



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0716NJ-1 for Woodbury City Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has set forth a comprehensive reform vision that builds on the consortium's prior work through individual initiatives and state initiatives. The applicant has proposed a vision and plan called "b2degree" that seeks to "describe a comprehensive and coherent reform vision" that will follow a child through three distinct phases in life: 1)birth - preschool where certified teachers will provide early intervention for students entering the school districts. 2) school age children k-12 by offering personalized and rigorous in and out of school programming to support graduation and college bound students. 3) post graduate - opportunities for recent graduates to stay connected. The applicant has addressed the four core educational areas. 1)The state and districts involved have adopted the CCSS for ensuring that their standards are preparing students to succeed in college and in the workplace 2) The state has implemented NJ SMART which is a state-wide longitudinal data warehouse. The consortium "will be adding to their current database with critical information." 3) The consortium "intends to recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals" through participation in local recruitment networks as well as rewarding Nation Board Certification. 4) The applicant states they have made changes to support the lowest performing schools, but lacks any anecdotal evidence of such interventions. The applicant has provided a plan that is credible to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning. The applicant needs to provide more evidence to support the consortium's plan for personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student interest and ability.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided some details regarding the LEA's approach to implementing the reform model proposal and has provide some support for the LEA-level and school-level implementation of the proposal. The applicant has provided a description of the process that was used to decide that all schools in both districts will be included. "This project strives to create 'whole school &amp; community reform', the consortium has chosen to not limit participation in the "b2degree" project." The applicant provides a list of schools from both districts that will be participating but does not include a breakdown of the total number of participating students for grade level bands, poverty levels, and participating educators in this section, however the A2 chart was found in section A4 of the application. This misplacement of the supporting evidence causes confusion when trying to evaluate the competitiveness of the application. According to the application the decision has been made regarding participation.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application includes a plan describing the aspects of the vision through an action plan in the form of a logical model and details of how their plan will improve student learning outcomes for all students that are being served by the plan.</p> <p>The applicant lacks clarity and the action plan found in the section is hard to understand without more details regarding each step of the Action Plan's implementation. The "Action Plan" contains 36 components that are collectively working to meet the goals found within the vision of the applicant's plan. The plan may contain to many components causing the clarity, ambitiousness, and the ability to achieve to become less effective. The lack of clarity and narrative to explain the process for implementing the action plans reflects on the uncertainty regarding ability to fully implement the plan.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant has provided a vision that is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity. The applicant has provided methodology that demonstrates that they have set ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceeds the State ESEA targets outlined in the NCLB waiver that has been approved through the state. Applicant provides subgroup breakdowns for students in the LEA's participating by providing performance expectations on summative assessments that are achievable and ambitious, decreasing achievement gaps that are achievable and ambitious, graduation rates that are achievable and ambitious, and the applicant has proposed achievable goals for college enrollment with 2012-13 forming the baseline for the plan. The applicant also proposes that the postsecondary degree attainment goals will be established after the baseline data is gathered in 2012-13. The applicant provides details that support their reform vision and high-quality plan. The goals are achievable and ambitious and are in line with the state regulatory requirements under the ESEA waiver.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided details regarding a clear record of success in the past four years where available in advancing student learning and achievement including descriptions, charts, raw student data that supports in some part the LEA's ability to improve student learning outcomes, close achievement gaps. The applicant has weaknesses in the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While there are areas that show a closer in the gap, this is because the higher scoring sub group overall achievement is on a decline. This should be noted by the applicant in order to demonstrate they are aware of the weaknesses in the theory that they have a track record of closing gaps. The applicant provides a specific reform plan that was put into place in its lowest achieving schools. The results have been positive, removing both schools noted - Oak Valley Elementary &amp; Monongahela Middle School - from the "Needs Improvement List" with one becoming a reward school and receiving special funds for making such impacts.</li> <li>- The applicant has "followed the stat's lead in using the NAEP for the purposes of evaluating b2degree." Using only a state mandated test to evaluate the reform plan may prove to be a weakness in the plan.</li> <li>- The applicant uses several acronyms that are not explained until later in the application, which takes away from the clarity and comprehensive nature of the plan itself. Examples: DFG-B and ERC.</li> <li>- The applicant refers to a previous grant called "INCLUDE". According to the plan presented some of the participating schools have received services from this grant that affect the implementation of the RTTD grant. More information regarding the correlation and or impact this grant has on the current application is needed.</li> <li>-The applicants track record on the ability to share the data with all stakeholders is weak. Although they plan to address this through the grant. They note the ERC (Evaluation and Research Coordinator) is used to run and provide data to teachers, but overall is weak in its ability to support a track record of advancing student learning and achievement.</li> </ul>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has 2 separate LEA's coming together to create a consortium, the applicant notes that the LEA's involved have different means of meeting the requirement for transparency in the LEAs processes, practices, and investments, including the publication of expenditures, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. Woodbury supplies the agenda and minutes from board meetings online to the public. Deptford provides minutes and agendas to the public, but limits them according to content. The applicant provides details from the district level regarding some exenditures, but not at the school level. The applicant does provide evidence of what the current procedures are, which are weak in their level of transparency. The applicant provides no details on how, as a consortium, they will provide more transparency during and after the life of the grant cycle. This impacts the consortium's ability to provide transparency to the public regarding the use of grant funds both during and after the life of the grant cycle. The goals are achievable in this section of the applicant's plan.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant has presented evidence and situations from New Jersey state legislature and regulatory requirements that will support the reform plan that is presented in the application. The applicant cites the statutes that NJ has put in place after receiving RTT3 monies that require the autonomy for districts to make decisions that have high impact on student achievement which includes the flexibility for implementing personalized learning environments that are described within the plan.

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

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence and documentation that they have held meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal and meaning support including a description of how stakeholders were engaged in the development of the proposal and the revision of the proposal. The applicant notes that one of the major concerns for stakeholders "involved program oversight and plans for sustainability." The applicant revised the plan to address these issues after the meetings that were held. The applicant has overwhelming support from key stakeholders and organizations outside of the school districts in the community.

The applicant is weak in the following areas:

-No mention of LEAs collective bargaining representation, evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools. This is a significant weakness due to the nature of the reform plan and the dedication it will take from all teachers to implement. The plan itself calls for teachers to be directly and indirectly affected by the "action plan" put into place. Without direct evidence of support and cooperation with the teachers' union, this plan may not be able to be carried out to scale as presented by the applicant.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence that they have a high-quality plan for analysis of the the consortium's current status in implementing personalized learning environments through Universal Design and the logic behind the reform proposal. The applicant has identified some of the needs and gaps that the plan will address including both academic and developmental. The applicant is very ambitious with over 30 initiatives as part of the grant. The applicant has not addressed the sheer number of initiatives and the consortiums ability to manage this large number of initiatives. Having so many initiatives makes the plan ambitious but not achievable.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(c)(a)(i) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving student learning by providing an opportunity for all students to understand what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. The applicant sets forth a program called "AVID" (Advancement via Individual Determination) that will require 7-12 graders to take an elective that focuses on career exploration. The weaknesses in this section of the plan are: more background on the AVID program needs to be established, more information regarding the implementation and planning needed to implement AVID, and more information on the roles will parents and educators have in the AVID program.

(c)(a)(ii) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving student learning by having students identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to CCRS or graduation requirements and to understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals and measure their progress towards those goals. The applicant has set forth several ways to accomplish this: through Naviance, a digital platform that will "help students and families connect what students do in the classroom to their life goals; Students in each grade span will visit college campuses; each student will earn personalized learning credits for service learning; supporting the "home" in emphasis on the importance of home intervention i.e. Fathers Breakfast Program. The weaknesses in this section of the application are: more information regarding the Naviance program including specific implementation plans for each district as well as more background on the program; more details in the "students in each grade will visit college campuses" -The applicant should address how they plan on managing this undertaking as well as the colleges they plan on visiting as well as the reasoning for choosing those colleges; more

information regarding other initiatives that will support their claim in this section that "the role of the home...is integral to academic success" - The Father's Breakfast sounds like a genuine idea, but lacks the details to make an informed decision regarding the clarity and cohesiveness of how it fits with the overall plan.

(c)(a)(iii) Applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving student learning by allowing students to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest by: focusing on differentiated learning and Universal Design for Learning to "ensure that every student is taught in a way that will best help him to succeed;" the AVID program which is a teacher training program. The weaknesses in this section are: the applicant provides information on DI and UDL for learning, but does not explain how the consortium will ensure that DI and UDL are being used with fidelity because without fidelity both programs are considered to have little impact on student achievement; and the applicants use of the AVID program - This is the second time the acronym AVID is used, but it appears to be a totally different program than mentioned earlier. They should provide more specific information regarding the program for full understanding of the approach they are presenting in their plan. This section provides little support for the goal of providing evidence of how the consortium will ensure students are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interests.

(c)(a)(iv) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving student learning by ensuring access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning by offering student participation at the high school level to "Challenge Day"; black students the opportunity to become members of the NAACP; and offering "Hispanico Hablantes" classes to prepare students for AP Spanish. The weaknesses in this section are: more information about "Challenge Day" for high school students and more information about what will be done to enhance culture diversity in the other grade levels; more explanation about how the applicant sees allowing black students to be a part of the NAACP as a culture enhancing activity for the student body as a whole; more explanation regarding the data that supports the need to provide a class that will aid students in completing AP Spanish. This applicant needs to provide more explanation regarding tier selection of the presented programs to address the access and exposure of all students to the diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning.

(c)(a)(v) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving student learning by ensuring that students will master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving by: starting at the early age of having parents as teacher model; the AVID program for every student; all 8th graders taking Algebra I; utilizing the math expert, Eric Milou, Ph.D. to train teachers in the constructivist approach; requiring all student to complete at least one AP class during their high school career. The weaknesses in the plan as presented are: more information regarding the "parent as teacher" model theory and methodology to support the requirements in this section; more information regarding the AVID program (this is the 3rd time mentioned with totally new use and idea); the reasoning behind requiring all students to complete at least one AP class and the data that supports that this is even possible to obtain.

(c)(b)(i) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving support that will ensure that all students have a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and be college and career ready by: providing after-school centers for students to complete work and find tutorial help; summer programs that will allow students to "maintain grade-level" in science and math; offer Test prep to all students for ACT; senior will be offered college "boot camp" as prep for college. Weaknesses in this section of the application are: more evidence and information about the data that supports the effectiveness of the initiatives and more specific ways that the presented initiatives support the personalized learning environment for students (Example: this contradicts the idea that every student should take Algebra I in 8th grade and that every student is required to take at least one AP course in high school).

(c)(b)(ii) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving a students educational experience includes a high quality instruction approach and environment by implementing the following initiatives: expansion of the current partial day preschool program to a full-day program; teachers fully trained in Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning. The weakness in this section is the applicant does not address how they intend to monitor fidelity within the use of DI or UDL. These initiatives when used with fidelity are very successful, but the applicant fails to discuss the importance of the fidelity of implementation and how the consortium will address this issue.

