



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0056TX-1 for Abilene Independent School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative does not present a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. The narrative only makes reference to "four keys" to college and career readiness. The narrative lists some of the components of the core education assurances, but does not explicitly address them in this section. Pieces of the narrative talk about such activities and goals as: increasing equity by implementing a Tech Lending Program and using EPIC tools to focus on Four Keys to College and Career Readiness. The Tech Lending Program is designed to lessen the technology divide, thus increasing equity. The narrative provides a listing of activities and goals, rather than a comprehensive coherent vision of reform. The narrative focuses on using technology to accelerate student achievement and deepening student learning. It is not clear from the narrative that the technology will support tasks based on student academic interests. While technology is an important tool, it is not clear that technology alone will lead to accelerated learning. The narrative did not provide enough detail to visualize the classroom experience for students and teachers.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While no description of the process for selection of the participating schools was provided, all schools meet the eligibility requirements. A list of all participating schools is provided. A total number of all participating students (17,251) and educators (1250+) is provided. The district annotates that over 68% of students are low income and 34% are at risk. The lack of information about specific subgroups and method for choosing schools weakened the proposal.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	1
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>No plan is provided. The narrative annotates that an exemplary plan has been developed and all projects have been piloted. The district is including all students and schools. However no other information is provided.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>ASD presents data for all students in the district by subgroup. The district does not provide state goals so it is difficult to know if the annual goals are equal to or exceed the state goals. Most of the goals (1.5-2% per year) seem achievable. The district provides information that initially suggests that the achievement gap is being closed and equity is being established. Projected goals for high needs population are achievable and potentially ambitious. However, in looking at the projected gains of the white population (1% a year) in summative assessments, it appears that these goals are unusually low compared to expected gains for other populations (4-6%) on summative assessments. This would cause the achievement gap to close by projecting a very slow growth rate for white populations. This strategy would not seem to truly address the equity issue. Graduation rates are already reasonably high in ASD with some schools already achieving 100%. The district has set reasonable goals for those schools that are not at 100% so that they reach 99-100%. College enrollment goals for 4 year colleges are set at achievable levels of about an increase of 1% per year. The goal for 2 year colleges is only 0.5% per year. It is not clear that these are ambitious benchmarks. The goals for the various subgroups appear to be moderately ambitious.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Sparse data is provided showing a clear record of success in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing learning. . For example in 2009-2010 students who were at "met standard" or higher on all assessments was 87%. The current percentage is only 89%, and the highest rate has declined. No disaggregated data is made available. The district only provided small samples of growth--(a 12% increase in fifth grade in math) which does not present a clear track record of success in their lowest achieving school. Performance data appears to be available to students and educators in ESP and Reasoning Mind. However, no information is provided suggesting that this is a program that all stakeholders at all levels have available to them. Other than one or two pieces of evidence being presented, not enough evidence was provided to show a clear record of success at their lowest achieving school. Achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment were not in the narrative.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative annotates that it the Texas Education Agency collects the data necessary to publish a district report. They note that these reports are available upon request and that teacher and personnel salaries are matter of record in TX. The narrative does not address whether this information is available by at the school level. It is difficult to determine the level of transparency based on the information provided.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative notes that the proposal adheres to all state legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements and therefore have sufficient autonomy to implement their plan to implement the personalized learning environments. The narrative does annotate that the proposal has support from the Abilene School Board, Mayor and City Manager. Little detail is provided related to the type of support available from the Abilene School Board, Mayor and City Manager.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	5
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district narrative annotates that stakeholder input was sort through a combination of surveys and collaboration. A survey of teachers was done. However, the survey focused on questions such as "Would you like students/children to have opportunities to advance, accelerate, and deepen their learning?" This style of question is too generic to really solicit stakeholder input. The district never explicitly asked teachers if they supported the proposal. There is no information from either a bargaining unit or evidence that 70% of the teachers support the proposal. Letters of support from seven stakeholders were included in the appendix. . The district did not provide convincing evidence that throughout the development of the proposal there was meaningful stakeholder engagement, especially from the teachers in the school district.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

ASD does not present 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. The narrative describes three different "programs" that will be purchased to improve learning environments. The narrative provides no evidence that any of these programs will enable students to: Understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals, or have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. The narrative suggests that the student will take a diagnostic assessment and will receive an "online report diagnosing their readiness on each of the components of the College and Career Readiness Model. No mention is ever made of college and career ready standards such as CCSS. It is not clear from the narrative whether these programs will enable students to identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals. While the narrative suggests that there are resources for the student, it is not clear that they contain accommodations and high quality strategies for high-need students. There is no information provided related to the frequency of feedback for the students. No information is provided regarding mechanisms that are in place to provide training and support to students. The narrative annotates that Think Ready focuses on Key Cognitive strategies and also measures skills such as time-management, goal-setting, etc.

Reasoning Mind is a program that is designed to increase algebraic thinking. More information is provided regarding the district's Extended School Program which is a PD program used to enhance the teaching skills of teachers in the extended school program. The narrative notes that programming is measured through student progress but few details are provided as to the nuts and bolts of creating a personalized learning even in this environment.

Generally the narrative provided little detail related to a high quality plan to improve teaching and learning. Information was only provided on three "programs" that might lead to improvement in learning. While research was provided related to the "canned programs" that are to be purchased, there is little information related to the who, what and where of the plan. Goals are set but there are no specific timelines of persons responsible for the implementation of the program.

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

20

5

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative does not provide a high quality plan for improving teaching where all participating educators engage in training, and professional teams or communities that support personalized learning environments, adapt content and instruction, frequently measure student progress and improve teachers' and principals' practice by using feedback from the evaluation system. Very little information is provided in relation to the PD needs of teachers. There is some information related to PD for teachers in the "Extended Day Program". There is no mention of how student data is used to inform plans for PD. There was no information provided regarding a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective or highly effective teachers and principals. A statement is made that Abilene ISD will fully comply with the RTT-D grant obligation that students are exposed to highly effective teachers. However, no plan was presented. The district states the three programs it is purchasing will provide high quality learning resources for students and teachers. The computer programs will match the students needs. There are few details related to the teacher's role in the feedback loop.

The narrative provided only generic information related to PD of teachers. There were no connections made to any of the indicators of this section. Merely stating that teachers will meet throughout the year does not provide evidence that these meetings will accomplish student growth goals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has organized the LEA central office to provide support and services to all participating schools. This is accomplished through a RTTT-D director and assistant director and administrative assistant. A community advisory

committee will be established, as well as site committees. The narrative states that the school leadership team will have flexibility and autonomy over factors such as: schedules; calendars; personnel decisions, etc.. The narrative notes that the Extended School Program and the Reasoning Mind Program are self-paced and therefore give students the opportunity to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. No information is provided regarding other subject areas or more traditional classes at the middle or high school level. While the computer program appears to offer multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery at multiple times, it is not clear that there will be opportunities to show mastery in multiple ways. The narrative states that there are currently only district target tests and assessments that all students are required to take. They state that they will develop alternative assessments. The narrative only states that all instructional materials will be developed in a manner that will be fully adaptable and accessible to all students. Since much of this plan is dependent on "packaged" programming it is unclear how this will be accomplished.

The narrative provides some evidence that the district has organized in a way to provide autonomy to school leadership teams. The narrative is ambiguous in relation to flexibility for students to earn credit based on mastery other than in the ESP program and Reasoning Mind program. Since the district is including all schools and grades in this program, other grade bands and schools need to be addressed.

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

implement the plan both in and out of the school environment. Conducting forums does not necessarily ensure access. The narrative describes an adequate plan to use the districts technology department to provide adequate technical support. The parents are allowed to use a computer at school, checkout a netbook, or use the library. It is not clear how stakeholders such as caregivers with low computer skills will be given appropriate support. The district plans on doing and RFP to secure the necessary technology systems that will allow parents and students to export data to open learning systems. The district has a data system that allows for a teacher to student match. . They note that this system is used extensively to improve instruction and target students who have academic problems. It is not clear how this system will work with the three new packages that the district proposes to purchase. It is not clear the budget data and an instructional improvement system is integrated with this package.

