



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0500MA-1 for Worcester Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Worcester Public Schools has set an ambitious, three tiered vision for accelerating students achievement, deepening students learning and increasing equity through the Race to the Top grant funds. The three components: develop high quality instructional leadership in all positions; align resources to provide every students a standards based instruction; and create aligned partnerships to increase momentum were further detailed in this section are areas that the district has identified through analysis of data and to compensate for ongoing and unfortunate budget cuts.

Their first priority is to develop a "human capital development system." This would include a comprehensive evaluation system matched with targeted professional development. The applicant will specifically target increasing teachers effectiveness with two subpopulations: English Learners and students receiving special education services. The system will provide mentors for building administrators along with targeted professional development. The Human Resource Department will develop an online catalog of best practices modules that all teachers can access to improve their instructional practice. Through a partnership with Clark University, their K through 3 teachers will receive intensive professional development to ensure early and ongoing success for the youngest students. Approximately two third of the teaching corps grades K-3 will be trained over the life of the grant. A survey of professional development needs will be conducted and an evaluator hired.

The applicant also will build out interoperability across systems as presently there is no communication between student data, human resources and professional development.

The second priority is upgrading and purchasing sufficient technology so that all students have access to 21st century technology including graphing calculators. They intend to build the technology and wireless infrastructure, long neglected due to budget cuts and to provide specific professional development to teachers around the new technologies.

The third priority creates opportunities for family engagement through complimentary learning opportunities. Adult Basic Education courses, citizenship and integration classes, mental health counseling, wellness screenings, literacy activities for families, mentorship and internship opportunities and recreational opportunities all offered in the nine persistently lowest achieving district schools.

The applicant makes reference to the District Project Templates in the appendices. The Appendices table of contents is mislabeled resulting in the page numbers not matching the index but all information was locatable.

There are four Project Templates in the Appendices though in this section of the application, the vision outlines only three initiatives. The four templates list the following projects: the Human Capital Development System, Kindergarten through third grade initiative, Technology Infrastructure and Aligning Resources.

In reviewing the District Project Templates for the kindergarten through third grade, initiative, the applicant states that Clark University is has extensive experience in providing training for urban educators and yet the entire first year of the grant (8 months) is considered a planning period. This seems like unnecessary planning time considering the entity is experienced in the services it is contracted to provide.

The applicant has identified some important goals, but has not clearly explained how the realization of their goals will result in the 1. accelerating student achievement, 2. deepening student learning, and 3. increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. The human capital development system is designed to adequately assess teachers through an evaluation tool and provide targeted professional development to increase their effectiveness and maximize student growth. It also includes focusing professional development to grades K-3 teachers on literacy. The technology initiative provides 21st century tools to students and teachers along with appropriate professional development. The applicant does not address how these tools can lead to the grant requirements listed above. Creating opportunities for family engagement is the third goal and although this is an important goal in itself, it is

not linked to the three grant requirements listed above.

The requirements of this Race to the Top grant would seem to be the next steps the applicant would pursue after putting the supports and infrastructure in place that they have outlined in their proposal. The applicant has identified important goals but not goals that will directly impact the three Race to the Top goals. As such, this section is rated low.

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

10

9

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that all students will benefit from and participate in this grant. The district is ethnically diverse. As such it has identified a disproportionate number of students represented in dropout rates, graduation rates, AP course enrollments and SAT participation. The applicant referenced the Appendix for participating schools but the information was not found on the page number listed in the Appendix table of contents. The applicant meets the participating student requirements as outlines in this notice for low income families, high need students, participating educators and schools. The applicant received a high point rating minus one point accounting for the disorganized appendices.

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

10

0

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant references a number of initiatives in this section but does not clearly connect them to the vision of this Race to the Top Grant Proposal. The applicant also cites data to support their initiatives, but again the data is not clearly connected to the project outcomes and goals.

The applicant cites their Worcester Improvement Strategy as an example of how the district uses data to drive accelerated students achievement. But there is no table or document outlining what this Worcester Improvement Strategy consists of or how data was used in this initiative.

The applicant references the Schools District Redesign Team (LEAP) having engaged in root cause analysis and created the Worcester Improvement Framework that is aligned to the Worcester Compact. This is then referred to and explained later in this section. The Framework is outlined here and the applicant indicates the Framework informed the Race to the Top proposal, but there does not seem to be a clear match between the two.

Lastly, the applicant cites ExEI, an Executive Leadership Program for Educators from Harvard and again there is no linkage between this program and the Race to the Top vision.

The Worcester Compact states that "100 percent of students will be guaranteed a rigorous core curriculum resulting in measurable student learning by 2013." if the intention of the Race to the Top vision is to meet this goal, the included timelines will not result in this goal being realized by at least 2015.

Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness were also described here as a tool for district and school self assessment though again there is no description of what it is or how it was used for this assessment. It is referenced in the appendices and yet the recommendations it purports are not reflected in the applicant's Race to the Top vision, so again no connection between these initiatives was provided in this section.

This section does not address the requirements sufficiently, does not build a clear and cohesive logic reform model. The applicant does not receive any points in this section due to the inability of the applicant to clearly state their intent.

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

10

2

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

This section (A)(4) contained tables of data without any accompanying narrative. Increasing proficient or above scores for all students and sub populations in the areas of English language Arts, mathematics, Science and technology were provided as well as median growth percentiles for English and math overall. The measures were not identified from which this data will be collected.

A table is presented with "CPI" points by performance indicator on the "MCAS" to apparently illustrate how gaps will be reduced between subgroups. The table is not labeled however, and the numbers do not appear to be gaps, as they get larger each year of the grant. The table does not clearly show how the gaps will be decreased over the life of the grant.

The high school graduation rate table is confusing in that the expected improvement in graduation rates by subgroup increases by 5 percentage points every two years rather than incremental increases by year. There is no explanation provide why this unconventional approach is taken.

College enrollment rate data is not presently collected by the district. Because this is required in this section, the applicant included student self reported college intentions.

The requirements in this section were only partially addressed by the applicant in (b), (c) and (d). No narrative was included by the applicant to facilitate understanding of the tables. For these reasons this section was scored in the low range of quality.

