



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1325VA-1 for Wythe County Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative provides helpful background information for understanding the region served, challenges faced and for clarifying the difference in city and county governance in Virginia from other states. The information provides context for the applicant LEAs and the students served.

The application sufficiently provides information as to how each of the four core assurance areas will be met through the consortium support and individual school vision and processes. Additional vision information on how the personalized learning environment will be developed for each child would have improved the response.

Summarized evidence of support for personalized learning from each LEA is provided in an appendix. The proposal also references and attaches the crosswalk document showing the alignment of Virginia's college and career ready standards to the Common Core standards. The consortium recently completed strategic planning and visioning resulting in the top two purposes being: 1) serve as a catalyst for change, and 2) support the development of programs that ensure student success for the 21st Century. These top two purposes support the RTT goals very well as a basis for the applicant's vision.

The narrative lists six key projects to support the vision which include data systems to inform teaching and learning, professional development increase the effectiveness of teachers, and college and career preparation.

The consortium's vision for implementing high quality standards for college and career readiness and graduation preparedness includes increased rigor in English, math and science through raised standards. Virginia is revising the standards and expects to incorporate content from the Common Core.

The consortium will jointly secure a robust data system to provide timely access to relevant information on measurable improvement in student achievement to support each learner's needs, with access by all key stakeholder groups. The new data system will also integrate with other relevant data systems including the Virginia EIMS and longitudinal data system. The students will have access to their data on a light system installed on their personal devices. Key training is envisioned by the applicant to support the implementation of the learning devices and use of the data systems.

Recruitment, development and retention of effective teachers and principals where they are most needed will be supported by dedicated part-time professional development coordinators who will manage the 21st Century e-Teacher training and to coordinate existing PD programs. Participant LEAs seek assistance through networking relationships in attempt to recruit outstanding candidates. The consortium members identify and share successful personnel recruitment strategies, and work with state institutions of higher education to help place certificated educators into open positions. The applicant demonstrates a unique approach to securing effective educators by hosting a consortium Teacher Employment Fair for student networking and candidate selection which they state has been effective in drawing highly qualified candidates. Targeted consortium provided PD for principals is also provided which should increase principal effectiveness.

The applicant sufficiently addresses turnaround of low-achieving schools by referring to the state required annual improvement plan to turn around low-achieving schools which require research-based interventions for at risk students, monitoring of the interventions and keeping records of leadership meetings. If not successful, the schools must follow a school improvement plan using Indistar, a tool for assessing, planning, implementing and monitoring progress toward achieving rapid improvement indicators. All member schools must also follow a six-year improvement plan emphasizing commitment and strategies to increase equity through personalized student support grounded in personal and common tasks based on student academic interests.

Appropriate teamwork and a capacity building leadership director provided through the consortium for the individual LEAs in addition to support from public and private leaders strengthens the group's ability to implement the vision. The consortium further identifies strategies to build stronger capacity to scale the program beyond participating grades levels, and to plan for

sustainability post grant.

The applicant provided substantial additional documentation in the appendices to support the stated reform vision.

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

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Information provided is unclear as to whether or not the applicant's approach to the reform proposal will support high-quality LEA and school-level implementation. The application states that all member LEA students in grades 5-12 will participate in the project but includes 3rd and 4th grade students in the participating students table. All subjects areas will be included in the project. The total number of participating students and the process the applicant used to select the grade bands is unclear. A narrative explanation would have been helpful to clarify the response to this criteria. The applicant provides a list of the schools that will participate in the grant activities but does not clearly indicate the participating student grade levels in the project or enrolled the schools in general.

The applicant also provides a completed table with school demographics showing the number of participating 3-12 grade students, participating students from low-income families, high-need students and participating educators.

Focus is heavily placed on teacher preparation and less so on student involvement throughout the narrative, resulting in an ability to easily judge a high-quality LEA or school-level implementation.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Information provided is insufficient to constitute a high-quality plan to scale up the project beyond the participating schools to help reach the outcome goals. The information addressing the requested criteria was difficult to identify and compile to judge a thorough response. Further, evidence of at least 70% of teacher support was not provided.

The narrative briefly describes the consortium's intent to build stronger capacity to scale the program beyond RTT through five tasks. The tasks include

- document skills and provide performance data to inform the efforts of the project leadership
- extend the PD to all grades to include PreK-4, ensuring all teachers in the member classrooms are supported by the PD program
- transition funds to support the new personalized education
- sustain ongoing initiatives by leveraging public and private

Although briefly addressed, the items are not tied to thoughtful plan to scale up and translate into meaningful reform through specific tasks, timelines and goals, etc.

A brief theory of change is provided. A logic model or graphic would more effectively convey the cause and effect intended through the outlined theory. The theory is that the member LEA's reform will result from focus on transforming student learning that addresses personalized needs that prepare students to successfully graduate and enter college and/or be prepared for their careers. This theory is based on the intent that the approach provides the widest possible environment to positively impact the entire LEA student population.

Several components of a high-quality plan are lacking including a timeline and the parties responsible for the specific activities which decreases the plan credibility. The omission of information showing at least 70% of teacher support across the LEAs (except for the five with teacher association president signatures on MOUs) is a critical lack of information.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application does not provide a strong likelihood for improved student learning and performance and increased equity

The annual performance baseline and goals are provided for the averaged overall student participants and subgroups, but the data are inconsistent without explanation. The targets are contradictory in places, not ambitious in others, overly ambitious in one, and reasonable in some. For example, Grade 5 All Divisions-Averaged math targets increase from 54.85% to 94.37% in one year, Grade 9 math targets drop from 71.43% baseline to 40.48% in SY 2012-13. Grade 11 English is targeted to decrease by the end of the grant period without explanation as to why a negative target was selected.

The overall English reading scores are quite high on average from grades 5-12, which is to be commended and leaves little

room for ambitious improvement. The reading targets are generally achievable, but they are less than ambitious with an approximate gain or loss of 2% over the four year grant project.

Math has adequate room for growth and for ambitious targets, but the targets are erratic, and with the exception of grade 5 which has an overall 41% increase from the baseline data, the targets are achievable but not ambitious in grades 6, 7, 8, and 9. Grades 7 and 8 have performance decrease targets overall. Grades 10 and 11 have ambitious but achievable annual targets.

The targets in Reading will decrease achievement gaps and should be achievable with the proposed interventions and because the gaps are relatively small. The math targets will close the math gap if successful, and the targets are ambitious but achievable with successful implementation of the project.

The graduation rate annual targets are reasonable and achievable across the board.

The college enrollment rates also reasonable and achievable.

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	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides minimal evidence of a track record of success. The only indication of successful implementation of a program advancing student learning and teaching in the past four years is the reference to the history grant. No data or other evidence is provided showing recent increase in achievement rates, graduation rates, college enrollment or other evidence of improved learning outcomes or gap closure.</p> <p>The criteria requesting information on applicant's recent successful ambitious reforms in low-performing schools is not addressed in the application.</p> <p>The LEAs currently provide student assessment data access for students, educators and parents. Each school promotes and encourages the use of the Annual Report Card which contains substantial school-wide data to inform and improve participation.</p> <p>The information presented regarding the state AMO requirements and interventions though interesting, is not responsive to the criteria.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides sufficient evidence that the LEAs have demonstrated generally high levels of transparency in processes, practices and investments. Although the proposal states that all of the required transparency criteria are met by the consortium members, the explanation does not clarify that specific requested categories of information are made transparent. The narrative confirms transparency in processes and investments by providing information regarding taxes, budgets, meetings, elected officials, administrative officials, contracts, audits, public records, academics, and background checks through district websites.</p> <p>The proposal clearly shows that all LEAs make their salary scales public via their website and the newspaper. Instructional staff expenditure as a specific breakout is not addressed (teachers and aides).</p> <p>An appendix document indicates that non-personnel expenditures are made available through budgets posted on school websites, and provides evidence that several LEAs make information available for the per student expenditures. Additional state report information detailing teacher and administration salary averages and starting wages is provided to the public by LEA and by school.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant clearly shows that successful conditions and sufficient autonomy exist under Virginia legal, statutory and</p>		

regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments. The applicant cites the statute providing the governance structure for the consortium and the schools to enact the personalized learning environments. They also noted VDOE support for personalizing and differentiating instruction, and the VDOE support and review letter confirms the expectation that the application is in compliance with State law and policy.