The district narrative did an adequate job in presenting a plan for LEA and School infrastructure. However, key goals, rational for activities timeline and person responsible were missing.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan for implementing continuous improvement is not presented in this narrative. There is only a generic ambiguous description of some activities that will be accomplished at some time during the grant period. Many of the components to a rigorous continuous improvement process are missing from the description or yet to be designed. For example, district benchmarks have not been developed; individual sites have not implemented individualized plans, goals and expectations. The narrative states that the College and Career Readiness System will accrue data, and evaluate data, and that by using these data all stakeholders can participate in school-wide improvement, but there are no specifics as to individual goals, timelines; persons responsible etc.. The narrative states that the district will investigate ways to communicate with stakeholders. The narrative indicates that quarterly newsletters are planned as a method of communication. The lack of detail fails to present evidence of a high quality plan for continuous improvement.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative stresses that the district has crafted an ongoing program of communication and engagement. This plan seems to encompass open forums every two months and a monthly newsletter. The Director of RTTT is responsible for these communication vehicles. The district only provides a statement that it has crafted a communication plan. However, almost no details are made available. The district does not present evidence to support the idea that they have a high quality plan. While the person responsible is listed. there is not a timeline or specific activities listed.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative provides no information related to rational for choosing performance measures; 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, and how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gage implementation progress. The narrative only states that directors will meet with the superintendent, associate superintendent and principals to review program progress and to make adjustments where necessary. No information is provided regarding timeline, who is responsible for each piece, and how measures will be adjusted if necessary. The performance measures presented are ambiguous and/or not ambitious. For example, the indicator related to "high quality teachers" seems to be decreasing across the years. Indicators related to performance seem to be low. For example, in fourth grade reading only 28% are expected to be on track for college and career ready; for minorities and disadvantaged the indicator is even lower. These low percentages does not support the idea that students are making significant progress. The narrative itself lacked detail and therefore could not be considered a high quality plan.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>No plan is provided for rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of RTTT-D funded activities. There is only a statement related to various committees verifying that expenditures have been appropriately made and that an accountant would also verify. No other details are provided related to how this process will work.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant identifies that all funds that will support the project: 24,999,618.19 (RTT-D) and 12,758,285 (district). The narrative and budget tables clearly delineate funds that are one time investments versus ongoing. The district provides thoughtful rational for investments. However some of these investments were not clearly addressed in the rest of the proposal. The budget puts a substantial amount of funds toward contractual obligations and expendable items (over 17,000,000 out of 25,000,000). It is not clear that these expenditures can be sustained once the grant period is over as this is close to 70% of the funds. The expenditure of this much money on contracts that would need funding after the grant period is over, suggests that the funding may not be sustainable.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative only makes a general statement that the project will be sustainable beyond the grant period. They suggest that PD will promote effective and efficient teaching strategies. It is not clear how this will be sustained post grant. The narrative reasonably argues that as teachers and administrators become more familiar with EPIC programs they will tutor new staff members. No information is provided regarding how contractual obligations of over \$17,000,000 will be sustained after the funding period. The narrative says that it will put in systemic processes, but there are no details provided regarding how this will be accomplished, other than that the Board of Trustees has made a commitment to the college and career readiness program. This lack of detail does not provide evidence of a high quality plan.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative suggests partnership with 2 entities to support the district proposal. They propose to do this by partnering</p>		

with: Day Nursery of Abilene (DNA); Communities in Schools (CIS) and the three universities and colleges in Abilene. These partnership are aimed at ensuring school readiness for kindergartners; improvements in school attendance through mentoring, and dual enrollment to increase opportunities for more college engagement. The narrative identifies five population level results. However, two of them seem to have little to do with the partnerships. There are two performance measures chosen. One is the increase in college enrollment. The other is an increase in math and reading on STARR by 5%. It is not apparent how reaching these two goals has anything to do with the community partnerships. There is only partial information related to tracking data. The narrative lists Dual Credit enrollment and attendance as the two metrics to be used to assess the community partnership. No information is provided for kindergarten readiness or middle school students. The narrative does not provide information on how it will use data to target its resources. It only gives an explanation of why some of the goals are important. The district does not provide details as to how it will improve results over time; it only asserts that it will. The narrative does not give a cogent explanation of how the partnership would integrate other services and education. The narrative talks about Dr. Conley's EPIC center but does not explain how the partnership will ensure that there are family and community supports. No decision making process for the community partnership was explicated. The narrative only has one sentence related to parent engagement in decision making. The statement that parent input will be sort, does not give any insight into how this will be accomplished. The narrative gives a general statement that the applicant's progress will be routinely assessed. The lack of detail as to process weakens this section. The district provides single metrics for each of the three (3) of the goals. However, they are not broken down to annual improvement levels.

The narrative throughout the competitive preference priority addresses mainly issues at the school level with very little attention to fostering a robust partnership with community agency. The narrative seemed to switch between several ideas, but never really settled on goals that were directly related to community supports. This made for ambiguous evidence supporting the viability of the community partnerships.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not meet this Absolute Priority. The core educational assurances were never mentioned in the applicant's proposal. The proposal presented a series of programs that would be implemented. However, there was never any cohesiveness to the proposal. The focus on the three major programs that the district would like to purchase did not provide evidence that they would create learning environments that would holistically support the student. The narrative failed to provide a high quality plan that provided key goals, activities, rational for activities, a timeline, deliverables and parties responsible. Simply put the nuts and bolts of the proposal were missing. There were some commendable ideas proposed, but the narrative failed to tie them together as a single whole.

Total	210	85
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0056TX-3 for Abilene Independent School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
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(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant does not specifically address how it builds on its work in the four core educational assurance areas in this section. These core areas are: (1) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; (2) building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction; (3) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and (4) turning around lowest-achieving schools. However, review of this proposal elicits the following evidence. (1) The applicant does not explicitly address how they will (or have) adopted standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy other than to indicate that their new programs are aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Also, they mention in the Competitive Preference Priority section that the district has performance an evaluation on all core curriculum to identify areas of discrepancies and misalignment with the new state assessment. This was needed as the state assessment has been updated to reflect a more rigorous curriculum which promotes added college readiness. (2) The data systems in place measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction, but may not have interoperability capability. (3) No plan is articulated to recruit, develop, reward, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most. (4) The applicant did not discuss how they plan to turn around the lowest-achieving schools. Overall, instead of presenting a proposal that builds on the district's work in the four ore educational assurance areas, they present a proposal that builds on strategies and structures to reinforce, accelerate, and advance learning and graduation credits.

(b) The applicant addresses this sub-criterion sufficiently through discussion of some of the initiatives which are the focus of their proposal. One initiative is designed to increase the understanding and implementation of effective technology tools and resources to accelerate and advance learning beyond minimal expectations for state assessments. This begins with an Extended School Programs available during the day, before and after school, and during the summer and school breaks. As part of this program, teachers will be trained to effectively utilize tools to advance and accelerate learning in the classroom using online curriculum, thereby increasing opportunities for students to feel challenged, create room for taking advanced courses, and to access Dual Credit, Advanced Placement, career certifications, and other courses leading to college and career recognition and credit. The goal of the program is to offer students up to 60 college hours by the time a student graduates from high school. This would ensure their preparedness to advance successfully into college and careers well be qualified to succeed. In another initiative designed to increase equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks based on student academic interests, the applicant intends to implement a Technology Lending program for students in need of technology access outside of school for those students that may not have resources on their own. This certainly is a much needed program, will effectively help students to stay abreast of the learning progress, and is the primary source of achieving equity that the applicant articulates in this proposal, particularly for those students who are economically disadvantaged without access to computer technology outside of school.

(c) Concerning what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalize learning environments, the applicant effectively describes personalized learning in the classrooms for students participating in the Reasoning Mind and Extended School Program initiatives. These programs are delivered through the use of technology-based, self-paced curriculum. These online curricula provide instant feedback to students and teachers to assess mastery. Teachers view live data as students' progress through objectives. This allows for immediate intervention by the teacher when a student encounters difficulty with a specific objective. This also enables teachers to plan enrichment activities for those students who master all objectives. The applicant also states there will be an enhanced focus on development of quality math beginning in the 2nd grade and the district will offer Algebra I and Geometry for high school credit in the 7th and 8th grades, eliminating Algebra I as the gate-keeper to high school and college success. In addition, the applicant will begin a concentrated focus on increasing expectations of educators PreK-12th grade, enhance collaboration with postsecondary, and conduct assessments of student college-and-career readiness measured the Four Keys to College and Career Readiness. The applicant does not elaborate on when and how this assessment will take place. These are solid, classroom-proven initiatives that should result in enhanced college- and career-readiness.