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	2
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant lists examples of raising students achievement but does not indicate the years when these accomplishments were made nor the specific numbers achieved, I.E. double digit gains in Grad 3 reading. More specific data is included to illustrate improvement in the four year graduation rate and a decline in the drop out rate. The data cited, while it is positive, does not sufficiently build the case that "significant" gains have been accomplished over the past four years by this district, thus positioning the district for benefiting from this grant award.</p> <p>The applicant did not build a convincing description of ambitious and significant gains in persistently low performing schools. Two of the lowest achieving schools showed "rapid improvements" which translated to both schools student growth percentages exceeded expectations by more than 10 points. This statement was then followed with the statement "The winter 2012 monitoring site visits resulted in no findings for significant improvement at one school and only one finding at the other school." The documentation provided by the applicant does not validate their claim of achieving significant gains in these schools.</p> <p>The applicant refers to the SIG schools making significant gains in students outcomes as measured by MCAS and qualified for a \$30, 000 bonus. This appears to be evidence of significant gains though the applicant does not define the number and level of these schools nor the actual gains made.</p> <p>The applicant states in (c) that an accountability team composed of a broad base of internal and external stakeholders implemented monthly learning visits. The applicant did not provide any further detail on who these team members are, how they were selected and what they hope to accomplish during the monthly learning visits. While this sounds like a promising practice, it does not address the specific requirements of (c) which makes student performance data available in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction and services.</p> <p>The applicant did not provide sufficient nor convincing evidence that they have accomplished a clear track record of success during the past four years. There are some promising trends that the district will undoubtedly build upon. The inability to build the case of a proven track record in this section resulted in a low overall score.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not address the requirements of this section. They included the Executive Summary page to the FY13 budget and a link to the complete budget. The Executive summary did not address any of the above components of this section and so was not viable documentation. The applicant states that there is a high level of transparency in the LEA processes but no detail is provided to support this claim. The applicant states that the budget reflects a variety of stakeholder priorities but does not provide evidence to support this claim. The applicant describes how the budget document is organized. The applicant was unable to address nor provide evidence for the components requested in this section and as a result earned no points.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	0
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant stated that their proposed projects are complimentary of the states Race to the Top initiatives and listed some of these relationships, I.E.their Educator Evaluation system is a key piece of the Commonwealth's RTTT efforts, but beyond this statement, no narrative or explanation is provided.</p>		

The applicant stated that none of the projects they are seeking through this Race to the Top grant exceed the authority of their governance structure, the Worcester School committee.

Unfortunately, the applicant has not sufficiently addressed the intent of this section of providing evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy. As such, no points were awarded for this section.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	0
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant makes a sweeping statement that feedback was gathered from a broad base of stakeholders to impact the vision of the Worcester Compact but does not provide evidence supporting their claim. The applicant states that they have moved from one dimensional teams to multi dimensional teams that extend beyond traditional organizational boundaries, but then lists a variety of teams but does not provide evidence of their membership diversity: LEAP, Comprehensive Accountability System team, Innovation Schools Local Partnership Group, Level IV Schools Local Stakeholder Group. The applicant does not address anywhere in this section who had input into this race to the Top Vision or how input was gathered as required by this section.

The applicant states that the collective bargaining sessions have addressed some of the components of this initiative. For example, collective bargaining began in 2012 on the Educator Evaluation System but apparently this is because the new system is mandated by the state. There was no clear evidence that the union is in support of this initiative as required by section (a).

Four letters of support were included in the Appendices, not representing broad, diverse support: Oak Hill Community Development Center, Clark University, Worcester State University, and Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board.

The applicant was not able to provide any evidence to support broad stakeholder involvement and support for this Race to the Top Project, and as a result, did not receive any points for this section.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	0
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not link the data cited with the purposes of the Race to the Top Grant. The applicant acknowledges the changing demographics in the community such as the proportion of low income students increased to 72.1 percent in 2011-2012 from 65.2 percent in 2006-2007. Certain populations are under represented in SAT participation rate, enrollment in honors and advanced placement classes. Certain populations are dropping out of school disproportionately.

The applicant concludes that these statistics lead to questions about whether students have access to rigorous standards yet, and the support of professional practices matched with student need and the delivery of systematic instruction. These conclusions however do not match the project goals outlined in this Race to the Top grant. There is a disconnect between the proposed plan and the LEA evidence to support the components of that plan. As such, the applicant did not provide evidence that they have adequately analyzed their current status nor developed suitable project goals to address their current status. This section did not receive any points because there was not a clear connection between their chosen logic model and the present gap analysis as required in this section.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	0

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the evidence provided in this section by the applicant is not clearly linked to the goals of their Race to the Top Plan.

The evidence provided in this section by the applicant does not clearly link to the required components. For example, the applicant cites the Parent Information Center, parent councils, the Know Your School Night, and the Policies Handbook in the Appendices as examples of how they are meeting components (a)(i) and (a)(ii) of this section. It does not appear that any of these meet the components cited:

- (i) Understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals;
- (ii) Identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this

notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice), understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals;

Other examples were listed that are equally unconnected to these components. Educator Evaluation System which is state to improve family engagement. The best example though still not directly connected, is the professional development for teachers in Kindergarten through third grades. This will help "teachers move from the stand and deliver models to more project based learning."

To address (iii), (iv), and (v) the applicant introduces new projects not outlined in previous sections of this proposal. They assert that with the adoption of the Common Core Standards in December 2010, the grant will allow them to train nearly all of their instructional coaches and half of the teaching core in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) basics. The applicant states that grant funds will enable them to train their instructional coaches in the components of their Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning. It is not clear in this narrative if this Framework is the same Framework cited in earlier sections, the Worcester Improvement Framework. It is not clear how these two training proposals link to the sections cited. Nor is it clear how these two projects link to the three or four areas of focus for this grant.

This section does not adequately address the required components and introduces new projects not clearly linked to the original grant focus areas. No points were awarded to the applicant for this section.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	0
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Human Capital Development System will link the Educator Evaluator System to focused professional development and in turn, the district is considering Individualized Professional Development Plans for each staff member. The applicant provides a glossary of professional development terms used in the district: context standards versus process standards, guiding principals for professional development, internal professional development versus external professional development. The applicant outlines that district professional decisions are made by the Professional Development Council and school decisions are made by Instructional Leadership Teams. The applicant does not include in this outline of professional development components how student progress is used to drive educator improvement, a required component (iii), how professional development will translate into personalized learning environments for students (i), how professional development will enable teachers to adapt content and instruction (ii).

The applicant provides detailed information on the background of the present Educator Evaluator System and its components, how the Human Resources Department was restructured to better support the work of the district. Additional new information was provided in this section that the Evaluator System was state required in the district's two lowest performing schools. As such, now is being taken to scale in the rest of the district.

It is not clear how this system will lead to every student receiving instruction from a highly qualified teacher and principal (d) nor how this evaluation system will lead to trainings, practices and systems that will continuously improve school progress toward the goal of increasing students performance and closing achievement gaps (ii).

