



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0957MS-1 for Vicksburg Warren School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has established strong vision statement that is both comprehensive and coherent beginning with statement of mission that is clear and doable and addresses core assurance areas. e.g. multi-faceted supports for high-need students, customizing learning experiences, evaluation to ensure effectiveness and data tracking to monitor progress. Applicant further notes creation of Professional Development Center for staff development, integration of 21st century technologies, use of advanced data systems to monitor progress, continuous feedback systems to support students and personalized learning systems through implementation of "Individual Learning Plans" for all students. Strategies to support these reforms include: Personal Learning Communities at each school campus, After School/Summer remediation and enrichment, advanced placement/dual enrollment, project based learning in high tech setting and implementation of a series of high interest academies to focus on student development for real world occupations. The final two aspects of vision not previously noted but needed and included in final portion of this element are Accelerated Program for Transistion (APT/CHALLENGE) for students more than two years behind grade level in math and English and expansion of pre-K programs for all district children ages 3 and up. Specific goals and timelines for these reforms are noted in appendix plan but lack measurable objectives during life of the plan and would be strengthen the vision if added.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant earns high score for this vision statement by (a) describing process of determining all schools meet eligibility as outlined in program guidelines (over 70% low income and over 50% high need students) of all schools in district and including each (b) in list of schools(15) including detailed data for each (c) including total number of students (8,740) participating and 583 educators. Evidence for support of this vision as likely to result in high-quality implementation includes the following: Integration of 21st Century technologies; use of advanced data systems; continuous feedback systems; personalized instruction; professional learning communities; after school/summer remediation and enrichment; advanced placement/dual enrollment; school to work and pre K programs all of which appear to constitute a high-quality implementation plan for this vision.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant earns high score in this category by noting plan to accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by implementing individual learning plans (ILP's) for each student; after school tutoring and enrichment, summer school and summer enrichment camp as strategies. In addition plan encompasses Professional Learning Community (PLC) development at each school to ensure effectiveness of its educators providing ongoing, job-embedded professional development which is in line with current research on staff development as a practical strategy. Teacher evaluation through Project LEAD (Linking Education, Academics, and Development) is noted as one of only ten pilot sites for state of MS. Furthermore a strategy of implementation of action plans to decrease gaps in student achievement including professional development for staff to focus on this issue is noted. Finally, applicant notes use of Active Student Program to support alignment of learning plans with individual student goals to measure progress of individual students. This section concludes with descriptions of academies curriculum focus as final means of scaling up the proposal and translating into meaningful reform to suport district-wide change.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant earns a high score on this final portion of vision by detailing district wide ambitious yet achievable annual goals for student achievement across grade levels and subject areas including desegregated analysis by racial and economic status. These goals appear reasonable and doable since they collectively total approximately 20% increases across the board from baseline(s) 2010-11 through 2016-17 post grant years of project. Designated performance on summative assessments are noted (a), decreasing achievement gaps are established (b) through desegregation of data and graduation rates (c) are addressed at 2% improvement goal per year along with college enrollment rate improvements (d) at 1% per year during course of the project.</p>		

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant earns a high score here by demonstrating a strong record of past success in implementing reforms that have resulted in dramatic growth for this largely disadvantaged student population. These gains are demonstrated (a) in MS Subject Area Testing Program test achievement results charts presented in the proposal which indicate (a) cumulative growth of +40.3% in passing Algebra I compared to state wide +13.4% assessments between '08-10 school years and +8.2% cumulative growth compared to state wide +2.8% in passing English II for students in VWSD. Though both high schools remain on academic watch lists and total graduation rate has declined slightly, 1%-2%, elementary and middle schools have all registered impressive gains in Mississippi Curriculum Test results and moved to either successful or high performing on state Accountability Status measures indicating reforms are working from bottom up and better days are ahead for high schools. Specifically (b) lowest performing schools, seven of which in '08-'09 were rated "At Risk of Failing" have moved from that category to at least either Academic Watch or Successful by '11-12 school year. This portion of the application speaks to (c) making student performance data available to all stakeholders through charts indicating multiple forms of testing are either sent home to parents or made accessible to anyone with an internet connection through use of "Active Student" administration manager system. Finally applicant seeks to further this outreach with planned implementation of a web based reporting system called "Universal Screener and Progress Monitoring System indicating future plans to excel in this aspect of the application.

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

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant states VWSD budget is presented annually at Board of Ed public meetings including (a) - (d) items in RFP and is currently expanding quick links to each element on district web site. In addition applicant has recently added two new public relations positions charged with increasing transparency of the district indicating a forward trajectory toward ongoing transparency and improved communication with its public thus earning a high score for this area of the application.

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

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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Context for implementation to implement personalized learning environments appears strong in this portion of the application. State Bd of MS has moved to adopt Common Core State Standards (CCSS) goals and has provided alignment guidance across the curriculum as well as training for teachers for local districts including VWSD. State has also joined Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) to assist in development of college-ready assessments as indicators of readiness for entry level credit courses. State has also provided local districts training assistance with English Language Proficiency Learners as well as those students with disabilities to support districts in ensuring these learners access standards on same schedule as all other students. VWSD also notes autonomy to proceed and support of MDE in implementation of a system to identify struggling students and prescribe individual education plans using a multi tier of intensity approach to instruction for these learners. For these examples of state support and VWSD initiative applicant earns another high in this category.

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

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

While applicant notes input on proposal from school leadership teams, (a) the composition does not apparently include parents and no evidence of revisions to the proposal are made with regard to input from these teams. As to (b) letters of support from key stakeholders the following are noted in the appendix: Family Development Service; United Way; Police Department; Mental Health Center and County Youth Court. Teacher signatures by school are also appended to indicate (i) and (ii) teacher support but no evidence could be found to determine whether a collective bargaining unit exists to determine which element applies as prescribed in this portion of the notice. Due to these two omissions, parent involvement on proposal development and no evidence of revisions as a result of school leadership team inputs the applicant earns a medium score for this element of proposal.

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

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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant indicates use of Student Administration Manager System program to provide ongoing assessment of data with regard to student needs and gaps in achievement across student populations. Chart submitted in this section of proposal indicates data for reading and math growth in student performance as a function of positive change of +9 for reading and +14 for math over period of '08-12. Thus demonstrating availability of data to support personalized learning environments. Use of Student Administration Manager System provides strengths and weaknesses information to drive individualized instruction system wide. Applicant further proposes implementation of additional data analysis system, Universal Screener and Progress Monitoring System to facilitate creation of individual learning plans for all students. A Data Tracker/Student Support Network is envisioned to coordinate all data analysis with specific activities, deliverables and responsible parties noted in this portion of the application. These elements constitute a quality plan for further implementation of a personalized learning environment.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant relies on use of Active Student component of Student Administration Manager System to allow students to access visual representations