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

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application describes specific opportunities for meaningful engagement in the development of and for the proposal including consortium meetings, meetings with key university, business and organization partners, and regular meetings with instructional leaders from each participating LEA to develop the plan. The individual LEAs also hosted forums to gather ideas codifying and accelerating efforts to support broadening personalized education, data use, and student preparation for college and careers. Webinars were also conducted and recorded for LEAs to share with interested parties. Community members, staff and students participated in the forums resulting in information gathering used for the proposal development and revision.

The applicant notes that Virginia does not allow collective bargaining for public employees, but that five of the 16 LEAs have teacher associations whose representative signed support for the application. Evidence of 70% of teachers from non-association schools is not provided, but support letters and MOUs indicating full participation by each LEA are included.

A plethora of support letters from city/county administrators, institutes of higher education from Virginia and beyond, and the Governor's office are provided which show significant support and offering of resources to the project. The parent support letters are particularly compelling to show involvement and support of the project for their children.

The proposal provides extensive evidence of stakeholder support and engagement in the development of the proposal for all groups with the only exception being unclear evidence of 70% teacher support from each LEA.

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

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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The application notes that each LEA already has a six-year plan in place which includes focus on the implementation of personalized learning plans. The proposal outlines an analysis of the applicant's current status which has already taken place.

The analysis confirms initiatives in place throughout the LEA members that align to the proposal implementation priorities.

The analysis also identified and lists specific member LEA needs which must be satisfied to implement the project.

The logic behind the reform model is addressed throughout the narrative and thoroughly in section C, explaining why the proposed project components should be effective.

Additional information such as a plan to analyze each individual LEAs' capacity for implementing the proposal would have constituted a higher-quality plan.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	19

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides a comprehensive narrative plan to improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment which identifies key staff, equipment, training, data availability and descriptions of diverse and relevant learning opportunities. The proposal identifies specific measures intended to address each of the criteria presented in concept with responsible parties periodically listed. Although the concepts are clear and comprehensive, the timeline provided for specific activities/deliverables with verification of responsible party is sparse. The concepts provided are matched with the criteria requirements below.

Students will better understand what they learn is key to success with increased support and control of their learning objectives and learning path. The proposal notes an objective to empower learners to take ownership of their learning, supported by reformed curriculum and delivery.

Acquisition of the improved data system and use of portfolios will help students, teachers and parents identify and pursue learning goals linked to common core and understand how to measure progress with individual assessment data available through the devices.

Access to deep learning experiences in areas of interest will be gained through multiple stated results. Examples provided include: students solving authentic problems that people care about in the real world, investigations that involve inquiry and knowledge building and developing knowledge sharing products which will be designed, assessed, and redesigned through collaboration and individual roles allowing the student to become an expert in a particular area.

Community and higher education professionals strengthen the plan to improve learning by providing relevant expert access and exposure to diverse cultures and contexts to motivate and deepen learning through participation in student lessons. These relationships will also promote national and international connections, mentoring support and relevancy to the professions represented.

The proposal helpfully describes the necessity of strong private speech and the general lack of private speech accomplishment in student bodies served. Student activities will be provided to practice private speech, which the consortium's students often lack, to help improve critical academic content and develop better communication and real-world (college and career) skills.

The proposal emphasizes the need to personalize in addition to the need to individualize the sequence of content and skill to graduate college and career ready by shifting control into the hands of the learner-teacher-parent instead of being driven by the institution. College and Career Readiness Coordinators will support efforts for ensuring students success beyond high school. This understanding is well placed to ensure life-long education success.

The applicant describes a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments including individual and group learning activities, project based sharing of knowledge and understanding and access to professional content area experts.

Students will have access to high quality aligned digital content created through the partnership with UVA and LearnIT-TeachiT and professional development supporting project-based 6E lessons and activities to develop student understanding of core subject knowledge and use of 21st Century Skills to create products to demonstrate the mastery. The partnerships with many subject matter experts will provide robust opportunities for students to access content, support and interest-based study. The applicant provides a thorough chart of established partner subject matter experts to support teaching and learning. LEAs will continue to provide and acquire existing digital learning resources in addition to teacher-developed curriculum resources. The narrative describes existing access to several high-quality digital learning resources already invested in by the partner LEAs which are aligned to the Virginia SOLs, Career Cluster supportive software to encourage career preparation and resources aligned to the Common Core.

Students will have access to feedback including: individual student data used to determine progress toward standards and personalized learning recommendations based on student current knowledge and skill through their personal learning devices. The devices will have individual data information and the performance standards rubrics loaded to refer back to while working on projects and to articulate use of the assessment language.

The proposal satisfactorily addresses a plan to meet high-need students. Accommodations and quality strategies for high-need students to graduate include exposure to the frameworks for college and career success. Students will explore interest and opportunity beginning in grades 5-6 through high school to solve real-world problems requiring mastery of core subject content to perform analysis and develop solutions. Additionally, mentor teachers will support each student's teacher in developing materials that answer to a specific student's needs and current understanding.

Students will be provided with persistent training mechanisms to use their devices and resources to track and manage learning. Training will include initial deployment and formal and informal support along with student "Tech Buddy" teams to provide peer-centered application and hardware support.

The applicant provides thorough and convincing evidence of concepts to meet all of the criteria. The diagram showing activity alignment to the core personalizing goals is very helpful to understand the logic behind the activity and intended result. Limited timeline detail with responsible party is the only deficit to an otherwise high-quality plan.

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

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium provides a detailed plan for improving the learning and teaching through professional development, training, and professional learning support which will help teachers and leaders improve instruction and increase capacity. Appropriate charts of PD schedules and numbers participating are provided to define the plan. The applicant's response to the criteria is generally sufficient, and thorough regarding teacher training, but lacks detail for best supporting school leadership. A thorough timeline of all teacher and principal training activities, not just the eTeacher courses, across the grant years would also improve the response.

The applicant's plan includes multiple levels of training for educators participate in to earn 21st Century eTeacher certification

or expanded skills, collaborative professional learning network to support personalization of learning and an online Professional Learning Community (PLC). Custom courses will also be developed to train on managing learning devices, the new data systems, college and career readiness approaches, coordinating mentors with real-world learning and how to develop strategies to support personalized learning. The teachers completing the graduate level certification will serve as leaders to their colleagues and will help deliver the non-credit trainings to the rest of the teachers. Mentors from the UVA-SCPS will provide coaching to teachers multiple times each year to calibrate adherence to 21st eTeacher training.

Teachers will be prepared support personalized learning environments through training, professional learning networks and coaching support. They will learn how to better adapt content and instruction for students to engage in common and individual tasks responsive to their needs, interest and learning approaches through the eTeacher courses.