The information provided by the applicant in this section touched on or referenced the components required in this section, but did not directly address or answer them. With minimal to no evidence provided to ensure the components are effectively addressed by this grant proposal, no points were awarded in this section.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	9

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant listed a number of leadership positions and teams both at the school and district levels, describing each position/team purpose within the larger system. It is not clear how each of these moving parts complement and coordinate with every other support level, but the applicant offers these as evidence that the district and school structures support structures to facilitate decision making. There are some promising practices such as the walkthroughs modeled after the Instructional rounds activity.

The applicant lists four software programs such as Plato, Fast Forward, Headsprout, and Study Island, as their documentation that students have opportunities to earn credits based on demonstrated mastery. This connection cannot be clearly made to

these examples. Plato is used for credit recovery. Study Island is only used in grades 3-8, grades not requiring credits. The other two software programs build specific skills such as comprehension or reading proficiency, neither area connected to credit generation.

The applicant states that their vocational technical programs presently allow students to demonstrate mastery of standards in multiple ways and over multiple times and they are hoping to expand these practices.

While the applicant provided examples of some structures and pockets of best practices around credit generation and mastery that are in place, there was not enough detail provided to make a clear determination that the structures and practices will indeed support the Race to the Top Vision or that a high quality plan is in place to ensure delivery of the grant goals. Additionally, the applicant did not address component (e) Providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. This section was scored in the medium range acknowledging the district's efforts to put the necessary structures in place to support the intent of this grant.

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

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2

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant included some existing student and parental supports already in place in the district.

The applicant outlines some innovative programs being implemented in the Worcester School District: AVID, 21st Century Learning grant, Parent Information Center, the Adult Learning Center and the Volunteer Office. There is also a large Special Education and Intervention Services Department. These are examples of additional supports provided to students and parents, related to improving student learning.

The district has made wireless access available at all schools. It was not clearly defined how the parents and students will benefit from wireless access during and outside of school.

Funding from this grant will allow for full system integration between the Human Resource Department, The Department of Staff Development and the Information Technology Department and the Quadrant offices. It was not clearly defined how the parents and students will benefit from the system integration component of the grant.

It was not clear how or if the applicant has plans for allowing parents and students to export information in an open data format or use data in other electronic learning systems through the district infrastructure.

While the applicant described some important components that are in place in the district, they were not able to align these components to a high quality plan to provide students, educators and parents with the support and resources they need, when they are most needed. The listed components were not clearly linked to how they would support personalized learning. With the limited detail provided in this section, a low score was provided for this section.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	0

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant outlined the decision making bodies and systems presently in place: The instructional Division, the Comprehensive Accountability System and school accountability plans. This section requests the applicant describe and assure a process is in place to continually improve the Race to the Top Plan. This section also requests details on how the grant will be monitored, measured, and publicly shared so everyone is aware of how the grant investments are being used. It was not clear how the applicant expected these bodies and systems to provide the continuous improvement function for the grant. There was no mention of how the grant will be monitored, measured or publicly accounted for. Not addressing the required components of this section have resulted in no points being earned.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant outlines all of the communication vehicles presently in place such as the Superintendents' annual State of the District address, weekly electronic newsletters, the district website, the Superintendent's monthly High School Advisory Council. While these communication vehicles are valuable, the applicant did not clearly link how they would be utilized for engaging internal and external stakeholders specifically in the Race to the Top plan. The applicant does not address how stakeholders will be engaged in the plan other than announcements or one way communication vehicles. The applicant did not provide the assurance requested in this section and thus did not receive any points.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant included tables in this section to address the components but did not provide any introductory narrative. In this section the applicant was to not only identify the measures to be used, but why these measures were selected, how they will provide rigorous and timely information and ultimately, how these measures will drive continuous improvement. Additionally, the two required tables were not included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup (as defined in this notice), whose teacher of record (as defined in this notice) and principal are a highly effective teacher (as defined in this notice) and a highly effective principal (as defined in this notice); and 2. The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup (as defined in this notice), whose teacher of record (as defined in this notice) and principal are an effective teacher (as defined in this notice) and an effective principal (as defined in this notice). <p>While the applicant explains that they are working on these through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, at present the Educator Evaluator System is not in place and so this information is not obtainable.</p> <p>The district selected Dibels and the Early Screening Inventory for use in K-1. For grades 4-8, the district selected the Massachusetts Early Warning indicator for grades 4-8, the MCAS for grades 4 and 8 in English Language Arts and math, and an annual student survey that asks students to respond to "I feel safe when I am at school." It was not clear if this survey would be desegregated by grade level.</p> <p>In the secondary level, the district does not currently collect FAFSA data so that is not available. The Early Warning Indicator will be used at the secondary level, though it was not clear if the information will be desegregated by grade level. The number and percent of students who meet state Competency Determination requirements (passing the 10th grade assessments in ELA, Math and Science) is another secondary measure. The MCAS will be administered to grade 10 students in English Language Arts and Math. The MCAS in Science and Technology will be given to grades 9-10 though it was not clear if the results would be desegregated by grade level. Lastly, the secondary level will use the same survey question for grades 9-12. The district did not include a measure indicating if their students are career ready.</p> <p>The applicant received minimal points for this section due to the omission of the two mandatory measures, and the omission of the required background narrative.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant will hire an outside evaluator to evaluate the effectiveness of the investments. The district has done this in the past and mentioned some of the evaluators they have hired. Once the evaluator is hired, the details of the evaluation process and components will be developed. The applicant acknowledged that both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected. Data will be collected annually and communication provided to the Project Coordinator and the Grants Manager. There will be regular contact with the data office.</p> <p>The description the applicant provided suggests that no detail has been prepared for how the grant will be evaluated except to hire an outside evaluator. hiring an outside evaluator is a sound strategy for ensuring neutral and rigorous information is collected. Medium points were provided for this section since the details cannot be provided until an evaluator is employed.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
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(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	0
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(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget submitted by the applicant did not specify what other funds would be leveraged along with the Race to the Top funds. It did not clearly delineate one-time investments versus ongoing operational costs. A number of budget items did not seem reasonable and are listed below. The applicant was meticulous in referencing all the sections in the grant that matched with the particular project funding, but did not include a clear, thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities in the actual budget section. A number of the expenses listed below were not clearly described in the body of the application and cannot be justified with the limited narrative provided in the budget section. With the items the applicant proposes to purchase with grant funds, there is no assurance these budget expenses will further the districts' ability to sustain this project after the grant ends. Without further detailed explanation, this budget will be awarded any points.

Some projects had coordinators while other did not. It was not clear why this distinction was being made. For example, there was a full time district coordinator for the K-3 professional development in literacy project and a technology project manager just for the first year.

It was not clear why the grant would pay for recruitment costs including travel and advertising when this is something the district does and is not related particularly to the delivery of the grant.