As the applicant did not completely address how its work builds on the four core assurance areas, they receive a low mid-range score on this selection criterion.

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

(A)(2)(a) The applicant has elected to include all schools in the list of participating schools in order to develop a district-wide College and Career Readiness Program. The applicant assures that all schools meet the RTT competition's eligibility requirements. No other information was provided concerning this decision. Evidence on why the applicant feels the need to develop a district-wide College and Career Readiness Program involving all schools is needed. For example, low graduation rates, low academic achievement rates, or low college enrollment rates could help explain the applicant's process used to select schools to participate.

(b) The applicant presents, in a bar graph, names of all of the participating schools and their low-income student population percentages.

(c) The applicant reports that the total number of participating students is 17,251. Of that total, 68% are economically disadvantaged, and 34% are at-risk (other high-needs status). There are 1250 educators in the district's participating schools.

The applicant receives a high score on this selection criterion.

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

10

1

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(3) The applicant did not describe how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change and help the applicant reach its outcome goals. The applicant mentioned that all of the projects in the proposal had been piloted within the district with great success in improving outcomes. However, details concerning how this scale-up process will be enacted were missing, as were the elements of a high-quality plan for this. As defined in this application process, a high-quality plan must include the elements of key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and timeline related to the selection criterion which relates to how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools

The applicant receives a low score on this selection criterion.

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

10

8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(4)(a-b) The applicant sufficiently reports current educational statistics to be at, or above, state rates for achievement levels and graduation rates. Decreases in achievement gaps for all student populations were reported to be at a statistically insignificant amount (state/district comparison data for achievement and decrease in achievement gaps among district sub-groups were not provided).

(c-d) The applicant has provided comparison information to show that the district's current graduation rate is 95.4%, exceeding the state goal of 90%. The anticipated grant end target is 99% for the district (no state comparison provided). The applicant anticipates with the project activities to be instituted with this grant that they can increase college enrollment from the baseline year to the four-year end point by 10% (no comparison for state rates, if available).

Overall, for sub-criteria (a-d) The applicant sets very safe performance targets per year. These appear to be very achievable, but not ambitious. For example, in reading and math across all years (baseline SY 2012-2013 through post-grant SY 2017-2018, expected increase for grades 3-12 is 10% (2% each year). This percentage of increase is the same for reading, math, and the college- to career-readiness. In addition, this same level of expected increase remains the same (10% across five years) regardless of subgroup. With such projected performance, there is no expectation of decrease in achievement across subgroups. This is troubling as the applicant also noted decreases in achievement gaps for all student populations were reported to be at a statistically insignificant amount (see comment in sub-criterion (a-b). Also no state comparison data is provided for projected growth and four-year end point (see comment in sub-criterion (c-d).

(e) The applicant also demonstrates a keen interest in tracking postsecondary attainment not currently available by suggesting that that if grant funding is approved, they will purchase a tracking student created by the National Student clearinghouse, called the Student Tracker for High Schools.

It is noted that the applicant anticipates the increase in difficulty of state standards may impact performance scores in the near future. The fact that the applicant is seeking avenues to increase successful outcomes for students through this grant-seeking demonstrates the proactive attitude of the applicant. The applicant receives a high score on this selection criterion.

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	11

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(1) It is praiseworthy that the applicant instituted significant and enduring reforms after a drop of graduation rates in 2009-2010 in one of the subgroups (subgroup not identified). Because of this drop, the district was rated by the state as “academically unacceptable.” Significant reforms since that time include an enhanced focus on effective teaching and meeting individual school needs, as well as incentives, varied scheduling, and credit recovery programs to allow more student flexibility for meeting graduation requirements. Since that time, graduation rates have risen from 80.3% to a current 95.4%, exceeding the state rate of 90%. (The comparison rates were not provided for the subgroup that fell short.) It is also significant to point out that the student cumulative percentage on state assessments has risen from 72% in 2009-2010 to a current 77%. The applicant does report that while their level of achievement at the “advanced” level on state achievement tests has dropped from 15% to 12% overall during this comparison period, it doesn’t appear to have affected college enrollment rates (comparisons not provided for this time period). As noted in selection criterion A4, the applicant anticipates with the project activities to be instituted with this grant that they can increase college enrollment from the baseline year to the four- year end point by almost 10% from 73.5% to 83% (no comparison for state rates, if available). Also noted in A4, decreases in achievement gaps for all student populations were reported to be at a statistically insignificant amount (state/district comparison data for achievement and decrease in achievement gaps among district subgroups were not provided). Equity is addressed as it pertains to access to computers and technology through the Technology Lending program, not decrease in achievement score gaps as noted in (A)(1)(b).

(b) The applicant successfully points to the progress in one of the district’s lowest performing elementary schools, Bowie Elementary, as evidence of successful ambitious and significant reform in raising student achievement through the implementation of the Reasoning Mind math program. This past year, Bowie increased their passing rate by 12% on the state assessment for fifth grade math. This program was so successful that the applicant intends to replicate it district-wide if this proposal is funded.

(c) The applicant sufficiently reports that the Reasoning Mind and Extended School Program (ESP) are two programs that have shown significant success in the district’s math curriculum, acceleration programs, and credit recovery programs where implemented. These programs are not currently used at all schools within the district and the goal is to extend them to all campuses in order to serve all students. The district will use the online curricula in the Reasoning Mind and Extended School Program (ESP) to provide instant data and perform student diagnosis as the students work through the curriculum. This information will be also available to teachers through the instructor programs. The Reasoning Mind can be programmed to send parents periodic email notices of their student’s progress. Additionally, the district’s electronic grade book can be viewed by parents at any time.

The applicant receives a high score on this selection criterion.

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

(B)(2) The applicant reports a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. To support this claim, the applicant notes that each year the district provides the Texas Education Agency with the necessary information to publish a district report that includes per-pupil expenditures, remediation funding, professional development expenditures, and other basic educational expenditures as part of the district’s annual accountability report. This information is posted on the Texas Education website and linked to the district website. In addition, copies of the full financial audit are available upon request, or a copy of the full financial audit can be found on the district website for viewing. In addition, teacher and personnel salaries are a matter of public record in the state of Texas.

While this ensures to the public and accountability avenues sufficient transparency, the applicant did not provide all the information required in the selection criterion. Specifically, the applicant did not provide information that ensures that public information includes, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. No description was provided by the applicant to ensure that the district already makes available (a) actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, (b) actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only; (c) actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and (d) actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level (if available).

As the applicant does not provide the level of documentation of transparency required in their response, they receive a low score on this selection criterion.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(3) The applicant reports that all of the initiatives that the district will initiate conform within the current state legislation and the school district's policy. These initiatives include the before mentioned Extended School Program and the Reasoning Mind program, both of which have been piloted in some schools in the district. In addition, career guidance will be provided and career pathways explored and followed per student readiness and interests. Teacher and principal evaluations will be developed and implemented upon receipt of the grant.

The applicant is planning to implement some programs and procedures that have been used in success in a few of the school's in the district. With the advent of the grant monies, the applicant indicates that conditions will be set for successful initiation of programs. None of the new enterprises appear to require separate autonomy from State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments; however the district did not provide evidence such as excerpts from these legislation and policies to demonstrate this conclusively. The applicant a mid-range score for this selection criterion.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	8
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(B)(4)(a) The applicant shows evidence that stakeholder input was gathered during the development of the proposal (sample comments and survey results/counts). Stakeholders listed that provided input included district curriculum, accounting, teachers, program directors teacher aides, parents, and students. Information was not provided to ascertain if this input was used in the refinement/revision of the proposal. Also, information was not presented to determine either of the following two conditions: (i) For LEAs with collective bargaining representation, evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools; or (ii) For LEAs without collective bargaining representation, at a minimum, evidence that at least 70 percent of teachers from participating schools support the proposal.

(b) The applicant provided copies of letters of support in the appendix from a variety of representative stakeholders in the community including the Mayor of Abilene, Abilene Chamber of Commerce, Education Service Center Region 14, Abilene Christian University, Hardin-Simmons University, McMurray University, Cisco College, and the Texas State Technical College. However, no parent, student, or teacher organizations were represented.

The applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(1)(a) The applicant describes in detail the key strategies that will be used to overcome the three barriers to higher achievement and college- and career-readiness that they have identified. First, they discuss Barrier 1 which they see are lowered expectations of educators, students, and parents. They intend to address this barrier through use of EPIC's College & Career Readiness System, a nationally recognized, well-researched model of college and career readiness. The applicant provides curricular descriptions of the components of this model in addressing sub-criteria (i, ii, iii, and v). Specifically, in the curriculum descriptions that the applicant provides, the Structure of Knowledge component cultivates (ii) developmentally appropriate mastery of subject matter knowledge and addresses (i) attitudes toward the core subject areas that students need to value learning. The Ownership of Learning component includes elements of (v) goal setting and persistence, which are self-monitoring techniques and learning strategies students need to self-motivate and learning new material. Use of all the strategies promotes (iii) deep learning experiences in areas of academic interests. This is a well-research and highly regard program for improving expectations and results in college- and career-readiness. The applicant does not address the sub-criteria of (iv) access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning.

(b)(i-iii) The applicant provides thorough descriptions of three major sources of instructional programs that offer a personalized sequence of

instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career-ready. These three instructional programs are intended to address each of the three barriers the applicant identifies. For Barrier I, identified above, the applicant uses the College & Career Readiness System to implement EPIC's Four Keys to College and Career Readiness. This System uses three web-based tools and a resource bank that is available to users of all three tools. These tools are research-proven methods aligned to high academic standards to diagnose and personalize learning and to provide solutions for schools to launch, prioritize, and support their college and career readiness goals. For Barrier II, which is addressing Algebra as a gate-keeper to high school success, the applicant plans to use the Reasoning Mind, a program that encourages the teaching of high-level Algebraic content and reasoning in the 2nd grade through the 6th grade. The students will then be ready for Algebra content in middle school, effectively overcoming a barrier (failure of high school Algebra) that impedes high school graduation. In overcoming Barrier III, the need for varied and flexible course credit and acceleration options (including online coursework) toward high school graduation, the applicant plans the use of the Extended School Program. This program contains an extensive professional development component.

All three of these programs offer personalization of learning, a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments, and high-quality content, including digital learning content aligned with college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Specifically, the tools provided with the College- and Career-Readiness System are, from information provided by the applicant, research-proven methods aligned to high academic standards to diagnose and provide individualized, actionable recommendations, and to provide digital learning content solutions for schools to launch, prioritize, and support their college and career readiness goals. The Reasoning Mind, as reported by the applicant, utilizes a self-paced, online curriculum to deepen the student's exposure to algebraic thinking. This content requires a higher level of cognitive mathematical reasoning at earlier ages to prepare students for Algebra in middle school. The Extended School Program provides extensive professional development to teachers to ensure that they are able to develop and deliver the coursework. This self-paced program is designed to allow students to recover credit from failed courses, complete courses needed for graduation, or to accelerate learning. Teachers are trained to deliver high-quality content, aligned to college- and career-readiness standards using online, digital curricula.

(b)(iv)(A-B) The College & Career Readiness System and the Extended School Program are both noted to contain elements that allow for frequently updated individual student data that can be used to effectively determine progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards/graduation requirements. For example, in the College & Career Readiness System, the CampusReady diagnostic tool is used to investigate skills critical to college readiness and provides an individualized, actionable recommendations to foster improvement. Administering the tool each year will help to monitor progress. For the Extended School Program, student progress is monitored online daily for mastering of academic concepts. Also, both programs are noted to personalize learning through individualized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills, college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, and available content, instructional approaches, and supports. The Reasoning Mind is designed to address algebraic thinking early in a student's development in order to overcome misperceptions about one's ability to do math and utilizes a self-paced, online curriculum to deepen the student's exposure to algebraic thinking. (v) The applicant did not specifically address accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career- ready graduation requirements.(c) The applicant did not specifically address any provisions for 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.

In summary, the applicant describes in detail the key strategies that will be used to overcome the three identified barriers to higher achievement and college- and career-readiness. The applicant provides thorough descriptions of three major sources of instructional programs that offer a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals. The applicant did not specifically address accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need nor did they specifically address any provisions for training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

The applicant did not provide the elements of 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 per RTT standards. Such a plan should have included key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and timeline for completion of the plan.

The applicant receives a mid-range score for this selection criterion.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(2) (a)(ii) The applicant thoroughly discusses the professional development training that will be provided to teachers, administrators, and facilitators during the summer and school year for the Reasoning Mind and the Extended School Program. For the Reasoning Mind, training includes a two-day qualification course with exam, a local implementation manager to frequently observe in classrooms and give feedback, an Instructional Coordinator to conduct curriculum study workshops throughout the year, and yearly teacher ratings. For the Extended School Program, a trainer-of-trainers model is conducted on-site, a school facilitator provided, summer and evening workshops are included, and hands-on experience is provided to educator via in student participant labs.

These professional development opportunities (i) support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time and college- and career-ready. Each plan is individualized and paced to meet the needs of each student. (ii) The applicant addresses the adaptation of content and instruction by providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches. Examples include digital content and a resource bank of materials for students that teach different strategies or skills.

It is not clear what types and amount of professional development will be available to educators for implementation of EPIC's College & Career Readiness System. It also is not clear if educators participate in professional learning teams (PLT's) or communities (PTC's) to support their professional development for these programs.

(iii) The academic programs, Extended School Program and Reasoning Mind offer opportunities for frequent measures of student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career- ready graduation requirements and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators. CampusReady, part of the College and Career Readiness model, provides individualized actionable recommendations diagnosing student readiness on each of the components of the model. The report also provides resources to help students take action to improve weak areas. In addition, student data is formally gathered at least four times during the school year through Benchmark and Target Tests to ensure teachers have the information they need for targeted instruction.

(iv) The applicant currently does not have in place a LEA teacher and principal evaluation system. Such a system is being piloted in one high school with the intent of expanding the system throughout the district.

(b)(i-iii) All three of the programs the applicant intends to put into place upon receipt of the grant high-quality resources, have processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches, offer frequent feedback, and result in information that the teachers can use to develop strategic and actionable strategies that support college- and career-readiness. These tools are embedded in the curriculum, training, and curricular supports (such as online and digital content) of each program. For example, the College and Career Readiness model offers a bank of resources that help students, parents, teachers, administration, counselors, and other staff improve college and career readiness skills. Students are assessed and are then provided with resources that target the specific strategy or skill their students address on to improve their college- and career-readiness skills. Continued use of the system tracks student progress over time. The academic programs, Extended School Program and Reasoning Mind offer opportunities for frequent measures of student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career- ready graduation requirements and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators. These programs are self-paced, and the student only progresses based on their own mastery of the academic content. Such mastery-based learning is an effective means for ensuring that students have a solid foundation for learning the next higher levels of learning and enhance acceleration, deepen learning through personalization of content.

(c)(i)The applicant did not address the training, policies, tools, data, and resources that school leaders and school leadership teams use that enable them to structure an effective learning environment, such as information from the district's teacher evaluation system.

(ii) The applicant did not address this selection sub-criterion - training, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps. However, they have clearly articulated in previous sections that training, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps are embedded and an integral part of the applicant plan (see C2a-b).

(d) The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. Requirements for such a plan include key goals, activities and rationale, deliverable, persons responsible, and a timeline. These elements were missing from the applicant's discussion. Instead, the applicant states that the to-be-developed teacher and principal evaluations instruments will be used to determine the best professional development avenues to ensure all students are taught by highly effective teachers.

The applicant provides sufficient information on the professional development training that will be provided to teachers, administrators, and facilitators during the summer and school year for the Reasoning Mind and the Extended School Program. These professional development opportunities support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies and provide frequent measures of student progress. It is not clear what types and amount of professional development will be available to educators for implementation of EPIC's College & Career Readiness System. It also is not clear if educators participate in professional learning teams (PLT's) or communities (PTC's) to support their

professional development for these programs. The applicant did not address the training, policies, tools, data, and resources that school leaders and school leadership teams use that enable them to structure an effective learning environment, such as information from the district's teacher evaluation system. The applicant did not provide sufficient information on how they intend to insure that students are taught by highly effective teachers. The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan for this selection criterion.