(c)(b)(iii) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan for improving student achievement through high quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate by: purchasing more digital curriculums; purchasing more smartboards, document cameras, and computers for labs; purchasing every student with an electronic tablet. The weakness in this section is that the applicant states that one school has already received some funding through another source to purchase every student a tablet. Therefore, more specifically, which schools already have this type of technology and which ones will be purchased with this grant and also more information regarding how teachers will use the technology to provide access to high quality content besides digital curriculums.

(c)(b)(iv) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan that offers students and parents regular feedback including frequently updated individual student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of CCS and

graduation requirements and personalized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills, available content, instructional approaches and supports by: having every student participate in NWEA MAP testing three times a year; participating in NJ SMART testing; providing access to online grade book; and the use of the Naviance program. The weakness in this section is more details in the connection between the initiatives and their connection to student data begin readily available for parents, students, and teachers in order to support a personalized learning environment.

(c)(b)(v) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan that will allow for accommodations and high quality strategies for high-need students to ensure that they are on track toward CCRS and graduation by: implementing the AVID program. The weakness in this section is a continuation of the other sections regarding the AVID program. The applicant has provided numerous examples of AVID interventions, but does not provide explanation to the overall AVID program leaving the plan lacking clarity.

(c)(c) The applicant provides details regarding a high quality plan that mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. The weakness in the applicants plan in this section is the applicant makes the statement that "every student will master Naviance...and master the use of online curriculum" without providing any mention of technical support of support for those who are not technology literate.

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

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a detailed high quality plan that ensures that all educators engaged in training and in professional teams or communities that supports their individual and collective capacity to support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time and college/career ready and adapt content and instruction, providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches by: providing intensive professional development for members of the Interdisciplinary School Site teams for implementation of the b2degree program; training teachers in the a web-based and careers-focused STEM curricular supplement; training teachers in Developmental Designs; training elementary teachers in the Responsive Classroom. The weakness in this section is the how the applicant plans to provide all the trainings mentioned and insure the fidelity of all initiatives in all classrooms.

(The applicant provides a detailed high quality plan that ensures that teachers will frequently measure student progress toward meeting college and career readiness and graduation, using data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators by continuing the use of NJ SMART, numerous test throughout the year, and Naviance. The weakness of this section is the applicant has not provided how they will use the data to make improvements in the individual and collective practices of educators.

The applicant provides a detailed high quality plan that provides teachers and principals with a way to improve practices and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the consortiums teacher and principal evaluation systems that include frequent feedback on individual and collective effectiveness as well as providing recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement by: incorporating the current teacher evaluation system based on Marazano's model. The teachers are encouraged to take control of their own learning. This provides a weakness in the plan. More details are needed on what the consortium as a whole will do to support the continuous learning of the teachers.

The applicant provides a detailed high quality plan that provides that participating educators have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting requirements including an actionable information that helps educators identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests by utilizing: the programs AVID and Naviance and NWEA. The weakness in this section is the applicant fails to address how they will ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and ability to access the information.

The applicant provides a detailed high quality plan that provides that participating educators have access to and know how to use tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting requirements including high quality learning resources including digital resources and tools to create and share new resources by: providing teachers with smartboards and document cameras. The weaknesses in this section of the plan is the applicant has also restated what they will do for students, but fails to explain how the teachers will use the resources to share in new ideas and resources and to create new resources.

The applicant provides a detailed high quality plan that provides that participating educators have access to and know how to use tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting requirements including high quality learning resources including processes and tools to match student needs and provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs by: continuing to use the data from the NJSMART and NWEA. The weakness in this section is the applicant provides little detail to support how these measures support the teachers ability to accelerate and/or accommodate for student learning.

The applicant provides a detailed high quality plan that addresses the consortiums plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals including hard-to-staff schools, subjects and specialty areas by: "removing inadequate teachers" ensuring that all students have access to effective instruction and providing rewards for high quality teachers.

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

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	14
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided evidence and details that support the consortiums ability to have practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning by having a consortium governance structure through a Project Director that will provide support and services to all participating schools; provides school leadership teams in participating schools that will have the b2degree blueprint and authorization to be flexible and autonomous over factors such as schedules, personnel, roles, and budgets as "long as the overall decisions respect the contractual labor agreements that are in force in the respective districts" are not interrupted; giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery not seat time through the Option II initiative through the state of NJ; giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards in multiple times and multiple ways through Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design Learning; providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible to all students by the use of the AVID model. Based on the information, they consortium does have the ability through process, policies, and statutes to support the implementation of said plan.</p> <p>The applicant has a high quality plan addressed in this section that will support the overall project implementation through comprehensive policies to provide every student, educator, and system with the support and resources they need. The goals are ambitious and achievable as they relate to the high quality reform design presented in this section. However, the plan is very ambitious, but the sheer number of initiatives limits the applicants ability to achieve the goals.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium has an infrastructure that supports personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, and educators have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the proposal by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the implementation of the AVID program;</li> <li>- ensuring that stakeholders have appropriate levels of technical support through a range of strategies through UDL and providing technology to students who are in need;</li> <li>-using information technology systems to allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format through the current NJ data warehouse system that is currently under construction;</li> <li>-ensuring the participating LEAs us interoperable data systems by utilizing their current network administrators in each of the districts and the SIF (School Interoperable Framework) that allows individual systems to "share data."</li> </ul> <p>The applicant should provide more information on the out-of-school support that will be implemented, how UDL is connected to the appropriate levels of technical support as a strategy, and how they will work to improve the transparency and interoperability of the current systems. The applicants plan is amitious and coherent and this section supports the requirements for the overall plan.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and</p>		

regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant by: holding quarterly reviews of progress by the "Oversight committee"; use of the NJSMART, ERCs, NWEA; an "Annual Report of Progress" that will be crafted using all of the aforementioned data. The applicant does not address the strategy it has to publicly share information on the quality of its investments.

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

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4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders that included: promptly placing all aspects of the grant and oversight on the districts' websites; holding yearly open meetings for all stakeholders in order to provide feedback. The applicant fails to discuss the steps that will be taken if there is issues with stakeholders that need to be addressed based off the meetings that are planned. Without the missing data it is difficult to understand the impact of the communication and engagement that will take place therefore, the plan seems achievable, but not ambitious.

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

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4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has presented achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant chosen performance measures. The applicant has provided rationale for each of the measures, they have provided information that is evident of how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information that point toward success or areas of concerns, they briefly describe how they will review and improve the measures over time if they find that it is not sufficient in grading progress of the programs, more specific information is needed to ensure they have coherently thought through their plan during the grant cycle and beyond.

The applicant's plan supports the high quality plan that has been presented in the proposal and provides evidence that the applicant has an approach to continuous improvement throughout the implementation of the plan.

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

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5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities outlined in the reform proposal by employing and Evaluation Research Coordinator that will analyze the program attributes that will address the indicators and performance measures set forth in the grant application and to facilitate through collection, analysis, reporting, and interpretation of program data, continuous quality improvement in program services and outcomes. The ERC will do this through qualitative and quantitative data collection. They will also be charged with reporting the information in usable formats.

This supports the high quality plan that has been presented in this grant proposal. This also supports the requirements of evaluation of investments. Therefore, they have met the requirement for this section. However, the ambitious nature of the plan itself is very overwhelming leading to question the viability of the plan.

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

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a detailed budget that includes both narrative and tables that identify all funds that will support the projects outlined in the proposal for the consortium and is somewhat reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant has expenses that are not aligned to the work involved (Example: Project manager that will only make 26,000 respectively with as much responsibility as they have placed on the position seems unbalanced. The applicant provides rationale for investments and priorities including a description of all funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal as well as a detailed narrative describing one-time investments versus on-going investments and the LEA's plans to continue with programs that require funding after the life of the grant cycle.

Weaknesses:

- There is a misalignment in the budget. Example a Fathers Breakfast (16 breakfasts that will cost 95,000 a year). This is unreasonable and doesnot align with the significant factors of the plan.

- NAACP - this is a program that welcomes African American's and is a non-profit organization. The budget has them recieving 86,696 over the grant cycle.

Overall the rationale for the investments are sufficient based on their plan, but not sufficient and justifiable toward the overall plan.

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

The applicant has a high-quality plan for sustainability provided the consortium will be able to obtain future grant money to sustain the on-going initiatives after the life of the grant. The grant does provide explanation regarding state and local support that is in the process or on hold due to the economy. The applicant has successful laid out a plan for the after life of the grant cycle. The applicants plan does not support a high-quality plan for sustainability of project goals based on the overall judgement of the high quality plan itself.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a description of the coherent and sustainable partnership formed with "The Hispanic Center of South Jersey's Family Success Center (FSC). The applicant has identified six population-level desired results for students who are members of the consortium. These results included education, family, and community results. The applicant has provided how the partnership will track selected indicators through the use of rosters and sign-in sheets; how they will use the data to target resources by using grades, attendance, and summer assignment completion to track progress and target the areas of need; how they will improve results over time by making changes that are supported by the data. The applicant describes in detail how the partnership would integrate education and other services for participating students by the FSC providing core services that range from access to health, development of family success plans, life skills planning, and parenting plans. The applicant provides details of how the partnership will "build capacity" through providing participating schools with another support mechanism to help students and families access to needed services. The applicant should provide more details regarding how the partnership will track selected indicators, use the data to target its resources, and improve its results over time.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a coherent and comprehensive plan that addresses how it plans to build on the core educational assurance areas, to create personal learning environments to ensure college and career ready students and high school graduates. The plan addresses student achievement and achievement gaps between sub group populations and the schools with the lowest achievement over time. However, do to the overwhelming initiatives that are included in the plan, the sustainability and the oversight would hinder the ability to fully implement all initiatives to see the success that is outlined in the goals of the plan.