Confusion between the roles of the internal evaluator and cost \$100,000 per year and the external evaluator and cost for the K-3 program.

It was not clear the rational for hiring a personnel management consultant to resolve personnel issues.

It was not clear why custodial support was included in this grant.

It was not clear why the grant providing a site administrator and custodial support for the adult education program when the district already funds an Adult Education office and position.

Funds were allocated for counselors to work during out of school time hours to provide services to students though specific services were not clearly described in the grant proposal.

Recreational materials and homework totes are being provided but clear rational was not included in the grant.

The applicant has allocated a significant amount of funds to pay their partner agencies to provide services. These include Career counseling, empowerment training, immigrant services, youth enrichment opportunities (summer camp), and community health services (\$120,000). The application does not make clear that these partnerships are not coordinating with their resources.

Another external evaluator is hired to assess these partnership programs.

Higher education is contracted with to provide mentorship and internship programs

The grant included costs for conducting asset mapping (\$95,000 and \$50,000 every year after) but in the body of the grant, this was described as a process the community partners would engage in.

Transportation for students (bus tickets)

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the district will assume fiscal responsibility for programs and positions initiated during this funding cycle that prove to be of high value in sustain improved student outcomes. District funds will be re-prioritized or reallocated as needed. The applicant also states that a significant amount of the budget is being used for professional development, increasing the capacity of the teaching corps. The applicant does not refer to any other funding sources they will access to sustain the project. Because this section directs the applicant to describe the support from Stat and local government leaders they will access and because this was not addressed here, the score for this section is in the medium range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes hiring a consultant who will look at the data from persistently lowest performing schools, identify resources within the school district and community and align these resources with targeted interventions for at risk students in a dropout prevention effort.

The applicant is open to adding partners to help with this endeavor. For starters, the Adult Education division will coordinate a financial literacy education program for parent and residents at each site. The applicant lists numerous partners that could be enlisted as part of this drop out prevention strategy.

The applicant states that the district has internally developed data systems that will be used to track the results of participating students and they will require the partners to maintain similar data bases.

The evaluator hired for the project will be responsible for developing the process for measuring results.in year 1 they will develop a logic model and define what evaluation measures need to be in place.

The evaluator will conduct annual family and resident focus groups with translators available as needed. to oversee the part of the grant that requires building staff capacity.

An asset inventory will be conducted at each site and this information will be blended with each site's School Accountability Plan to ensure alignment to the goals of this grant.

The applicant will use their RTI model to guide a decision making process on appropriate student supports.

The applicant will use the existing Department of English Language Learners and Supplemental Support Services to build staff capacity.

Annual Site Visits and focus groups will occur at each school over a two day period. The district will use existing data bases and data collection already in process. Annual partner surveys, school personnel surveys and annual family and resident focus groups are all vehicles for providing necessary information to the project evaluator to guide decisions and resources.

The applicant has listed some innovative project measurements. Some may not be readily measurable, ie family access to preventative health services, families reading to their children, families helping their children with homework. Most of the measures are part of the measures being implemented at all schools in the district. not all of the measure will be appropriate to the age group included in the project. The project appears to be designed for grades K-8 though that is not specified anywhere in this section.

The applicant addresses many of the components of this section. What is not clear however is how the partners will be used and how their services will be integrated within the schools identified. It is also not clear how this project will be scaled to benefit other schools. These are key omissions in assuring this component will add significant value to the overall Race to the Top Grant. This section is scored in the high range taking into account the applicant did not describe this overall relationship between the partners and the schools.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has identified some important goals, but has not clearly explained how the realization of their goals will result in the 1. accelerating student achievement, 2. deepening student learning, and 3. increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests.The human capital development system is designed to adequately assess teachers through an evaluation tool and provide targeted professional development to increase their effectiveness and maximize student growth. It also includes focusing professional development to grades K-3 teachers on literacy. The technology initiative provides 21st century tools to students and teachers along with appropriate professional development. The applicant does not address how these tools can lead to the grant requirements listed above. Creating opportunities for family engagement is the third goal and although this is an important goal in itself, it is not linked to the three grant requirements listed above.

The requirements of this Race to the Top grant would seem to be the next steps the applicant would pursue after putting the supports and infrastructure in place that they have outlined in their proposal. The applicant has identified important goals but

not goals that will directly impact the three Race to the Top goals and absolute priority. As such, the applicant does not meet this requirement.

Total	210	44
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0500MA-2 for Worcester Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has identified three strategies that will guide the development of their proposed program. Strategy 1 emphasizes the importance of having high quality teachers and leaders in the district. Strategy 2 addresses the importance of aligning resource to address student needs. Strategy 3 is to create aligned partnerships to increase momentum to improve student outcomes. These strategies will work towards the goals of accelerating student achievement. However these strategies do not directly address deepening student learning or increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests.</p> <p>Through the discussion of these strategies, the applicant has demonstrated to a significant extent a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in four core educational assurance areas and articulates a clear and credible approach to the 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.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant intends to include all schools in the district in the proposed program. The district wants to provide equal educational opportunities for all of its students.</p> <p>The applicant provides a list of all schools that will participate in grant activities.</p> <p>The applicant provides the total number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, and participating educators. The application does not include the data for each of the participating schools. Site data will need to be considered as the applicant considers how resources will be distributed throughout the district.</p> <p>The information described above is included in the proposal and supports the criterion in this section to a moderate extent.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All schools in the district will participate in the proposed program. This will result in district-wide change. The applicant's theory of action involves a phased approach to improvement, focused on the probing use of data, broad based participation, and ongoing refinement to the plan. This theory of action could improve student learning outcomes for students served by the applicant through increasing numbers of high quality teachers and administrators in the district, quality professional development, and adjustment of instructional and learning opportunities based on numerous sources of data.</p>		

Information is provided about the components of the theory of action and how those will be used to guide decisions in the proposed program. This helps clarify the district's vision and demonstrates to a significant extent that the applicant's vision could likely lead to meaningful district-wide reform that could improve student learning outcomes.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Annual goals are provided in several areas. LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes are included for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology. The annual goals are included for subgroups of the student population. The data for this section is indicated as being for all grades, but it seems unlikely that it is for grades PreK-12 - the grade levels indicated to be participating in the proposed program. The annual goals for improved student outcomes seem ambitious yet achievable.

The applicant provides a table of data reflecting the intent to decrease the achievement gap. The methodology described to reduce the achievement gap will be implemented across all subgroups. Annual goals for the identified subgroups are achievable, but not ambitious. The program aims to halve the gap between each subgroup and the highest achieving subgroup in each content area by the end of the first post-grant academic year.

