mastery of skills. However, other than this assurance, no evidence of this practice – or the extent to which it is adopted across these four districts – is given.

(e) The applicant explains how the data dashboard will allow teachers and administrators to understand how student achievement differs across subgroups in real time. However, the proposal does not include a description of structures that are in place to help ensure that students of diverse backgrounds and learning styles have equitable opportunities to succeed in school.

Overall, this section of the proposal scores in the middle range of points.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant effectively demonstrates how the proposed project will increase equity in learning opportunities. To ensure equitable access to Internet, the applicant proposes to build towers in each of the cities included in the project and mobile hotspots in rural areas. Since the main emphasis of this proposal is individualized, anytime learning, this is an appropriate way to improve the infrastructure.

(b) The applicant partially addresses assurances of technical support by providing a menu of local support, online support, and peer support that will be available to students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders. However, these supports do not seem to be tailored to the different stakeholder groups. Since one of the identified needs of the proposal is connectivity throughout the community, it is likely that parents will need more and different support than teachers will.

(c) The plan in place to select a vendor to create an information technology system is appropriate for this project. The applicant has an RFP date set and a preliminary list of specifications consistent with the Notice. As such, the applicant demonstrates a plan in place for making technology systems available as described in the notice.

(d) The applicant includes a list of the departments responsible for each of the data systems but does not make clear if each school district has a department of this title. Since the districts have different sizes and school boards, it is possible that they have different organizational structures.

Overall, this section provides considerable detail in response to the selection criteria, but with some weaknesses, scores in the high end of the middle range of points.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes a list of information that will be collected during the course of the proposed project and the individuals or groups responsible for collecting it. However, it is unclear how that information will be used to facilitate

ongoing corrections and improvements. The applicant also does not describe how the information collected will be publicly shared. Being minimally responsive to the selection criteria, this section receives points in the low end of the middle range.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a thorough plan for ongoing communication and engagement. Strategies include parent-teacher conferences, community meetings, and engagement with local news media. Schedules in place include frequent updates to various stakeholder groups. Accordingly, the applicant receives full points for this section.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant partially meets the selection criteria for this section. The applicant provides performance targets for grade 3 through 11 students based upon current performance on Texas state tests. These targets include proposed gains for the economically disadvantaged and ELL subgroups as well. However, the applicant has not discussed the rationale for focusing exclusively upon state tests with this age group or how the measures will provide “formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan.” Since the proposed project impacts schools across four different school districts, it is also not clear if a singular set of performance targets is appropriate. As such, neither the rationale nor the process for reporting results is clear.

The applicant includes performance targets for PK-3 centering on skill development (such as phonological awareness and oral language proficiency). The rationale for these measures is not included. As such, it cannot be determined from the information presented if these are appropriate targets.

With several strengths in response to the selection criteria being offset by lapses in explaining how specific performance measures were chosen, this section receives a score in the middle of the point range.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant plans for annual formative evaluations that will include performance monitoring, qualitative and quantitative analysis, monitoring of comprehensive personalized information, and outcome evaluation. The evaluation will also measure teacher content knowledge and teaching effectiveness in part to evaluate the quality of professional development that teachers have received.

While the data to be collected are appropriate to help gain an understanding of RTTT funded activities, the reporting of findings is unclear. The applicant states that reporting will occur quarterly, semi-annually, and annually. It is unclear, though, how these reporting cycles will be different from one another.

Overall, the applicant receives points in the middle range for this section.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant’s budget request for \$40 million is spread across five project categories: staffing the consortium team; development of the data dashboard for instructional improvement; professional development in support of improved instructional practices; promoting language activities from birth through age three; and bridging the digital divide. The budget narrative includes detailed costs for personnel, equipment, travel, and services related to each of these project categories.</p>		

In addition to the \$40 million in RTTT funds requested, the applicant indicates that more than \$18 million in kind will be contributed to the success of this project. Included in this calculation is more than \$700,000 for office space and personnel donated by the lead district in the consortium; time and effort of existing technology staff in each district in the amount of more than \$200,000; use of student data software in the amount of more than \$6,000,000; local, state, and federal funds to be used for professional development in support of project activities in the amount of more than \$3.8 million; more than \$1.2 million in local staff costs to pay for the deployment of the mobile network; and over \$4.9 million in each district to manage technology acquired through this project.

Overall, the costs described in this section are reasonable and sufficient for the activities described. More detail is needed however, in the cost of professional development. Without knowing the length and cost of individual activities within this project category, a full understanding of the adequacy is not possible. Also, some of the personnel used for in-kind contribution do not list the percent of time that will be committed to project activities.

This section receives points in the medium range.

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

10

4

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's budget assumptions following the grant period include state, federal, and local funds such as would be normally available to the districts attached to this consortium. However, the narrative does not include an estimate of the costs that will be necessary to sustain grant activities following the period of federal funding for this project. As such, little evidence is provided to support the sustainability of project goals beyond the four-year funding period.

This section receives points in the low end of the medium range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

- (1) The applicant explains that the proposed project will require partnerships between the school district, community organizations, and faith-based entities. However, no evidence of these partnerships exists. While the application itself represents a partnership between the four school districts in the consortium, that bond is only a few months old and was created for the purpose of developing this application.
- (2) The applicant lists five population-level desired results for students prior to entering school. These results include demonstration of academic skill (letter and sound recognition) as well as behaviors desired of students (following directions in school). These five desired results are not quantified, however.
- (3) The applicant includes appropriate instruments for measuring each of these five indicators (such as the Woodcock Munoz and Oral Language Development Scale). However, the narrative does not indicate how data derived from these instruments will be used within the framework of any future partnerships to help the targeted population come closer to reaching desired levels on the five indicators. As such, there is no clear indication of how the applicant would improve results over time.
- (4) The project narrative does not indicate how this consortium or any future partnerships would integrate services described in this section for participating students.
- (5) The project narrative does not indicate how the consortium will leverage future partnerships to build capacity of staff in participating schools.