Total	210	143
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0716NJ-2 for Woodbury City Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium's vision mentions a number of activities, but the vision items listed below are teased out of the narrative and may not be what the Consortium intends to be the vision.</p> <p>The Consortium desires to create "whole school and community reform" through its "b2degree" (birth to degree) proposal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children are school-ready when they first enter consortium schools</li> <li>Consortium graduates are career and college ready</li> <li>Consortium alumni succeed in college and career selection</li> <li>Consortium teachers and principals remain committed to student success</li> </ol> <p>This vision does not reference the core educational assurance areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed, and</li> <li>building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform educators how to improve instruction.</li> </ul> <p>The four parts of the vision are not directly or clearly linked to the RTT-D goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. Although the four parts of this vision are internally consistent and represent desirable educational results, this vision falls short of RTT-D specifications.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Consistent with the consortium's desire to create "whole school and community reform," all students and teachers in all schools and in all grades will be participating. This includes 434 participating educators and 5,865 participating students, 43.5% of which are low-income students. The percentage of high-needs students being served is unclear due to an error in the total and a mislabeling of column I of the School Demographics table. A list of the six schools in Depford and seven Woodbury City schools is provided. There is no estimate of how many young children will be served by the Supporting Parents as Teachers program area.</p> <p>The decision to include all schools, students, and teachers in both districts of the consortium is appropriate for a consortium that includes two geographically close small districts with similar demographics. In addition, students from Depford attended Woodbury High School until 1957, creating a common history between the two communities.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application does not present a high quality, credible plan for reform. Five key goals were listed with eight activity categories. The rationale for how the activities will help meet the key goals is not presented. The Logic Model does not connect needs to activities, activities to results, and results to goal fulfillment. For example, the direct connection between the "Fathers Breakfast" program at the elementary schools and any of the five key goals is not explained, even though the program may contribute to the Program Area of Social and Emotional Health.</p>		

The timeline in the plan is inadequately detailed. It does not indicate which activities must precede other activities; for example, staff development must precede implementation of a program. Twenty-seven of the thirty-six activities take place during all four years, and eight activities take place in the last three years of the grant period. Supporting Recent Graduates in College Success has no indication of when it will take place. The narrative states that "Scale-up will not be necessary by nature of the program's design."

Eighty-seven percent of the deliverables are participation rates in programs, with very few products and activities created by the district. The majority of the program initiatives are purchased products. No explanation is provided for how the expected outcomes of using these products align with the identified needs of students in the district and expectations of RTT-D grant. If the results promoted by the product vendors do not match the outcomes required by the grant, using these programs will consume time and resources that should be used for initiatives congruent with the purpose of the RTT-D award.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium's comprehensive plan is likely to meet its goals for performance on summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, and increasing graduation rates and college enrollment

The consortium's ambitious goals for performance on summative assessments and decreasing achievement gaps are 1.2 times the New Jersey ESEA targets, because they will halve the percentage of non-proficient students and gaps in achievement in five years rather than six years. These goals are likely to be met with the level of teacher professional development, capacity for data-collection and evaluation, and project activities directed at the goals.

The goal for increasing college enrollment rates is also ambitious, because it meets the New Jersey formula for increasing rates by 2% each year. The consortium's vision that "consortium graduates are career and college ready" and "consortium alumni succeed in college and career selection" should propel efforts to achieve this goal, and elements of the grant plan, such as AVID, SAT and ACT prep, college-readiness boot camp, Degree Density Centers, plus access to college work while in high school, make this goal achievement likely.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium proposal does not provide consistent evidence of success over the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement. Overall, most of the data provided in the application does not show positive growth trends during that time.

The narrative did, however, report successful reforms that raised student achievement and closed gaps in two Deptford schools which had been identified as in need of improvement. Their reform efforts included increased supervision of curriculum and instruction; increased support of underserved populations through mentoring, instructional coaches, and consultants; implementing a system of informal classroom walk-throughs; increasing teacher leadership through grade-level meetings, vertical articulation meetings, and professional learning communities; and targeted small-group tutoring sessions led by highly-qualified teachers; after-school preparatory classes for the NJASK tests; and on-site professional development courses from the University of Pennsylvania geared to individual schools' needs. No data was provided in the narrative, but the elementary school is no longer identified as a school in need of improvement, and the degree of success at the middle school, which was a Year 4 School in Need of Improvement, earned it the designation of a Rewards School in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

The data for Woodbury, in the form of graphs covering 2006-2011, showed:

- On the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge at Woodbury Elementary Schools, all four groups – white economically disadvantaged and not, and Black economically disadvantaged and not- showed lower language arts and literacy proficiency in 2011 than in 2007. At the junior high school, all of those groups proficiency rates dropped from 2007 to 2011.
- On the High School Proficiency Assessment of language arts, three groups improved their proficiency rates from 2007, but the rate for Black students who were not economically disadvantaged dropped precipitously in 2011 after 4 years of general improvement. Over the four years, white disadvantaged students closed a gap of over 30 percentage points

with white non-disadvantaged students.

- NHASK performance for 4<sup>th</sup>-graders in Woodbury decreased in LAL and Math from 2007 to 2011 regardless of economic status or race. Proficiency rates for Special Education students rose, particularly in LAL, to nearly close the gap with General Education students, whose rates dropped significantly.
- At the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level, students made modest gains in LAL, regardless of economic status, but the rate of proficiency dropped slightly in Math for economically disadvantaged students. White and Hispanic eighth-graders made strong gains in LAL, while Black students made modest gains between 2008 and 2011. No data was presented for 8<sup>th</sup> grade math achievement by race. Special Education students proficiency rates in LAL rose from 2007 to 2011, however rates for 2009 and 2010 are so anomalous as to be questionable. Rates for general education students rose significantly during that time, yet the gap had closed by 30 percentage points over that time. Proficiency rates for 8<sup>th</sup> graders in math dropped slightly for general education students, but the change between 2007 and 2011 for special education students is difficult to interpret, because the graph shows a proficiency rate of 0% in 2011.
- Woodbury schools presented cohort data for 9<sup>th</sup>-grade students attending school in Woodbury over the last 4 years. Percentages of proficiency increased steadily from 2007 to 2011, except for 2008, when new cut scores had to be met, and exceeded the state average in both LAL and Math.
- The class of 2015 cohort at Deptford improved LAL scores since 2008 for white, Black, and Hispanic subgroups, but positive change was minimal or absent for these three ethnic groups.
- The Woodbury HSPA proficiency rates in LAL and math rose steadily and significantly from 2006 to 2011 and met or exceeded the state average. During this time, economically disadvantaged students rose to completely close the gap with non-economically disadvantaged students in language arts and nearly closed the gap in math. White, Black, and Hispanic students improved HSPA performance from 2006 to 2011 in Language Arts, with the Hispanic subgroup changing the most and closing the gap with white students. In math, all subgroups gained ground. While general education students' proficiency rate remained static, special education students' proficiency dramatically improved in language arts and math.
- The number of students taking Advanced Placement tests has increased steadily since 2007, as have the number of AP exams taken and the number of students scoring a 3, 4, or 5. The number of exams earning high scores has nearly doubled since 2007.

It is not possible, for several reasons, to say the consortium has a solid track record of success in advancing student achievement over the past four years, nor that equity has been achieved:

- The achievement data were incomplete, in that graphs were not presented for the same types of data for all of the between-groups comparisons.
- Most of the performance data presented showed downward trends over 4 years.
- Many of the data points were so erratic, without explanation, that the data shown may not be trustworthy.
- It appears the data were all from Woodbury, which leaves half the consortium with no data to consider.

The narrative provided evidence that up-to-date student performance data is available to parents, educators, students, and the community. This data includes NWEA-MAP benchmark data, standardized test data, results of pre-school and reading screening, and classroom assessments. This data is reviewed by teachers and administrators to identify trends, gaps, growth patterns, areas of concern in meeting the Common Core Standards, as well as student, classroom, and school-wide concerns.

In Deptford parents participate in developing goals for school and district improvement plans. Woodbury's Evaluation and Research Coordinator, in addition to analyzing and reporting data, provides technical assistance to staff in using data, holds regular teacher data conferences, responds to research and evaluation requests, and provides services to neighboring districts through shared services agreements. The consortium's RTT-D proposal includes expanding these services.

The evidence of a credible history of improving student achievement over time by both districts in the consortium is insufficient to assume that the consortium as a whole has the capability to use data to diagnose and repair specific areas of weakness in teaching, learning, and performance. The Deptford district, on the other hand, was successful within the past four years in lifting two of its schools out of in-need-of-improvement status. The likelihood of the consortium's future success in making effective reforms is tenuous, because evidence is unconvincing that the districts work closely to share expertise and solve common problems.

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

The Consortium currently has a moderate level of transparency in its processes, practices, and investments, but is likely to improve this over the course of the grant due to the activities presented throughout the narrative.

Along with School Board agendas and minutes, Woodbury City Schools provides salary information on their website, through proprietary software, to the public for teachers, instructional assistants, classroom aides, administrators, and support staff. It also reports non-personnel expenditures and purchases. It is not clear from the narrative whether these are reported at the school level. Individual teacher and principal salaries are not reported on the website, but are listed by district and school through a DataUniverse portal provided by a number of state news agencies

In their School Board Minutes Deptford Township reports administrator promotions and salaries, but specific reports of instructional costs including salaries and non-personnel expenditures are limited to special cases. Again, individual teacher and principal salaries can be found through news agency portals in New Jersey.

The consortium is mixed in its levels of transparency provided by each district for its processes, practices and investments. Woodbury City may have a high level of transparency, but the evidence for reports of school-level expenditures is not clear. The narrative states, "the Woodbury City Board of Education attaches full expenditure reports...These reports provide access to all non-personnel expenditures occurring in the schools," which could mean "all schools" or "each school." Deptford Township, on the other hand, has a low level of transparency at this time. The collective evidence for transparency in the consortium is inconsistent, and therefore is not at a high level.

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

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10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided sufficient evidence that the State of New Jersey policies and laws will provide a supportive context for the consortium's plans to personalize instruction and improve the quality of teachers.

By virtue of New Jersey's award as a RtT3 state, it will provide conditions supporting the implementation of many of the Consortium's plans. The state's Option II law will enable the consortium Boards of Education to permit students to earn high school credits through non-classroom experiences, such as on-line learning.

The state permits flexibility in hiring, firing, and rewarding teachers. The Consortium has been asked by the State of New Jersey to recommend a system that includes multiple measurements of student learning to comprise 50% of a teacher's evaluation. New Jersey law allows districts to use evaluations to remove ineffective teachers. State law also allows the Consortium flexibility in teacher compensation by prohibiting salary advancement based on seniority and advanced degrees. The districts may also reward teacher excellence and attract high quality teachers for hard-to-fill positions through salary incentives. New Jersey had established a Master Teacher and Master Principal credential, which will support the Consortium's plan to provide Master Teacher training.

That the state not only permits and encourages autonomy in the districts makes it very likely that the proposed activities will be successfully carried out.

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

10

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The districts of Woodbury and Deptford sought and obtained input and support from their stakeholders after the grant proposal was drafted by Woodbury administrators. In the short time frame used for developing the RTT-D proposal, stakeholder involvement in problem-identification and original brainstorming did not take place, as evidenced in this timeline:

- September 10: Woodbury superintendent met with principals and district administrators to brainstorm ideas for the RTT-D grant. Deptford was selected as a consortium partner.
- Superintendents and staff members held frequent planning meetings.
- September and October: Districts exchanged information.
- Both school boards approved the RTT-D application.
- MOU documents ensure support of teachers and teachers' association
- October 3: Proposed grant activities were shared with stakeholders from both districts with mayors, Boards of Education, superintendents and administrators, principals, teachers, parents, and students. Attendees asked questions and offered suggestions. Their main concerns were program oversight and plans for sustainability.
- The final version of the grant proposal included some stakeholder suggestions.