of coursework progressions to construct dynamic maps to graduation. The system permits tailoring of personalized learning plans to fit individual student goals and needs. Students and families can access system at school or home to monitor student progress. In addition to address the personalization of learning opportunities applicant sites establishment of eleven career academies to appeal to student interests and provide real world applications of academic coursework, e.g. Teacher Academy, STEM Academy, Information Technology Academy, etc. These academies are designed to connect student learning to available jobs in the coming decade and thus help students to understand what they are learning is key to their success in the goal of transitioning to the adult world of work. In order to further strengthen goals of students headed for post secondary education VWSD proposes to expand Advanced Placement Courses now only offered in English and math. The use of technology tools such as video conferencing, smart boards lab equipment, data tracker, etc. is further envisioned as a means of structuring learning to achieve goals of higher education completion. Finally new out-of-school opportunities, e.g. summer school, summer enrichment camp and after school enrichment programs, are noted as a means of allowing students to explore deeper common core subject matter. Development of the technology infrastructure is also seen as a means of allowing students to hear, see and experience the various cultures beyond their everyday experience. Also during each year of the grant the proposal provides for 100 K-8 teachers to receive Cooperative Learning training designed to model and teach students skills and traits such as communication and compromise, creative and critical thinking and problem solving skills that enhance success in real world work and higher education settings. The Active Student system is cited as a means of giving each student access to learning goals to ensure on time graduation and college and career readiness through twice annual meetings with teachers, parents and students to discuss these goals. Finally a partnership with Hinds Community College and Alcorn State University is noted as a means of modifying curriculum to ensure students are on track to meet their academic, career or technical school goals.

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

Strategies to address this component of the RFP are inclusive of enhanced professional development, data driven instruction, new learning opportunities through institution of academies and advanced placement and dual enrollment opportunities at the high school level. A Data Team Coordinator is envisioned as information gatherer from seminars and conferences to dispense back to the larger teaching staff strategies to better use student data to drive instruction and implement Personalized learning environments. The creation of an on-line data repository is cited as a means of sharing successful lesson plans and activities. The Student Administration Manager system is cited as a means of monitoring student achievement and providing data to give input to individualized learning plan development. Feedback to staff on their effectiveness will be a function of a Grant Coordinator who will coordinate all personnel evaluation and improvement plans. A future key to success in this area of teaching and leading is the implementation of a universal screener and progress monitoring system to monitor progress of students in grades K-12 in English and math. Data Team Coordinators and the Project Director will have primary responsibility for training of staff on these data systems. The teacher evaluation system from State of MS piloted in VWSD beginning in '10-'11 is cited as concept of teacher feedback for development and growth. The essential purposes to ensure growth and provide critical feedback appear to give teachers input into their own professional development which will result in support for the project as well as enhancing individual student achievement. Finally applicant supplies a series of charts including goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and persons responsible denoting specifics, e.g.. Math Solutions Training for 100 teachers+materials, Fall 2014, etc. that address improving outcomes for students in highest-need schools; implementation of evidence-based practices and programs; and new learning opportunities through use of technology to effectively address each component of this part of the RFP.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Regarding policies and rules to provide infrastructure for the plan applicant lists six new positions: Project Director, Secretary, Grant Coordinator, Data Manager (2), Data Clerk, and Career Tech Teachers (4) along with clear organizational charts for each plan aspect to define reporting responsibilities and lines of authority. Responsibilities and decision making authority for School-based Leadership Teams are clearly defined to provide support and services to all schools participating in the plan. Mastery Learning strategies are to be adopted to give students opportunity to progress in their studies based on mastery of topics rather than amount of time invested in their study. Students will be given opportunity to demonstrate mastery at multiple times during the school year and in multiple ways using Stanford assessments K-12. In addition the purchase and implementation of a screener and progress monitoring system is envisioned to give teachers and administrators real time pictures of student progress toward mastery benchmarks. Finally, applicant states a system is in place to support needs of people with disabilities and English language learners designed to translate for parents of Spanish speaking students the results of STAR system progress reports as well as full time services of translator and tutor to serve this population.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant sites modernization of technology infrastructure proposed in this plan to address (a) component of RFP and supplies detailed list of equipment upgrades and hardware to do so. In addressing (b) levels of technical support applicant will hire and retain Network Specialist to support the network and facilitate two training sessions per year of project to familiarize all stakeholders in use of and understanding all technologies made available under this plan. Use of systems (c) with open data format with access by students and parents is accomplished with use of AR Accelerated Reader and STAR programs by applicant as well as Student Administration Manager System that allows parents and students to view student data at home. these are web based programs with non-proprietary formats that permits open public access to the data for planning and goal setting purposes in support of individualized student achievement program planning. Finally applicant claims to use robust interoperable data systems that meet RT3 standards but supplies no evidence in form of names of systems or details about their structure other than to note they comply with FERPA regulations for privacy and are secure. Thus for this one minor detail applicant earns a high score for this portion of the application.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant describes use of Project Advisory Council as overarching structure to monitor, give feedback to stakeholders and ensure communication on plan progress to community but does not detail the makeup of this group. School based leadership teams are noted as another vehicle for community participation in implementation and direction of plan as it evolves but again does not specify exactly how and to what extent they might participate in improving the plan over time. Standardized reporting templates are noted as a communication vehicle but not supplied as an example so the detail and extent of their data collection and reporting potential cannot be determined. However quarterly newsletters are also noted both via email and paper copies to inform stakeholders about plan progress and alteration. Thus due to the omissions noted applicant earns a medium score for this component of the application.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant indicates a variety of strategies for ongoing communications and engagement noted in previous RFP element including use of email, phone conversations, fax alerts, phone conferences, weekly updates via email and monthly milestone meetings for staff and school leadership teams as well as school's and the district's websites. These strategies appear thoroughly adequate to communicate with and engage internal and external stakeholders. Therefore a high score is earned for this component by the applicant.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant lists a variety of performance measures that appear rigorous, timely and formative in chart provided but measures and rationale don't always match up, e.g. performance measure of highly effective teachers and principals and reduction of student suspensions as a rationale do not match. However areas that do match appear to be reasonable goals stated in measurable percentages over the four year life of the project, thus applicant earns a high score on this portion of the application. Finally, applicant notes in order to improve these measures over time, "Project Advisory Council will review the measures annually to ensure that they are effectively measuring implementation progress" and "In the event that any measure is shown insufficient to gage implementation progress, the Advisory Council will coordinate changes with the State of MS Department of Education.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant lists fifteen budget measures exceeding fourteen prescribed in the announcement and notes the plan to hire via contract a highly skilled third-party evaluator to work with USOE in evaluating effectiveness of this project. Each performance measure is followed on the chart provided with a frequency of assessment notation and responsible party. The alignment here between measures, frequency and responsible party appears reasonable and well organized to appropriately address the evaluation measure, e.g. 15: Number of students who receive mental health school or community based counseling services/twice each year/administrators and guidance counselors. These performance measures are reasonable and ambitious in line with overall project and are followed by detailed charts for each school in the project including baseline data for each of the four years of the project 2011-2016 and beyond into '16-'17 indicating continued plan to monitor post grant which is a good sign of commitment by the applicant. Therefore applicant earns a high score for this portion of the application.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicants budget appears to support goals of the project and is detailed and comprehensive with thoughtful rationales for each item. Personnel salaries and contract items appear reasonable and in keeping with good budget practice. However funds that will support the project other than RT3 (a) are not noted; (b) as already stated are reasonable and sufficient to support the applicants proposal; with (c) a thoughtful rationale but (i) nothing noted beyond RT3 and (ii)no clear delineation between one time investments and ongoing operational costs. Due to these omissions applicant earns a medium score for this section of the application.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant notes in this portion of the application "We need to include a three-year projection for after the completion of federal fund allocations." However, no such projection appears in the text. Sustainability is referenced by alluding to a variety of possible funding sources including local</p>		

business in the area and community volunteers who will be asked to donate time and talents. While the "search for outside funds is ongoing from state and federal sources" is noted this does not constitute a sustainability plan that has any reasonable chance of succeeding . Due to these omissions applicant earns a low score for the sustainability portion of this application.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