Overall, the applicant receives a low score for this section.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Although many activities in the proposed project are aligned to the core educational service areas, the framework created in the project narrative leaves several gaps. Throughout the narrative, activities described are in place to support the adoption of standards and assessments aligned to college and career readiness. A more thorough description of proposed professional development activities would have made the plan to support implementation of these standards clearer. The applicant's commitment to build data systems is evident in the description of the dashboard embedded throughout the proposal. No data are provided of the extent to which schools to be served by the proposed project lack effective teachers. Also, the applicant does not describe efforts to reward and retain teachers and principals.

Overall, the gaps in coherence throughout the proposal diminish the extent to which the applicant is comprehensive in addressing the four core educational reform areas. Accordingly, the application does not meet Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	123
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Race to the Top - District Technical Review Form

Application #0254TX-2 for United Independent School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In this section UISD submitted evidence:

- providing details concerning its study of personalized learning environments and its readiness to implement them
- documenting the challenging nature of the student population served by the collaborative
- showing high rates of graduation for its highest risk population
- documenting that the core strategy of the project will be the provision of Internet services in the collaborative schools which have had little or no Internet service in the past
- making an argument that the use of technology with Internet services is an essential component for providing personalized learning environments
- aligning project goals with the four reform areas.

Points were deducted because very little information was provided on the history of reform efforts in the collaborative districts and schools that would provide the foundation for the proposed reform efforts. This reviewer relied on information

provided in other parts of the application to determine that the proposed activities aligned with the four reform areas are ambitious, comprehensive, and detailed. Six points were awarded for this section. UISD's response to this application section falls in the middle range.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 UISD established an RTTT-D planning committee which reviewed student and school population and performance characteristics and made a strategic decision that ALL students in ALL collaborative schools should participate in the project. Data submitted by the applicant show that the project as a whole meets the participation requirements (sufficient numbers and percent low income). In fact, each participating school exceeds the overall 40% low income requirement and the percent low income for the overall project is 82.68. The project will be a large scale system-wide implementation.
 UISD provided a high-quality response for this section earning all 10 points.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 Since this project involves all students and schools in all four participating districts there is no scale up over time for participation. In Table A3.2, UISD provided a four year/phase plan for implementing various plan components across grade spans and age levels which addresses bringing the project to full scale implementation from a components standpoint. The application does include a logic model which conveys the planners' basic theory of action for improving student learning outcomes. The plan presented in A(3) is missing timelines and responsible parties which are required high-quality plan elements. The plan presented here is a general conceptual model. The missing high quality plan elements resulted in the deduction of four points and a section score of 6 which is in the middle range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 UISD provided extensive historical and projected student performance data covering the range from age 3 through college matriculation. With just a few exceptions, the data generally show ambitious goals for improving achievement and closing the achievement gap over the life of the grant and beyond.
 Two points were deducted because of projected performance levels for assessments which were either unrealistically high or too low to be challenging. There are a few assessments in the preschool range which inexplicably show zero performance levels for the first two years of the project. In many cases, projected performance levels reach 100% by the end of the project which may not be realistic unless the assessments are not very challenging.
 UISD's response to the section was in the high range earning a score of eight.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 B)(1)(a) UISD provided data concerning its track record of success only at the high school and college level. Across the grade levels and districts, they reported gains in the 3 to 13% range for mathematics, the 6 to 26% range for reading, and the 14 to 31% range for science. Improvements are substantial overall but not dramatic. The data for high school graduation rates shows a four-year improvement of 9% which is just slightly above the rate obtained for the state of Texas as a whole. The consortium districts' graduation rates, given their at risk population, is an impressive 85% or about 20 percentage points above the national average for economically deprived students. It is also impressive that the consortium

districts report 62% of their students matriculate into college versus 55% for the state. The data show that their students do not fare very well once they get to college, however, since they have a retention rate of 44% which is 19 percentage points below the state average. This poor college retention rate suggests that the PreK-12 curriculum that they have experienced while students, has lacked rigor and failed to provide them with the skills they need to succeed in college. The districts are getting the students out the door, perhaps by lowering standards or having low expectations, but many of them are not well prepared to succeed in college. While the core elements of the proposed project will address this problem, this section is about the consortium's past record.

B)(1)(b) UISD provided performance data and information concerning awards received by the consortium districts and schools but provided very little information regarding ambitious and significant reforms for its persistently lowest achieving or low performing schools.

B)(1)(c) UISD provided information regarding the type and frequency of performance data that is made available to students, educators, and parents. The information and processes are pretty typical of what most districts do.

UISD's response for this section fell in the lower portion of the medium range and a score of 8 was awarded for this section. Points were deducted because the consortium failed to provide evidence of a clear track record of success for grades below high school, the fact that very little information was provided concerning ambitious and significant reforms which have been implemented, and the fact that strategies for making available performance data have been typical and unremarkable.

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

UISD provided information describing its policies and practices for sharing information in a transparent manner. Much of the information provided concerned the consortium's plans for the future rather than current practice. The consortium reports that it does make salary information available for teachers only, instructional and support staff, and nonpersonnel salaries, but did not report availability of information for the instructional staff only category. Salary information is reportedly available for instructional and support staff on the website which is fairly transparent but that means of access was not described as available for the other salary categories. UISD indicated that freedom of information requests can be made to obtain information for all salary categories which is neither user friendly nor transparent. UISD's response for this section was of medium quality and 3 points were awarded.

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

UISD provided documentation showing that the consortium members have the necessary legal statutory and regulatory requirements needed for implementing the personalized learning environments aspects of the proposal. Texas has adopted the College Career readiness Standards, site-based decision-making authority, administrative and principal evaluation systems, and there are local board policies and legal authority in place needed to support implementation of the project. The completeness of this response falls in the high range and all 10 points were awarded.