The proposal falls short of meaningful engagement by stakeholders, because a broad contingent of stakeholders was not involved in the initial brainstorming sessions. More important, there is no indication in the application that there was a thorough assessment of the district's needs prior to generating ideas. The logical sequence of identifying needs before seeking solutions based on these needs seems to be absent. What appears to have been done is the adoption of many products to address goals in hopes that some will meet some needs and make some improvements.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application did not present a high-quality plan for an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environment. The narrative identified areas for reform efforts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving student achievement</li> <li>• Creating personalized opportunities</li> <li>• Enhancing educators' skills</li> <li>• Expanding student access to the most effective educators</li> <li>• Decreasing achievement gaps</li> <li>• Increasing the graduation rate</li> <li>• Increasing former students' success in college and career</li> </ul> <p>There was no mention of the degree of change in these factors that would be considered successful, so the goals of the plan are not specific. Activities for the grant proposal were presented, but there were no activities listed for status or needs analysis, with the exception of regular data conferences between the Evaluation and Research Coordinator and staff. Deliverables, such as data dashboards, indicators of progress, timelines for data collection and reporting, or evaluation protocols for the effects on students of staff development programs are missing. With the exception of the Evaluation and Research Coordinator, no other responsible parties are listed for analysis of needs and gaps.</p> <p>Programs have already been in use, but no mention is made of how these programs are regularly evaluated to determine their effectiveness in making the improvements listed above. There was no highly-effective plan described in the narrative for analysis of the Consortium's current status in implementing personalized learning environments, nor was there a logic model for how the activities will impact needs and gaps. Without a high quality plan for continuing analysis of needs, progress, and the effectiveness of program activities, the Consortium lacks a "GPS" for knowing if it is on the right route or how close it is to the destination.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative presents a long list of well-respected products and programs that will be used to prepare students for college and career, but a high-quality plan is not presented. The Consortium's plan to personalize the learning environment to ensure all students are prepared to graduate and succeed in college and career uses the AVID program to communicate to students that learning is key to their success and reaching goals. AVID provides peer and adult group support, and as a grade 7-12 elective course, it engages students in career exploration. To help students plan for careers, the Consortium plans to expand its use of the Naviance computer program, which enables students to track their progress toward their goals, learn about their own strengths and interests, set personalized learning goals, learn about what career they want and plan their career path, research colleges, and use a college planning tool. In addition, all students visit colleges in classroom groups once each in elementary, middle, and high school. As a culminating experience to exploring career goals, students will earn credit for a service learning experience which includes original research, data analysis, writing a paper and presenting it in a multimedia format. To emphasize the role of the family in student success, students may participate in the Fathers Breakfast program for exposure to positive adult role models.</p> <p>The proposal narrative describes several programs for providing deep learning experiences for students in their areas of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal Designs for Learning teacher training in differentiated learning</li> <li>• Developmental Design and Responsive Classroom for teachers to create accepting learning environments</li> <li>• AVID training for teachers to provide deep-learning experiences for students through writing as a tool for Learning, emphasis on inquiry, collaborative approach, organization, and reading to learn</li> <li>• Penn Literacy to engage teachers in collaborative learning to improve instruction and assessment</li> <li>• Literacy TA for student resources and professional development in the Common Core Standards</li> </ul> <p>To increase exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives the Consortium plans to:</p>		

Provide a Challenge Day to one high school grade each year to celebrate each school's diversity and break down barriers between students of different backgrounds.

- Create a NAACP student chapter to equip students of color to advocate for systematic change that improves their opportunities to learn, broaden their perspectives, and motivate them with a year-end culturally enriching trip.
- Offer Hispanico Hablantes classes to improve the Spanish of Native and Heritage Speakers to prepare them for AP Spanish classes. These will prepare students for college while placing them in the company of the school's high-achieving students.

The Consortium's plans to help students master critical content includes:

- The Parent as Teacher model to assist parents in preparing young children to be school-ready
- The AVID program to teach students study skills, critical thinking and reading, time management, organizational skills, and inquiry-driven problem-solving
- Requiring Algebra I for all 8th-graders to prepare them for calculus
- A constructivist math approach for all students from early primary grades through high school to help them develop authentic problem-solving skills and mathematical creativity
- Requiring all students to complete at least one AP course and providing students the Literacy TA or Penn Literacy Network programs to prepare them to pass AP exams
- A mentoring program for high-needs students that provides a trained adult to guide and encourage the student.

The above listings of activities to address the learning required for students to prepare for college and career does not constitute a high-quality plan. Assuming the goal of these activities is to provide learning opportunities that engage and empower all students, particularly high-needs students, as described in (i) through (v), the collection of products and programs above is moderately likely to achieve this goal. There is only a vague timeline for these activities, The deliverables for this plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment are not provided beyond participation rates, as discussed previously. Later sections of the narrative list measurement tools, procedures, schedules, and evaluation plans. Persons responsible for implementation of the plan are included in the overall proposal plan, but the activities include so many programs from multiple vendors, plus staff training, that it could overstretch the time resources of teachers, administrators, lead LEA superintendent and project director. Fewer programs, more specifically tailored to Consortium needs, and greater use of Consortium-developed programs, training, and materials would allow the focused effort needed to meet the stipulations in Criterion 1. This plan is somewhat credible but is likely to result in wasted resources and decreased achievement due to instructional time consumed to implement redundant programs.

#### C1(b)

Again, this portion of criterion C1 lacks a high-quality plan, because the narrative does not supply timelines and deliverables for the many individual activities. This plan is credible to the extent that teachers have enough time to do the substantial amount of curriculum-writing needed to prepare for individualized instruction and assessments.

Some of the personalized learning offered to students in this plan is in the form of after school summer tutoring and catch-up opportunities for students who are not achieving at grade level. Other opportunities for remediation or advancement are offered during a Summer Bridge Program. Preparation classes for college entrance exams will be offered outside of school hours. Other plans for provide personalized instructional content include online, video-based delivery of "expert instruction," although no assurance was given in the application that this content would prepare students to meet Common Core Standards. These may not be opportunities for learning, because not all students will be able to attend these programs. At a different location in the grant narrative, it was explained how teachers will be trained to individualize instruction for all students in the classroom using techniques from Universal Design for Learning.

The Consortium's plan for providing a high quality instructional approaches and environment includes expansion of pre-school to full days, training for teachers in Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning to be able to implement effective strategies in personalized education. Differentiated Instruction prepares teachers to be proactively responsive, yet it is not evident in the plan that teachers will be given substantial amounts of paid time to develop curriculum, lesson plans, and assessments to address a variety of learning styles, needs, and interests to enact D.I. Likewise, the plan to also train teachers to implement the Universal Design for Learning program does not provide the opportunity for teachers to do the extensive preparation needed to use these methods. UDL and DI may be duplicative in how they address very similar teacher skills and tasks. This redundancy is not only wasteful of teacher effort, classroom time, student effort, and financial resources, but it could cause confusion or frustration for teachers to implement both, resulting in poor implementation of otherwise effective programs.

The Consortium currently provides digital content in social studies in the elementary and secondary levels and a digital math program at the middle school level. It was not stated that this digital content is consistent with the Common Core Standards, nor if students could progress through content at an independent pace or if the pace of learning was the same for all students in a classroom. The In addition to purchasing more SmartBoards and other technology equipment, the grant plan includes

providing a tablet computer for every student. The narrative states that tablet computers will “enhance students’ ability to meet graduation requirements at a personalized pace” without specifying how this would be done or how teachers would ensure that educational content accessed by a tablet computer would be high quality or be consistent with Common Core standards, especially in the lower grades.

A state-wide data system, NJ SMART will allow students and parents to access all student level test data and growth estimates. Teachers will be trained to implement “student learning scales,” which allows students to self-assess during classroom learning experiences. An online grade book gives students the access to monitor their grades and homework completion. It was mentioned in the narrative that students would be trained and supported in using technology and online tools and resources to track and manage their learning, however it was not clear when or how this training would be provided.

Although some or all of the commercial programs selected for this proposal, such as AVID, are of good quality and may be highly effective when used with perfect fidelity, this impractical grant proposal seems geared toward quantity of programs and activities rather than quality. Teachers need generous amounts of time to develop the curricular, instructional, and assessment resources needed for personalized student learning. This plan appears not to provide this, nor does it provide a clear picture of what personalized student learning will look like in the classroom – how many students will be in a classroom? How will a classroom be designed and equipped to facilitate students’ self-directed learning? What will the teacher be doing during class, and how will the teacher monitor student activity and tend to the needs of all students? This plan for student learning will consume a great amount of resources and may not result in more college and career-ready students.

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

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Although the Consortium’s approach to increasing teachers’ capacity to improve instruction and support student progress has some promising procedures for staff development, it is not a high-quality plan, because it lacks a specific timeline and deliverables. The plan is likely to build the capacity of teachers to implement personalized learning through the development of professional learning communities, interdisciplinary teams, and school-based communities of practice which will work together to plan instruction and academic support activities for students. One weakness is using two different programs – Differentiated Instruction and Universal Design for Learning – to prepare teachers for adapting content and instruction to prepare personalized learning environments. These two programs may overlap or conflict in their philosophies and techniques for personalizing instruction. This plan is unfocused, likely to waste resources, and unlikely to enable the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching.

A greater flaw in this plan is the inclusion of several more programs and stipulations requiring additional training and further cluttering and obscuring the path to improving instruction. Teachers not only have to implement DI, UDL, Literacy TA, and The Penn Literacy Project with fidelity, but they must include a web-based STEM supplement, focus on 21st Century Skills, incorporate non-fiction reading and writing, provide authentic assessment, develop cross-curricular lessons, create differentiated career projects for project-based learning, deliver skill-based instruction, and use content as a way to teach reading, writing and speaking. Elementary teachers will also need to find time to teach the Responsive Classroom social curriculum, and middle school teachers will use Developmental Design to improve students’ social-emotional skills, which requires students to practice the seven skills daily. The Consortium’s proposal for helping educators improve instruction and adapt it to individual students’ needs is highly likely to lead to poor results, frustration, inconsistency, and the waste of time and money. It is difficult to imagine how teachers will be able to consistently follow through with all of these programs and requirements. Even if teachers could do all this and still pay attention to individual students, this shotgun approach to reform threatens to destroy the focus on the true goals and impede real progress.

The proposal’s plan for providing access to data and empowering staff to use it to accelerate student progress toward college and career-readiness is moderately strong. A wide variety of data is available, and educators are provided tools and assistance to use it. The Consortium uses the results of wide variety of data measures: NJASK, HSPA, NWEA-MAP, SAT, PSAT, NJEOC exams, AP tests, and Lexile scores. Some test results are available from the New Jersey state reports, and districts can use the state’s NJSMART feature to analyze test data along with student-level demographics. This database also provides data on the individual and collective effectiveness of teachers by linking individual teachers to their students’ results. NJASK and MAP data are given to teachers four times per year and, with the help of the Evaluation and Research Coordinator, is used to make curriculum and instruction decisions. As many as seven other achievement measures are also collected to inform curricular and instructional decisions. One concern is the use of this data to identify optimal learning approaches. With so many programs involved in the activities, it will be extremely difficult to attribute outcomes to individual activities, and without being able to evaluate the efficacy of activities, some may be continued that are ineffective and waste resources while effective programs may be dropped.