VWSD defines clear goals for credible and sustainable partnership with Warren Yazoo Mental Health, Vicksburg Family Development, Child and Parent Center etc. to focus on four performance measures centering on student mental health and well being. The measures are clear and measurable and summarized in a chart including population group, type of result and desired result in clear measurable terms, e.g. Grades 7-12; Education Attendance; a 10% reduction in number of students reported missing 10 or more days of school unexcused over the 4 year grant period. This is the type focus that will support project goals and strengthen community support for the schools and therefore earns a high score for this portion of the application.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has met and exceeded requirements as noted in previous reviewer comments for Absolute Priority 1 (see vision statement comments) with this proposal's frequent noted individual plan components and personalized strategies to coherently and comprehensively address all items noted in this portion of the RFP. Example highlights of previous comments include: "Applicant has established a strong vision statement that is both comprehensive and coherent beginning with statement of mission that is both clear and doable with reference to core assurance areas" and "Applicant demonstrates a strong record of past success in implementing reforms" and "Context for implementation of personalized learning environment appears strong", etc.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>182</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0957MS-2 for Vicksburg Warren School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The response described a comprehensive program designed to address the four core educational assurances through an approach that defines the personal learning environment within the framework of integrating relevant technologies, an advanced data system, continuous feedback, and personalized instruction. The program proposes to create the personal learning environment through a series of strategies that span pre-K to 12 grade students addressing professional learning communities for educators, as well as six system wide student level programs. All approaches are essential and incorporated effectively. The most noteworthy is the "Academies" designed under career and technical that identify 11 career focused tracks for students to choose from when developing their learning path.

The response effectively addressed the requirements for this aspect earning s score in the high range.

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

All 15 district schools listed will participate in the RTTT-D program with a total number of 8,740 students. Data was provided illustrating that all 15 schools meet the eligibility requirements. The data demonstrated that 76% of students live in poverty and more than 50% are identified as high needs. 583 educators will participate in the project from the 12 school sites. The processes used to analyze the required data illustrates capacity to identify and utilize data in developing a high quality plan.

The response demonstrated a need for the program and the proposed applicants eligibility to apply for funding under the initiative. A score was earned in the high range.

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

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7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Vicksburg School District application describes multiple layers of service and support designed to accelerate and deepen student learning with several specific strategies identified. In addition, a logical plan was provided for increasing educator effectiveness and expanding student access to effective teachers. Each of these aspects was designed to decrease student achievement gaps across subgroups. Finally, a comprehensive discussion was prepared that illustrated 11 different programs available for students based on interest.

However, the timeline provided in the appendix was not aligned to specific goals to illustrate how the strategies and activities identified were designed to ensure program goals are met. Moreover, the use of the external evaluator and data specialist were not included in the timeline to illustrate how each supports the reform proposal in collaboration with all other personnel identified in the timeline.

The response scored in the middle range. While the plan demonstrated capacity to address reform and change relevant to the high quality planning process, the goals designed to ensure this aspect may be effectively implemented were not clearly provided relevant to the proposed activities and strategies. Moreover, the timeline failed to illustrate the role and deliverables of all personnel and/or supporting positions to implement and monitor program deliverables.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The response provided student data in the areas of performance in various academic content areas for grades 3-8 and by specific content area for high school demonstrating baseline data and the expected increase that will occur as a result of program implementation. In addition, specific subgroup data was provided for baseline purposes with expected gains illustrating a 5% increase the first year and 2% each year for all groups to decrease achievement gaps. An overall graduation rate analysis was provided, but it was not broken down by subgroup or school. Finally, the college enrollment rate was shared for the two high schools, but the data was not broken down by subgroups.

Overall, the response earned a score in the high mid range because sufficient data and analysis was not provided for all subgroups.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	9
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The response provided student data in the areas of performance in algebra I and English II and the Mississippi Curriculum Tests. Two years worth of data were provided relevant to subgroups. District schools have varying levels of success in meeting the state accountability criteria. Using the information provided in the data tables the belief is that the district schools have the overall capacity to achieve ambitious reforms; however, the lowest achieving schools appear to have difficulty in maintaining academic gains and will need an effective plan for progress monitoring.</p> <p>Student performance data is gathered from achievement tests and benchmark assessments and maintained in two data systems including the ActiveStudent and Universal Screener and Progress Monitoring System. The ActiveStudent allows access by educators, parents, and students, while the Universal Screener is accessible to teachers as a diagnostic and reporting tool, as well as a source of assessment design and delivery. Both systems allow for data to be accessible in an appropriate manner to relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>This aspect earned a score in the mid range since data was not provided for four years for all subgroups and pertinent subgroup data relevant to graduation rates and college enrollment was not included in the analysis to demonstrate a clear track record of success.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The response indicated that all school level expenditures are available to the public through district governing board documents. Web based access to salary schedules is currently being expanded for public viewing. In addition, the district is committed to expanding transparency efforts through the establishment of two new public relations positions.</p> <p>The proposal earned points for this aspect in the high range because logical efforts were described to ensure transparency.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		

The proposal was designed in concert with the State of Mississippi to provide personalized learning environments under the framework of the Common Core State Standards. Moreover, partnerships have been formed to support the implementation of a next-generation assessment system that further supports personalized learning. Using the Mississippi Department of Education three-tier instructional model, personalized learning may be attained by the Vicksburg District on an autonomous basis within the framework.

Points have been awarded in the high range for this aspect that demonstrates autonomous capacity to implement the program as designed.

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

The response effectively described the partnerships and relationships with local organizations, law enforcement, and other grant programs that logically support the program efforts with letters of support included in the appendix.

The response did not provide information describing collective bargaining or teacher support from the partnering schools for participation in the program. However, lists were located in the appendix materials illustrating that 70% of teachers on each campus support the program.

This item earned in the upper mid range because the process used to determine teacher participation was not discussed.

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

The response demonstrated a comprehensive approach to determining students needs with personalized instruction as the most effective strategy to address the needs. Using the Student Administration Manager System has allowed for the analysis of data to identify weaknesses. As a result, the use of individual learning plans will be implemented across the district on a K-12 basis. The ILP will be instituted in a three phase process making the implementation manageable. While the plan identified the responsibilities of personnel described in the proposal necessary for a high quality plan, it did not sufficiently demonstrate the role of the mentioned external evaluator. The role was not defined and clearly described in the narrative or needs assessment table relevant to how the external evaluator will support the framework of the overall grant management and monitoring system to determine needs and gaps. Finally, the table included a goal, but it was not provided in a measurable format.

The response earned points in the middle range.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan demonstrates a highly qualified plan for ensuring students are engaged in the process of establishing learning and achievement goals, especially for the high school students in determining college and career readiness goals.