Teachers will have access to the enhanced data systems with individual student assessment data on their mobile devices to frequently measure student progress toward standards

The recently adopted Virginia teacher standards and guidelines for evaluation criteria and performance standards led to the updated teacher evaluation process which is the vehicle to improve teacher and principal practice through feedback provided by evaluation systems and the support, recommendations and interventions needed for improvement. The application notes that the state is providing updated Principal and Superintendent evaluation systems in 2013 and 2014 respectively. All three systems will be aligned to directly gauge each level's impact on student achievement. Current teacher performance data will be available through the SSWS application for teacher and principal review as part of their 21 eTeacher courses.

Teachers will receive access to actionable information to identify optimal learning approaches responsive to individual student needs and interests through the enhanced data system provided through this grant and access to student portfolio information. The data will be gathered through each students portfolio showing areas of need, interest and mastery or lack of mastery.

As noted in the Learning and Teaching section, teachers will have access to high-quality learning resources, including digital, aligned to standards along with the training and support required to develop custom high-quality learning resources. The narrative specifically describes current access to several high-quality digital learning resources previously invested in by the partner LEAs which are aligned to the Virginia SOLs, Career Cluster supportive software to encourage career preparation and resources aligned to the Common Core.

The student portfolio housed on the personal electronic devices along with coaches and the collaborative professional learning network sufficiently provide the process to share and match student needs with resources and approaches.

School leadership will also have access to evaluation information to assess, improve individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate for continuous improvement through the new evaluation system and through the existing TPEC system.

Principals will receive the same training, systems and practices to continuously improve school progress to increase achievement and close achievement gaps as teachers receive. Additional, leader-specific training and support opportunities would be helpful to strengthen their ability to lead their staff through this major reform effort.

The applicant references the evaluation systems as the method to increase the effectiveness of teachers and principals. The proposal does not otherwise provide high-quality plan for increasing students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. Information regarding distribution of highly effective teachers and principals to hard-to-staff schools and specialty areas is not addressed. The full criteria are not addressed in the applicant's response and key elements of a high-quality plan are omitted (timeline, specific activities tied to goals and responsible parties) resulted in the mid-range score

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal outlines a policy and infrastructure environment that is supportive of the proposed project and describes a basic plan to support project implementation. The significant missing plan element is the timeline with project implementation support activities noted with assigned responsible parties.

Consortium governance structure as explained is supported by state funding and developed to join regional LEAs together and

with higher education institutions to support and build capacity in the member schools. The consortium is noted to play a significant support and coordination role in the success of the project including hosting the new data systems, coordinating the professional development and PLCs across the LEAs. The narrative indicates the state has a single school district, with the LEAs being "divisions" of the state district. The Consortium as described is a key supporting layer in the success of 16 varied LEAs gaining the capacity to embark on a reform project of this magnitude.

The proposal describes sufficient flexibility and autonomy for LEAs and school leadership teams to develop appropriate schedules, staffing, and budgets. Leaner LEA central offices and overall commitment to learning provides a favorable environment for implementing personalized learning environments in the schools.

The consortium plan for students to demonstrate mastery at multiple times in multiple ways is to manage the learning resources, student portfolios containing evidence of learning and through the enhanced data system accessible through the student and teacher electronic devices. The students will advance based on mastery, not "time on task" and earn credit based on mastery; a key shift in personalized and student-driven education necessary for the long-term success of personalized education reform.

The proposal defines support and training to provide or customize learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including those with special needs will be provided through the eTeacher courses and access to varied digital learning resources.

Insufficient information is provided to understand the sufficiency of this training or other supports available to fully adapt and make accessible the personalized education for students with disabilities and English learners, a key aspect of the RTT-D program.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal briefly explains that students, parents, and educators have access to information important to inform the learning process and to interact with it in meaningful ways. Each of these stakeholders will have access to the new data system and the student portfolios in and out of school with increased access via the personal learning devices. The narrative does not provide a clear picture as to how and when the specific activities and infrastructure supports will be provided, enhanced or trained for success.

Sufficient appropriate technical support is explained for teachers and students through the increased technical support, the consortium technical support, course facilitators, and the student peer support and learning communities. Parental technical support options are not described in the narrative but would be critical to increasing parent engagement and involvement in their child's technology-heavy education information.

The proposal states that the new information technology systems will use SIF interoperability framework for the use of data sharing between institutions and to integrate data from legacy systems. The applicant does not address whether or not the systems allow parent and students to export info in open data format to use in other learning systems.

Although the applicant describes the infrastructure and processes planned to provide support and resources to personalize learning access to when and where needed, several of the required elements of a high-quality plan are not presented including a timeline with activities and responsible parties noted.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides sufficient strategies for conducting a generally rigorous data collection process, but a merely satisfactory evaluation process. The narrative provided extensive information on what data will be collected through described methods. Additional explanation regarding how the collected information will be used to evaluate, and who will consider the information to make adjustments would strengthen the response to best understand the continuous improvement process design. Omitting this information was not fully responsive to the criteria.

Timely and regular feedback on progress toward goals will be accomplished through direct observation of implementation

phases, teacher surveys, teaching observations, interviews with project leaders and key officials. The evaluator will begin developing evaluation instruments immediately after grant award to allow for timely initial feedback. The narrative states that regular reports and assessments will be provided to key leaders.

The evaluator will collect information early and frequently for opportunities for corrections and improvements during and after grant. Specifically noted is the chance to assess the efficacy of the initial cohort of teachers response to completing the graduate courses in summer 2013, to make adjustments before the majority of additional teachers will be trained. Specific highly relevant project areas are noted for in-depth analysis by the evaluator. This early intervention design is well-designed to make early improvements.

The applicant listed multiple methods to be used to monitor, measure and evaluate project components including direct observations, surveys, interviews, inspection of project records, and analysis of collected data through the various information technology systems. Of interest is the note in the application that the evaluator's past data system implementation experience may improve the process for this project.

No information is provided explaining how the applicant intends to publicly share information such as investments in PD, technology and staff which was detrimental to the overall score.

The table with the timeline, activities, deliverables and responsible party is extremely helpful to understand the evaluatory process envisioned.

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

5

1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This criteria is not directly addressed in the proposal; no strategies are indicated. Opportunities for ongoing communication and engagement with internal stakeholder inferred from the narrative in general include communication opportunities through direct teaching observation, interviews with project leaders and key officials and when regular reports and assessments will be provided to key leaders.

No strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with students or external stakeholders are identified.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative provides the rationale for selecting the applicant's proposed measures in sufficient detail; 12 performance measures are provided, covering all required areas. Although provided as required, the targets overall are not ambitious.

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 is described in section (E)(1) and in the description box for each performance measure.

The applicant also describes the process for review and improvement of the measures over time if insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

Annual targets proposed appear achievable across the board. Some are ambitious; most strive for minimal gains over the life of the grant and could be more ambitious. Measures with minimal increases targeted across the life of the grant include: access to effective teacher approx. 2%; SVPEC Average Pass Rate on Virginia SOL Mathematics 8 Assessment approx. 2%; SVPEC Average Pass Rate on Virginia SOL Reading Grade 8 Assessment approx 2% except for low-income students which is more ambitious; Average Daily Attendance for grade 5-6 calculated .02% increase overall. The Improved On-time Graduation Rate for SVPEC consortium schools overall gain target is minimal, but reasonably so since affecting on-time graduation rates is a slow process.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Specific strategies to measure the impact of RTT investments are not directly addressed in the narrative. Some components will be measured through one of the stated evaluation goals: 1) measure teacher impact, Teacher impact will be measured by growth in knowledge and skills by connecting the PD provided through a logic chain ultimately resulting in impact on classroom teaching and learning outcomes. This strategy should verify the effectiveness of the professional development

investment. Specific evaluation of technology, community partner assessment, compensation reform, or other investments are not addressed.