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

UISD provided documentation describing the process used to develop its proposal which showed engagement of students, families, teachers, and principals. Letters of support were provided by a broad array of stakeholders. Table B4.1 provided details on the dates, location, purpose, and attendees of planning meetings to develop this proposal which took place in a series of meetings between July and mid-October. Representatives of two different teachers unions were involved but it appears that teachers were otherwise not represented and no students had a voice in the process. Since Texas is not a collective bargaining state, the applicant conducted a survey of teachers which showed 95% support for the proposal. Due to the failure to meaningfully involve teachers and students in the planning processes, four points were deducted for this section resulting in a total score of six which is in the middle range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In section B(5) of its proposal, UISD provided table B5.1 detailing needs, gaps, and actions/measures planned for the project. Many of the elements listed as needs, particularly related to technology hardware infrastructure, are not actually needs but are instead potential strategies or solutions for some need. The information included in this section looks mostly like a wants list for technology without a thoughtful analysis of the underlying need for it. No information was provided in this section concerning the theory of action and logic behind the reform proposal although some of this information is included elsewhere. This section did not include a high quality plan. In particular there are no specific activities, timeline, deliverables, or parties responsible. The applicant's response was judged to be in the low end of the medium range and two of five points were awarded.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>UISD provided a high quality plan including all of the required sub elements which will be used to improve learning and teaching by personalizing learning environments. The plan itself is comprehensive and generally thorough (lots of detail and credible elements) and addresses all of the required C-1 elements. One relative weakness is that relatively little information was provided regarding how students would be provided with ongoing and regular feedback. The consortium's response to this section fell in the high range with 18 points being awarded.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>UISD provided a high quality plan including all of the required C(2) sub-elements which will be used to improve instruction and teacher capacity. The plan itself is comprehensive and systematically addresses the C(2) sub-elements. It also calls for a deep reconceptualization of teaching which will make instruction personalized and student-centered. Some of the elements of a high quality plan are weak. Although the plans presented in this section are conceptually very strong, details concerning some required high-quality plan elements are weak. For example, persons identified as responsible for implementing the activities are generally not identified by name or position and timelines are often general. Overall, the consortium's response to this section fell in the high range with 18 points being awarded.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>UISD provided an organizational chart and extensive descriptions of its planned organizational structure for the project which are detailed, appropriate, and address the roles of varied stakeholders including a fairly detailed description of the responsibilities. The applicant also provided required assurances concerning flexibility and autonomy of leadership teams, the ability of students to earn credit on demand, show mastery of standards, and provision of adaptable and instructional learning processes. The fact that the consortium has already achieved implementation of differentiated instructional practices provides a firm foundation for the further work of this project.</p>		

The high quality plan elements for deliverables, timelines, and persons responsible were generally not provided in this section, but many of the planning elements provided in section C would be relevant for this section. Overall UISD's response for this section was in the high range and 12 points were awarded. A few points were deducted because of the lack of detail concerning high quality plan elements relevant to this section.

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

10

8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

UISD provided documentation describing how Internet services would be provided to students, parents, and educators providing them with the necessary infrastructure to personalize learning. Those plans systematically address all of the section D(2) requirements including provision of content, tools, learning resources, provision of technical support, open data formats, and interoperability of systems. The proposal describes novel plans and strategies for delivering internet services in remote areas which lack the infrastructure which is available in most of the United States.

The high quality plan elements for deliverables, timelines, and persons responsible are generally not provided in this section but many of the planning elements provided in section C would be relevant for this section. Overall UISD's response for this section was in the lower end of the high range and 8 points were awarded. Two points were deducted because of the lack of detail concerning high quality plan elements relevant to this section.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>UISD provided a high quality plan with a strong conceptual model for continuous improvement. The conceptual model includes developing a plan, implementing the plan, assessing the progress, evaluating the results, and making adjustments. This is basically the total quality management "plan, do, study, act cycle." The plan provides for ongoing progress monitoring and plan adaptation at the student, classroom, school, district, and consortium level. The plans include goals, activities, persons responsible, and deliverables though they are not labeled as such. Timelines for the activities, a required high quality plan element, were not provided. The plan did not adequately address how the consortium would publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top.</p> <p>UISD's response to this section was at the low end of the high range with 12 points being awarded.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>UISD provided documentation detailing a credible plan for ongoing communication and engagement of stakeholders regarding continuous improvement processes. Specific examples of communication strategies at the student, classroom, school, and district level were provided. The response met all requirements for this section and full points were awarded.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>UISD provided an array of performance measures with performance targets that were generally ambitious, calling for improvements of 4 -5% proficient per year, but achievable. The full range of measures required for each grade level band was provided above grade 3. In the K-3 range, however, no non-cognitive measure was identified. In a few cases, the target called for 100% of the students to achieve the target which is not credible. UISD did not provide a rationale for the selection of the measures or how they would provide rigorous timely informative leading information. No annual targets were provided for the percentage of students who will have a teacher of record and principal that are classified as highly effective. Because of these missing elements, two points were deducted and a total score of three was awarded for the section. This rating falls in the medium-range.</p>		

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>UISD described evaluation plans including a broad array of measures intended to support formative and summative evaluation functions. Project level evaluation reporting is planned quarterly using an external evaluator. The evaluation plans are comprehensive and very ambitious. Plans to bring much of the information together in a Data Dashboard to be accessed by the evaluator will make a very daunting challenge more manageable. Timelines and persons responsible, which are required elements of a high-quality plan for this section, were generally not provided. Two points were deducted because of these concerns. A total of three points were awarded which falls in the medium-range.</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>UISD provided a four-year budget, broken out by five major project areas, and also provided a high quality plan for implementing the budget which included the required sub elements for goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible. The quality of the plan would have been better if some of the activities and timelines had been developed with more attention to detail. The five project areas address critical areas including a management team, an instructional improvement system, educator capacity building, early intervention, and technology implementation. Each project included a narrative description and rationale along with goals, activities, deliverables, time lines and responsible parties.</p> <p>A rationale for the funds and strategies ensuring sustainability were provided. Fund expenditures of a one-time nature generally were identified as such.</p> <p>The personnel budget for year two is roughly 10 times higher than that provided for other project years. Most of the personnel budget is for professional development and the grossly disproportionate focus for professional development in year two seems unrealistic. Teachers are likely to be overwhelmed with the concentration of professional development in year two and professional development may not be adequate in years three and four. In year one it's understandable that professional development activities may be less because the project is just getting started.</p> <p>UISD's response for this section fell in the high range with eight of ten points awarded. Points were deducted because of lack of activity and timeline details in the high quality plan and the fact that no rationale was given for the grossly disproportionate personnel expenditures for year two.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>UISD indicated it is committed to sustaining the project and provided a very general plan for funding the project beyond the life of the grant which listed possible federal, state, and local funding sources. At the end of the four year grant, the plan calls for aligning resources at the local district level within each district to support project activities.</p> <p>UISD did not provide a high quality plan with the required sub-elements for addressing sustainability of the project.</p> <p>UISD earned five of ten points with its submission for this section. Point deductions were made for the absence of high quality plan elements and low credibility that the project can be sustained with the methods identified.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>UISD described partnerships which it has and will expand for addressing the needs of students during the preschool years. The services focus on developing the language and general readiness of impoverished students who do not speak English. While guidance in the application calls for a high quality plan with sub-elements such as activities, timelines, and responsible parties, the plan submitted is of a more general nature. The plan identifies five indicators for monitoring student progress and does establish challenging but realistic targets. The plan for this section was quite general. Information was provided on how the strategy would be scaled beyond the participating students. The consortium's submission for this section earned eight of ten possible points which is at the low end of the high range. Points were deducted due to the weaknesses described above.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>UISD's proposal coherently and comprehensively addressed how it will use personalized learning environments to improve learning and teaching, produce students that are college and career ready, and met all other elements of the absolute priority one requirements.</p>		