The applicant receives a mid-range score for this selection criterion.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(1)(a) The applicant sufficiently reports that the district will establish a central administration RTT office with a director, assistant director, and administrative assistant. The role of this department is to implement all components of the RTT grant program and to provide support for the programs. This department will also be responsible for all reporting and tracking that is necessary for this grant. A Community Advisory Committee will be developed with the Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, the secondary and elementary directors of education, a teacher representative from each site, two counselors, at least one parent from each site, four business members, the program director, and assistant program director. This team will meet quarterly to review performance data and implementation of the grant. The applicant notes that this group is critical as it involves all stakeholders that will provide vital information and feedback. Site committees on each campus will be developed consisting of the Instructional Coordinators/Specialists, the Principal, and a teacher from each grade level to get information and feedback on how the program is working and what changes need to be made to better meet the needs of the campus. This structure should be adequate to enable proper governance of the grant activities and monies.

(b) It is unclear how much flexibility and autonomy that schools will have per school-based leaderships teams, as the applicant reports that flexibility and autonomy over such factors as school schedules, calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, as well as roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators and school level budgets will be provided per the Superintendent of the district. The applicant noted that this level of flexibility and autonomy over grant programs has worked well for the district in the past.

(c) The applicant cited appropriate statistics for the Reasoning Mind and the Extended School, both which have been piloted for three years. These statistics show that students are allowed to move at their own pace through both programs. For example, at one school a 5th grader was able to complete both his 5th and 6th grade math curricula while in the 5th grade. For the Extended School Program, 1920 students completed 3660 semester credits and 156 students recovered 217 six weeks grades over the last three years.

In addition, this program has provided state assessment support for over 1200 students with increased passing rates for these students in all core subject areas. It is also commendable to note that web-based learning opportunities have been developed on all secondary campuses to provide support for students, teachers, and administrators. It is also praiseworthy that it is anticipated that with the award of this grant, almost 600 students will start the year on a web-based course to earn credit in 2014.

(d) The applicant succinctly reports that Reasoning Minds and Extended School offer built-in assessments for all students to exhibit mastery over multiple times. It is also noted that while the district currently only requires district target tests, teachers, with the assistance of campus Instructional Coordinators/Specialists, will develop additional common assessment that will allow multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery. More information is needed to ascertain if these assessments will be given in multiple ways.

(e) More information is needed to understand how learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. The applicant only provided a statement of assurance. Information is needed concerning practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning related to adaptability and accessibility per the requirements of this selection criterion.

In summary, it is unclear how much flexibility and autonomy schools will have to implement personalized learning via school leadership teams. More information is needed to ascertain if these assessments will be given in multiple ways and if there are practices, policies and rules that allow for adaptability and accessibility of learning resources and instructional

practices. In addition, the applicant has not provided a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. This plan should be operationalized through the required components of key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline.

The applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	7
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

D)(2)(a) The applicant succinctly reports that the RTT program Administration will conduct stakeholder forums on a monthly basis, conducting outreach to different organizations each month, to ensure that all feedback can be received for the benefit of the program. Additionally, the RTT Program Director and Assistant Director will conduct reviews of their programs to determine what content, tools, and other learning resources are needed by students and teachers to ensure successful implementation of the proposed programs. It is commendable that the applicant will reach out to stakeholders on such a frequent basis. More information is needed concerning how this will target parents in their quest for feedback and how often program reviews by RTT administration will be conducted. (b) The applicant concisely reports that technical support and access will be available for all students and stakeholders through the district's Technology department. In addition, trainings will be held for parents and stakeholders to ensure proper use and accessibility of information pertaining to their student and the district. All parents will be provided with a log-in to access their student's grades, homework, and progress. If a parent does not have access to a computer, they may use one near the school office at each site that is designated for parent use. Students who do not have computer access will be allowed to checkout a netbook through the school tech lending program which will be created by the RTT Grant. Student access will also be provided to computers in the library. The applicant has provided several reasonable avenues for tech support to students and their parents. Tech support to educators was not mentioned. (c) The applicant sufficiently reports that the RTT Tech Support will conduct a needs assessment to determine the extent to which current systems meet the requirements of the RTT program. It is indicated that they will develop a Request for Proposals to secure the necessary technology systems that will allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to ensure that the data can be used in electronic learning systems, if needed. It is unclear what the timeline is for these endeavors including the needs assessment, how quickly such a new system can be operational for student and parent use, and whether grant monies will be allocated for this purpose. (d) It is not clear if the current data system, Eduphoria, contains interoperate components (e.g., systems that include human resources data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data) to allow information to easily flow from one system to another and in which data are in a non-proprietary, open format. Information provided by the applicant suggests that the current data system is used extensively to provide data disaggregation of state scores along with district target tests and benchmark scores as well as for classroom improvement.

In addition, the applicant has not provided a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. This plan should include the required components of key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline. The applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(1) The applicant reports that needs assessments by the Program Director and Assistant Director will be conducted twice a year to see where adjustments and improvements need to be made. In addition, they will work with each site to implement individualized plans, goals, and expectations based on student and school need. Core Area teachers will collaborate with the district's Curriculum and Instruction Directors and Content Teacher Specialists to develop district benchmarks and learning targets. With the data collected from these new guideposts, Curriculum and Instruction Directors and Content Teacher Specialists will be able to work with teachers to help develop individualized learning tools and lesson plans.

By using The College and Career Readiness System, educators will be able to diagnose individual student needs and provide guidance for the district to implement the college and career readiness goals and individualized learning environments. By using this system in grades PreK-12, all students, teachers, administrators, and counselors can participate in school-wide reform to create measureable gains in student achievement that provide additional information beyond performance on state assessments and promotion and graduation requirements.

The district will assess and evaluate current public communication and information delivery procedures to initiate improvements in order to make information more accessible. In addition, the district will develop a quarterly report that will identify student performance and professional practice data that define project implementation and effectiveness. These reports will then be posted on the district website and made available at all campuses in both English and Spanish for parents to attain. Graphs, tables, and charts will also be used in these reports to assist readers with understanding project data.

It is worthy to note that the district will develop a committee of educators for the purpose of expanding career opportunities (through partnerships) for all students. This committee will work with community partners and stakeholders to set up work-based learning for high school students to experience different career fields of choice. The district will work to increase the number of students earning career certifications and dual credit.

While the applicant outlined some solid continuous improvement activities, they are not organized in a way to provide the information in the form of a high-quality plan. As part of the requirements of this competition, the applicant should provide the components of a high-quality plan for continuous improvement to include key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline.

The applicant receives a mid-range score for this selection criterion.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant aims for a high level of transparency in their intent to establish open forums every two months for stakeholders from different organizations to ask questions and state any concerns that they may have about the program. In addition to this venue, the applicant will produce a monthly newsletter with information about the RTT Grant Program including any upcoming meetings. The publication will include email addresses and phone numbers which stakeholders may call to ask question and state any concerns in between forums.

The applicant has established some worthy endeavors and actions to generate meaningful communication and engagement with external stakeholders. More information is needed concerning the communication and engagement strategies for internal stakeholders. Also, the applicant did not include component of a high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement. This plan should include key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline.

They receive a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(3) The applicant sufficiently reported the following performance indicators will be used for all participating students: 1) highly effective teachers and principals (grades 3-12); 2) effective teachers and principals (grades 3-12); 3) attendance (grade PreK); 4) behavior (grade PreK); 5) attendance (grades K-3); 6) discipline (grades K-3); 7) reading (grades 4-8); 8) math (grades 4-8); 9) attendance (grades 4-8); 10) discipline (grades 4-8); 11) Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); (grades 9-12); 12) reading (grades 9-12); 13) math (grades 9-12); 14) career-readiness (grades 9-12); 14) attendance (grades 9-12); and 15) discipline (grades 9-12). Note: The applicant broke the PreK subgroup for attendance and behavior/discipline out separately from grades K-3 due to difference in performance measures (assessment criteria). If they are included together in the total number of performance indicators, there will be a total of 13.