The Consortium has a comprehensive system for teacher and principal improvement in place. An evaluation system developed by Marzano for teachers and principals, available on an electronic platform, includes student performance and growth measures. The Marzano models are aligned to the Interstate Assessment and Support Consortium standards and

measure teachers' success in specific essential domains of learning. The model combines classroom observation, feedback with data about student learning, and teacher self-assessment to prepare Personalized Growth Plans that are realistic, focused, and measurable. Feedback is provided to help teachers assess their areas of strength and their needs for improvement. Teachers are observed three to five times per year with immediate feedback and ratings. The ratings identify four levels of performance; beginning, developing, applying, and Innovative. Highly efficient educators may be offered master teacher training to earn National Certification. It is likely that this system will produce significant continuous improvement and result in increased numbers of effective and highly effective educators.

There is a reasonable and promising plan for using data to identify optimal learning approaches for students. NWEA-MAP tests, administered three times per year, provide information about the level of discrete skills a student has mastered, is working on, and will soon be working on, so the teacher can provide appropriate learning approaches. To use information to identify optimal learning approach requires two steps – 1) using information to determine what the student needs and 2), effecting a plan to meet the needs. This plan will be successful to the extent that both steps are accomplished.

The availability of resources that are high-quality is documented, but the separate contributions of program effectiveness and training effectiveness are not measured. The narrative states that teachers will have access to “innovative and high-quality learning resources and technology.” Web-based supplemental STEM curriculum will engage students in project-based learning. Content and assessment will be aligned to 21st Century workplace and college readiness. Teachers will have training in Literacy, STEM, and Constructivist Mathematics and will use regular assessments to find out the degree to which curriculum and instruction are enabling each student to meet Common Core Standards and the NJ Core Curriculum Standards. Training in AVID, Universal Design of Learning, and Differentiated Instruction will enable teachers to recognize best practices and to create new resources. The NJSMART system evaluates the rate of student growth, which not only measures the school's or teacher's effectiveness, but also gives feedback on the effectiveness of processes and tools.

NJSMART, NWEA-MAP, and Social and Emotional growth performance measures provide continuous feedback on student progress and the effectiveness of resources. There is no mention of assessing how effective the teacher trainings are in the programs listed. If the programs and trainings are not successful in achieving the desired goals, it cannot be determined if deficiencies are due to the program or to the teachers' ability to implement it, therefore corrective action may be misdirected and not enable improvement.

School leaders in this Consortium have the appropriate training, policies, tools, data, and resources to structure an effective learning environment. The Marzano model for teacher evaluation provides information to enable principals to improve individual and collective teacher effectiveness, improve school climate, and create summative teacher evaluations. Training enables principals to prepare accurate, effective and consistent observations of teachers. Principals are also trained in ten programs, including programs used by teachers, such as AVID, Universal Design for Learning, etc. Principals use teacher observations plus student data to create individual learning plans for teachers needing improvement. The Marzano model for school leader evaluation checks for effective use of policies, data, tools, and resources to indicate how well leaders are driving student achievement, and assists in planning the leader's professional development. By providing parallel systems of evaluation for teachers and principals, both groups of educators have a common language and protocol for feedback and professional development. These procedures are highly likely to improve principal, teacher, and student performance.

The Consortium has a few elements of a high quality plan to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers, including hard-to-staff positions. A new New Jersey law has eliminated teacher tenure, and allows districts to ensure that all educators are excellent. A teacher with poor performance can be fired after two years. This ensures that all students will be in classes with effective teachers. The Consortium will also reward effective teachers while demanding accountability. Multiple measures of student progress constitute 50% of an educators evaluation score, and teachers are rated. Students with the greatest needs are placed with highly effective teachers. Unfortunately, the proposal plan does not include evaluation of the worth of the many staff development and training opportunities, and deliverables consist only of participation rates. without a high-quality plan complete with timelines and deliverables, this plan is unlikely to be fully or consistently implemented.

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

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Although the Consortium does not have a separate plan for comprehensive policies and infrastructure to provide every student and educator the support and resources to implement personalized learning, the Consortium does provide support and services to schools, for example:

- The Consortium will hire a Project Direct with secretarial support, and the business office will devote 20% of its time to the grant.
- Schools will be provided a blueprint of the grant, plus project outlines.
- A timeline will be developed, so all will know how resources will be spent each year.
- School leadership teams will have summer planning time to prepare for the upcoming year.

Schools have the flexibility to modify school schedules as long as it conforms to labor agreements.

Students will be allowed to earn credit for participating in Option II classes, and students have the opportunity to use experiential and online courses to earn credit by demonstrating mastery. The UDL program will support allowing students to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways. Students with disabilities have been remarkably successful at Deptford where UDL has been used to provide students choices on how to learn in addition to performance-based assessments. An in-class support model allows students with disabilities to have equal access to materials, rigor, and curriculum with highly qualified instructors in the regular education setting, including college prep coursework. English Language Learners at Woodbury can enhance their native language by taking courses to develop formal Spanish language skills. At Deptford, ELL students access additional support through the Sheltered English Instruction program. General and special education teachers are trained to scaffold the content and instruction ELL students receive.

The districts will provide the flexibility and support to allow numerous learning options to be available to all students, including ELL and students with disabilities. This helps ensure that the programs and planning can be implemented and have the best prospects for success. Personalized learning is more likely to succeed with these supports and resources.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district infrastructures support personalized learning to a moderate degree. The Consortium's primary program for providing necessary content, tools, and learning resources in and out of school is AVID. AVID is currently in use in Woodbury and will be starting up in Deptford with assistance from trained and experienced Woodbury AVID teachers. There will also be AVID coordinators and an AVID director in each district. While Woodbury is an AVID demonstration district, Deptford received a 4-year grant to train teachers and implement the Universal Design for Learning program. UDE trains teachers to use a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that can be customized for individual student needs. Other programs in place or that are planned to ensure all students have access to learning resources in and out of school are:

- An after school tutoring and homework center is available to all students and is staffed with teachers and tutors
- Notebook devices will be issued to every student for in-school and out-of-school access to resources
- Each district will get additional technology specialists to support hardware and to support teachers as they use technology to broaden learning resources. Training and web-based videos will also provide instruction for parents to help them support students' use of technology.

The State of New Jersey has a data warehouse, NJSMART, that gives schools access to student data, and will soon be possible for families to export this data in open data format. The Consortium currently provides for interoperability between various computer systems.

The Consortium currently provides moderate technology support for personalized learning, but training teachers to ensure that students get the greatest educational benefit from the personal technology provided by the districts should receive equal or greater support. Without that emphasis, personal technology for students of all ages can be a distraction that impedes personalized learning progress.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium has a very strong plan for a continuous improvement process, including oversight, communication, performance measures, and evaluating effectiveness of investments. An Oversight Committee comprised of the project director, the evaluation and research coordinator, teachers and principals, a board member, parents, and students will meet quarterly during the grant years and continue to meet for at least 2 years beyond the grant period to review progress of the

grant and make suggestions for improvements. The committee will designate one representative from each school to assume responsibility for the seven program areas. The representatives will report progress at each committee meeting based on direct conversation with those implementing the action plan. The school representatives meet regularly with the implementers for assessment and feedback. This plan for continuous improvement ensures that there are responsible parties at every level from the administrative offices to the teachers. It also includes a mechanism for stakeholder feedback via the Oversight Committee.

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

5

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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium has a vary good strategy for ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders. The in-house Evaluation and Research Coordinators will provide timely reports on school data. An Annual Report of Progress will be presented in December of each year, after state test data are available from the previous school year. At the joint meeting of Consortium school boards in December, this report will be presented, questions from the public will be answered, and suggestions for improvement will be heard. The district website will have a link to the "b2degree" webpage which will list projects, a copy of the complete grant, a list of Oversight Committee members, Committee meeting agendas and minutes, contact information, an email address for submitting questions, FAQs, and a digital warehouse for the annual reports. This promotes stakeholder engagement, because stakeholders can ask questions of the data and send in suggestions for improvement.

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

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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Population and subgroup performance measures and targets are provided in the proposal. Explanations are provided for why the measures were selected, how the measures inform the proposal plan, and how the measures will be improved over time if needed. Rationales and method of determining yearly targets are described in the narrative and tables for these measures and subpopulations:

- Percentages of all students and subgroups served by highly effective teachers and principals. Percentages of all students and subgroups served by effective teachers and principals.
- Pearson's Early Screening Inventory for Pre-K -3
- NWEA-MAP grades 1-3
- Piers-Harris 2 – Children's Self-Concept Scale for grades 1 and 3
- Attendance as an indicator of being on track to career and college readiness, grades 4 through 8
- New Jersey State Test (NJASK) median growth percentile increase over time, by LEA
- Piers-Harris 2 for grad 7
- FAFSA applications completed, grades 9-12
- Attendance, grades 9-12
- Number and percentage of students who enroll in AP take exams, and pass exams
- High School Proficiency Assessment, high school
- Piers- Harris 2, grades 9-12

This is a comprehensive collection of assessments that should provide ample information on achievement and other goals. There is the risk, however, of excessive loss of instructional time due to all the assessments.

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

5

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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Evaluation and Research Coordinators in each district will conduct internal evaluations to determine the impact or outcomes of program services on program participants. This evaluation will include Key Process Questions, Key Impact/Outcome Questions, Evaluation Tools and Data Collection, and Analysis. Analysis procedures include descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to establish relationships and interactions between variables. The evaluators will submit program progress reports containing results and recommendations to each project site halfway through each project year and a summative report at the end of each calendar year.

This plan for continuous improvement will most likely keep the implementation of activities on track, because progress will be continually in the spotlight due to the schedule of assessments and data collection. The plan is well-structured with purposeful data collection, analysis, and reporting. The duties and responsibilities are clear for the Research Coordinators, Oversight Committee Members, and teachers and principals responsible for implementing programs. The number and types of measures are appropriate, and many of the ambitious goals for the grant should be achievable.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides a total budget which includes RTT-D funds and funds from other sources that supporting the plan, however the non-RTT-D funding sources are not named or described. RTT-D funds requested total \$19,999,500.62. Funds from other sources total \$6,630,519. The sum of all funds is \$26,630,019.62.