Total	210	163
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

	Available	Score
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	10
<p>Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Optional Budget Supplement #1 – College and Career Pathways to Success Initiative</p> <p>This replicatable supplemental project would provide for an extensive array of field trips designed to provide students with hands-on real-world learning activities to help prepare them for college. UISD provided a rationale for the population served and a coherent budget to support the activities but failed to provide a high quality plan with required sub-elements such as activities, deliverables, timelines, and responsible parties. UISD reported the intent to include difficult to measure skills and traits including perseverance, critical thinking, and communication. UISD's submission earned 10 of 15 possible points which falls in the medium-range. Points were deducted due to the absence of high-quality implementation plan elements such as timelines and persons responsible as well as the overall significance of the proposal (providing field trips is not innovative).</p>		
Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12
<p>Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Optional Budget Supplement #2 – One to One B3 0-20 (High School) Technology Initiative</p>		

This replicatable supplemental project would provide laptop computers and E-readers at the high school level for students and staff to use at a one-to-one ratio. Over one third of the funds from the project would be local matching funds. UISD provided a rationale for the population served and a coherent budget to support the activities but failed to provide a high quality plan with required sub-elements such as activities, deliverables, timelines, and responsible parties. UISD reported an intent to include difficult to measure skills and traits including perseverance, critical thinking, and communication. UISD's submission earned 12 of 15 possible points which falls in the medium-range. Points were deducted due to the absence of high-quality implementation plan elements such as timelines and persons responsible as well as the overall significance of the proposal (the project is moderately rather than highly innovative).

UISD's projects 2-4 are essentially identical one to one technology initiatives each of which focus on one education level (elementary, middle school, high school).

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12
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Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Optional Budget Supplement #3 – One to One B3 0-20 (Middle School) Technology Initiative

This replicatable supplemental project would provide laptop computers and E-readers at the middle school level for students and staff to use at a one-to-one ratio. Over one third of the funds from the project would be local matching funds. UISD provided a rationale for the population served and a coherent budget to support the activities but failed to provide a high quality plan with required sub-elements such as activities, deliverables, timelines, and responsible parties. UISD reported an intent to include difficult to measure skills and traits including perseverance, critical thinking, and communication. UISD's submission earned 12 of 15 possible points which falls in the medium-range. Points were deducted due to the absence of high-quality implementation plan elements such as timelines and persons responsible as well as the overall significance of the proposal (the project is moderately rather than highly innovative).

UISD's projects 2-4 are essentially identical one to one technology initiatives each of which focus on one education level (elementary, middle school, high school).

Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)	15	12
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Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

Optional Budget Supplement #4 – One to One B3 0-20 (Elementary School) Technology Initiative

This replicatable supplemental project would provide laptop computers and E-readers at the elementary school level for students and staff to use at a one-to-one ratio. Over one third of the funds from the project would be local matching funds. UISD provided a rationale for the population served and a coherent budget to support the activities but failed to provide a high quality plan with required sub-elements such as activities, deliverables, timelines, and responsible parties. UISD reported an intent to include difficult to measure skills and traits including perseverance, critical thinking, and communication. UISD's submission earned 12 of 15 possible points which falls in the medium-range. Points were deducted due to the absence of high-quality implementation plan elements such as timelines and persons responsible as well as the overall significance of the proposal (the project is moderately rather than highly innovative).

UISD's projects 2-4 are essentially identical one to one technology initiatives each of which focus on one education level (elementary, middle school, high school).





Race to the Top - District

A. Vision (40 total points)

Technical Review Form

Application #0254TX-3 for United Independent School District	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant, The Texas Middle Rio Grande Border Consortium (Border Consortium), is a partnership among four school districts located in an area covering almost 7,000 square miles categorized as impoverished and Spanish speaking without reliable internet access. The vision is the blanket the area with internet coverage and use technology to improve student achievement. The Border Consortium details their goal is to provide an opportunity to make individual learning choices available in the venue of a different, more flexible learning environment and innovate teaching and assessment method which is critical to the student preparation for the world of work and post-secondary learning. They acknowledge this will be a major shift from the teacher centered approached to a student centered approach through using the concept of personalized learning environments. To accomplish this they detail they will need to erect signal towers throughout the entire consortium area and use the concept of staffed eBuses which will boost tower signals in remote areas allowing student to access the internet on a regular schedule. They propose to use the unique approach for tutoring services through the use of Skype and other face time options which utilize the internet. In addition, the applicant will use parent portals administered through the district to promote multiple communication, again which required the internet.</p> <p>The applicant presents a credible approach to the goals which build upon the four core educational assurance areas evidenced by Table A1.1. This table provides an overview of their vision through focusing on three primary goals - Students are on Track to College and Career Readiness, Students are Socially and Emotionally Prepared to Enter Post-Secondary Life and All Teachers and Principals are Highly Effective.</p> <p>The applicant scored high points because they clearly articulated a comprehensive and coherent vision building upon its work in the four core educational assurance areas with the goal of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity through personalized student support.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's table A2.1 provides solid overview of the individual LEA and individual school-level commitment for the process leading up to submitting application. They provides good detail on the process they used to select schools to participate. The proposal details there was a project committee composed of members appointed by each superintendent to evaluate sub populations which included the following metrics: free and reduced lunch, language readiness assessment, PSAT, TAKS, AP enrollment, drop rate/ graduation rate, college enrollment data. The narrative presented that this subcommittee discovered that the highest needs students were not just in the lowest performing schools but distributed among all the schools in the district. The applicant detailed after their data assessment was conducted by the subcommittee that all schools would need to participate in the grant programs to provide personalized learning environments targeting specific needs through intuitive and prescriptive standards based curriculum software. A clear and concise listing of 102 schools, from the four (4) districts serving in the consortium, are shown to be participating in the grant activities. The applicant further provides information that 90,346 total students will be participating with 75,667 low-income participating students, 57,085 high-need students and 5,572 participating educators.</p> <p>The applicant scored high points because they clearly articulated the approach to implementing the project will support high-quality LEA level and school-level implementation which includes the key components listed in the criteria.</p>		