It is commendable that the applicant intends that all (100%) participating students will be instructed by highly effective teachers and principals by post grant year SY 2017-2018 and 96%-100% will be instructed by highly effective teachers in English Language Arts (ELA) and math by end of grant year SY 2016-2017. This goes from a low of 68% (grade 9 ELA) in the baseline year of 2012-2013. It is worthy to note that high school grade 12 began with a high baseline (math grade 12, 98% and ELA grade 12, 95% for both teachers and principals). It is reasonable to see that if all teachers and principals are projected to be highly effective by post grant year SY 2017-2018, that none (0%) are projected to be effective teachers and principals by that same year. Due to the high numbers already operating as high effective and effective, this is ambitious and achievable for the applicant.

The applicant sets very safe performance targets per year. These appear to be very achievable, but not ambitious. For reading and math across all years (baseline SY 2012-2013 through post-grant SY 2017-2018, expected increase for grades 3-12 is 10% (2% each year). This percentage of increase is the same for reading, math, and the college- to career-readiness. In addition, this same level of expected increase remains the same (10% across five years) regardless of subgroup. With such projected performance, there is no expectation of decrease in achievement across subgroups. This is

troubling as several of the subgroups have large gaps. For example, for 9th grade reading, the white subgroup for baseline in SY 2012-2013 is at 67% and at end point post-grant (SY 2017-2018) is expected to be at 77%, while the economically disadvantaged is at 44% at start and 54% at the end. These are two subgroups that have similar population size: white at 319 students and economically disadvantaged at 328 students. Again, these numbers appear achievable but not ambitious.

(a) The applicant did adequately explain its rationale for selecting the performance measures for attendance and behavior/discipline (PreK-12) and the measures to be used. For attendance the applicant notes students must be present to learn and success. The measure is average daily enrollment. For behavior/discipline, the applicant notes that problems with this indicate a lack of student engagement in the learning process. This is calculated using the total number of participating students and total number of incident reported. For reading and math (3-12) achievement indicators, the measures will be the state assessments and end-of-course tests. It is not clear what the career-readiness measure is for grades 9-12. The assessments listed career readiness were the same for reading and math performance indicators, but the baseline and expected end point percentages were different.

(b) The applicant did not discuss how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant’s implementation success or areas of concern; and

(c) The applicant did not discuss how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is sufficient to gauge implementation progress.

The applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(E)(4)The plans that the applicant lay forth in evaluating effectiveness of investments include activities to ensure the mechanisms of, and who has oversight of, implementation of the program instead of the required evaluation of the components of the plan. For example, the applicant states the personnel who will be employed, not the evaluative responsibilities for ensuring performance measures are being met or how they will ensure professional development activities or the technology lending program are effective. It is unclear if an external evaluator will be used and if the applicant has given thought to the methodology of the evaluation design. The applicant has addressed very little concerning the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. In addition, the applicant has not addressed the component of a high-quality plan, including the key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline.

They receive a low score on the selection criterion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(F)(1)(a) & (c)(i) The applicant succinctly reports that the funding will be mainly from two sources. The RTT grant funding will cover student online curriculum access, technology lending to students without these needed resources, dual credit course fees and books, district-wide professional development, and technology start-up costs. The district is requesting \$24,999,681.19 for these projects which are designed to better prepare students for college and career paths, eliminate roadblocks to advanced curriculum, and increase college enrollment and postsecondary degree attainment. Through local funding, the district will provide the cost of personnel for the proposed projects (approximately \$12,253,000) and transportation for students in the Extended School Program and dual credit courses (approximately \$220,890) over the grant period. Total amount of funds from other sources including local funding is \$12,758,285 for a total budget amount of \$40,903,171.19.

(ii) It is clear through review of the budget that, primarily, one-time investments will be incurred in year one to supply the technical equipment and supplies needed for the implementation the Reasoning Mind and Extended School Programs.

All other expenditures will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period. A large part of this proposal deals with professional development needed to implement the Reasoning Mind, Extended School, College and Career-Readiness and the Technology Lending Program. This training will focus on teaching educators the strategies to successfully use these programs to ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments. However, more information is needed to understand how the district plans to maintain the sustainability of the technological aspects of this project, particularly the upkeep and replacement of technology equipment as they becomes outdated.

(b) The applicant has clearly spent some time in thoughtful consideration of the budget and has broken the budget down by categories of expenditure needs. In addition, the applicant has based their expenditures on actual price quotes provided by existing suppliers and service providers. Also, the budget was based on experiences with current and past district programs. Some of the major initiatives - the College & Career Readiness System, Reasoning Minds, and Extended School Program - have all, at least in part, been piloted in some of the schools.

Thoughtful organization and planning, current price quotes from well-known vendors, experience with similar programs and budgets, along with the cost-sharing with the district mentioned in (a) above, were positive aspects of the budget. More information is needed concerning the sustainability plan for technology upkeep. The applicant presents a reasonable and sufficient budget to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant receives a score within the lower end of the high range on this selection criterion.

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

(F)(2) The applicant soundly explains that the strong professional development aspect of the proposal will promote more effective and efficient teaching strategies and teacher/student interactions for sustainability. In addition, as teachers and administrators become familiar with the EPIC program, they will then become tutors of untrained and new staff members further promoting sustaining practices. Program success with personalized learning, online coursework, and use of technology will encourage sustainability efforts. The applicant also ensures the following supports to promote sustainability: 1) a systematic process to ensure all stakeholders have access to program progress and a method for regular input; 2) continued program evaluation with changes made as necessary to ensure attainment of program goals; and 3) a commitment from the Board of Trustees to this enhancement of college and career readiness programs and standards that will ensure sustainability beyond the grant period.

However, the applicant provides little concrete information from which to develop a high-quality plan for sustainability. The applicant did not include support from State and local government leaders, financial support for sustainability, and a description of how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments. Also, the applicant did not address how they will evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget, including an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds. These factors were not tied into place through the elements of a high-quality plan including key goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, persons responsible, and a timeline.

The applicant receives a mid-range score for this selection criterion

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1) The applicant has set forth a strategic plan for coherent and sustainable community partnerships that target the critical success needed for the PreK and the high school populations. For the PreK community population, the applicant will partner with the Day Nursery of Abilene (DNA) to support the district's School Readiness Program. Both of these programs are voluntary and both maintain a waiting list of students to enroll. As preparation for kindergarten readiness is so important to success in kindergarten and beyond, the two educational entities are uniting to offer more coordinated curricular opportunities (using the same computer-based curriculum, Frog Street) for students, including economically disadvantaged students. Both entities will provide the necessary funding for this united effort. This partnership is highly needed and the fact that both entities will share a common curricula is necessary to the equity of learning

opportunities these students will experience as they enter kindergarten.

For the high school partnerships, the district will partner with Communities in Schools (CIS) to improve school attendance rates by working with students to identify specific issues of difficulty and refer, as needed, to external sources for additional assistance. Working in coordination with the district CIS will assist students in goal-setting for postsecondary education and/or career choices by identifying and resolving barriers in the student's life. In addition, the district will partner with community universities (3), two-year college (1), and technical school (1) to increase dual credit opportunities for high school students by reducing tuition rates which increases the probability of students articulating to postsecondary from high school graduation. Two distinct types of partnerships, one community-based and the other educationally-oriented, will provide needed wrap around services for students during and after high school.

(2) The applicant has established seven sound population-level desired results that represent both educational and community supports. Educational results include: PreK – students will complete the School Readiness program fully prepared for success in kindergarten. PreK will master the Approach to Learning as well as mastery of Social Behaviors. It is unclear if this includes the community Day Nursery of Abilene also. Elementary and middle school students will show increased performance measures in math as measured by the state assessment through use of the Reasoning Mind. For middle school students, student will increase the number of high school credits earned allowing them more flexibility in scheduling upon entering high school. Enrollment in dual credit courses for high school students will increase providing opportunities for college enrollment to more students. The applicant indicates that student percentages for state criteria for “met” standards will increase district-wide in math and reading on the state assessment (STAAR) by a minimum of 5% for grades 3-11 (from SY 2011-2012 to SY 2017-2018). It is unclear if this data was extrapolated from performance measure data in (E)(3), or if this is another source of data.

For PreK-12 students impacted by the CIS community partnership, students will demonstrate improvements in both school attendance and discipline referrals which will help parents and the community with decreased truancy/vandalism issues. It is unclear if the target population for CIS intervention is high school students, as suggested in the narrative in response to this selection criterion, or if the total student population (grades PreK-12) will receive CIS intervention, as indicated by this population-desired result chart.