Further, the specifically requested elements to constitute a high-quality plan are not provided.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant clearly identifies funds to support project and whether the funds are requested through RTT or an identified alternate source.</p> <p>The requested RTT funds are reasonable and sufficient to develop and implement the project. All costs requests have justifications as to the quantity and amount and include any state mandated limits/requirements.</p> <p>Throughout the narrative and within the budget narrative the applicant provides a clear rationale for investment and priorities of expenses requested.</p> <p>The applicant did not identify one time investments versus ongoing operational costs as requested which lowered an otherwise thorough response to the criteria.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a thoughtful sustainability plan supported by the narrative declaration that the sustainability plan is grounded in the commitment of the LEAs to transform their current approaches to funding operations to ensure critical continuation needs are funded.</p> <p>Key aspects leading to likely success of the sustainability plan include hiring of a Sustainability and Development Director to begin securing funding as soon as the grant begins, rather than when it ends. Several standard and innovative investment programs and partnerships will be created for parents and the community to engage in to offset technology needs when the grant expires. LEA redirection of legacy funds will help provide continued self-funding. Professional development is designed to be capacity-building and with lasting knowledge to carry far beyond the grant period. The implementation plan is structured with sustainability in mind and will be rolled out in research-based stages for lasting affect. Last, the commitment of the LEA leadership and the Consortium leadership to institutionalize the reform efforts and prioritize funds post-grant should provide for imbedded results and re-directed money where most needed.</p> <p>The narrative describes support from the State for the SVPEC's work and advocacy for the schools indicating support for sustainability fundraising efforts. Significant examples of local government leader and community member support letters are provided, with commitments for financial support as applicable.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium describes existing sustainable partnerships with institutes of higher education, several which are members of the consortium itself, and with support through the Appalachian Prosperity Project (APP). APP brings a members from public and private business, health providers, IHEs, and commissions created to serve the SVPEC region, of which an extensive list was provided in the narrative. The student benefits received from these partnerships includes increased support for college awareness and attendance, and support for community health, economic prosperity, and integrated education, health and business development.</p> <p>The application appropriately identifies 12 population-level desired results including educational and family/community results designed to support all aspects of student and family education, health and well-being. The applicant defines five ambitious</p>		

yet achievable annual performance measures to improve education and social-emotional and behavioral results for students, families, teachers, schools, parents and the community.

The IHE partnerships provides opportunities including college fairs, academic advising, and service learning activities for deeper and ongoing engagement for students, teachers, parents and guidance personnel. The APP partnership provides a systems approach to integrate education with other services addressing social-emotional and behavioral needs through their member organizations. Integration of social-emotional and college and career-ready support with school programs is clearly defined by the previously-noted activities.

The narrative does not provide information on how the partnership will complete the following criteria:

- describe how the selected indicators will be tracked
- use the data to target its resources, particularly for students with special challenges
- strategy to scale model beyond participating students

How will the partnership build staff capacity to:

- assess needs and assets of participating students
- identify and inventory the needs of school and community
- create process and infrastructure to select, implement and evaluate supports for student needs
- assess progress in implementing plan to maximize impact.

The limited response to the criteria resulted in the partial credit award.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The narrative coherently and sufficiently addressed how it will build on the four core educational assurance areas to create personalized learning environments to ultimately prepare students for college or careers. The applicant provides a research-based professional development plan to thoroughly support the education staff in their transition from traditional teaching to serving as guides to the students as students take increased control over their own progress and learning. The applicant's plan should accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the personalized needs of each student.

Total	210	145
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A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan is submitted by a consortium (SVPEC) of 16 school districts in SW Virginia. The SW Virginia districts are rural; economic and social gaps exist between them and the northern districts of the state.</p> <p>The vision of SVPEC is to provide equal and optimal opportunity for every student to achieve intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth, to ensure that each individual is equipped to communicate effectively and has the competence and capacity for both the workplace and higher education and the confidence to make creative and constructive decisions. Through implementation of its vision, the consortium aims to demonstrate that personalized learning and measurable growth are commensurable. Its objective is to transform the districts in its group into a model for technology-based K-12 personalized instruction that increases students' preparedness for college and career success.</p> <p>The applicant has set out a clear and achievable vision that builds on the four educational assurance areas to increase student achievement and deepen learning. It plans to achieve this by improving the quality of teachers and principals, focusing on rigorous academic standards, incorporating content from the Common Core, and building a data system that effectively informs teachers and principals regarding student growth.</p> <p>The vision emphasizes its commitment to having in place highly qualified teachers and principals to support student achievement and fully outlines how the districts will focus on recruiting, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals - especially where they are needed most needed. It plans to increase teachers' knowledge and skills through professional development so every student has access to highly qualified teachers to support their learning. The vision focuses specifically on turning around the region's lowest performing schools by providing interventions for those students most at risk of not passing the Standards of Learning Assessment.</p> <p>It plans to achieve its vision through adopting personalized learning devices and curriculum development and integration, professional development, focusing on college and career preparation, using data to inform teaching and learning, ensuring that the project is administered for sustainability</p> <p>The applicant has set out a clear, coherent and achievable vision that builds on the four educational assurance areas to increase student achievement and deepen learning and focus on career and college-readiness.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan targets all G5-12 students in the 16 district consortium, with details provided also of students currently in G3/4, as they will be part of the project in future years. A list of all participating schools is provided.</p> <p>The total number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, participating educators is described clearly within the tables provided.</p> <p>Within the consortium of districts, the applicant has outlined a high quality approach to implementing the proposal across all schools by including of all G5-12 students.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan provides a coherent model for realizing significant gains in student achievement, and in particular addressing the needs of high risk students based on aligning system-wide processes across the consortium; using human and fiscal resources to recruit and develop and support high quality educators; providing targeted support to schools, in particular those who are not meeting the state standards, using data-driven processes for information to drive instruction, and designing and delivering a high-quality curriculum that addresses the needs of all children. The key goals and rationale of the plan are clearly stated. The activities, deliverables, and responsible parties are evident. A timeline in which to coordinate processes and routines to attain the project goals will be developed. Also evident is a plan to extend the project beyond the G5-12 focus to include extending the professional development initiative to all grade to include preK-12.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The extent to which the applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal (e.g., schools, grade bands, or subject areas)</p>		

will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal, including—

- (a) A description of the process that the applicant used or will use to select schools to participate. The process must ensure that the participating schools (as defined in this notice) collectively meet the competition’s eligibility requirements;
- (b) A list of the schools that will participate in grant activities (as available); and
- (c) The total number of participating students (as defined in this notice), participating students (as defined in this notice) from low-income families, participating students (as defined in this notice) who are high-need students (as defined in this notice), and participating educators (as defined in this notice). If participating schools (as defined in this notice) have yet to be selected, the applicant may provide approximate numbers.

a) The applicant provides detailed numerical evidence of current student performance data on summative state-wide assessments for each grade level that participates in the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments in reading/communication and mathematics (G5-8; G11-12) across the consortium. Data have been disaggregated into sub-groups. It based its overall consortium growth projections on Virginia School Improvement Planning Requirements. It has provided detailed district by district reports in the Appendix. While a plethora of tabular evidence has been provided, the absence of a brief summary narrative reduces the coherence.

(b) Overall, current achievement rates in reading/communication are high, but gaps exist between students with disabilities, ELL students, economically disadvantaged students, Hispanic students and African American students. Overall achievement in mathematics is lower, with similar gap groups. Growth projected over the RTTT period clearly indicates a significant yet achievable reduction in the achievement gaps in identified subgroups in all grade levels and a growth in overall achievement.