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While applicant provided goals for the <i>Breaking Barriers on the Border B3 (0-20)</i>, these goals did not provide information addressing the area wide internet coverage. Even though the overarching goals are those listed on page 33, some information concerning the building internet capacity would have strengthened the application. Although the applicant does provides a theory of change logic model for the <i>Breaking Barriers on the Border B3 (0-20)</i> project which includes the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and goals; they do not project all of the required information for a high-quality plan as defined by US DOE such as they list no responsible parties for the activities and outputs and no timeline for the critical activities. A critical area for the times is in developing a Comprehensive Data Management Platform. With no understanding of the timeline for how this platform will be rolled out it is difficult to fully assess implementation of the project. Concurrently, the proposal does not provide a timeline for activities or outputs listed associated with providing internet access in all areas served. The applicant does provide phases for the project (Table A3.2) which includes mobile eBus for phase 1, but fails to provide timeline for ramping up the mobile eBus aspect of project. The applicant does provide the understanding that all students, in all schools in the targeted area, will be served.</p> <p>The applicant scored in the lower medium range in point value due to lack of information on scaling up major aspect of this proposal. A goals and timelines for the internet scale up would have strengthened the application.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a clear, detailed chart on each of the areas required by the NIA but they do not provide the State ESEA targets for LEA(s). They explain that the goal for the final year of the project is to have 100 percent attainment for the majority of the areas being measured on performance of summative assessments (proficiency status and growth) which appears ambitious but unrealistic. But, the Special Ed and At-Risk subpopulations appear to have ambitious and achievable annual goals.</p> <p><i>The Performance on Summative Assessment</i> data for up through 2nd grade appears to have ambitious yet realistic annual goals for BOY, MOY and EOY, but do not provide data on goals for SY 2012-13 & SY2013-14 for BOY, MOY and EOY. The reason for this non-inclusion is unclear. More information on this would have strengthened the application with an explanation of why two years would pass before data is collected. The achievement gap data provided is clear, concise and easy to understand. The applicant provides the district average and state average for meeting or exceeding the standard for the overall population as well as for the subgroups as well as provides a benchmark for achievement gaps. For the goal areas and identified subgroups listed the percentage improvement in the achievement gaps appears ambitious and achievable. The applicants graduation rates for the overall populations, those economically disadvantaged and ELL students, is ahead of the state and national figures which demonstrates reform. For San Felipe-DeI Rio CISD, the graduation rates for two subgroups ELL/LEP and African American project a downward trend by projects end with no explanation as to the reason why. An understanding of for this would have strengthened the application. The applicant projects that United ISD overall college enrollment rate will be 100 percent by SY 2015-16 which appears to be very ambitious, yet unrealistic. The college attainment rate for The Consortium (62%) leads the state rate (55%) which provides a solid foundation to build upon. Although the college attainment rates are low for the consortium, having higher high school graduation rates is a foundation to start from. By having a partnership among the four districts, the strong districts in college enrollment can assist those weaker districts in this area with strategies for improvement through the consortium. The low higher education retention rates should be boosted for area.</p> <p>The applicant scores in the upper medium range in point due to the unclear data presented. If the application had provided justification as to why data was not going to be collected for a two year time period the proposal would have been strengthened. In addition, the point total was lower due to the unrealistic targets of 100 percent attainment for the majority of summative assessments.</p>		

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

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	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant demonstrates evidence of improving student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps through the four partner districts experiencing positive student achievement growth for the past four years 2007 – 2010. Further evidence explains graduation rates increasing from 54 percent to 81 percent, dropout rate decreasing from 14 percent to around 7 percent. The graduation rates for the consortium has experience a growth of 9 percent over the past four years which is 3 percent higher than the state growth. The consortium graduation rate for the economically disadvantage, ELL and overall population all are ahead of the national rate.</p> <p>The applicant details they strategically improved graduation rates through targeting and tracking students entering the 9th grade with focus on those at-risk students who did not achieve successful previous year benchmark schools or who had below average attendance rates for state targeted which shows demonstrated evidence of strategic planning. This success began being pushed down to grades 6 - 8 which should see success follow. Another measure of success is the consortium rate for college enrollment being ahead of the state and national rates.</p> <p>The individual districts improvement strengthens the consortiums position for change. The Del Rio district had realized a decrease in dropouts and an increase the graduation rates (from 54 percent to 81 percent). The Eagle Pass District has achieved reforms in the attainment of AYP and therefore eliminating a staging for all three campuses which is attributed to the use of data for instructional decisions made on student needs and strengths. Applicant provided table (B)(1)(c) <i>Availability of Student Performance Data</i> explains the data, including performance data, to students, parents and educators help to inform and improve participation, instruction and services. This includes the use of a Parent Portal in Student information System which informs parents on attendance, discipline, class lesson plans and classroom assignment grades. The consortium appears to have demonstrated success to build upon.</p> <p>The applicant scored high in points for this section because of a well-articulated record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal provides strong understanding of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments. This is evidenced clear understanding that actual personnel salaries for all school level and support staff are public information and identifiable through both the individual and position. The proposal documents that the purchase of a comprehensive data portal coupled with the delivery of internet throughout the area will further enhance access to information. An explanation is also provided that actual non personnel expenditures at the school level are available through district requests through their open records requests. Further detail is provided about transparence in LEA processes, practices and investments through the districts website, the district's improvement planning process, district-maintained standards and expected behaviors, perception surveys and school councils as well as through a host of other avenues provided. This applicant scored high points because of the level of transparency documented in their processes, practices and investments.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides details for the various state legal, statutory and regulatory requirements which provides autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments described. This includes the Site-Based Decision Making ability in addition to the evaluation systems, local board policies, regulatory and legal requirements. In addition, the state of Texas has adopted across the board College and Career Readiness Standards in the critical areas of English/ language arts, social sciences, mathematics and science in K-12. This will provide an appropriate alignment of public and higher education curriculum. Based on the narrative provided, successful conditions and sufficient autonomy exists to implement the personalized learning environments described by proposal. This section scored high points because of their explanations that there were successful</p>		