In addition, the applicant has set a college enrollment goal of increasing a minimum of 10% % (actual figures show 12%) from start of grant to post grant (73.5% in SY 2011-2012 to 85.5% in SY 2017-2018). It is unclear if this is considered an educational (although outside of the grant PreK-12) and/or community desired result as postsecondary institutions were not described in the desired results as a support.

(3) (a) It is sufficiently reported by the applicant that university partners will collect data concerning the number of dual enrollment credits earned across all the schools in the district. These will then be gathered by the RTT program director to evaluate growth in this program. Also, the number of students enrolled in dual credit classes throughout the district will be followed to measure population increase. On the student level, sub-populations will be monitored to assure equal opportunity to all students. Any group not equally represented will be contacted by counselors to review dual credit procedures and benefits. District and campus attendance rates will be monitored weekly to track differences in attendance. Low attendance rates will be addressed by administrators on a campus-wide level with motivation and incentives for improved attendance. As individual students are identified with attendance concerns, district attendance officers and Communities in Schools personnel will work with those students to determine the cause and develop a solution. All other desired-results will be tracked per student assessment indicators annually toward school performance measures (School Readiness assessments and state academic assessments) as mentioned throughout this application. These methods are adequate for the expressed purposes with one exception, the applicant does not discuss the tracking of student subgroups to ascertain desired decreases in achievement gaps in order to shine the light on this overlooked area.

(b) The applicant has accurately determined through district pilot data and observations that failure in math, particularly Algebra, is a huge obstacle to students, often preventing them from taking advanced courses and pursuing college enrollment. For this reason, the applicant has a solid plan to address this barrier. The applicant has chosen to implement the Reasoning Mind math program in all their elementary schools, after successfully piloting the program in one school. The applicant describes this program as providing real-time data for teachers to monitor student success on all objectives, enabling teachers to intervene as soon as a weakness is identified so that each objective is realized before students move

to another concept. Also, the Edmentum curriculum used in the Extended School Program (also piloted in one high school) has embedded diagnostics which identify areas of non-mastery and prescribe additional units of study before students get too far behind. These two programs will allow students who are struggling to learn material at their own pace, with built-in remediation as needed as they progress toward college- and career-ready standards. The programs are appropriate for any at-risk student. These two academic programs have a solid track record of success, per applicant report, in piloting effort in the district. In addition, the Technology Lending program provides netbooks for use with online curricula to students, such as economically disadvantage students without home computer resources, a significant step toward technological equity and access for all students.

(c) All schools and all students in all grades in the district are included in the grant proposal and the applicant has selected community-wide partners with whom to collaborate. The applicant mentions one area of possible expansion (scaling up) to be in the Technology Lending program since this proposal is for grades 5-12 only. However, the applicant does not provide a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students, and does not provide affirmative commitment to this effort.

(d) The applicant states that program leaders, teachers, and administrators will closely monitor student participation and performance and data will be constantly monitored to assure program growth and allow for immediate adjustments, if needed. However, specific methods for this data monitoring and program adjustment are not provided. For example, such information might include identifying the educators and community partners who receive/gather the data and in what form, specifying indicators of concern, determining specific data collection times and methods, and deciding how the data will be analyzed, reported, and acted upon for improvements in education/community supports are all factors to be considered.

(4) The applicant provides limited information to support this sub-criterion. For example, they say that the Communities in Schools partnership provides resources for students with unique needs. More information is need concerning this. The applicant also notes that the district has a large English Language Learner (ELL) population with programs on every campus and interpreters are employed by the district to assist the high refugee population. Also, the district's counseling program assists students from families who have not traditionally attended college to help them understand the benefits of higher education and complete applications and financial aid forms. The applicant does not describe how the partnerships support these efforts.

(5(a) The applicant indicates that all stakeholders will be trained in using EPIC's Four Keys conceptual framework to enhance student learning making them more prepared for college level courses. This effort is designed to initiate a cultural mindset shift in district staff from the present idea of students being good enough (passing) to becoming advanced learners. The applicant fails to explain the collaboration that will take place with partners to assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with the partnership's goals for improving the education and family and community supports.

(b) The applicant notes that the state has recently changed or upgraded the state assessment instrument to reflect more rigorous curricula which promotes added college readiness. In response to this, the district has proactively performed evaluations on all core curriculum to identify and update areas of discrepancies and misalignment. It is reported that the district curriculum department frequently monitors student progress and implements curricula changes when needed. The applicant does not mention how the PreK curriculum and community supports/partnerships are considered in this process.

(c) The applicant reports that the district has Campus Wide and District Wide Consultation Committees which appraise school performance data and needs and make recommendations for student improvement. In addition, the applicant notes that a program director and assistant program director will be put into place to ensure fidelity of implementation and teacher training of this grant proposal. The applicant fails to address how the partnership would build capacity of district educators by providing them with tools and supports to create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports which address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results. Instead, the applicant has focused on the supports provided by the district.

(d) The applicant notes that parent input will be sought to address individual student needs and any obstacles to student learning. Professional development will help teachers overcome these problems as they work with parents in addition to the individual student. The programs proposed will provide extensive electronic data which parents can access to monitor their student's progress. The applicant fails to address how the partnership would build capacity of district educators by providing them with tools and supports to engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs. Instead, the applicant has focused on the supports provided by the district.

(e) The applicant reports that they will use data systems such as Frontrunner (grade reporting) and Eduphoria (student data) to monitor student mastery in required objectives for all courses. The applicant fails to address how the partnership would build capacity of district educators by providing them with tools and supports to routinely assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems. Instead, the applicant has focused on the supports provided by the district.

(6) The applicant has listed the following performance measures for the proposed population and describe desired results for students.

- Twenty five percent of high school students are enrolled in dual credit courses with a local college or technical school. (Type - Educational);
- 2) Middle school students enter high school with up to 5 credits earned toward graduation. (Type - Educational);
- Enrollment in Algebra 1 courses in the 8th grade increases by 50%, and Algebra I will be offered in 7th grade, due to the algebra preparation provided through the Reasoning Mind program allowing students to take more advanced math classes in high school which lead to college preparation or more elective courses which track toward a chosen career path. (Type - Educational)

The applicant did not mention the two community-desired results or the two additional educational-desired results that were discussed in criterion CPP (2).

The applicant receives a mid-range score for this Competitive Preference Priority.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a well-thought out plan for personalizing learning PreK-12, through the initiatives the Reasoning Mind, Extended School Program, the College- and Career-Readiness System, system-wide Professional Development, and a Ttechnology Lending program as described in earlier sections. The applicant was careful to provide thoughtful and reasonable attention to the funding and budgetary needs. Students will learn college- and career-ready standards which are aligned to the above academic programs through a personalized learning system, as the programs are self-paced and many activities can be accomplished online through alternative settings. These programs are designed to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase graduation rates by meeting the academic needs of each student. A plan for technology support for students, parents, and educators was explained, and the district will offer an innovative technology lending program for students who do not have access to technology devices away from the school. The broad-based PreK-12 professional development program, provided through the above academic programs, is designed to increase the effectiveness of educators and, thereby, increase student access to the most effective educators.

However, the applicant does not provide evidence, as noted by their performance measures (E)(3), of the intent to decrease achievement gaps across student groups. According to the data provided, all student subgroups are expected to increase achievement in reading and math by 2% each year, resulting in the achievement gaps remaining consistent

among subgroups from grant start to end. This is troubling as several of the subgroups have large gaps as explained in (E)(3). As it stands, the applicant projects achievable, but not ambitious performance measures across the grades and subgroups. In addition, the applicant does not provide sufficient information and a high-quality plan for ensuring teacher effectiveness and that students have access to highly effective teachers.

Also, the applicant fails to completely address the manner in which the grant reform vision will build up on its work in the four core educational assurance areas. These core areas are: (1) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; (2) building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction; (3) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and (4) turning around lowest-achieving schools. Specifically, the applicant does indicate how (1) they have updated standards and local assessments (in response to more rigorous state assessments) that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy other than to indicate that their new programs are aligned with college- and career-ready standards. Also, they mention in the Competitive Preference Priority section that the district has performance an evaluation on all core curriculum to identify areas of discrepancies and misalignment with the new state assessment. This was needed as the state assessment has been updated to reflect a more rigorous curriculum which promotes added college readiness. (2) The data systems in place measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction, but may not have interoperability capability. (3) No plan is articulated to recruit, develop, reward, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most. (4) The applicant did not address how they plan to turn around the lowest-achieving schools.