Deep learning opportunities were described for all students with expanded learning experiences based on personal interest using the ActiveStudent application. The plan illustrates how the use of technology broadens contextual exposure to content and learning to expand exposure to various cultures and perspectives, which also deepen the learning experience.

The use of cooperative learning groups and embedded teacher training were identified as strategies used with K-8 students to promote teamwork, creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. High school students will utilize technology to broaden context and access to various cultures and perspectives. ActiveStudent and guidance counselors will work with high school students and parents to set learning goals, as well as career and college goals. This approach promotes a personalized sequence of instruction to meet student goals.

Students will be engaged in several high quality activities and learning practices to promote higher order thinking skills, creativity, and critical thinking. Instructional delivery methods such as small group, student-led, investigations, large group, one-on-one, and technology-facilitated approaches were described.

Vicksburg Warren School District will work with area higher education providers to develop high quality curriculum that scaffolds to college and career readiness. Eight content areas will be focused on in collaboration with the higher education entities. In addition, researched-based math and technology-based content will be utilized.

A comprehensive data system, collection plan, and training plan were described addressing how student data will be gathered, stored, analyzed, and utilized to ensure teachers and stakeholders understand and are updated on student progress regularly. Personalized learning will be enhanced by the use of the data system to determine specific needs and plans for each student.

The plan earned a score in the high range.

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(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal demonstrates a high quality plan to ensure participating educators are prepared to implement the personal learning approach into the learning environment through a series of comprehensive supports, trainings, and resources. In addition various support personnel have been described in the proposal to assist with data collection, report generation, and monitoring highest-risk student learning plans and assessments to ensure an appropriate level of support and instruction are provided.</p> <p>Regular high quality training and support will be provided in the form of targeted practice, coaching, teacher sharing of best practices, and a data repository for successful lesson plan access to help facilitate the successful implementation of the personalized learning instructional delivery system through adapted content that has illustrated effectiveness within the district.</p> <p>Student progress reports will be accessible on a regular basis and teachers will be trained in practices to embed assessments into normal routines and to differentiate instruction based on the embedded assessments.</p> <p>Teacher and principal evaluation will be in the form of observation on a formal and informal basis utilizing performance instruments approved by the state and piloted in the district.</p> <p>The plan demonstrates a high quality approach to tracking, storing, and utilizing data and content that allow the teacher the capacity to individualize instruction for each student utilizing a system that identifies resources, strategies, and practices that may be most successful for each student need.</p> <p>Finally, through comprehensive educator training, services, data supports, and resources, teachers will be provided with the capacity to enhance instructional skills increasing the number of students that learn from highly qualified teachers including the hard to staff content areas supported by STEM programming and students with special needs.</p> <p>Overall, a detailed timeline was provided with deliverables reasonably described. However, the goal identified in C2d is written to address all Mississippi schools and is not specifically measurable. The goal must be measurable and aligned to the specific students served by the program to ensure a high quality program may be implemented and measured for success.</p> <p>The response earned a score in the middle range.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	10
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The response provided a plan for the grant management on a district level with dedicated project director, secretary, coordinator, data manager, data clerk, and career tech teachers to ensure the overall project is implemented effectively. The district level team will work with each school-based leadership team to ensure program implementation is effective and compliant. Graphic depictions provided a strong visual for the project oversight from a district and program activity perspective. However, the grant coordinator position only identified evaluation, but the budget included an external evaluator and data specialist to support this function. More detail is necessary to fully describe the role and function of the grant coordinator, external evaluator, and data collection specialist.</p> <p>School-based teams provide direct reform support for the program and ensure authentic buy-in from school personnel. In addition, each site leadership team works to ensure students progress in mastering content and skills and earning credit at an appropriate level. Mastery is demonstrated at three key times throughout the year. Attention is applied to ensure students with limited English proficiency and special needs are being served on an equitable basis in all program aspects.</p> <p>The response earned a score in the middle range because project personnel roles were not sufficiently described with minor mention included for an external evaluator and data collection specialist who were not discussed beyond limited support to the grant coordinator who is responsible for the evaluation process. Roles and responsibilities must be illustrated as part of the grant team.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal identified strategies and practices ensuring equitable access to services and resources allocated to each school site for personnel, students and parental purposes. A variety of technology tools and resources have been incorporated to ensure that different learning styles, needs, interests, and preferences may be accommodated. Moreover, Spanish speaking stakeholders parents will be able to provided student data and reports in their native language. Special attention has been provided to the technical support of the system and the effective use by students, parents, and educators with career tech teachers in place to provide training at all campus.</p> <p>The discussion included a description of the overall consortium capacity for security of student data, as well as interoperability of data systems for easy access across multiple platforms.</p> <p>The two goals included in the table illustrating effective use of data deliverables were not measurable. A high quality plan provides all goals in a measurable format to ensure consistent data is collected for analysis. In addition, an evaluator was mentioned as one of the responsible parties in the table, but it is not clear if this is the grant coordinator responsible for evaluation or the external evaluator mentioned briefly in the grant.</p>		

This aspect earned points in the middle range.

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A plan for a continuous improvement process was shared including six critical components addressing operating procedures, communication plans, planning and decision-making, managing issues and risk, meeting facilitation, and accountability. The plan described how personnel will monitor and intervene in a timely structured manner. However, specific measurable goals, timeline, deliverables, and responsible parties were not identified or consistently addressed relevant to this aspect to support the creation of a high quality plan.</p> <p>This aspect earned a score in the low middle range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A variety of print, verbal, and electronic communication strategies were identified to outline the ongoing communication practices with staff, students, parents, and stakeholders. Some of the mentioned strategies include web site announcements, newsletters, meetings, email, fax alerts, and phone calls. However, engagement strategies that are effective for students such as social media, instant messaging, and chat were not mentioned in the response. Additionally, it is not clear if two-way communication will be established to ensure that feedback can be gained from engagement of stakeholders for consideration of continuous improvement strategies.</p> <p>This aspect scored in the middle range.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Ten ambitious performance measures were provided with reasonable rationales relevant to the overall program implementation. Two additional performance measures were provided for PreK that aligned with the overall project design. The tables included in the work provided key data to support the performance measures in effectively identifying student and teacher needs for each site.</p> <p>A project advisory council was identified as a group that will monitor the evaluation process to ensure that insufficient measures are addressed in a timely manner.</p> <p>This aspect earned a score in the high range because it demonstrated the capacity to identify and rationalize performance measure required in a high quality planning process and relevant to the the student population served by the proposal.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The response identified fifteen performance measures designed to provide a monitoring process for evaluating the effectiveness of the program investment. Frequency of each measure was indicated and the person responsible was identified for each measure. The fifteen performance measures demonstrate the capacity to address program effectiveness of the high quality plan required to implement and assure the investment for a comprehensive program through the inclusion of of measures such as student placement with effective teachers and principals and college and career readiness, as well as measures aligned to content areas and educator and stakeholder perceptions. Finally, a brief description and purpose of the external evaluator was detected; however, the data collection specialist was not mentioned in this response leaving out a key role in the process previously mentioned.</p> <p>The response earned a score in the high range.</p>		

### F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget included reasonable expenditures for most items. However, some expenditures were not sufficiently addressed in the proposal and appear to be highly excessive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel costs for conferences were high and the expenditure was not sufficiently explained or discussed in the proposal.</li> <li>• An external evaluator expenditure was included a a high rate, but the proposal did not discuss the external evaluator specifically beyond mention in sections B and C. The graphic provided in D1 indicated that the grant coordinator was responsible for grant evaluation. This</li> </ul>		

- expenditure is excessive.
- A data collection specialist was mentioned in section D1 only. It is not clear why this expenditure is necessary when a robust data team has been identified for central grant management purposes. This expenditure is excessive.
- Fringe benefits were not included to support the PreK teachers, Career Tech teachers, academy teachers, and assistant salaries.