The budget provides a rationale for each program's expenditures, but the overall rationale for priorities is not clear. In some areas it is difficult to evaluate the reasonableness of the budget without knowing the number of children served. For example, how many families will be served by the 17 Parent as Teacher teachers? What is a typical distance for a single home visit? Another example is the Robins Nest Counseling service - How many will be served for the nearly \$3 million cost over 4 years? Without these figures it is difficult to evaluate whether the budget for this program is reasonable or excessive. Another consideration is how the importance of programs to the vision compare to the programs' costs. For example, will the \$580,000 total cost of the Fathers Breakfasts to provide 16 breakfast events and four end-of-year celebrations for some students in grades 6-8 reflect the Core Educational Assurance Areas to a greater degree than the \$486,000 cost for the system to track a student' Personalized Learning Plan or the \$560,000 cost of the Universal Design for Learning, which is a critical training component for teachers to implement personalized student learning? This budget does not ensure that dollars spent are closely related to desired measureable outcomes.

The budget identifies funds that are designated for one-time investments and those to be used for ongoing operational costs. Strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the programs are listed by project. Some of these strategies involve uncertain sources of funds, such as:

- Parents as Teachers; seek new grant funding and/or scale back program
- All-day Pre-school; State has a plan, but no secure funding to date. If funding is not available, scale back services to select groups
- "Robins Nest" counseling services; seek new grant sources
- Expand Option II; program may replace less valuable programs in the districts
- AVID; training costs need to be incorporated into district budgets
- NAACP club; showcase trips need outside funding from local donors
- Notebook purchase; replace textbook budget with budget for cycling tablets
- College entrance exam preparation; may continue if districts fund it
- College "Boot Camp" for seniors; contributions from school, family or other donors
- Penn Literacy; will not continue unless other funding is found
- Master Teacher program; sponsor needed to provide incentives for high-scorers
- National Board Certification; seek other avenues to offset certification cost
- Degree Density Program; seek new funding source
- Access to College Coursework; seek new grant or private donor funding
- Data Support Activities; Evaluation and Research Coordinator positions eliminated

Some of these programs at risk of losing funding are very important to the proposal and the continuation of the work started, according to various statements in the narrative, such as All-day-Pre-school, Parents as Teachers, AVID, notebook devices, and access to college coursework. The Evaluation and Research position needs to continue in order to preserve the capacity to effectively use data to evaluate programs and make sound decisions. One full time position, however, may be able to serve both districts.

Of concern is the RTT-D funding of programs, costing millions of dollars, that have a poor chance of continuing beyond the four year grant period due to uncertain future funding. Of the 21 programs not listed above, funding for the rest will be absorbed by the districts or, in the case of training programs, will be sustained by train-the-trainer plans. It is unlikely that the districts will be able to fund all of the programs designated for district budgets, because many small amounts add up to a large amount, and some are likely to be cut. Train-the-trainer plans are risky for sustainability, because the degree of staff turnover in the future is difficult to predict, and the trainers may leave. This is another consideration for evaluating whether the number of separate programs included in this application is excessive and unfocused.

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

The sustainability of programs is described in the proposal narrative, as is a plan to collect data for two years beyond the grant period. However much of the sustainability depends on scaling back programs, hoping for promised state funding for expanding pre-school, substituting notebook mobile device expenses for textbook purchases, reducing personnel expenses, and applying for additional grants. There is no specific plan included in the application for how decisions will be made for scaling back or deleting programs that cannot be funded. Initial grant planning should have determined what levels of change in outcomes constitutes success in each program or project. This, as mentioned earlier, requires methods for estimating the portion of an outcome is attributable to each program. Prioritization of programs by importance to the vision is also a necessary component of a high quality plan for sustainability, however these two considerations are not included in the proposal.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The partnership plan for Competitive Preference is brief and incomplete when judged by the Competitive Preference criteria. The Competitive Preference plan creates a partnership with the Hispanic Center of South Jersey's Family Success Center to provide additional student and family supports to Consortium students by addressing social, emotional, and behavioral needs of Hispanic students, a high-needs subgroup. The Consortium agrees to provide staff members to teach classes, make presentations, and promote the Center to students and their families. The Center agrees to provide ten core services: access to health services, development of family success plans, economic self-sufficiency program, information and referral services, Life Skills training, housing-related services, parent education, parent-child activities, advocacy, and home visits. The Center also offers eight expanded services depending on community needs.

The population-level desired results are:

- Improved performance by Pre-K and Kindergarten students on the ESI-R
- 80% of K-3, 4-6, and 8-12 students will increase report-card grades
- Reduce percentage of chronically absent students by 4 percentage points in four years
- 80% of K-e, 4-6, and 8-12 students will increase homework and summer assignment completion
- 80% of grades 3, 7, and 11 students will improve on self-concept measure (Piers-Harris) over prior measurements
- Increase the rate of FAFSA completion by graduating students by 5 percentage points per year

The desired results are specific and measurable, but it is not clear which specific Center programs are linked to these measures. Also unclear is whether these desired results are for all participants in the Consortium or all Consortium participants served by the partnership.

The proposal will track student participation rates by using rosters sign-in sheets at the center. The Consortium will track the population-desired results listed above to determine resources to allocate to areas in need. Participation data and satisfaction surveys will be used to make improvements over time. This will be a fully scaled project from the beginning, because all Consortium students are invited to participate in Center activities.

The narrative does not specifically state how the partnership will build staff capacity. It only states that "The Partnership would build capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with another support mechanism to help students and their families access needed services." Consortium staff may be more effective teachers if students served by the center have better social-emotional supports, improve attendance, and improve grades.

This partnership plan has an appropriate purpose, but the plan is insufficient to determine that this plan is likely to be successful and enduring.

## Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The Consortium comprised of the Woodbury City and Deptford Township School Districts has met the requirements for Absolute Priority 1. It has a record of success with the core educational assurance areas with its use of New Jersey State Standards and the Common Core Standards to prepare students to be college and career ready. To carry this work forward, the Consortium will institute more supports to ensure its graduates are ready for the next step. The districts will build on the data systems provided by the State to create in-house data systems to store, analyze, report and communicate student data and results. An evaluation system for teachers and principals includes multiple measures of student achievement and includes personalized professional development plans in addition to training programs for each of the many programs it plans to incorporate to improve students' academic and social-emotional capabilities. One district in the Consortium has a history of turning around schools in need of improvement.

To build on these core educational assurance areas, the Consortium's b2degree proposal includes training in programs that enable educators to create and monitor personalized learning plans for students which will permit them to proceed at a pace and in learning modalities that will allow them them to learn deeply and meet their personal goals. These goals are aligned with career and college-readiness standards, and numerous supports are proposed to support students before and after they transition to post-secondary education. Programs are proposed to accelerate student progress and close achievement gaps between groups, including a variety of programs to support students' social-emotional growth. The Consortium's proposal includes, in addition to substantial personalized and group staff development opportunities, the ability to select and retain the most effective educators and remove, with the support of State law, those who are ineffective.

The proposed birth-to-degree plan includes a broad spectrum of programs designed to ensure student progress, from the support of parents of infants and toddlers and an all-day preschool program to supporting students in their first year of college. The plans are coherent and comprehensive – the challenge to the Consortium will be managing the plethora of programs proposed to ensure their successful implementation and continuation.

Total	210	148
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0716NJ-3 for Woodbury City Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The vision outlined by the consortium is quite comprehensive, involving many programs and initiatives geared towards improving student success and achievement from birth to beyond high school graduation (b2degree). The consortium strives to provide activities that serve students throughout three phases of their lives:

1. From birth to school age by expanding the existing preschool program and adding home-based services
2. From school age to high school graduation by providing all students with rigorous and personalized academic,

social/emotional, and career focused programming through highly effective educators and community partnerships and resources.

3. From graduation to career by reaching out to alumni to stay connected and supported in their post-secondary life.

The applicant does builds on the four core assurances. A long list of services and programs were discussed in the vision, several were new, but most have already been implemented, yet require funding for continuation or expansion. Many of the programs described would provide personalized student support and were grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. Some of the described initiatives include an plan to send certified educators into the homes of identified families of preschoolers to support early education and child development, a rigorous educator evaluation and feedback system, implementation of Common Core standards, the use of student data and assessment results to inform instruction, increased emphasis on social and emotional development of students, the expansion of personalized programming for students, and accelerating student achievement through programs that support academic rigor.

In terms of comprehensiveness, coherence, and credibility, this vision is definitely comprehensive. It is far-reaching and ambitious. However, it is initiative heavy and appears to be more of a medley of many different approaches, rather than a coherent focus on implementing research-based best practices. This reduces coherence and credibility. For example, the plan to bring teachers into the homes of young children (Parents as Teachers) is a three million dollar project alone. However, no background information was provided anywhere in the application documenting the need (data showing that students entering school are not ready). In addition, no background research or data from similar programs taking place in other communities was provided to convince that this program would make a positive difference for student achievement long-term or in terms of short-term school readiness.

In summary, this is a far-reaching vision with a very large number and wide variety of initiatives presented. While many of these activities are likely to deepen student learning and increase personalized support, not knowing whether each of these initiatives are grounded in research and evidence-based somewhat reduces the credibility and coherence of this vision.

I scored this criterion at the high end of the medium range.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Overall the Consortium presented an ambitious, high-quality implementation plan involving all of the Consortium's schools. The proposed plan is strategic and comprehensive in supporting community-wide, district-wide, and school-level implementation of the many elements of the vision.

- The Consortium is made up of two school districts, both relatively small in size with approximately 1500 students in one district and 4350 in the other.
- The low-income percentage for the first school district is 59.2%. It is 37.9% for the second district. This makes the low-income percentage for the Consortium as a whole 43.5%, which meets the eligibility requirements.
- A list of the participating schools and educators, as well as economic demographic information for each school's student population was presented. However, this information begins in a different section of the application than was noted.
- The Consortium sees this proposal as encompassing the "... whole community of learners through the entirety of their academic career: from birth to degree." Because this proposal is striving for "whole school & community reform" some general demographic information about the community population and the community workplace should have been included. Lack of this information made it difficult to assess the need for the programs for the very young children and the post-graduates.
- The strengths of this proposal's approach to implementation include the comprehensiveness and inclusiveness of the plan, a thoughtful and sustainable professional development program, and the plan's intention to serve all students.

I have scored this criterion at the lower end of the high range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant presented a well-articulated plan that outlined 34 separate initiatives, plus management and data support, under the themes of supporting parents as teachers, expanding preschool opportunities, promoting social and emotional health, expanding personalized programming for students, accelerating programs that support academic rigor, providing staff development opportunities, and supporting recent graduates and college success. The majority of these initiatives appear to already be in place and the goal is expansion of programs and activities. A logic model is employed that details inputs, program areas/activity categories, outputs, and both short and long-term outcomes. It is proposed that a combination of all the aforementioned components will lead to the goals of personalized learning environments and improved achievement for all students.

This plan is ambitious. However, the achievability of the plan in terms of improving student learning, promoting social and emotional health, and reducing achievement gaps is not clear. A concern is "initiative overload" in particular for teachers and the lack of evidence provided regarding the research or data-base for some of these initiatives.