conditions and sufficient autonomy under state, legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the proposal.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant detailed that nearly 95 percent of all teachers were in support of the proposal submitted. Although principals were surveyed in the Eagle Pass and Del Rio districts, no information was provided concerning principals support from the Laredo and United district's. Also, while the United District management team was involved in the development of proposal no mention is made concerning engagement from their principals, families, teachers or students. This is especially critical due to United being the lead applicant. In addition to the United's lack of student involvement, no reference is given to how students from any of the districts were involved in the proposal's development. Applicant has a cross section of support letters in the proposal ranging from schools districts, state legislators, local government officials, state teacher union, higher education yet no letters were submitted from the business community, civic based groups and organizations with parental involvement. Commitment letters from those groups would have spoken to the community support for the vision presented and especially the internet towers to be constructed and for the community support for change in the education system in the area. This section scored in the medium range because of the lacking support from needed groups.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:
 While the proposal provides the needs, gaps and action/measures concerning the consortiums current status toward implementing a personalized learning environment they fail to provide is a high-quality plan for an analysis of their current status. This would include the responsible parties in the high-quality plan for assessing the needs and gaps. Through providing an understanding who would be responsible for the action/ measures the applicant would have strengthened the proposal.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 The proposal has included a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching through a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development to allow they can graduate on time and college and career ready. This plan specifies learning goals which focus on college and career readiness, social and emotional development and highly effective teachers and leaders. The plan clearly outlines the activities and timeline along with the deliverables and persons responsible for carrying out activity. The applicant's plan to implement solid comprehensive graduation plan for students in grades 3 - 12 involving the student, parents, school personnel and focuses on connections between academics and life is a strong component. The proposal presents that at end of 8th grade, a committee comprised of key stakeholders (parents, educators and students) will collectively develop an Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) designed to not only assist the student to make a smooth transition from middle school to high school but also involves college and career pre-planning.

In addition to the IGP, and Early Graduation Plan (EGP) will be developed in the 3rd grade which includes an age appropriate career interest inventory which is a solid approach to move students on track for college and career readiness.

The applicant provides that they will be placing mobile digital devices in homes with children birth through age 3 which will allow for the student to be involved with deep learning pre-k experiences in areas of exploring academic interest through pre-loaded language games, school readiness activities and read-aloud books. This is a great approach to school readiness.

In keeping with their student centered approach, the districts provide a clear plan for providing a variety of elective course options including CTE, along with project-based learning to provide deep learning opportunities in areas of academic interest. In addition, the applicant presents a thorough listing of option (i.e. dual enrollment, early college, virtual field trips and tutoring through Skype) which are designed to help motivate and deepen the individual student learning experience. While the applicant explains they will provide Gear-Up and other mentoring programs, they fail to provide the correlation between these programs and how the student will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives. An example would be that they will provide diverse mentors, virtual field trips to other cultures, etc.

While the applicant explains they will implement college- and career-ready standards for grades K-12, which describe problem solving and reasoning as key cognitive skills, more detail is needed on how they will develop traits such as goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, and communication. The applicant details a plan to conference on graduation requirements yearly for students in grades 3-8 and twice a year for grades 9-12. These meetings will bring the student, parents and educators together for calibration allowing for continuation towards graduation. For high need students, the applicant provides a detailed listing of individualized strategies to be available in addition to the annual/ biannual conference.

The applicant provides a solid understanding of their plan to implement a comprehensive student-learning dashboard which will be accessible by parents and educators. They detail a clear plan to ensure the student have access to a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development. This includes details of implementation of a data warehouse, individual student conferences, individual student graduation plans along with college and career readiness standards and tutoring. In addition, they present a plan to execute a rigorous on-line standards based curriculum, extended learning, common assessments, dual credits and other approaches to provide a variety of high quality instructional opportunities and environments. A major component in this proposal is to provide wireless internet access for students to foster high quality, digital learning content which are aligned with college and career ready standards. While applicant does provide a timeline for implementation of the eBus project as being October 2013, they do not address the timeline for construction of the internet towers discussed earlier. The digital learning content will be reticent without this blanket coverage. With 7,00 square miles of coverage areas it is evidence that the eBus' cannot cover entire area alone. A clear timeline would have provided that mechanism would be in place by a certain time to allow for tools and resources to be used. While applicant has discussed the data warehouse and digital enhancements available to students, they fail to provide an understanding of the training and support necessary to assist the stakeholder to learn how to use those tools and resources provided to them to track and manage their learning. More detail on how training would occur would have strengthened the application. This applicant scores in the medium range in points because of the unclear timeline for blanketing the area with internet coverage, lack of exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives and training for the digital enhancements and tools.

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

20

12

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an extensive listing of training activities for educators designed to support the effective implementation of the personalized learning environments and strategies that meet student's academic needs. These include training in the use of dashboard data features, specific classroom management strategies and personalized learning topics. A detailed listing of training activities for educators is also provided which teach adapting content and instruction and providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks

While the proposal speaks to using the dashboard for measuring student progress, it does not provide information on how they will provide training for educators to frequently measure progress. Information is provided on using data for early, individual and personal graduation plans along with developing individualized instructional plans yet more information is needed to describe how educators will be trained to frequently measuring progress.