The score earned for this aspect is in the low range because of excessive expenditures that were not sufficiently discussed and explained in the proposal.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The response described how leveraging project funds will allow for the purchase of one-time equipment purchases and the comprehensive professional development will be gained. However, the plan did not mention support from state and local governments. Leveraging funds from other federal sources was mentioned, as well as pursuing support from local businesses. No projected budgets were included for review. This aspect addressed the design of a high quality plan relevant to sustainability on a limited basis.

The score for this aspect was in the middle range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The competitive preference priority was addressed illustrating several agencies that will provide support for the program. While small group settings were mentioned for delivery of service and support, it is not clear how these partners will support the Absolute Priority 1 in providing a personalized learning environment.

Reasonable tracking of the performance measures was described relevant to the services that may be provided by partners. However, it is not clear how the strategies will be scaled up to provided services beyond participating students.

Six population level student results were identified with four based on education and two on family and community. Integrated services were identified relevant to social-emotional and behavioral needs for participating students.

This aspect earned points in the middle range because alignment with the Absolute Priority 1 was not addressed in the response.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The overall proposal demonstrated the capacity to implement a personalized learning environment for student served in preK-12 grades required of Absolute Priority 1. The plan addressed the four core educational assurances and identified tools, strategies, resources, and practices relevant to ensuring student learning is improved on an individual basis and college and career readiness standards are implemented at appropriate levels with students in the junior high and high school. Instructional strategies designed to deepen student understanding of content were identified and expanded access to effective teachers will be accomplished through a comprehensive training and evaluation plan for educators. Finally, the plan clearly addresses how achievement gaps will be decreased for subgroups and high school graduation will be increased for all student groups.

The proposal met this criteria.

Total	210	147
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0957MS-3 for Vicksburg Warren School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Vicksburg Warren School District has met the criteria in articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision.</p> <p>The applicant has identified the following personalized learning environments:</p> <p>Integration of 21<sup>st</sup> Century technologies -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advanced Data Systems</li> <li>Continuous feedback systems</li> <li>Personalized instruction</li> <li>Professional Learning communities</li> <li>After school/summer remediation and enrichment</li> <li>Advanced placement/Dual enrollment</li> <li>School to work</li> <li>Academies –career and technical</li> <li>Accelerated program fro transition/challenge</li> <li>Pre-kindergarten</li> </ul> <p>Each of these environments has clearly articulated goals, timelines, persons responsible, and specific deliverables.</p> <p>The district has provided documentation in the narrative section that clearly articulates the processes utilized to identify the specific activities and areas of implementation in a multi-step approach. The planning included key stakeholders.</p> <p>Partners for the project include: Vicksburg Family Development Service, United Way, Vicksburg Police Department, Hinds Community College, Alcorn State University, and Warren Yazoo mental Health Center. Each partner has provided a letter of support that outlines his or her role in the program.</p> <p>This is a high quality section and includes all aspects of the selection criteria. Maximum points are awarded for this section.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's approach to reform will effect and include all schools in the LEA. Each identified reform effort is targeted to specific sub-groups as identified through several data points including standardized tests, state assessments, and teacher observations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All schools meet the selection criteria by supporting at least a 70% free and reduced rate as well as enrolling over 50% high needs students.</li> <li>b. All 15 schools in the Vicksburg Warren School District will participate.</li> <li>c. A total school population of 8,740 is enrolled in the LEA. 6,603 are from low-income families and 2,312 are considered high-need students. A total of 583 educators will participate.</li> </ul> <p>The applicant provides a clear and easy to read table of enrollment and poverty data broken down by individual school.</p> <p>As the applicant has provided specific goals for each specific building and as each building serves a majority of low-income students, this section is scored at maximum points.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant clearly articulates four specific approaches to the reform implementation.

1. Accelerate student achievement. This will be a multi-step approach that is centered in assessing student achievement, developing individual learning plans, and more.
2. Increase the effectiveness of educators. This will be accomplished through a robust program of staff development that includes professional learning communities. The applicant has developed a project advisory council as well as seeking input from school-based Leadership teams. The applicant has participated in a state pilot program of teacher and principal evaluation. The plan includes teachers and principals developing growth plans.
3. Decrease achievement gaps across student groups. The applicant clearly defines specific steps to improve student outcomes in all schools. A pre-k program will be expanded to ensure all students have early access to interventions and support. The pre-k program will be offered to students at least 3 years of age.
4. Increase the rates at which student graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The applicant will implement several strategies including expansion of dual credit coursework, incorporation of project –based learning academies in a variety of disciplines, and incorporation of an on-line system of individual learning plans accessible to parents and students.

The applicant also included timelines of the reform process in the appendix. The timeline articulates professional development topics and building staffing needs.

The applicant support reform efforts effectively through a well thought out plan that includes specific activities and timelines. This section earns a high score.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's vision demonstrates the ability to improve student learning and performance. Sub groups have been identified and the goals are ambitious yet achievable. The project proposes state proficiency levels as the target thus meeting the section criteria. However, there is not enough change in the achievement gap to earn full points for this section.

- a. Baseline data is present in each grade level 3-high school in the subject areas of language arts, math, science, and history. A projected percentile growth of 5% for the first year and 2% growth each year after has been stated.
- b. The applicant does not alter percentage growth for sub-groups. This does not allow for a decrease in the achievement gap between these sub-groups. For example, there is only a 2% gain in the achievement gap between IEP students and overall students in language arts for the four years of the project.
- c. There is a goal of increasing graduation rates each year of the project, however, there is no sub-group separation of rates. Applicant predicts a sixteen point percentage increase for all students. There is no explanation for providing information for both 4-year and 5-year graduation rates.
- d. College enrollment rates are reported as a whole and not by sub-group.
- e. Student surveys indicate estimated percentages of enrollment rate. These percentages seem high for degree attainment and therefore may not be a true indicator of actual degree attainment.

The applicant has included appropriate data demonstrating an established baseline and proposed growth for the program. However, there still remains a significant achievement gap. For this reason, this section is scored at a medium-high level.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(1) The applicant demonstrates success in increasing student achievement over the past four year. The number of students passing Algebra I courses at the high school grew from 48.1% to 88.4% over three years.

(a) In the elementary, language arts scores increased each year for the past four years and outpaced state growth in grades 3,7,and 8. In math, scores increased each year for the past four years and outpaced state growth in grades 3,6,7, and 8.

Graduation rates however have decreased over the past four years falling from 64% to 56.2% over four years. There is no longitudinal data concerning changes over time in college enrollment rates.

(b) 12 of the 15 schools in the district are rated by the state department of education. Over the past four years, all schools have improved their state rating.