I have scored this criterion at the top of the medium range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium set achievable annual goals for overall student performance. The methodology for determining growth goals was explained and the Consortium's goals slightly exceeded the ESEA target goals set by State. Performance on summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, and graduation rates were presented. College enrollment rates and postsecondary degree attainment rates are not yet available, but will be collected beginning 2012-13, per the proposal.

However, this part of the application was unclear in several areas. For example, there was a lack of clarity in regards to the Applicant taking the grade-level testing methodology for NAEP and applying it to the NJASK (although that test actually covers grades 3-8). In the application, it was stated that "In determining progress in the areas of performance on summative assessments (a) and decreased achievement gaps (b), The Consortium has followed suit with the state and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), choosing to assess in grades 4 and 8..." However, the use of NJASK, which is a standardized exam given to all students in grades 3-8, was not discussed. Then, at the top of the table for the LEA-wide goals for performance on summative assessments it indicated that they were using NJASK results (not NAEP). Therefore, although NJASK was not discussed, it appeared that the Consortium was using NJASK assessment results for setting the growth goals, but only in grades 4 and 8. This should have been more clearly explained and information on the NJASK should have been provided.

In addition, although the methodology for determining the growth goals and the post grant achievement gaps were explained and aligned with the state's method, it is concerning that in some cases a 15 to 20 point achievement gap still exists in 2016-2017 between Black and White students in one of the districts. For example, the Black/White achievement gap for one of the district's fourth grade students in math is projected at 21.9 in 2016-2017. Arguably, this is a significant reduction in the gap, which is currently at 43.9. However, the source of this and other very large gaps in subgroup achievement on NJASK were never really discussed or pinpointed as areas requiring immediate and specific intervention. Under the conditions of this grant, more ambitious goals should have been set for the subgroups experiencing these very significant achievement gaps.

I scored this criterion in the medium range.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant did not provide a clear or consistent track record of success in advancing student learning in the past four years. Although some record of success was indicated at certain grade levels and for certain groups, the presentation of data in this section did not demonstrate an overall four-year record of improved achievement. The narrative was not consistent in presentation and many of the graphs were not labeled well, making this section difficult to follow. In addition, there was a great deal of assessment data presented from one of the districts, but almost no data from the larger school district in the Consortium (NJASK and HSPA assessment results were only presented for one district in the Consortium). This made it very

difficult to determine the Consortium's record of success as a whole.

- The graphs presenting the assessment data should have been labeled more clearly with the school district's name, the exact grade levels represented, and the number of students. For example, it was unclear if the very first elementary graph presented (NJASK (LAL) Proficiency Performance by Race and Class) represented only fourth grade (to be consistent with the growth goals), or represented all the elementary grades tested (grades 3-6). Another example of an unclear graph is the NJASK Grade 8 Economic Status Language Arts Literacy graph, which says it measures LAL on the top, but math on the bottom.
- NJASK (LAL) elementary data for (presented for only one district in the Consortium) broken down by race and class indicated a decline in every subgroup's scores since 2006. There was a drop in economically disadvantaged Black students scores from 65.1% to 27.1% over the four-year period.
- NJASK (LAL) junior high data (presented for only one district in the Consortium) broken down by race and class indicated a drop in every subgroup since 2006. Black economically disadvantaged students dropped from 51.6% in 2006 to 37.9% in 2011.
- Senior high student scores (presented for only one district in the Consortium) on the HSPA proficiency performance by race and class did indicate a positive trend and showed increases for all subgroups.
- Eight grade NJASK assessments broken down by subgroups indicated increases in scores, as did the cohort group of ninth graders in 2011 (the class of 2015).
- For the district in the Consortium that presented very little data, the results of a grant called "INCLUDE" were discussed. The results indicated that students in the INCLUDE classrooms showed higher passing percentages than students not in INCLUDE classrooms. However, no explanation of the INCLUDE program was provided, so it was unclear what supports this program offered to students.
- It was stated earlier in this application that both districts in the Consortium have a commitment to using NWEA; however, no NWEA results were presented.
- Due to a change in the way the state calculates graduation rates, accurate data can only be provided since 2011. Both the districts in the Consortium had graduation rates slightly lower than the state's rate of 83.2 in 2011. The 2012 rates have not yet been released. However, the proposal states that preliminary calculations indicate the both districts have made improvements in their graduation rates since 2011.
- College attendance rates have risen since 2010 in both districts. In the spring of 2012, one of the districts in the Consortium received a CollegeBoard's Inspiration Award in recognition of their work in this area, including creating a college-go culture and increased AP course participation and pass rates.
- In one district in the Consortium, two out of nine schools in the last four years were identified as low-performing based on district goals. Several strategies were implemented to turn around these schools and it was reported that steady gains have been made. However, no assessment data was provided to document these improvements.
- The other district in the Consortium has also made changes to turn around its low achieving schools, including repositioning/replacing staff and implemented programs, such as Algebra 1 for all eighth grade students. The eighth grade student performance increases for this district were documented earlier in this section.
- The LEA demonstrated evidence that student performance data is being made available students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

I have scored this criterion in the low end of the medium range.

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

The Applicant demonstrated that a high level of transparency in processes, practices, and investments are in place in one of the districts in the Consortium. The other district in the Consortium does post information, but it is more limited.

- The district showing high transparency uses a software program, which facilitates patron access to board actions, including detailed attachments of board documents, salary information, and full expenditure reports.
- The other district does post board agendas and minutes on the website, as well as salary and some non-

personnel expenditures.

- Both district posts student assessment data, curricular reports, and information regarding objectives.
- The district provides and will continue to provide regular updates to the community regarding their progress toward the PBS project and other initiatives.

Due to the high level of transparency that exists in one district and a somewhat high level of transparency in the other district in the Consortium, I have scored this criterion at the low end of the high range.

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

The Consortium demonstrated evidence that successful conditions and sufficient autonomy exist under the State's legal, statutory, and regulatory requirement to implement the vision in the proposal.

- Relevant New Jersey Education Code (Option II) was provided, which documented sufficient local autonomy and conditions.
- The State is a RttT3 funding recipient and is committed to creating personalized learning environments for all students, as evident through several state-wide initiatives that were discussed.
- The State has implemented a comprehensive system to reward effective, high-quality teachers and this will assist the Consortium in reaching its goal of providing high-need students with increased access to highly effective teachers and leaders.

I have scored this criterion at the top of the high range.

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

The Consortium presented strong evidence that all stakeholder groups were engaged in the proposal development process and there is a great deal of support for the project.

- Both districts engaged teachers, parents, administrators, students and community members in the development of the plan.
- The plan evolved and was revised based on discussion and feedback between and among various stakeholders.
- A large group meeting regarding the proposal was held in October, which included members from all stakeholders groups and local elected officials.
- The Boards of Education of both districts strongly support the proposal.
- The Presidents of the local teachers' associations' have signed off on the documents.
- Memorandums of Understand for the purposes of conducting the grant activities are included.
- Many (50) letters of support for the proposal are included from parents, students, teachers, administrators, community members, business and community groups and collaborative project partners.

This criterion is scored at the top of the high range.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant presented a logical needs and gaps analysis, complete with specific solution strategies designed to enhance implementation of personalized learning environments.

- The gap analysis was focused on areas identified as needed conditions for reform. Many tasks, programs, and/or approaches were outlined. The goals, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties were also described.
- While a math intervention was discussed for the junior high (training in constructivist approaches that have been

successful in 8th grade), a specific intervention was not identified to address the large achievement gaps in the elementary schools involving Black economically-disadvantaged students. It is possible that increased training in Differentiated Instruction, "Universal Design for Learning," and/or "Responsive Classroom and Developmental Design," will assist with reducing these achievement gaps, but these programs were not discussed in this light. The impact of this missing information slightly reduced the achievability of the plan.

I have scored this criterion at the bottom of the high range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan for learning is ambitious, but I question its achievability. The plan does encourage all students to achieve high school graduation and college/career readiness standards. This proposal is very strong in the college/career readiness component, especially through the AVID program, which had been shown to be effective and supports a variety of individual student needs. However, due to the overwhelming number of initiatives proposed, many of them overlapping, the credibility and practicality of the plan is greatly reduced.</p> <p>Strengths include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The AVID program will be expanded K-12 and will help students understand that what they are learning is key to their future success. The AVID program had several components. Some of these include involving students in a strong group of peers and adults focused on academic achievement and social/emotional health, a career exploratory program at all grades, and career classes once per week for students in 7th through 12th grade that help students connect careers with their interests and helps prepare them for the college experience. Critical skills such as goal-setting, teamwork, oral and written communication, perseverance, organization, inquiry, reading to learn, and problem-solving are emphasized in the AVID program.</li> <li>Personalized learning credits (through New Jersey's Option II) will be offered for service learning experiences and this will encourage students to volunteer and learn more about careers</li> <li>The role of the home is supported in a variety of ways, including providing parenting classes and expanding preschool to a full-day program.</li> <li>The Consortium will offer after-school centers for students to complete work and receive tutoring. Some students will be identified through assessments and invited to access these opportunities.</li> <li>Summer programs will provide opportunities for students to receive remediation and also to advance to more rigorous programs.</li> <li>Data profiling of students will allow for personalized recommendations.</li> <li>Training will be given to students regarding the tools and resources provided to them.</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no evidence presented that some of the initiatives, for example, Developmental Designs at the Middle Schools, will help ensure that students have deep learning experiences.</li> <li>There appear to be multiple cases of overlapping services and programs due to the very large number of initiatives being implemented.</li> <li>It was not explained how it was determined that the digital content that has been adopted in social studies, and will be adopted in other areas, is high quality.</li> <li>The learning plan is not focused on implementing only research-based best practices, but appears to be a combination of both experimental and proven practices.</li> </ul> <p>I have scored this criterion in the medium range.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant presents a comprehensive plan for supporting learners from birth through college. The plan includes many approaches and programs for implementation of personalized learning strategies for all participating students, encouraging them to pursue a rigorous course of study towards graduation and college and career readiness. Overall, this is a high-quality plan for teaching and leading, involving a great deal of training for both teachers and leaders. However, a concern about this proposal is the huge number of initiatives involved, which may results in lack of focus and overload, in particular for teachers and principals who are being trained on and implementing so many different programs.