(c) The plan indicates a Virginia average graduation rate of 82% with some divisions within the consortium above and some below the state average. Graduation rates are not disaggregated into sub-groups. The plan projects a modest and achievable increase in graduation rates over and beyond the RTTT period. The proposed increase of 1.5-5% across the districts cannot be described as ambitious.

(d) The plan indicates college enrollment is currently at 51% overall and projects realistic growth in college attendance of all sub-groups over and beyond the RTTT period. African American, Hispanic and low-income students have the lowest college attendance rates.

While a plethora of tabular evidence has been provided, the absence of a brief summary narrative makes it difficult to connect the projections to the vision. A connection to the district contexts within the consortia, for instance, may have helped explain why the targeted increases in graduation rates are not more ambitious. In addition, while the current high levels of proficiency in reading (90%+) compared to the lower proficiency levels in math (40%+) are explained in part in section B (new statewide math exam which is more difficult), a new statewide examination in reading will come online in 2012-13, and so some explanation of why the reading proficiency levels projections are still forecast to be so much higher than math would help put this discrepancy in context.

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	0

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant failed to provided any evidence of the extent to which each LEA has demonstrated evidence of advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching over the past 4 years. No descriptions, charts or graphs, raw student data, were provided to demonstrate the divisions within the consortium's ability to

(a) Improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps , including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates;

(b) Achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools (as defined in this notice);

(c) Make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

The specifics of this item were not addressed.		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Comprehensive evidence is provided that indicates clearly that all consortium members fully meet items a-d with regard to transparency.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The reforms proposed in the proposal are a statutory responsibility for each school to carry out according Virginia State statute. With regard to district level, as this is a consortium proposal, it may be assumed that each member will promote successful conditions and provide sufficient autonomy for in the schools to implement personal learning environments.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement in Formulating the Plan. To gather ideas for the RTT proposal, the instructional offices of the 16 participating districts held a series of forums. Two informational webinars were recorded for each LEA to share with administrators, teachers, staff and other interested parties. The purpose of the webinars was to discuss best practices and approaches to involve each LEA in formulating specific objectives for the RTTT proposal. While it is stated that the forums were attended by community members, staff and students, no specific numbers are provided. Their responses were used to formulate the proposal. No evidence is provided as to any opportunity for stakeholders to have input into revision of the proposal after it was initially formulated.</p> <p>Collective Bargaining. No evidence is provided in the narrative as to whether all or any of the 16 districts has a collective bargaining agreement. No communication of support from either the collective bargaining association or all the districts' teachers is provided.</p> <p>Letters of Support: The consortium has provided over 50 high quality letters of support from local civic and community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, in particular from the University of Virginia, and from all the participating districts. From key stakeholders, such as parents, two signed 'form' letters were included. There are no letters of support from students or from student organizations.</p>		
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the applicant lists the initiatives that are currently in place throughout the consortium and identifies some of the needs that schools have, it provides no evidence of how these needs were ascertained across the 16 districts or of the steps the consortium took to ascertain where specific gaps lay. It does not describe the collection of any data or a plan to collect data. No evidence is provided to demonstrate the areas in which students are struggling and in particular students at risk of not being successful. Analysis of its status in implementing personalized learning environments is not provided.</p> <p>This section does not provide a high quality plan for analyzing current status in implementing personalized learning environments. Absent are goals, activities, a timeline, and responsible parties.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant acknowledges the role of parents and teachers in supporting students.</p> <p>The applicant states that it's important to have "clearly established goals for our students". It does not mention the process of</p>		

goal setting and the student's role in setting goals, but it does emphasize the need for ownership and putting control into the hands of the learner-teacher-parent triad. While it does not specifically state how teachers and parents will help students connect gaining knowledge to achieving goals will ensure that parent, it does emphasize the need for students to apply and use the knowledge they gain.

Strong evidence is provided that beginning in G5-6 and all through high school students will be introduced to the frameworks for success in college and career. In addition, a .5FTE College and Career-ready coordinator will be employed in each district. Students will have access to community experts to act as mentors and experience with business and industry to provide real-world experience on how to apply their learning in the world of work. A thorough plan is in place to create a better understanding of job opportunities and the needs for business and for further education.

The applicant has clearly addressed how it will involve students in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest through using personal devices to create products that require a deep understanding and application of knowledge.

The applicant explains that personal devices provide the opportunity for students to 'visit' and multitude of places and converse with a multitude of people and to connect with experts in the field.

The applicant addresses the role of the teacher, the learner, curriculum and technology in providing the learner the opportunity to gain skills in critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving as well as working in partnership with other students, in teams as participants and in dyads as coaches.

The applicant has detailed a clear method of personalizing content 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. A variety of innovative and high-quality instructional approaches and environments that integrate high quality learning are proposed. The LMS will allow students and their parents and teachers to receive ongoing and up-to-date individualized feedback on progress and guide learning direction based on students' current knowledge and skills, a capability which is just as important for high-need students as it is for those who achieve at a higher level.

The applicant has fully addressed the criteria of this category. The plan includes goals activities, timelines, resources and responsible parties.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a high-quality plan that clearly describes an approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to effectively meet students' academic and career-readiness needs. All teachers will receive extensive professional development on how to implement personalized learning environments and support student progress to be on track to graduate on time. PD will begin as soon as the RTTT proposal acceptance is received and will include a train the trainer approach to develop in-district teacher-leaders. Teacher PD will also include training on how to adapt content and instruction and provide opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks that match their academic needs and interests. Teachers will also be provided training on using data to inform teaching and learning as well as on how to use the new data management system so that they use student data to identify optimal learning approaches and provide ongoing feedback.

While teacher professional development and training is well document, less evidence is provided on the training principals and school leaders will receive on how to use the teacher evaluation system to assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement.

Although the applicant has provided strong evidence of teacher professional development no direct evidence is provided on how the consortium will increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. There is no mention of staffing in including in hard-to-staff schools, in subjects such as mathematics and science special education. However, because the applicant has provided a plan that clearly describes a high quality approach to help educators improve instruction and increase their capacity to effectively meet students' academic and career-readiness needs, minimal points were deducted for the lack of specific evidence related to these two areas.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Consortium governance structure is comprised of a board of governors that is made up of the superintendent from each of the 16 districts. To achieve the reforms requires much coordination and cooperation among all district offices. The consortium has set goals collaboratively so that each ELA has a shared understanding of the flexibility and autonomy needed to provide needed resources and support to its schools and that there is a clear definition of what principals are responsible for and what central office is responsible for with regard to school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school-level budgets

The applicant provides a comprehensive description of how students will have the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic and to demonstrate mastery of standards in many different ways. Less evident is a description of the adaptability and accessibility of learning resources and instructional practices to all students, in particular to students with disabilities and English learners.

The governance and organizational structure is such that it will allow full implementation of the project throughout the Consortium. A thorough plan is evident for the flexible ways in which students demonstrate mastery of standards. However, access and adaptability for English learners and students with disabilities is not evident.

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

10

5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

While it is clear that all participating students and educators, regardless of income, will have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources in school, it is unclear if students will have access out of school, and unclear what access parents will have to devices and content. Additionally, if students are permitted to take the devices home, access will depend on home Internet connection which many low income parents may not have. With regard to technical support, while students may have technical support and peer-support during the day, a helpline is not mentioned for after school hours.

It is clear that the new data system will allow students, parents and teachers up-to-date access to student grades; however, it is not clear if information technology systems will allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems. The LEAs and schools in the consortium will use centralized interoperable data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Extensive data will be collected and analyzed and procedures monitored. However, a timeline is only provided for the first year of the evaluation project and it indicates only preparatory work for collecting data – no data collection is described, and no timeline for review of data to provide regular feedback on progress towards project goals and opportunities for improvements. No clear approach to continuously improve the plan is provided. In addition, no strategy is provided as to how information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top will be publicly shared.