Again the applicant explains they will provide educators with a comprehensive dashboard designed to match student data, track achievement goals and provide customized reports for creating flexible skill groups and to track and assign interventions. Applicant details they will use a new teacher evaluation system along with student data in self-examination of teacher effectiveness, walk throughs, and dashboard report features in improving processes. The proposal clearly articulates an overview of the professional development training focus is through the four phases outlined.

The comprehensive dashboard which will be a single site for educators to access student data related to academics, interest inventories and demographics which is a solid plan. Educators will seek data from one source rather than multiple sources. While the dashboard will be purchased and implemented in year one, more information is needed concerning how the dashboard data will be loaded. For example an understanding that the data from prior years will be loaded into system or that the dashboard will start to compile data once implemented would have strengthened the application. The applicant explains that the digital instructional resources will be aligned with state standards including college and career ready standards which demonstrates coordination . The specific resources will include dashboard curriculum, interactive white boards, school computer labs and mobile digital devices which appear reasonable resources.

Applicant provides achievable activities to provide information from various sources that helps schools leaders and leadership teams assess and take steps to improve effectiveness and continuous school improvement. Although the activities listed appear to only be able to provide a partial view for assessment and more information is needed. An example is how the various district's teacher evaluation system will be used to help conduct assessment. This would have strengthened the application.

The applicant provides limited ongoing activities around systems for continuous improvement of school program. Applicant does not provide plan for training with educators or parents which is critical for calibration and continuous improvement. Applicant fails to address the high quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a comprehensive governance structure which includes an executive committee comprise of the four superintendents along with a Chair and a Co-Chair. In addition, they will employ the use of a steering committee with representatives from each district along with a project implementation team, again comprised of each district. The applicant also provides a supportive model which moves from the consortium level to the LEA/School level and provides a level of understanding how the structure will be governed. While the participating schools do not have the autonomy to modify schools schedules and calendars, due to the TX Education Agency not allowing, local districts do have the authority to make those modifications. The applicant clearly explains that the Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) teams have authority to produce staffing models and school personnel decisions that include roles and responsibilities of educators and non-educators and developing and managing school-level budgets as they pertain to the implementation of the B3 (0-20) project.

While the applicant does explain the approaches for a student who does not grasp the content of a skill, they fail to explain how a student who does quickly grasp can earn that credit and progress to another skill without being held back. In other words, for those who excel an understanding of how they can move forward without having to wait on other classmates to achieve mastery would have strengthened the application. Applicant does provide an understanding that the students will have multiple avenues to grasp the content and will be offered multiple comparable ways in order to establish comprehension of the content. A thorough list of assessments formats to be used is given which clearly explains the teachers are given the flexibility to compare those assessments for students weekly and determine the best mode of evaluation tool to be used with the individual student.

The applicant focuses on the development and implementation of individualized graduation plans, the execution of a Dashboard system to provide teachers with data along with diverse instructional delivery tools. These tools are

comprehensive and include the framework Universal Design for Learning (UDL) along with training which shows how they can apply universal design principles to curricular materials and instructional strategies to support student learning. More information is needed concerning how students with disabilities and English Learners will have access to adapted learning resources and instructional practices.

The applicant scored in the high range of points due to the need for more clarity on how high performing students can move through demonstrated mastery without being held back.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a clear understanding the all students the four districts comprising the Border Consortium, will be afforded wireless internet at home through the strategically placed towers inside the city limits and hotspots in the form of refurbished eBuses in the outlying areas. While information is provide concerning the internet, more information needed on how all participating stakeholders including students, parents, educators and others will be afforded the necessary tools and other learning resources both in and out of school. For example, the applicant needed to provide information concerning how those families who do not possess mobile electronic devices to be given those to have access in their homes. Also, more information is needed concerning how the tutors who do not possess an electronic device will be granted access to Skype or other face time options.

While the applicant explains that two technical support staff will be hired to provide implementation assistance, content integration aid, training and technical support of the four- year grant period, it appears unrealistic that only two tech supports can serve four school districts serving 5,572 educators and 90,346 students. While each district has a technology department and each school has a technical support staff on-site, more information is needed on how specifically the two new technical support individuals will be used. For example, these two support individuals will be used with overseeing training with the on-site tech support providing the actual training or they will be overseeing the wireless plan unfolded or some other aspect. More detail would have strengthened the application.

The applicant documents they will issue an RFP for the development, interfacing capabilities and the implementation of a Data Management Platform early in Phase I, but does not provide information concerning when the anticipate bid award will be made and when the platform will be operational would have strengthened the application. Table D 2.2 provides clear description of the interoperable data system, specific data to be included which covers Human Resources, Finance, Student Information and Instructional Improvement which provides a comprehensive system for various stakeholder use.

The applicant scored in the medium range of points due to the lack of timelines concerning the Data Management Platform project and in how the two support personnel would be used.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an explanation that their strategy for continuous improvement plan will begin in the classroom, when the teacher uses data to develop instruction plans. The continuous improvement plan matrix described is a logical process which expand outward. The plan outlined includes goal and assurance alignments to provide a check step for the process. While the process is explained as being a model which expands outward, more information concerning how the Site-Based Decision Making (SBDM) teams, steering committee, implementation team and executive teams will have input into continuous improvement is needed. Applicant does explain that parent, student, teacher, administrator and community member's comments and concerns will be included in the informal review process, which is crucial for continuous improvement. More information needed concerning how the project will publicly share information on the quality of its

investment funded. For example, yearly published information on the results or annual report compiled and distributed would have strengthened the application.