The graduation rates included in the application are divided by identified subgroups. There are annual goals set for each subgroup. However, the goals for a couple of the subgroups do not seem achievable. Raising the graduation rate of Special Education students from 52.3% to 80% in two years and to 90% by the final funding year seems unlikely. A similar concern is present with the goals for ELL students - a raise from 55% in 2010-2011 to 90% by 2015-2016. The table shows no goal for growth at two points during the grant funding. The goals for 2013-2014 are the same as 2014-2015. The goals for 2015-2016 are the same as goals for 2016-2017. While these are likely achievable, they are not ambitious.

The applicant explains their method for obtaining college enrollment data. Achievable annual goals are provided for each identified subgroup. The program goal for Asian students is not ambitious: college enrollment will increase from 92% baseline to 96% post-grant.

Based on the annual goals included in the proposal for each of the subcriterion, the applicant demonstrates to a moderate extent that their vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity. I

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 applicant provides data to demonstrate a record of success in raising student achievement and increasing high school graduation rates. This demonstrates the applicant's ability to improve student learning outcomes.

The lowest achieving schools in Worcester have had success through the use of Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-assessment. It allowed schools to monitor and adjust practices to improve the learning climate and student ownership for learning. The school day was restructured to be long allowing for additional planning time and for three-tiered instruction to be delivered with fidelity. Each school made significant gains in student outcomes.

The application states that district leadership has built communication with key stakeholders including students, parents, school personnel, higher education, and the community. However, no specific examples are provided of the types of communication that were used to make student performance data available in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

The application demonstrates evidence to a moderate extent that the LEA has a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application states that the location based budget included as a part of the district budget provides the salary and non-salary cost of each school or operating location in the district. The Fiscal Year 13 budget was alleged to be attached as an appendix as demonstrated evidence. However, the appendix only contains the Executive Summary of the budget, which does not provide enough information to determine if the specific information requested as a part of this criterion is included in the budget. The applicant does not provide evidence demonstrating the extent that the four categories of school-level expenditures are made available. Due to this lack of evidence, it must be concluded that the applicant addresses this criterion to a very minimal extent.

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

10

5

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Worcester Public Schools has a committee that is the elected legislative and policy-making body charged with supervision of the Worcester public Schools System as established under Chapter 71, Section 37 of the Massachusetts General Laws. This committee has the power to select and to terminate the superintendent, review and approve budgets for public education in the district, and establish educational goals and policies for the schools consistent with the requirements of law and statewide goals and standards established by the Massachusetts Board of Education.

The Educator Evaluation System is a part of the state's RTTT efforts. The online formative assessments and curriculum modules that will be used are also a part of a state project. These provide further evidence that the district projects would be able to be conducted under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates to a significant extent that there are successful conditions to conduct program activities, however there is no information about the autonomy of the district. The evidence provided addresses the criteria to a moderate extent.

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

10

5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does a moderate job of demonstrating evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal or of meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal.

No detailed description is included of how students, families, or teachers in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal or of how their engagement or feedback was used to revise the proposal. The applicant formed the Worcester District Redesign Team to help guide the development of the district's vision. The applicant does state representation from school principals was involved starting in the third phase of the District Redesign Team. Details are not provided about how the representation was selected, how many principals were included, or what the grade-level distribution of the principals was (elementary, secondary). There is mention that participation will include a broad base of stakeholders including parents, teachers, administrators, and community members.

The applicant states that collective bargaining session with the teacher's union regarding key concepts contained in this proposal have been or are being held. However, the applicant does not demonstrate evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposal.

Letters of support are included from several key stakeholders who represent higher education and community agencies. Conspicuously absent are letters of support from parents and/or parent organizations, students and/or student organizations, and early learning programs.

The applicant mentions elements that apply to the criterion in this section. However, because of the lack of detail, it is determined that the applicant demonstrates to a moderate extent its level of meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal or of meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal.

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

5

2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Worcester Public Schools included a list of identified needs and gaps that will be addressed by the proposed program. These include the identification of certain populations of students who under perform, have higher dropout rates, and are underrepresented in advanced classes. The data included as evidence is all for students at the secondary level. No evidence is provided about needs and gaps that may exist at the elementary level or how the applicant intends to identify those needs

and gaps.

The applicant indicates that the foundation for personalized learning environments has been laid through the use of Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment. However no details are included about what steps have been taken toward personalizing the learning environment.

Worcester Public Schools identified some needs and gaps that their plan will address. However, it was only demonstrated to a limited degree the extent to which they have implemented personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	2

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that through the incorporation of the Worcester Public Schools' Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning into all classrooms, students will be able to express what they are learning in their own words and why; articulate the connection between what they are learning and the school wide instructional focus; utilize methods/strategies, models, and materials independently and or collaboratively to support their own learning; articulate personal data goals, growth, and benchmark expectations and ask questions to deepen their understanding of process and content. This provides evidence that students will be able to understand that what they are learning is key to success in accomplishing their goals.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there will be a component of the program that engages and empowers all learners to identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, or measure progress toward those goals.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there will be an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners such that all students are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest. No information is provided about how students might identify areas of academic interest. No information is provided about what deep learning experiences might look like under the proposed program.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there will be an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners such that all students are able to have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there will be an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners such that all students are able to master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there is a strategy to ensure that each student has access to a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career-ready.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there is a strategy to ensure that each student has access to a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there is a strategy to ensure that each student has access to high-quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate, aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there is a strategy to ensure that each student has access to ongoing and regular feedback.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there is a strategy to ensure that each student has access to accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

The applicant does not provide evidence that there is a strategy to ensure 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.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	5
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant anticipates using the first eight months of the grant as a planning and preparation period to determine professional development needs.</p> <p>The educator evaluation system will provide some feedback that can be used to guide teaching and leading.</p> <p>The Human Capital Development System is in place to help guide school improvement.</p> <p>There are gaps in how the projects listed as a part of the proposed program will achieve the results identified. The applicant fails to fully describe a systematic approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that enable participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements and accelerate student learning through support of his or her needs.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	3
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes several positions that are in place in the district that will provide support to the proposed program both at the district and school level. However, it is not indicated how the support and services provided by these positions will facilitate personalized learning for the students who attend participating schools.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence of practices, policies, or rules that facilitate personalized learning by providing school leadership teams in participating schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets.</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of some practices that facilitate personalized learning by giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. The Vocational Technical program has a credit program in place. No information is provided as to whether this program will be expanded to other areas of the district.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence of practices, policies, or rules that facilitate personalized learning by giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence of practices, policies, or rules that facilitate personalized learning by providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.</p> <p>The lack of information provided by the applicant to address the specified criteria results in the determination that the applicant does not have a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.</p> <p>There is a significant lack of information in the proposal related to the criteria for this section. The applicant only minimally describes practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	0
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence that the school infrastructure supports personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders (as appropriate and relevant to student learning), regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence that the school infrastructure supports personalized learning by ensuring that</p>		

students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders (as appropriate and relevant to student learning) have appropriate levels of technical support.