Thus, evidence of a strategy for a rigorous improvement process over the entire course of the RTTT is lacking.

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

5

0

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

No strategies are provided for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders regarding improvement of the plan.

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

5

4

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a table that identifies achievable performance measures that meet the requirements for performance measures. The outcomes for #s of highly effective teachers seem less than ambitious with a projected increase of less than 4% in #s of highly effective teachers over the grant period. Given the consortium's commitment to professional development and teacher evaluation, this projection seems a little low. It has provided data tables for each measure showing how data will be disaggregated (when it is available) across the sub groups. Evident is a

thoughtful rationale provided for the choice of measures and an indication of how the chosen measure will provide rigorous timely and formative information regarding the plan, but no evidence of how the consortium will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has addressed how it will evaluate the effectiveness of PD and activities that use technology, but has not addressed how it will use the information collected to more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results. No strategies for improving the plan are provided.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Although the budget identifies the Race to the Top funds that will support the project, it does not identify any dollar amount from any other source.

The budget appears reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal, with the exception of no budget items mentioned for extra technical support for upkeep and maintenance of the devices across the 16 districts. The budget provides a clear description of all of the funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal, including total revenue. It identifies funds that will be used for one-time investments as well as those that will be used for ongoing operational costs to be incurred during and after the grant period.

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

10

6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Although the applicant provides several possibilities for raising extra funds to sustain the project, there is no evidence of a high quality plan that will support the updating and upgrading of all the computing devices that will be required at least on a 4-yearly basis. This is a major cost.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided an extensive list of organizations with whom it plans to partner but has provided no specific details of how these partnerships will be structured. The applicant has identified several population-level desired results for students and their families in the consortium of LEAs that align with and support the applicant's broader Race to the Top – District proposal that include both education outcomes, in particular with regard to career and college readiness and family and community supports. However, details of the selected indicators and how it will track them are sparse as is evidence of how the data will be collected and used to improve results over time. There is no narrative provided to describe how the partnership and LEA or consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating schools to assess the needs and assets of participating students, schools and community and to create a shared decision-making process. No annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level are described.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has clearly addressed how it will create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students. The plan comprehensively addresses measures to accelerate student achievement, to deepen student learning across sub-groups and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. It provides clear guidelines as to how it will increase the effectiveness of educators through extensive professional development. The applicant has met absolute priority 1.</p>		
Total	210	150



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #1325VA-3 for Wythe County 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 Southwest Virginia Public Education Consortium (SVPEC) proposal set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision built on its work in four core assurance areas. The proposal vision and priorities addressed three of the core educational assurance explicitly but its response to turning around lowest-performing was less well defined for reasons noted in later sections. It did articulate 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 was sparse.</p> <p>SVPEC was composed of 16 districts. The RTTD proposal was designed to serve 34,655 5th-12th grade students and their 3,429 teachers, administrators, and school-based technology support personnel. Fifty-five percent of the students come from low income families. The proposal was designed to “transform a consortium of school divisions in southwest Virginia into the national model for technology-based, personalized K-12 instruction that increases students’ preparedness for college and career success. We will show that personalized learning and measurable growth can go hand in hand, and that, when teachers have the ideal resources for customizing instruction. new tools of learning can lead to substantial gains for children who would otherwise remain at risk of being left behind.”</p> <p>The proposal had three specific foci:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of teachers and school leadership personnel; • Providing assistance to school divisions in meeting Standards of Accreditation and to teachers in helping students meet Standards of Learning; • Helping school divisions and teachers apply technology in support of instructional goals and student performance. <p>They intended to achieve their vision through six identified projects, which included:</p> <p>Project1: Personal Learning Devices & Curriculum Integration</p> <p>Project 2: Professional Development</p>		

Project 3: College & Career Preparation

Project 4: Data Informed Teaching & Learning Project

Project 5: Subject / Content Development & Integration

Project 6: Project Administration & Sustainability

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal earned high points because it provided the following required components.

(a) The process that the applicant used for participation was to select all students in 5-12th grade students in all schools in the 16 participating districts to part of the proposal. The process ensured that the participating schools collectively met the competition's eligibility requirements as 55% were high need studnets. The RTTD proposal would serve 34,655 5th-12th grade students and their 3,429 teachers, administrators, and school-based technology support personnel in the 16 school districts.

(b) A list and the demographics of the 169 school sites that will participate in grant activities was included in the proposal.

(c) The RTTD proposal would serve 34,655 5th-12th grade students and their 3,429 teachers, administrators, and school-based technology support personnel. Fifty-five percent of the students come from low income families.

The proposal in different parts of the proposal defined of tasks, deliverables, persons responsible and performance indicators.

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

10

8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The application included a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal would be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. They intended to scale up through making sure the existing program was successful and then using that success move the RTTD program down to K-4 using district funds and seeking additional funding.

Specifically, they planned to implement the scale-up through the following strategies:

- "Actively managing performance to ensure goals are met
- Tactfully managing efforts to improve teacher and leader effectiveness
- Focusing support for school turnaround
- Using student performance data and new methods of documenting skills
- Extending the professional development initiative to all grades to include K-4
- Ensuring that all new and/or returning teachers to SVPEC member institution classrooms are supported by the professional development program
- Transitioning of funds from traditional approaches to instruction, professional development and instructional support to the new approach to personalized instruction
- Sustaining the ongoing initiatives that are part of this reform by leveraging public and private resources."

Two points were deducted because the plan had insufficient detail or examples of savings and possible external funding resources when they attempted to include K-4.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

SVPEC vision was likely to result in increased equity as demonstrated by targets that brought them closer to where state averages were today. In most cases the projections increased achievement in each target area by a modest amount. The proposal earned middle points because the targets were achievable but not ambitious.

a. Performance on summative assessments (proficiency status and growth).

The data provided showed very high levels of student proficiency in reading ranging from 90.91% in grade 8 to 96.36% in grade 6. With those extremely high performance proficiencies, SVPEC future goals were to raise and maintain proficiency in the 94% range. In mathematics base proficiency scores were much lower and ranged from 40.48% in the 8th grade to 71.43% in grade nine. Growth projections in four years ranged from 4 to 8 percent. The growth ranges for mathematics were achievable but not ambitious.

b. Decreasing achievement gaps

SVPEC projected decreasing achievement gaps goals equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the LEA(s). They expected to decrease achievement rates by approximately 3% to 17% over 4 years. Those differences in expectations were reflective of lower base scores in some districts. Those projections would put minorities' achievement close to state student's totals.

c. Graduation rates (as defined in this notice).

Present graduation rates in the 16 districts ranged from 67% to 90 percent. The projected increases in graduation rates were achievable but not ambitious. The projected increases were about 1% per year over the 16 districts with some higher and some lower. The modest projected increases were surprising given that they had carefully thought out strategies for improving graduation rates in a document titled "Graduation Rate Goals."

d. College enrollment rates.

Projected college enrollment rates increased approximately 1.5 % per year. That made those projections achievable but not ambitious.