The applicant scored in the medium range of points because of the of the lack of information concerning how the project will publicly share information, which is critical for community support.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant explains that information will be shared with students, parent in and then expanding communication to the community at-large. The proposal details that schools will share information through the normal channels of PTA meetings, website postings and school literature. In addition, the district and the consortium will use community meetings, local news media, local organizations to share project goals and report effectiveness. Appropriately, the applicant will make extensive effort to communicate information to all stakeholders in their native language. Each of these adds to the overall community plan which is details to help as many stakeholders as possible to have information. Overall, the applicant scored high because they outline a clear strategy for ongoing communication.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant chose 14 performance measures which are required by the NIA. They adequately describes how they intend to assess the performance measures in a timely manner through a variety of assessments that are either state mandated (STARR) or as a part of their new instructional model. The applicant fails to explain how the measure will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information tailored to it proposed plan. While the measures are required, the proposal doesn't explain how they will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge progress. The applicant scored in the middle of the point range because of the lack of information asked by the criteria.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant provides details that the final component of the evaluation process will be outcome evaluation which is a solid approach. A narrative description includes teacher professional growth through program participation, impact on overall school improvement, professional development and student academic achievement. A more detailed account of quantifiable outcomes for the project in these areas would have strengthened the application. While academic achievement and achievement gap data projections are given in earlier section, more information on outcomes for overall school improvement would have strengthened the application. For example, in an earlier section the applicant explains that the college enrollment rate was high, but the retention rate was low which would appear to be an effective longitudinal measure of program effectiveness. This section scored in the middle of the point range because of the lack of information on outcomes for overall school improvement.

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 details that the total project is \$58,440,736 of which \$18,440,736 is non-grant funds. The overall project is organized clearly into five (5) projects. While some of the projects provide a level of detail of where non-grant funds will come, in some cases the level of detail does not provide for an identification of where all funds will come from. Some funds are detailed as local funds, but they are not categorized as local educational funds, local philanthropic funds or other

sources. The budget appears reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant covered all the narrative activities concerning the project. With the overall project broken into five separate projects, it is more clearly articulated as to how the project will be implemented from a funding perspective. The applicant provides clear and thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. By breaking down the budget into project-level itemized costs, the project follows a logical flow for priorities parallel to the narrative.

The applicant does not provide a description of all the funds sources. For example, some local funds are detailed yet others are only listed as local funds such as *Budget Subpart 4 - funds from other sources used to support the project*. They state \$40,000 will be from local funds, but no explanation of source(s) the local funds are from. Again, applicant's format for the subparts provides a clear understanding of what funds will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs. An example of this is the Equipment description for each section.

The section scored in the middle of the point range due to lack of clarity of where non-grant funds would be coming from.

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

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan with goals, timelines, and responsible parties not included. The applicant does present a clear plan to document sustainability of project and to build organizational capacity beyond the ending date of the project. Additionally, the applicant does explain potential funding sources but does not include support letters from those entities explaining potential for support. A major issue relates to the internet towers and resources for their continued support after the grant. The towers, satellite equipment for towers, cost of internet service through towers and continued operational costs of the eBuses are all sustainability issues. More information concerning how these may be potentially sustained would have strengthened the application. In addition, the mobile devices to be secured have no sustainability dollars for repair or replacement. Information on these items would have strengthened the application also. Since technology is a major component to this project, more information on the sustainability of this aspect would have been helpful.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant explained two partnerships: the Head Start/ Early Childhood Kindergarten readiness program and the Avance Parent-Child Education program. These partnerships provide an effort to work with parents. The applicant would have strengthened the narrative by discussing other partnerships formed with public and private organizations surrounding the major aspects of this project (i.e. philanthropies, civic groups and other community based organizations.) The applicant describes population level desired results for the Colonia pre-school students which account for up to 2,200 students and includes both emotional results and educational outcomes focusing on being school ready. A clear detail is provided that they will track the NSRII indicators on school readiness through using the Dashboard management system to be purchased. The applicant needed more information on how they will use the data to target its resources. While the indicators will be for pre-school students, no discussion was centered on what will be done with results to improve results for the participating students.

The applicant does provides an sound understanding that the model could be expanded to serve other low income and/or ELL students in the district as well as expanded to other Colonias. They specify that the current project will continue to scale upon itself and that the mobile devices will be reassigned to other preschoolers in the Colonia area. The applicant

does not provide an understanding of the process of assigning the devices or how those that become non-functional will be repaired or replaced over time. A understanding of the process would have strengthened the application.

The applicant only described two partnership, Head Start and Avance, and fails to describe how they will integrate educational and other services for participating students. A greater understanding of potential partners in the area would have strengthened the application. If there is a lack of potential partners in the area, then an understanding of that would have strengthened the proposal. Because applicant failed to provide a broader level of partnership, beyond Head Start and Avance, limited evidence is provided on how the will build capacity of staff of schools to assess the needs and assets of participating students. The applicant doesn't address how they intend to use a partnership to identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community. The applicant doesn't address how they intend to use a partnership to create a decision making process and infrastructure to select, implement and evaluate support that address the individual needs of participating students. The applicant doesn't address how they will use a partnership to engage parents and families of participating students in both decision making about solution to improve results over time and in addressing student, family and school needs. While applicant identified indicators for the proposed population they fail to explain targets leaving a discrepancy to determine if they are ambitious yet achievable. The applicant doesn't address how they will use a partnership to routinely assess the applicant's progress. While the steering committee, formed by the partnership of the four districts, will assess progress, criteria specifies to describe how a partnership of public and private resources will be used. With the magnitude of this project, it would appear that more community partnerships with other non-profits and the business community would have existed.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Applicant demonstrates that they will comprehensively address how they will build upon the core educational assurance areas to create learning environment designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through personalized learning strategies. They will accomplish this through making the classroom student focused rather than teacher focused along with providing differentiated instruction through the use of technology. This will occur through their providing internet coverage and digital resources throughout the area both during in school times and out of school times to allow for learning and information.

Total	210	138
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Optional Budget Supplement (Scored separately - 15 total points)

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

Optional Budget Supplement Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides four budget supplements which focus on 1) College and Career Readiness,2) Technology Standards for the 21st Century for 8th grade, 3) Technology Standards for the 21st Century for 9th &10th grades, and 4) Technology Standards for the 21st Century for 2nd and 5th grades. While applicant provides solid narratives for these four optional budget supplements they do not provide a high-quality plan for each which includes goals, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties. Performance measures are listed for each aspect which are realistic along with activities for each

that are achievable. The proposed budget for each optional supplement is adequate to support the development of the activities that meet the NIA. Costs are reasonable and appear to be in-line with activities proposed for each for each of the four supplements.