The applicant does not provide evidence that the school infrastructure supports personalized learning by using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems.

The applicant does not provide evidence that the school infrastructure supports personalized learning by ensuring that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems.

The lack of evidence supporting these criteria do not demonstrate a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	2
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does not describe a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant.</p> <p>Minimal information is included about how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District. The proposal mentions its comprehensive accountability system, but does not directly link the system to the targets and goals of the proposed program.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the applicant provides examples of communication practices that are currently in place in the district, the applicant does not address how these are part of a high-quality plan to maintain ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders as part of the proposed program.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant minimally meets the criterion for performance measures All Applicants a and b. While no data is provided regarding the numbers of effective and highly effective teachers, the applicant does indicate that Massachusetts is in the process of implementing the Educator Evaluation System, a part of which will be setting baselines and targets for these performance measures. The applicant does not provide a rationale for the selection of these performance measures. The applicant does not describe how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measures over time if they are insufficient to gage implementation progress.</p> <p>Performance measures PreK-3 a and b will be measured using DIBELS Next and Early Screening Inventory. Ambitious yet achievable annual targets have been included for the overall population as well as identified subgroups. No rationale is provided for selecting these as a means of demonstrating the performance measures. The applicant does not describe how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measures over time if they are insufficient to gage implementation progress.</p> <p>No measures are listed for grades 2 or 3. It is of some concern that no annual goals have been set for these groups of students and that no measures have been identified to measure and track their progress.</p> <p>Performance measure Grades 4-8 a will be measured using the Early Warning Indicator Index (EWII). The EWII measures students who are "off-track" for grade level or developmental age. Achievable annual targets are provided for the overall student population as well as for identified subgroups. The annual targets do not seem ambitious. The applicant does not</p>		

describe how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

Performance measures Grades 4-8 b,c will be measured with the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Composite Performance Index (CPI) for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Although the assessment is administered annually, the application only provides data for grades 4 and 8. Ambitious yet achievable annual goals are provided for both grade levels on both the ELA and Mathematics measures. The applicant does not describe how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measures over time if they are insufficient to gage implementation progress.

The applicant also lists a student self-report question from an annual student survey to address performance measure Grades 4-8 b,c. Achievable annual targets are provided for the overall student population as well as for identified subgroups. The annual targets do not seem ambitious. No rationale is included as to why the applicant selected this measure. The applicant does not describe how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

When addressing performance measure Grades 9-12 a the applicant states that although the district does not currently collect this data, they are currently in the process of establishing a system that would capture this type of information while also preserving student and family privacy. Ambitious yet achievable annual targets are not included for this performance measure. The applicant does not describe how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

Performance measure Grades 9-12 b will be measured using the EWII. The annual targets provided for the overall student population as well as identified subgroups are ambitious yet achievable. The applicant does not describe how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

Performance measure Grades 9-12 c will be measured using the number of students who met state Competency Determination requirements (pass grade 10 state assessments in ELA, Math, and Science). Baseline data is provided for the overall student population as well as identified subgroups. Achievable annual targets are set for the percentage of students who met the requirements. The goals do not seem ambitious. No rationale is included as to why the applicant selected this measure. The applicant does not describe how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

Performance measures Grades 9-12 d,e will be measured using the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Composite Performance Index (CPI) for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Although the assessment is administered annually, the application only provides data for grade 10. Ambitious yet achievable annual goals are provided for both the ELA and Mathematics measures. The applicant does not describe how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measures over time if they are insufficient to gage implementation progress.

Performance measures Grades 9-12 d,e will also be measured using the MCAS High School Science and Technology CPI. Data from grades 9 and 10 is provided. Ambitious yet achievable annual goals are provided. The applicant does not describe how the measure will the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Composite Performance Index (CPI) for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Although the assessment is administered annually, the application only provides data for grades 4 and 8. Ambitious yet achievable annual goals are provided for both grade levels on both the ELA and Mathematics measures. The applicant does not describe how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

The final item that addresses performance measure Grades 9-12 d,e is student self-report question from an annual student survey. Achievable annual targets are provided for the overall student population as well as for identified subgroups. The annual targets do not seem ambitious. No rationale is included as to why the applicant selected this measure. The applicant

does not describe how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern. There is no evidence provided as to how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that upon award of the contract the evaluation team will work with Worcester Public Schools to convene an evaluation kick-off event. Evaluation performance expectations and communication protocols will be identified at this meeting. From there a detailed evaluation plan will be developed and presented to the district for approval. While this is evidence that there will be an evaluation component, it is not evidence of a high-quality plan for evaluating the effectiveness of investments.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget tables identify funds that will come from the Race to the Top-District grant. The budget tables list funds from other sources as TBD. To a moderate extent, the applicant's budget identifies funds that will support the project .

Because of the lack of detail throughout the proposal as to what specific strategies and activities comprise the proposed program, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the applicant's budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal.

The applicant does not provide a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities, including a description of all of the funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal, including total revenue from these sources.

The applicant clearly shows what funds are requested for each of the four years of the funding period. However, no clarification is provided as to what funds will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs. Additionally, no details are provided about which expenses will extend beyond the grant period. No specific strategies are described that will ensure long-term stability of the personalized learning environments.

In summary, while the applicant has included the budget narrative and tables, the criterion for this section are only met to a minimal extent.

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

10

1

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the district is prepared to allocate the resources necessary to sustain the plan after the implementation period. However, a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant is not included in the application. There is no mention of specific, quantified objectives; goals correlated to the objectives; activities which support the goals; detailed timeline for implementation and integration of the activities; deliverables that will demonstrate results of the activities; or identification of the individuals responsible for the completion of activities and deliverables.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant lists potential partners but does not identify a coherent partnership that is has formed to support the plan nominally outlined in Absolute Priority 1.

The application identifies eight population-level desired results that align with the applicant's broader RttT-D proposal. The results include both educational results and other education outcomes as well as family and community supports.

The applicant does not describe strategies or provide examples of how the partnership would track the selected indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the LEA or consortium and at the student level for the participating students.

The applicant states that they will contract with an outside evaluator to develop an implement an evaluation program and lists questions that will guide the evaluation. However, the application does not describe how the partnership would use the data to target its resources in order to improve results for participating students with special emphasis on students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students affected by poverty (including highly mobile students), family instability, or other child welfare issues.

There is no information about how the partnership would develop a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students to at least other high-need students and communities in the LEA over time.