- Interdisciplinary School Site teams will be created at each school to share in the responsibility of grant/project implementation.
- Participating educators will engage in training regarding various grant components and methods of creating personalized learning environments designed to meet students academic and social-emotional needs (for example, Developmental Designs at the middle schools and Responsive Classrooms at the elementary level).
- Electronic tools for managing and analyzing student data have been implemented and will be expanded to include more resources for teachers, students, and parents. The Consortium will use data to regularly measure student progress towards meeting graduation and college/career ready standards.
- New research-based systems of performance evaluations for teachers, based on the work of Marzano and aligned with InTASC, have been adopted by both districts. These systems provide frequent feedback on effectiveness including personalized recommendations for professional development, ongoing supports and interventions as needed.
- The AVID and Naviance systems include tools designed to help educators analyze individual student and/or group data to inform and plan instruction. Teachers will also use NWEA MAP results to plan differentiated instruction.
- Teachers will have access to innovative and high-quality technological resources, such as SmartBoards and document cameras. Students will be provided with electronic tablets for a variety of educational purposes.
- Ongoing training, systems, and practices to continuously move the Consortium towards its goals are included in the plan. Targeted professional development is also a component of the new teacher evaluation system. The Consortium expects to grow the number of teachers earning National Certification. The list of trainings that principals are to receive is very ambitious, but achievability may be difficult, especially considering the many demands of their positions. These trainings includes: AVID, NJNCAG, Marzano Observer Calibration, Responsive Classrooms, Developmental Design, Universal Design for Learning, Literacy TA, Penn Literacy, NWEA MAP Testing analysis and training on use of NJSMART.
- Using data from the new teacher evaluation system, there is a plan for increasing the number of high-need students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective educators.

I have scored this criterion in the high range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant has policies, rules, and practices that facilitate personalized learning:

- The grant will provide for the addition of a Project Director.
- The business office will provide specialized attention to grant management.
- Individual school leadership teams will be provided with the “blueprint” of the proposal and a guiding timeline for consortium-wide implementation.
- School leadership teams will have some flexibility to develop their own school level plans based on their individual school needs, within the guidelines of the overall Consortium plan, budget, and timeline.
- Both districts are active participants in the Option II program, which allows students to earn credits through non-traditional methods and extended learning opportunities. One of the districts has an Option II coordinator and this position will

be extended to the other district, allowing stronger coordination and expansion of the program.

- Students will be given multiple opportunities and ways to demonstrate mastery of content through Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction.
- The Consortium has demonstrated a commitment to making learning resources, programs, and services fully accessible to all students, including those with disabilities or English Learners.

I have scored this criterion at the top of the high range.

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

The Applicant has a high-quality, ambitious plan for project implementation through the development of infrastructure that supports personalized learning.

- Both districts in the Consortium are members of the New Jersey Network for Closing the Achievement Gap (NJNCAG), which provides support and assists member districts in building capacity to close achievement gaps.
- Through the AVID program and UDL model, all students will be provided with personalized support and services moving them towards graduation and college/career readiness.
- The Consortium has a plan to support equitable use of learning resources, regardless of income, both in and out of school. This includes the purchase of mobile tablet devices to be provided to students, increased after-school tutoring and homework completion opportunities for students, and securing highly affordable home Internet pricing for qualifying families through a local provider.
- A team of technology specialists will provide technical support for students, educators, and families.
- The State of New Jersey has creating a system called NJSMART, which provides students, parents, and educators with access to student and school information such as group and individual assessment results.
- The districts in the Consortium and their schools have interoperable data systems.

I have scored this criterion at the top of the high range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

There is a feasible and clear strategic plan for monitoring progress towards project goals. The plan includes a system of measuring, revising, and then publicizing information on the quality of investments funding by RTT-D. This is an ambitious and achievable plan for continuous improvement.

- The implementation of the project will be lead by a Project Director, who will have the support of an Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee will consist of members from all stakeholder groups and will meet regularly.
- The Oversight Committee will be formally responsible for monitoring effectiveness of the implementation of strategies. The formal tracking of student progress towards achievement measures will be conducted by the Evaluation and Research Coordinators and reported out.
- The system includes a formal feedback/evaluation/improvement loop.
- Reports on progress measures and information on the quality of investments will be shared regularly with all stakeholders in a variety of formats.

This criterion is scored at the top of the high range.

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

Effective and timely strategies are presented for the ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. This is a high-quality and achievable plan for ongoing communication and engagement.

- Both districts will provide additional methods of communicating progress towards goals, including regular presentation of progress at public School Board meetings and a specialized site on the districts' websites. The site will include a email address for individuals to submit feedback or ask questions.
- An executive summary of the annual progress report will be provided digitally to all families and key stakeholders.
- At least one annual, advertised, open meeting will be held and all stakeholders invited to attend to hear about and provide feedback on the project's progress.

I have scored this criterion at the top of the high range.

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

5

5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Ambitious yet achievable and sound performance measures are proposed.

- Projected changes in overall enrollment and for subgroups were determined after looking at the last five years of trend data.
- All performance measures are appropriate and meet the RTT-D requirements including the number of measures and the setting of annual performance targets for students overall and for specific student subgroups. Separate and appropriate measures were selected for different age or developmental groups of students. Career-readiness indicators are included.
- A strong rationale for selecting each performance measure is provided. Both norm-referenced and personalized academic growth assessments are used. For example, at the elementary level, NJASK results and percentage of student meeting NWEA target growth goals are employed. Emotional/social growth indicators, like the Piers-Harris 2, are also used where appropriate.
- The measures selected will provide rigorous, timely, and formative information regarding implementation success or areas of concern.
- The proposal explains how measures will be reviewed and improved over time if found to be insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

I have scored this criterion at the top of the high range.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The plans to evaluate the effectiveness of investments were sound and appropriate. These evaluation plans included a thorough examination of implementation and effectiveness directed by an internally employed Evaluation and Research Coordinator, who will report periodic progress. Strategic and data-driven decision making strategies will be used for program modification and improvement.

- An evaluation management plan was presented that outlined key process questions, key impact/outcome evaluation questions, evaluation tools/data collection, analysis, data-based modification, and reporting of results/progress.
- The evaluation management plan included both quantitative and qualitative measures and multiple data collection methods, for example, assessment analysis, student trend data, interviews with pertinent stakeholders, and opinion surveys of students, staff, parents, and stakeholder groups.

This criterion was scored in the high range.

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

	Available	Score

(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposed budget identifies supporting funds, provides all required information, is sufficient to support the project, and provides a rationale for priorities. However, the efficient use of funding is questionable in some areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The budget fully encompasses the project's main goal areas, which include: Supporting parents as teachers, providing preschool opportunities, promoting social and emotional health, expanding existing personalized programming for students, accelerating programs that support academic rigor, providing staff development opportunities, supporting recent graduates and college success, providing program oversight and support.</li> <li>· Investments for each of the project areas are broken down, specifically explained, and prioritized. In sum, these investments will provide sufficient support to the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal.</li> <li>· All supporting budget documentation and tables were provided as required.</li> <li>· All resources that will support the project, both one-time and long-term, were described, including RttT-D funds, internal funds, and external sources of funding including local or federal government and non-profit organizations.</li> <li>· The rationale for investments is not clear in some areas and funding seems excessive for several initiatives. For example, the "Father's Breakfast" program at the elementary schools is \$290,340. This seems excessive for a program of this nature. Another example is the "Parents as Teachers" program, which is \$3,159,617. However, this program has not been shown in this application to be research-based.</li> </ul> <p>I have scored the application in the medium range for this criterion.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Consortium has a plan for long-term sustainability of some, but not all of the project's initiatives after the grant period. Many of the programs are self-sustaining or require only short-term expenditures. However, several of the larger programs will require outside funding after the RttT-D period ends and while it is hoped that grants can be obtained at that time, no specific grant sources or opportunities were provided as potential resources. This leads to uncertainty regarding long-term sustainability of the project's goals after the grant period ends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Many activities have been designed as one-time or short-term expenses, for example, teacher training in several initiatives. There is a plan to "train the trainers" in order to have teacher in-house experts for many of the initiatives in order to provide follow-up support and maintenance of programs. However, it was not explained what would happen if in-house teacher experts left or how new teachers would be provided with professional development to fill this role.</li> <li>· It is hoped that some personnel positions will not be needed after the grant period and will be phased out, but this is an unknown at this point.</li> <li>· To increase sustainability, the Consortium intends to draw on and enhance outside resources, such as state and federal funding, and collaboration with the business community and other outside partners.</li> <li>· For many of the smaller projects, like the Father's Breakfast and the Algebra 1 program, the districts intend to absorb these costs into their local districts' budgets in the years after the grant. However, these two projects alone will represent a substantial new cost for the district.</li> <li>· The full-day preschool programs will need outside support after the grant period. This is an area that has received attention at the state level and it is hoped that the state will support this program through funding after the grant period.</li> <li>· The Parents as Teacher initiative will also need outside support after the grant period. It is hoped that positive results will be obtained from this program leading to the securing of grants to continue the program.</li> <li>· The Degree Destiny Center and the summer college course opportunities are also ones that will need outside funding. Again, it is hoped that grants will be secured to continue these programs.</li> </ul> <p>The application scored in the medium range for this criterion.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
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Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Applicant presented a competitive preference priority that promotes students' academic success, social/emotional health, and college/career readiness through a community partnership with the Hispanic Center of South New Jersey's Family Success Center (FSC). This sustainable partnership provides strong academic, social, and emotional support for students. The FSC, as a social service provider, also provides resources and programs for the entire family. However, many of the services provided in this competitive preference priority are overlapping with services provided through other initiatives in the proposal. In addition, more detail was needed in some areas to increase credibility of the competitive preference priority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· A description of the FSC programs and services are provided. Some of these include after-school tutoring, summer enrichment programs, health services, mental health services, and parenting programs. The mission of the FSC is to provide the community with a broad range of culturally relevant social services and advocacy programs that promote and encourage empowerment and self-sufficiency.</li> <li>· Overlapping programs were found. Some of these including after-school tutoring, mental health support, parenting programs, and various academic and social supports for students.</li> <li>· Ten appropriate population-level desired results for participating students were provided that aligned with the Consortium's broader proposal of providing personalized learning environments and personalized supports for students. These included academic, social, and emotional indicators.</li> <li>· A description of how the data will be tracked and used to target resources in order to improve results for students and build capacity over time was included. However, some of the methods for documenting program effectiveness, for example, sign-in sheets, show only participation, not effectiveness.</li> <li>· Current demographic data about the community was never presented. It was unclear what percent of students or families might use these services.</li> </ul> <p>This criterion received a score at the top of the medium range.</p>		

### Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Creating personalized learning environments is a top priority of this proposal. The Consortium comprehensively addressed how it will build on the core educational assurances.

- The Consortium has already begun the implementation of many initiatives designed to personalize learning, promote college and career readiness, provide ongoing professional development for educators, and increase the effectiveness of teachers. This proposal continues the districts' efforts towards turning around low-achieving schools and improving student learning through a variety of programs and practices. Through the RtT-D grant, the Consortium proposes to implement or expand programs in the project's main goals areas, which include: Supporting parents as teachers, providing preschool opportunities, promoting social and emotional health, expanding existing personalized programming for students, accelerating programs that support academic rigor, providing staff development opportunities, and supporting recent graduates and college success. Each of these goal areas and the initiatives contained within support the overriding objective of creating personalized learning environments for students.

The Consortium has met the Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	163
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