(c) Several performance data points are documented in the proposal. The table includes explanation of how the data is used to inform instruction and how student performance data is reported to parents, students, and teachers.

Data includes the Stanford Achievement Test grades k-2. Student reports are sent home to parents. Benchmark assessments for grades 3-8. Reports are sent home to parents. ActiveStudent is part of the district student administration manager system. The data is posted in real time and parents, educators, and students have internet access to the data at any time.

Universal screener and progress monitoring system is to be implemented as part of this project. This system allows for real time brief testing in all curriculum areas. The data is available on-line to teachers and administrators. Reports can be generated to send home to parents.

The applicant has provided data to support a clear record of success in the areas of student achievement at most grade levels and in core content areas. Graduation rates, however, have not kept pace with achievement data. The district demonstrates the ability to share achievement data with students and parents and either has implemented instruments that inform teachers and have plans to increase screening tools as part of the project.

Due to the lack of improved graduation rates and incomplete data concerning college enrollment over the past four years, this section scores in the middle-high range.

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

The applicant meets the criteria for providing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments by making public budgetary information through state department of education reporting and posting to the department's web site as well as public record budget and salary information at the district level.

- a. personnel salaries are reported by school level to the Mississippi board of education which then prepares reports for posting to the department website.
- b. Personnel salaries by school level are included in the state report for instructional staff
- c. Personnel salaries by school level are included in the state report for teaching staff
- d. Non-personnel expenditures are made available through open board meetings and budget hearings.

As a matter of public record, all district expenditures and budgets are made available to the public. Teacher salary schedules are posted to the school web site. The district has recently added two public relations positions to improve transparency of the district to the public.

All criteria are met for this section. All points are awarded for this section.

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

The applicant provides information concerning the adoption of the common core standards in 2010 at the state level. In addition, in January of 2012, the state approved early learning standards for programs serving three and four year olds.

Within the context of the state's implementation of the standards, each district is allowed autonomy to deliver curriculum as best meets the needs of their students. The Mississippi department of education has called for feed back from school districts as the new standards are implemented.

In addition to the common core standards and early learning standards, the applicant has adopted an implementation plan that adheres to guidelines provided to the states and includes 1) students receive high quality instruction, 2) continuous monitoring of student progress, 3) all students screened for academic and behavioral problems, 4) Multiple tiers of instruction are implemented.

The demonstration of the applicant to utilize state requirements in a systematic way provides the district with the autonomy necessary to carry out the goals and reform measures identified in this project. This section receives full points.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates a long history of community, parent, and family involvement. This project proposal is supported with letters of support in the appendix from project partners including Warren-Yazzo Mental Health, Vicksburg Family Development, and Vicksburg Police Department. The applicant partners with the local police department to provide summer open gym for middle school students. There district is supported by 23 local organizations through the local United Way.

- a. the proposal was developed by school leadership teams. These teams are made up of school administrators, teachers, each grade level, parents, and school counselors.
  - (ii) teachers have provided support for the project and teacher signature pages are included in the appendix section of the proposal.
- b. Letters of support are provided in the appendix section of the proposal. There are no letters from post-secondary institutions.

The applicant has demonstrated the involvement of key stakeholders including parents, civic and health organizations. Post secondary is not represented therefore full points are not awarded for this section.

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

The applicant has done an exceptional job of developing a high quality plan that includes measureable goals.

The district has proven success in improving student achievement as evidenced in a nine-point increase in student achievement in reading and a fourteen-point increase in math.

The applicant proposed to add a universal screener and progress monitoring system to further evaluate student progress. This is one of the gaps that have been identified by the applicant as needed to be addressed.

The implementation of the data analysis and reporting instruments will allow the district to identify needs, strengths and weaknesses of individual grade bands and specific content. The goal for this data analysis is clearly articulated and parts of a larger high quality plan that includes specific activities, deliverables, and responsible parties. Due to the implementation of these processes, this section receives full points.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a high-quality plan that includes rigorous standards, individualized course planning, increased dual credit opportunities, high interested content, and the scholastic academy program will be expanded from the junior high to the high school and includes project-based learning in high-tech settings. High-needs students will work in the APT/Challenge program with a career tech teacher. A school to work program will allow student to work in career fields and receive stipends for working with local businesses.

Additional supports include the addition of tutoring programs, summer schools, and summer camps. There is no mention of expanded school hours or access to on-line digital content support face-to-face instruction.

(a) (i) Students create individualized four-year graduation plans through the use of the on-line tool ActiveStudent. Parents have access to the same data on-line.

(ii) The narrative mentions "online support and intervention programs" but do not explain exactly what those programs and supports may be. Twice-annual conference with teachers, parents, and students will be held.

(iii) The applicant will expand advanced placement courses and dual enrollment opportunities at both high schools. The district will enhance current personal learning environments including new staffing to include Accelerated program for transition teacher and assistant and academy teachers. Technology resources will be increased to include lab equipment and several software applications including Read 180, data tracker, and a math intervention program. Video conferencing equipment will be used to connect students to national experts. Additional learning opportunities during summer school, summer camp, and afterschool enrichment and tutoring programs will expand learning opportunities.

(iv) Increases in technology network will expand opportunities to use digital resources, video-conferencing opportunities, and high tech science equipment.

(v) Professional development will be provided to K-8 teachers in Cooperative Learning to build classroom teamwork opportunities. District will build on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support program.

(b)(i) Twice annual ActiveStudent meetings will be held with parents, teaches and students. Real time student data will be available on-line. It is not clear if ActiveStudent is implemented K-12 or simply 9-12.

(ii) The applicant indicates all educators will participate in professional development focused on evidence-based instructional strategies. The timeline in the appendix identify yearly topics including cooperative learning, hands-on instruction, project based learning. Access to personal learning devices is mentioned, however, there is no clear articulation on what devices will be used. Anytime-anywhere learning is mentioned but no further explanation is provided. There is no explanation of how high-needs or students living in poverty will access the internet outside of school hours.

(iii) The application indicates it will work with Hinds Community College and Alcorn State University in the development of curriculum for career and technical development track; however, no letter of support or partnership for either institution is included in the appendix. There is mention of a "research-based math intervention program" but it is not named. Additional digital learning content will be selected based on needs assessments conduced in year one.

(iv)(A) Each school will have a data team coordinator. These coordinators will create school teams that will use student data to inform instruction. There is no mention of how often that data will be analyzed. Credit recovery options will be available to provide proactive solution to course failure, allowing students to remain on-track.

(iv)(B) Data Team Coordinator will communicate with teachers and parents and make suggestions for interventions when appropriate. No mention of how often student data will be reviewed or when these recommendations will be made.

(v) The accelerated program for transition will be made available for struggling students who are two or more grade levels behind in English, Language Arts, and Math. Online learning programs are mentioned and it is indicated that these programs will provide immediate feedback to students, however, no on-line programs have been clearly identified.

(c) It is mentioned that teachers will be trained in appropriate tools and they will be responsible to assist students in this area. No formalized plan or support structure has been identified other than to note that all students will take part in formal training sessions for each new tool as it is introduced.