The application does not describe how the partnership would improve results over time.

The applicant does not describe how the partnership would, within participating schools, integrate education and other services for participating students.

The applicant does not describe how the partnership and LEA would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports to assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with the partnership's goals for improving the education and family and community supports identified by the partnership.

The applicant does not describe how the partnership and LEA would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports to identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with those goals for improving the education and family and community supports identified by the applicant.

The applicant does not describe how the partnership and LEA would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports to create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results.

The applicant does not describe how the partnership and LEA would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports to engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs.

The applicant does not describe how the partnership and LEA would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports to routinely assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.

The applicant identifies annual performance measures for the proposed population-levels. The targets are not ambitious. Desired results for students are not described.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has neither coherently nor comprehensively addressed how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

Total	210	77
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0500MA-3 for Worcester Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a comprehensive vision of developing teachers through its four proposed projects: Human Capital Development System, K- Grade 3 initiative, technology infrastructure, and Aligning resources. It does not currently have interoperability within its data systems, but plans to build data systems that will provide teachers and principals with information to improve instruction. The district includes a logic model in the Appendix for each of its four projects, including resources, activities, outcomes, timelines, and responsible parties.</p> <p>The applicant plans to accelerate students achievement and deepen learning through professional development of teachers and staff.</p> <p>The applicant fails to provide evidence that it addresses all of the core educational assurance areas. The LEA does not currently track students beyond high school. Retention and rewarding effective teachers and increasing equity of students are not addressed in the proposal.</p> <p>Because the applicant provides strong evidence for improving teacher effectiveness, but does not address all of the core areas, this criterion was ranked medium.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All of the applicant's schools are included in the proposal and are listed in the appendix. The total number of students is approximately 24,000 and more than seventy percent of the students are economically disadvantaged. The LEA provides data for the numbers of special education and English language learners it serves. More than twenty-one hundred educators will be affected by the proposal. The applicant meets the minimum requirements for the grant.</p> <p>Because the applicant provides ample evidence for each part of this criterion, it is scored high.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of its logic model in the application, describing the Worcester Improvement Framework, which connects adult actions to student outcomes. It contains four targets related to English language learners, exceptional students, literacy at grade three, and college and career readiness. Elements of a high quality plan (timelines, outcomes, and responsible parties) for each of the four projects are given in the appendix. However, a clear link was not provided between the reform and the vision statement.</p> <p>The LEA provides a compelling rationale to include all schools so that reform will be sustainable throughout the district .Scale up is not addressed in the application, but all schools in the LEA will participate in the grant.</p>		

Because the proposal includes all of the elements of a high quality plan to reach its goals, this criterion is ranked high.

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

10

2

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence with ambitious and achievable goals for improved outcomes on English, math, and science assessments, for the all students category and by subgroups. Achievement gaps data is provided, with goals increasing annually so that in five years the gap is reduced by fifty percent .

The applicant does not disaggregate the achievement results (baseline or goals) by grade level. No evidence is given for the state's targets on these achievement exams.

The applicant provides district level data and goals for high school graduation, which reach 90% by the end of the grant and are maintained at 90% after the life of the grant. No evidence is given for campus level graduation rates by subgroup.

No evidence is provided for college enrollment, but a table is provided of student self-reported data in section A4.

Because the applicant has provided district level information, but has not provided grade level achievement data or campus level graduation rates, this criterion is scored low.

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	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides narrative evidence that the district has some success over the last four years. The district graduation rates increased 2.2 percent over four years. Two of nine persistently low performing schools in the district have improved, especially in achievement growth and student ownership of learning.</p> <p>The LEA has created an accountability team of internal and external stakeholders to design a Comprehensive Accountability System.</p> <p>No evidence of success is presented as raw student data or chart or graph format. No evidence of closing gaps, increasing college enrollment, or improving data reporting to students in the last four years was presented.</p> <p>Because the applicant did not provide a clear track record of success, this criterion was ranked low.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Based on the appendix, the applicant posts its budget on its website, which includes salary costs at each school.</p> <p>No evidence is given that the LEA already makes salary data available by the categories of instructional and support staff, instructional staff, teachers only, and non-personnel expenditures.</p> <p>Because of the lack of evidence of the four levels of school expenditures, this criterion was ranked low.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence that there are successful conditions for its projects, which are compatible with the state's Race to the Top initiatives, including the Educator Evaluation System, online formative assessments, and use of the state's curriculum modules.</p> <p>No evidence is provided that the LEA has autonomy to implement the proposed activities.</p> <p>Although the LEA has not demonstrated a certain level of autonomy, it has provided examples of successful conditions that</p>		

may allow for the implementation of the proposal, and thus this criterion was rated medium.

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

10

4

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant gives evidence that it has involved parents and community members in the current proposal through a process similar to the success of the District Redesign Team. Support for the proposal is evident from the teacher union. Letters of support for the project are included from local postsecondary institutions and the business community.

The LEA does not provide evidence that the proposal was revised based on feedback from community stakeholders, nor that students were engaged in the proposal. No letters of support are included from student or parent organizations.

Because the LEA does not provide evidence for student engagement or the role of feedback in the development of the proposal, this section was ranked medium.

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

5

1

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence that it has analyzed the need to improve graduation rates through its District Redesign Process. It has identified the need for interventions with students with disabilities and English language learners for high school graduation and SAT participation.

No evidence is given for elements of a high quality plan for needs analysis (such as timelines, activities, and responsible parties).

As the applicant does not provide most of the elements of a high quality plan for needs analysis, this area was ranked low.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of the ownership of student learning through its Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning. Parents are engaged through its Parent Information Center. Teachers of early grades will be provided professional development related to personalized learning. Instructional coaches will be funded through grant money to help all teachers place students at the center of learning. Its Human Capital Development System is a high quality plan to improve teaching through professional development, as evidenced by the chart for this plan in the Appendix.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence that it has a strategy for students to have individual learning goals, regular feedback including personalized learning recommendations, or accommodations for high needs students to ensure they are on track for college or career readiness.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide evidence that mechanisms or processes are in place to help students use tools to manage their own learning.</p> <p>As the LEA provides a high quality plan for professional development of teachers, but student-centered components of this criterion are missing, it is scored medium.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	7
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has included elements of a high quality plan related to improving teaching with its Human Capital Development System. It includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties in the Appendix. However, more details are needed for each of these required elements. Teachers will have individualized professional development plans and data systems will be integrated across the personnel, technology, and staff development departments. Delaying professional development activities in the first year weakens the rationale for the HCDS.</p>		

The applicant provides evidence that all staff will be trained in the tools and processes in order to create effective learning environments through its use of guiding principles from Learning Forward. Based on the Educator Evaluation system, steps were taken to improve teacher effectiveness by having educator self-assessment and goals, team goals, and the collection of evidence by educators to assess progress. This data will be used to improve collective and individual educator effectiveness.