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	0
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: The SVPEC proposal received zero points because it did not requirements of this section. The specific requirements for this section were> The extent to which each LEA has demonstrated evidence of— A clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching, including a description, charts or graphs, raw student data, and other evidence that demonstrates the applicant's ability to— (a) Improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps (as defined in this notice), including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), and college enrollment (as defined in this notice) rates; (b) Achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) or in its low-performing schools (as defined in this notice); and (c) Make student performance data (as defined in this notice) available to students, educators (as defined in this notice), and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal stated and provided examples about how each LEA demonstrated evidence of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular

K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. Using examples, the proposal provided descriptions of the extent to which the applicant already made available to the public, the four categories of school-level expenditures. It, also, provided Internet addresses where the data could be found. Because reviewers were not allowed to pursue evidence beyond the proposal, verifications were not made.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

SVPEC earned high points because it provided evidence of Successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant’s proposal. Specifically it indicated that:

- Under Virginia Statute 22.1-350 the SVPEC and its member school divisions have the statutory responsibility to carry out the school reforms put forth in this proposal.
- These reforms are informed by the *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* edited by Herbert Walberg (c.2007) of the Academic Development Institute. The handbook can be found on the Virginia Department of Education web site under its school improvement resources

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

10

3

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Stakeholder engagement and support earned low points because information provided was insufficient to demonstrate that this expectation was addressed in a quality manner. There was a great amount of documentation that administrators from the 16 districts and their higher education partners participated in the planning. However, there was no evidence that other stakeholders were engaged in the development of the proposal or how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback. The RTTD expectations and the responses are noted below to document the low score.

While, some districts did have collective bargaining, those districts that do, did not provide documentation from teacher organizations or individual teacher of support for the proposal. Points were deducted because there was no evidence that at least 70 percent of teachers from participating schools support the proposal. Because teachers are so critical to the success of the program, indicators of their enthusiasm and support were critical and would have made the proposal much stronger.

The proposal had over fifty letters from district administrator, political officials, parents, civic organizations, potential partners including numerous from higher education officials. Two letters from parents were provided but they spoke to potential impact on students and not planning participation. Unfortunately, there appeared to be no letters from teacher organizations or individual teachers.

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

5

3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

SVPEC received middle points for analysis of needs and gaps. It found the needs stated below but it was not a high-quality plan for how it addressed those issues. There was very little examination of curriculum and educational resources strengths and weaknesses. There appeared to be no analysis of common student or teacher needs. The proposal did not provide information on what components of the needs analysis would be addressed by the RTTD proposal. The needs found were:

- “Guide and support instructional staff in the schools to align LEA curriculum and instructional content with an emphasis on personalized learning and data-driven instructional approaches.
- Develop teacher, student and community adoption of the use of personal learning devices to facilitate the shift in instructional practices
- Develop and nurtures teaching practice that support rigorous and authentic real-world learning, that increases student engagement, and uses data analysis at the classroom level including formative and summative assessments.
- Expand the goal for every student to have equal opportunities to be capable of pursuing a college education to prepare them for 21st Century careers to improve the quality of life throughout the Southwest Virginia region.
- Emphasize the application of subject matter knowledge through project-based experiences that demonstrates analytical abilities.
- Transforms the traditional approach of public education towards a sustained embrace and support for reform after Race to the Top support expires.”

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

SVPEC earned medium points because the necessary elements for developing a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready were found scattered in the response. A high quality plan required at minimums:: definition of tasks, products/deliverables, performance indicators, person(s) responsible and timelines. Also a high quality plan required addressing an 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 (as defined in this notice) and college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice) and accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs. Those components were instead delivered in a narrative fashion with no measurable outcomes.

The SVPEC proposal indicated that they would develop a personalized, technology intensive education plan that relied on each student having a personal learning device and the districts use of management systems that tracked each student's progress. The specific devices had not been determined. The proposal noted quite correctly "that while personalization is not precisely the same as individualization, both are critically important reforms in our proposal. Personal learning requires the active direction of the student; individualization lets our schools tailor the curriculum to scaled assessments of interest and abilities. The difference between individualization and personalization lies in the concept of control. Putting control into the hands of the learner-teacher-parent creates ownership and allows the emphasis to be on the needs of the student, not the school."

The 21st Century project learning approach focused on:

- "Centrality to the curriculum
- Driving questions that lead students to encounter central concepts
- Investigations that involve inquiry and knowledge building
- Processes that are student driven, rather than teacher driven
- Authentic problems that people care about in the real world

The content was to be designed from the framework provided in *Virginia's College and Career Readiness Initiative* and content expert's suggestions. The instructional design incorporated UVA 21st Century project-based and used 6 E lesson plans and activities structures. Quality explanations of both were provided in significant detail and were appropriate to the RTTD proposed project.

Points were deducted because the proposal provided insufficient information on how they would:

- Help students understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals;
- Have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning;
- Provide accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need
- Provide ongoing and regular feedback
- 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	16
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

SVPEC earned medium points for teaching and leading. Most of the criticisms of the proposal's response to section (C) (1) were true for section (C)(2). The response neither was structured as a high-quality plan or structured to follow the outline in the criterion. As such, it was extremely difficult to find the required data.

The components of the plan that were found in the proposal were of high quality and appropriate for a projected that targeted 3,249 teachers, administrators and in-school technology support staff in 16 districts located in an Appalachian Mountains

setting. It relied heavily on on-line courses. The plan was “an adaptation of the 21st Century e-Teacher initiative created by the non-profit organization LearnIT-TeachIT. 21st Century e-Teacher has helped educators to engage their students through individualized instruction in project-based learning experiences that have been shown to improve academic performance. It would be “deployed in concert with the University of Virginia’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies (UVA - SCPS), through their 21e-Teacher Graduate Series and with the support of the University of Virginia’s Center for the Liberal Arts (UVACLA), SVPEC teachers and school leaders will become connected through a meaningful learning network that produces an ongoing collaborative community in the creation of a personalized approach to teaching and learning.”

Given the isolation of many of the SVPEC districts and how small some are, the idea of building support networks across districts with job-alike responsibilities make sense. The problem with this “all eggs in one basket approach” is that it assumes all teachers will respond positively to on-line learning.

The plan provided a phasing in and timelines for the effort that appeared appropriate for districts that were presently low in implementation of technology-intensive, personalized learning. The following is the plan for professional development implementation.

Educators will participate over the four-year project in two capacities; 1/3 of all participating grade 5-12 teachers will build their skills as 21st Century Master e-Teachers through the four UVA – SCPS graduate courses, and the remaining 2/3 of all teachers in SVPEC 5-12 grades will progress through three non-credit professional development courses. Each school building will also have an administrator and instructional support specialist selected to participate in the UVA – SCPS graduate series. Participants in the UVA–SCPS version will be selected from an application / recruitment process to identify educators who are determined to become the ‘early adopters’ of change in their schools along with unique skills to incorporate in the ongoing development of the sustainable training program. The UVA – SCPS courses are delivered in four, ten-week sessions, while the non-credit courses are conducted in a set of three, five week sessions. Upon completion of the four UVA SCPS courses, participants will be certified as 21st Century Master e-Teachers and will be prepared to apply to facilitate a non-credit course for other SVPEC educators. When selected and assigned to facilitate a non-credit course, those 21st Century Master e-Teachers will receive a stipend to cover their additional work-load assignment.

The four new courses are planned to enhance the capacity of SVPEC teachers to implement and realize the six projects of the plan. They include new courses on:

1. Developing and using data informed teaching and learning in the classroom, with specific details on the use of the newly developed student information and electronic portfolio systems;
2. Deployment, use and instructional approaches for personal learning devices, with specific details on supporting and enhancing the use of the devices distributed in SVPEC LEA’s;
3. Recruiting, managing and using mentors and community professionals in the classroom to support ‘real-world’ connections to the curriculum, and;
4. Developing personalized learning strategies to reach every learner, with a specific focus on differences in learning styles, student-driven participation in developing the learning process, technology access, varied learning environments, teacher and parent development programs.