This is a high-quality plan that includes several interventions and opportunities to expand student achievement. The use of ActiveStudent appears to be a central aspect of supporting individualized student planning. However, there is no explanation of how families without internet access will access this tool outside of normal school hours. There is no mention of open computer lab times or training for parents on how to access and use the system. In addition, there is no mention of how to improve parent involvement beyond the normal twice-yearly parent-teacher conference format.

Digital tools are mentioned, however, there is no clear articulation of what type of tools aside from a possible credit recovery system, which was not identified. Enrichment activities through video-conferencing will be implemented. There is no mention of what other possible digital resources are available and while there is mention of personal learning devices, there is no clear description of what devices will be implemented and for what purpose other than to access digital content. It is not clear if this digital content may be complete courses or simply resources and tools necessary for research or productivity. There is no mention of what grade levels will utilize which digital resources or devices.

Due to the lack of information in these areas, this section scores in middle-high range.

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

The applicant has designed a high-quality plan that includes personalized learning plans for each student supported through increased access to high-interest content. The use of student data to inform instruction is incorporated throughout the project. Teachers will be required to utilize evidence-based instruction with students as well as reviewing data to inform instructional practices.

(a)(i) Data team coordinators will take lead in identifying strategies for instructional staff. They will then train staff members. In addition, previous sections indicate outside trainers will be utilized to improve instructional strategies. The use of the ActiveStudent system will inform all teachers on student performance. A youth advocacy core team coordinator will work with students at highest risk for failure as well as working with local service providers including the court system and mental health providers.

(ii) Teachers will attend training and coaching sessions. Resources will be developed and shared through an on-line data repository.

(iii) Real time student data will be used to support instructional decisions. Peer coaching will be embedded into the culture of the district.

(iv) Evaluation systems will be managed by a grant coordinator. All staff will complete self-assessment surveys twice daily and set personal goals. Coaching sessions and trainings will focus on staff requests.

(b)(i) and (ii) The district will implement a universal screener and progress monitoring system for grades K-12 in language arts and math. Baselines for students will be established. Data can be desegregated by sub-group. This will support other student progress monitoring systems.

(iii) Systems are in place to identify baselines. Data team coordinators and project director will work with teachers and administrators to monitor all data.

(c)(i) The teacher evaluation documents are included in the appendix of the application. The district has been involved in a state-wide pilot of teacher evaluation systems and has made significant progress in improving evaluations that include determination of competence, assesses strengths, providing supporting and mentoring, assure continued growth, and monitor employment decisions.

(c)(ii) Teachers will be involved monthly for professional development. On-line communities will be available that include on-line content and discussion boards. Two pathways will be developed.

(d) Table of goals that includes activities, timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible is present. Professional development includes science, technology, engineering, and math in forensics and robotics for 90 math and science teachers. Cooperative learning training, Math solutions training, science instruction training, best practices strategies, coaching, positive behavioral interventions support, response to intervention, and creation of a parent resource center.

This is a high-quality plan to support teacher and leader behaviors that will support the personalized student-learning project being proposed. The plan clearly articulates specific activities, time lines, evaluation systems, deliverables, and persons responsible for each aspect of the plan. This section earns full points for a well developed plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates adequate practices, policies, and rules for personalized learning.

(a)The applicant has provided adequate staffing at the management level to include full time director, secretary, and coordinator. In addition, the project will employ two full data managers, a full time data clerk, and four additional full time career tech teachers. In addition to narrative information for each position, organizational charts are provided outlining the structure of the leadership and collaborative nature of the program.

(b) School-based leadership teams will be implemented at each school. New board policies will be implemented to allow teams to make school decisions in terms of schedules, hiring, spending decisions, and staff responsibilities. Leadership teams will include administration, a lead teacher, and chairpersons for each grade level, parents, and counselors. Professional learning communities will also be established at building levels.

(c) Mastery learning is new to this applicant. It will be achieved through grading based on actual number of objectives mastered, number of units completed, and proficiency level achieved on each unit or a combination of all. The narrative indicates students will be allowed to work at their own pace. The plan for this is vague stating only that there will be a transition to mastery-based learning.

(d) Students are assessed and able to prove mastery three times during the year through standards testing. All students in grades 2-12 are assessed. K-2 uses the Stanford, 3-12 take benchmark assessments. A universal screener will be implemented through the project to add an additional dimension to demonstration of mastery.

(e) Documents are translated for ELL students or non-English speaking parents and families. Assistive devices are also available as necessary. A full time translator and tutor is also available for parent communication. The district modifies instruction and activities based on individual needs of students.

The support systems necessary at the leadership level for this project are clearly supported. The use of existing systems that are documented in the planning document in the appendix have proven to be effective in the development of the proposal and are positioned to continue appropriate support for the implementation process.

There is less certainty on how students will be allowed to work at their own pace or demonstrate mastery of skilled as opposed to tracking seat and instructional time. There are implications that students needing additional time or assistance will be served through the proposed after-school tutoring and through additional interventions mentioned in previous sections. There is no information regarding students who demonstrate mastery of concepts in pre-teaching formats.

The lack of a clearly articulated plan for students working at their own pace keeps this section from receiving maximum points. The remaining criteria are well developed so this section scores in the high range.

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

10

5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to improve district network and technology resources to support the use of on-line data systems that are instrumental in supporting personalize learning for every student.

(a)The applicant proposes a solid plan to improve district network infrastructure to provide access to on-line resources at the schools site. However, with the exception of eight classrooms, mobile devices are not mentioned. The proposal specifically states computer works stations implying that the machines will not be mobile. No survey was conducted to establish potential need for access to technology that can be checked out is mentioned. With a 70% free and reduced percentage and a 40% poverty level, students may not have equipment or access away from the school building.

Access to accelerated reader was not described as available on-line away from the building or if the reading tests reside on a server within the school.

(b) The district intends to employ one full-time network specialist. It may be difficult for one person to administer a wide area network for 15 buildings by themselves. Career tech teachers at each of the four schools will support all stakeholders. To support students, teachers, and parents two training sessions per year will be held. There is no mention of a ticket system for tracking hardware or software issues. There is also no mention of on-line or other support systems for independent learning of technology skills. It is not clear if each building employs a technology support technician but there is nothing mentioned in the narrative.

(c) The systems identified by the project are systems designed to support data analysis of student performance. There is no product or process proposed that allows teachers, students, or parents to receive recommendations or links to on-line materials that would support further development of skills.

(d) The data systems proposed in this project are almost exclusively student performance tracking or assessment systems. It is noted that all data is uploaded to the district's Student management system.