Digital resources are available to teachers such as Study Island, Plato, and internet-based activities.

The applicant does not provide evidence of a plan to increase the number of students served by highly effective teachers and principals.

Because the applicant provides a plan to focus on professional development for the improvement of instruction, but does not provide details of many elements, nor a mechanism to increase the number of students served by effective teachers, this criterion was judged medium.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has provided evidence that it has reorganized its central office to better support participating schools using Quadrant Managers and instructional leadership teams. However, details are not provided to establish that the reorganization better supports efforts to personalize learning.</p> <p>No evidence is provided that school teams have flexibility and autonomy in the areas of personnel, scheduling or budgets.</p> <p>The applicant has presented evidence that students have several methods of demonstrating mastery, including credit recovery and online learning programs.</p> <p>Because the applicant does not provide evidence that school leadership has flexibility or autonomy, this criterion was scored medium.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	2
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>No evidence is given that the LEA ensures that students have access to content and tools both in and out of school.</p> <p>The LEA provides stakeholders with support via programs such as AVID, Child Study, and the Parent Information Center.</p> <p>No evidence is provided that the LEA supports an open data format.</p> <p>The applicant has plans to create an interoperable data system using grant funds, which will integrate student, personnel, professional development, and information technology data. Goals for the three year data integration plan are included; however deliverables, performance measures, and responsible parties are missing from the plan.</p> <p>Because many elements of a high quality implementation plan for the data system are missing, and no provision is made to provide students with resources outside of school, this area was judged low.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has created a Comprehensive Accountability System, which includes stakeholders such as parents, community members, and high education agencies. One of its goals is to develop a formal communication system for continuous improvement.. Each division has data teams that meet weekly to monitor progress of interventions. However, the applicant</p>		

does not make an explicit connection between the CAS and the objectives of the grant.

No evidence is given how the data teams communicate with the Comprehensive Accountability System in order to publicly share information. Specific methods of measurement are not addressed in the continuous improvement process.

Because the LEA has not presented a rigorous process that measures the effectiveness of the interventions, nor a clear method of reporting to the public finds of the data teams, this criterion was judged medium.

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

5

4

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has presented evidence that it has ongoing communication with internal and external stakeholders via weekly electronic newsletters, monthly meetings with community members, monthly meetings with students, as well as a frequently updated website. Stakeholders can provide feedback at many opportunities.

The applicant does not provide a specific forum or district responsible party to address the continuous improvement of the interventions in the proposal.

Because the district does have ongoing communication practices, albeit not ones specific to the proposal, this criterion was judged high.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not yet implemented its Educator Evaluation System, which will identify effective teachers and principals.

The LEA has performance measures in math and reading, with baselines and targets for grades 4-8, 9-12. Included are data on the early warning indicator index, which identifies children at risk of not graduating from high school. Results of a school safety survey are given, with annual goals for future surveys.

No rationale is given for inclusion of the Early Screen Inventory or the Dibels Next in prekindergarten-grade 3.

No evidence is given for FAFSA completion rates or career-readiness rates.

The applicant does not address how it will provide leading information related to its plan. It does not describe how it will improve measures over time if progress is insufficient.

Because several required components were missing from this criterion, this area was rated medium.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence that it will evaluate the initiatives by employing an external evaluator, who will use qualitative and quantitative methods to create annual formative assessments of the project. Part of the evaluation process will include interviews with principals and other stakeholders, and surveys of teachers.

The applicant shows elements of a high quality evaluation plan, including frequency, activities, deliverables, and responsible parties.

The applicant does not indicate how often the evaluator will contact district personnel to conduct meetings between annual evaluation meetings.

Because the applicant will employ a formal evaluation process, this section is marked medium.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that all funds for the project will come from the Race to the Top District grant.

The applicant includes funding charts for all component projects: human capital, K to grade 3, technology and the competitive preference (aligning resources).

These charts include criteria related to each component and responsible personnel for each, along with a rationale for each line item. For human capital and aligning resources, the majority of funds relate to personnel. Sustainability beyond the life of the grant is not addressed for the role of the school site facilitators.

No rationale is given for the use of 40 long-term substitutes in the Kindergarten to Grade 3 project, who will replace 40 teachers for three years at \$1.7 million per year.

No details are provided for the technology equipment purchase in the technology project, which totals \$4.8 million.

Because the applicant has not provided evidence that its request for substitutes and technology is reasonable, this criteria was marked low.

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

The applicant has considered sustainability beyond the life of the grant, and will allocate local funds to replace grant money.

No evidence is given for timelines, goals or activities related to the sustainability of the project. No letters of support relate to funding past the life of the grant. The proposal budget does not include any funds other than the Race to the Top District grant monies.

Because no concrete timelines or other sources of funding are apparent, the criterion related to the sustainability of this project is judged low.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide clear evidence for collaboration. While, the applicant provided evidence that it has had partnerships with Worcester State University and Oak Hill by including letters of support, the LEA does not clearly indicate which of the potential twelve partners have agreed to collaborate on the current project.

The applicant has only some portions of a high quality plan for its competitive preference priority. The applicant lists eight results, including educational and non-educational goals, with baselines and annual targets. However, five of the goals have no baseline data, and no rationale is given why some of these targets increase by one percent and others increase by ten percent each year.

The LEA has contemplated evaluation of its project in its plans and budget. The applicant will employ an outside evaluator to determine if the project increases family involvement, communication with stakeholders, academic performance, and access to health care.

No specific method of tracking data, plans to scale up the project, build capacity of staff, or improve the results were given.

The applicant shows evidence for parental involvement as it will involve parents and assess needs through focus groups, surveys, and annual site visits.

The LEA describes its decision making process, which will be based on the Focus on Results and Response to Intervention programs to address needs of individual students.

Because the competitive preference priority plan only contains some elements of a high quality plan, and strong evidence is not provided for a project partnership, this area was judged medium.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence that it meets some of the core educational assurance areas in that it will implement a teacher and principal evaluation system in 2014-15 and that it is in a State that has adopted college and career ready standards.

The applicant does not demonstrate that it has a robust data system that provides teacher-student matching and the LEA notes in the application that it is unable to match high school and higher education data.

The LEA does not coherently address how it will build on the core assurance areas in its technology project, with \$4.8 million for unspecified classroom equipment and its reliance on long-term substitute teachers for three years in its kindergarten to Grade 3 project.

Because the applicant does not provide evidence that it meets and coherently addresses all of the core education assurance areas, it does not meet absolute priority 1.

Total	210	82
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