Points were deducted because some required materials were treated sparsely or not all. Missing topics were::

- How to improve teachers’ and principals’ practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEA’s teacher and principal evaluation systems (as defined in this notice), including frequent feedback on individual and collective effectiveness, as well as by providing recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement.
- High-quality learning resources (e.g., instructional content and assessments), including digital resources, as appropriate, that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice), and the tools to create and share new resources; and
- Processes and tools to match student needs (see Selection Criterion (C)(2)(b)(i)) with specific resources and approaches (see Selection Criterion (C)(2)(b)(ii)) to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs.
- Increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals (as defined in this notice), including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science), and specialty areas (such as special education).

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score

(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	9
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal did not address much of what this criterion required. It did provide satisfactory information on organizing LEA central offices. It provided some information, but unclear and vague on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic; • Giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. <p>It did not provide satisfactory information on :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing school leadership teams in participating schools (as defined in this notice) 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 non-educators, and school-level budgets; • Providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>SVPEC responses to this criterion are largely hypothetical because it is at such an early stage in the development of the program. Because it has not selected much of the equipment necessary for program implementation and because much of the support is being designed, they had to rely on stipulations. It earned high points because it provided assurances in this and other sections that if the RTTD proposal is funded, LEA and school infrastructure supported personalized learning by</p> <p>(a) Ensuring that all participating students and other stakeholders, 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>(b) Ensuring that students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders (as appropriate and relevant to student learning) have appropriate levels of technical support, which may be provided through a range of strategies (e.g., peer support, online support, or local support).</p> <p>It stipulated that information technology systems would:</p> <p>(c) allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format (as defined in this notice) and to use the data in other electronic learning systems (e.g., electronic tutors, tools that make recommendations for additional learning supports, or software that securely stores personal records); and</p> <p>(d) Ensure that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems (as defined in this notice) (e.g., systems that include human resources data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data).</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>SVPEC earned high points for its 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. The project identified an external evaluator who provided a creditable evaluation plan that provided key evaluation questions, performance indicators for both formative and summative reports. The evaluation plan met all expectations required in this criterion. The evaluation plan had considerable information on how information would be gathered and how evaluators would share information with administrators. The proposal, however, was deficient in how those findings would be shared with teachers, students, parents and the community</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The evaluation plan had considerable information on how information would be gathered and how evaluators would share information with administrators. The proposal was deficient in describing how those evaluation findings would be shared with teachers, students, parents and the community. It did not address on-going communication and engagement with external stakeholders on other concerns..

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Except for the performance measures associated with Algebra II and the SAT test, the performance measures projections were safe and not ambitious. All appeared achievable. There was little discussion for the rationale for selecting the measures, the value of those measures nor how those measures will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The evaluation plan noted in (E)(1) provided the required information as it related to the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology. There was minimal or no discussion of how more productively use time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results, through such strategies as improved use of technology, working with community partners, compensation reform, and modification of school schedules and structures would be evaluated.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget identified all funds that will support the project including a transfer of some district budget technology expenditures to line 12. The budget was complete and was reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. It clearly provided a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. It distinguished one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period. The most significant problem in the budget development was that much of its planning was at an early planning stage. For example, they do not know which computing devices and other special technology items they will be purchasing so they could not provide specific numbers on some items.

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

The proposal provided rich discussion of strategies for sustainability of the project. Most of the conclusion focused around reallocating existing resources and conducting fundraising activities ranging from bake sales to writing other proposals. One interesting idea was establishing savings accounts that parents and students could use to save for their own computer devices. The section suffered from sufficient detail for concrete approaches they would implement for sustaining the project's goals. The proposal suggested possibilities but it left the impression that the decisions would be made by individual districts once the RTTD funding ended.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

SVPEC received medium points for its competitive preference priority. This section appeared incomplete as if proposal writers had run out of time after a good beginning. The proposal provided a good history of the many partners SVPEC has worked. Those included: Bluefield College, Emory & Henry College, Mountain Empire Community College, Southwest Virginia High Education Center, Southwest VA Community College, The University of Virginia's College at Wise, Virginia Highlands Community College, Virginia Intermont College, and Wytheville Community College, Alpha Natural Resources Kingston Resources, Inc., U.S. Economic Development Administration, American Drew/Lea/Hammery LENOWISCO Health District, Verizon, AMFIRE LENOWISCO Planning, District Virginia Coalfield Coalition Appalachian College of Pharmacy Maxim Shared Services Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority Appalachian Regional Commission, Mountain Empire C.C., Capital Brooks Run Mountain Empire, Older Citizens, Virginia Department of Forestry Center for Teaching, Excellence Mountain States Health System, Virginia Department of Health, Chambers of Commerce (various), People, Inc., Virginia Dept of Tourism, Clean Energy R&D Center, Pioneer Fuel Corp., Virginia Economic Bridge, Crutchfield Corp., Rockspring Development, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Cumberland Plateau Health District, SCORE, Virginia Health Care Association, Cumberland Plateau Planning District, Small Business Development Center, Data Ensure, Inc., Department of Housing and Community Development, Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission, Virginia State Parks, Eastman Chemical Southwest, Virginia Health Authority, Virginia Tech Health and Kincaid Furniture Company.

The proposal identified five primary partners and activities. Those were:

1. The University of Virginia's Virginia College Advising Corps and College Advisors from local community colleges and 4 year institutions increase student and parent awareness of college opportunities
2. Southwest Virginia Early Language and Literacy help with the problem of school readiness by working with parents of at risk students to address the root causes for low literacy and language skills. This will provide support for parents as nursing and education students will meet with parents twice a week with advice on children's nutritional needs, how to have a healthy life style and success in schools
3. UVA conducts pediatric subspecialty clinics throughout Southwest Virginia through Care Connection for Children. To provide much needed healthcare to the children of the region to ensure they are able to learn and grow to the best of their ability.
4. The colleges and universities partnered with the SVPEC will support teacher and student development in grades K-12. This includes expanded reach into STEM. Increased high school graduation rates, better prepared college freshman, increase in high tech trained individuals in the region, better job opportunities.
5. Access UVA is committed to provide 100% of demonstrated need for every admitted undergraduate student to UVA from the coalfield region

Unfortunately, the rest of the Competitive Preference Priority was quite incomplete as it did not address the remainder of the expectations of this section in a satisfactory manner. It did not:

(3) Describe how the partnership would –

(a) 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 (as defined in this notice);

(b) Use the data to target its resources in order to improve results for participating students (as defined in this notice), 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;

(c) Develop a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students (as defined in this notice) to at least other high-need students (as defined in this notice) and communities in the LEA or consortium over time; and

(d) Improve results over time;

(4) Describe how the partnership would, within participating schools (as defined in this notice), integrate education and other services (e.g., services that address social-emotional, and behavioral needs, acculturation for immigrants and refugees) for participating students (as defined in this notice);

(5) Describe how the partnership and LEA or consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating schools (as defined in this notice) by providing them with tools and supports to –

(a) Assess the needs and assets of participating students (as defined in this notice) that are aligned with the partnership's goals for improving the education and family and community supports (as defined in this notice) identified by the partnership;

(b) Identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with those goals for improving the education and family

(d) Engage parents and families of participating students (as defined in this notice) in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs; and

(e) Routinely assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems; and

(6) Identify its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level and describe desired results for students.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The proposal met Absolute Priority 1. However, the proposal was quite uneven in its writing. It had sections that were fully developed and written very well. Others were very incomplete and appeared to be still in the thinking stage. The preference priority and the record of success were two examples of problem sections. The biggest concern was how early the proposal was in its planning. A strong proposal would have required that many more decisions would have been made before submission.

Total	210	140
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