This section lacks a well-supported plan to ensure new technology infrastructure will be well supported. In addition, an adequate plan for on-going support of increased on-line tools is minimal. There is no evident plan for daily support for teachers and students. Two training sessions per year seems inadequate to support all families. And finally, the lack of hardware access for students outside of the school building and normal school hours limits the full potential on-line resources and content may have on the project. Due to the lack of adequate district-wide technology support and extended technology access for students, this section scores in the low-middle range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant makes a reasonable attempt to explain the improvement process of the proposed activities. Each individual section of the narrative proposes several checkpoints for review of student data, teacher evaluation processes, instructional practices, and professional development activities. This section does not clearly articulate those practices. There is no table outlining each aspect of the proposal that includes specific meeting frequency or the make up of each review group that has input into the system.</p> <p>There are five processes outlined that meet the minimum requirement, however, in the process of ensuring accountability, the proposal states that the applicant will work with an evaluator to ensure all goals and outcomes are being measured. This is the first mention of an external evaluator working on program implementation processes. The only previously mentioned use of an external evaluator was in the creation of the needs assessment described in section B5.</p> <p>Because of the lack of a table that clearly outlines each aspect of the proposal and how information will be collected, monitored, measured, and shared, this section scores in the middle range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant indicates information will be shared through regular meetings as well as e-mail, phone, fax, and phone conferences. There is no meeting schedule or calendar provided to know if these meetings are weekly, monthly, and which meetings involve which stakeholders.</p> <p>A weekly e-mail will be sent to the project advisory council.</p> <p>Community and parents will be updated through website postings and participation in leadership teams.</p> <p>Quarterly newsletters will be distributed.</p> <p>All methods of communication are adequate but not rigorous. There are no efforts to encourage engagement through parent nights, local media outlets, or open houses that highlight student projects, successes, and plans. The lack of non-traditional communication outlets or activities rate this section in the medium score.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided a project that includes ambitious yet achievable performance measures.</p> <p>The performance measure of students that have a highly effective teacher is targeted at 84% district-wide at the end of the grant period.</p> <p>The performance measure of students that have an effective teacher is targeted at 14% district-wide at the end of the grant period.</p> <p>All other performance measures including students scoring proficient or advanced on state tests, percentage of students earning mastery on the state CPAS2 test, number of students scoring proficient or advanced on the state Algebra 1, English 1, Biology, and US History, will all increase between 12 and 15%</p> <p>There is a target of reducing suspensions by 12% by the end of the project.</p> <p>(a) The rationale for selecting the measure was either the measure was required by the application or because the district seeks to become a high performing district in the state.</p> <p>(b) Each of the measures is standard based. The implementation of project processes including student data information and personalized learning to support improvement of student outcomes is evident.</p> <p>(c) The project will employ an outside evaluator that will assist the district in determining if project targets are being met. If they are not, the leadership team will work with the state department of education to seek input on next steps.</p> <p>The applicant has identified clear student performance targets and developed a reasonable plan to meet those targets. This section receives full points.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant will contract with an outside evaluator to evaluate student outcomes and targets but fails to provide a plan for how actual grant activities and practices will be evaluated.

Each school-based leadership team will appoint someone to oversee and manage data collection and forward to the project evaluator.

A table is provided listing each performance measure, the frequency of the assessment, and the person responsible for the information.

The table does not address an evaluation of the specific activities that will take place, the effectiveness of the project personnel, expenditures, or other aspects of the actual project processes. There is mention of a perception survey to be conducted twice each year for students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

The lack of plans to evaluate actual grant activities places the score for this section in the middle range

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does an adequate job of producing a fiscally responsible and reasonable proposal that meets the needs of the proposed activities.

(a)The budget includes both grant and other funds and identifies each in both the overall budget summary and each sub-section. District funds for APT classroom teachers and assistants are included in the budget in the personnel section as well as technology director.

(b) Most of the costs associated with the proposed budget seem reasonable and meet industry standard rates with the exception of the following:

- Mileage is calculated at .57/mile. This exceeds the federal mileage rate of .555/mile.
- Travel expenses for federal meetings at \$2,500/person compared to data team coordinators allowed \$1,000/person for same expenses (registration/hotels/meals/transportation)
- External evaluator expense of nearly \$500,000/year for four years. 444 hours per month means at 40 hours per week, the evaluator would employ 3 people. No supporting documentation to support this expenditure is present in the appendix. There is no letter of support, memorandum of understanding, or resume' of the proposed evaluator or evaluation company.
- Cell phones and monthly service fees of \$150 per phone is high.
- Explanation of expenses related to camps and enrichment is incomplete. Funds to pay teachers to conduct camps should be included in the personnel budget section.
- Contractual expenses for professional development are different between trainings. STEM teachers are paid \$550/day while Cooperative Learning teachers are only paid \$350/day. Math teachers are paid \$500/day.
- No cost of living is calculated for technology coordinator while it is for other staff positions.
- Cost of \$8,000 for switches is far above industry standard expense for medium sized switches. With 15 buildings and a request for 110 switches it indicates several small to medium sized switches will be deployed. There is no formal network plan included in the appendix to clearly support the number of switches requested or the capacity of the switches to clearly understand the price.
- Cost of \$20,000 for servers is higher than industry standard rate for servers. There is no network plan provided that clearly describes the type or capacity of the servers requested.

Due to the lack of documentation to support evaluator and network expenses, this section scores in the lower part of the high range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does an exceptional job of providing a clear plan for sustainability in terms of budget authority and necessary support. Each line item in the budget is either zeroed out or other funding sources are identified to support the on-going expenses.

The plan clearly identifies which components of the project will be supported with other funds after the grant; however, there is no clear indication of where those funds will come from.

Because potential sources of funding are not indicated, this section will not receive maximum points.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant supports a plan to partner with several community partners to address the well being of all learners.

(1) Partners include Warren Yazoo Mental Health, Vicksburg Family Development, Child and Parent Center, Vicksburg Police Department, Vicksburg Regional Housing Authority, Warren County Youth Court and Legacy.

The proposal plans to provide secure environments through improved facilities, address high-risk behaviors, provide opportunities for students to improve personal responsibility behaviors.

(2) The plan will focus on four measures and include the number of students exceeding 10 unexcused absences, the rate of students entering juvenile detention center, number of days students suspended per year, and number of students who receive mental health school or community based counseling services.

(3)(a) Indicators of success will be measured through project implemented strategies including attendance records, grades, test scores, discipline incident reports, and intervention strategies.

(b - d) The district will develop teacher support teams to monitor all areas of the partnerships. Project partners will also provide supports that may not be measured in student data sets including local police attending district sporting events, after school programs for high-risk students provided by youth services and the YMCA.

The proposed activities fully support the overarching goals of the project by placing community support systems into the program to offer activities and resources outside of the normal school day as well as during normal instructional time.

This plan is comprehensive and addresses key aspects of personal safety as well as behavioral and mental health supports for students. This section earns a maximum score.

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

This applicant has met the absolute priority 1.

The district is proposing a personalized learning environment for all students based on the implementation of a student data system that allows learners and their parents to track progress, make course selections that support long-term college and career goals, and provides information concerning the student's current achievement levels.

The data system further informs teachers and instructional leaders of student progress and provides information necessary to support instructional decisions.

The high-quality plan includes ambitious yet achievable goals and has clearly articulated student outcomes and targets identified. The plan also includes a robust professional development process that will increase teacher effectiveness as well as a teacher and principal evaluation system that will improve teacher instructional skills. The addition of student academies based in project-based learning is a highlight of the proposal.

The project also addresses additional student needs beyond instruction and includes project partnerships with local mental health professionals as well as law enforcement and community support programs.

The application falls short, however, of fine tuning the program in the area of decreasing achievement gaps between sub-groups of students, articulating a clear plan for providing supports and access to resources outside of normal school hours, and providing a clear plan for supporting student learning at their own pace.

Supporting material is absent for post secondary support, project personnel information, a clear and concise technology network infrastructure plan, and a plan for summer enrichment camp offerings.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>185</b>
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