As the applicant does not build its grant application to completely address the four key areas (core educational assurance areas) to support comprehensive education reform, the Absolute Priority I is not met.

Total	210	121
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0056TX-4 for Abilene Independent School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is a large school district in Texas serving over 17,000 students, more than 68% are Economically Disadvantaged and 34% are considered At-Risk.

The proposal lists numerous general objectives intertwined with statements addressing the need in the community. For example it will raise the level of awareness, interaction and expectation on the part of all educators, and seek input, collaboration and commitment with post-secondary partners. It also states that it wants to develop and implement a quality algebra readiness curriculum and strategies in the early grade levels in order to develop a "love for mathematics and overcome fear and lack of confidence in mathematical skills."

The applicant also states that learning will be personalized in the classroom for students participating in the Reasoning Mind and Extended School Programs.

Missing however is a logical progression of the applicant's vision stemming from the 4 core assurance areas and a history of how these assurances will be built into the applicant's proposed plans.

The applicant does speak to the level of need and the data collection it uses. It provides a history of its low performing schools but there is no discussion tying them together with the 4 core assurances. Nor is there an analysis of a classroom experience or an articulation of 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 interest.

In summary the applicant has not set out a comprehensive and coherent reform vision or approach that builds on the 4 core educational assurances.

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

10

5

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant’s schools all belong to the LEA and all campuses have been chosen to develop a district-wide college and career readiness program. According to the applicant and from reviewing the chart serving students in grades early childhood (including Headstart) –grade 12 meet the Race to the Top-District competition’s eligibility requirements. The schools listed in the proposal will serve over 1250 educators and 17,000 students in the first year of RTT-D, with 68% qualifying as low-income and 34% as at-risk.

The process for selecting the schools appears appropriate given the fact that the schools are already part of the LEA working together and tied together through the district’s governing regulations.

The applicant’s approach to implementing its reform proposal (e.g., schools, grade bands, or subject areas) does not appear to support a high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation. It has however, identified four main areas in which it will work as part of the application but they are not unified in a district-wide approach including all schools that the applicant has pledged to the proposed project. They are Reasoning mind math for grades 2 -6: Technology lending (it is not clear what grade levels will be involved); College & Career Readiness where students take college level courses while still in high school; Professional development – using the College and Career Readiness System; and Extended school program for high school students to allow them to recover credit from failed courses, complete courses needed for graduation, or to accelerate learning.

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

10

4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant’s proposal states that it has developed an exemplary plan to adopt standards and assessments aligned to College and Career Readiness standards, update student data system so that all schools can use data to drive and personalize instruction, as well as, train, develop, and evaluate teachers and administrators so that each is highly effective. It also states that two programs proposed (extended school, and reasoning mind math) have been piloted in the district but there is limited data included to suggest how the pilots worked or where they were located except for the reason mind pilot which was at one of the district’s lowest performing elementary schools. The passing rate increased by 12% on the state assessment for fifth grade math at this school. Missing also is the logic model or the discussion about how to implement the plan or scale the plan to include all schools in the district. A discussion of scaling is critical to understand how the proposed plan will be implemented and efficacious in a broader implementation.

There are discussions throughout the proposal that suggest how Reason Mind math and ESP will work but there is no overall plan on integration of these programs into all schools or a timeline for all teacher training only that it will start in 2014. The applicant’s plan therefore, does not include all of the aspects of a high-quality plan per RTT standards, including key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

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

10

4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

While the applicant has presented charts suggesting rates of gain it does not adequately show goals in reading and math for its student population (including those with disabilities) and has not effectively shown the comparison with the state’s highest-achieving subgroup on standardized assessments.

The goals that the applicant has developed for improved student achievement based on the charts provided can not be assessed to be either ambitious or achievable based on the current interventions and past achievements for students since none is presented. As a result closing the achievement gap is not readily assessible since there are no goals listed for rate of gain or change in math, ELA or reading.

The applicant's current graduation rate of 95.4% for its students is great to start with and its projected rate is both ambitious and achievable based on its past programming.

Finally, The applicant has stated that it currently meets all minimum growth requirements and achievement levels. But it does not state what they are or the comparison group(s) on which they are being compared or how they will close the achievement gaps of students in greatest need and below grade expectations.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant indicates that after the 2009-2010 school year, it was rated as academically unacceptable by the state education agency due to a drop in the graduation rate of one student sub-population. In that year the district's 4-Year completion rate was 80.3%. After three years of intervention (especially after the introduction of the extended school program – ESP), the high school graduation rate went to a commendable 93.2%.</p> <p>Also in 2009-10, the cumulative percentage of students that 'met standard' on all state assessments was 72%. The rate has gone up to 77%. There is however no rationale for this increase – no correlation presented to explain the change in performance to the programs proposed or the need for the programs. The applicant does explain the pilot for reasoning mind and how it has improved student performance at a low performing elementary school even though it shows that it has.</p> <p>The applicant speaks of students on track to college and career readiness and indicates that they have a College & Career Readiness System that all students, teachers, administrators, and counselors can use to participate in school-wide reform to create measurable gains in student achievement. There is also a performance measure to increase college enrollment that will raise a minimum of 10%.</p> <p>The applicant has not collected past college enrollment data. It has projected the percent of graduates who will attend 4 year universities and 2 year colleges at the end of the 2012-2013 SY.</p> <p>Regarding closing the achievement gap, the applicant provides a series of charts showing the baseline and expected increases by each district student sub group but not a comprehensive high quality plan to show how they will reach the expected performance outcomes.</p> <p>Furthermore, the applicant currently does not have many systems in place to allow for parent, student and educator access to records and a student's continuous performance. The applicant has indicated that the reasoning mind program can be programmed to send parents periodic email notices of their student's progress. Additionally, the district's electronic grade book can be viewed by parents at any time. And it will expand its data systems but no specifics are presented and the budget does not show any major technology infrastructure improvements to support the collection and dissemination of information to stakeholders..</p> <p>All of the applicant's programs seem beneficial for their students and may have an impact on learning and graduation rates but there is no consistent theme in the presentation to adequately evaluate a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement at all grade levels in more than just a few pilot examples. Equally, achieving ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving school is a great example of what is possible but scaling the work to other schools is not fully explained and no timetable or outcome goals are given.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has not been able to show its non-personnel expenditures at the school level are transparent even though they state that they are posted on their web page, submitted to the state education department (such items submitted to the state include per-pupil expenditures, remediation funding, professional development expenditures), and other basic educational expenditures as part of applicant's annual accountability report. Additionally, the applicant does not specify any of its investments, if any or any information about its policies other than to say that it maintains an extremely transparent stance regarding public school finance.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	3

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has stated that all of the primary components in applicant's proposed programs fit within current legislation and its particular District Policies. According to the applicant it will not face any legal roadblocks when it moves forward to implement the proposed grant activities and specifically when it implements the personalized learning environments as described in the applicant's proposal.

The applicant, however, has provided no description of the policies or the legal authority to conduct the proposed grant activities. There is a letter from the state department of education (indicating that it has declined to comment on any LEA proposals) and one from the mayor but it is not descriptive in its assertion of the applicant's right or ability to conduct activities as it proposes.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has stated that it received input from a variety of sources (e.g., parents, program directors, teacher aides) through collaboration and/or surveys but only one - teachers - is there any evidence of input. There is no evidence that the information gleaned from the applicant's survey of teachers was used in the development of the proposed project activities. And it has mentioned that it has received support from local colleges/universities who have indicated that they support the applicant but no specific input was recorded by these supporters to the proposal.

Also, the applicant has secured letters of support from several area colleges and universities, the city manager and the mayor. Absent were letters or other indications of support from parents, teachers, community groups, individual schools in the LEA and administrators including principals.

There is limited evidence that the applicant has been able to develop any meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and/or meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal other than a survey to teachers. There was no mention of the applicant's collective bargaining representation or even if one is necessary.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has indicated that through its research it will develop 3 new strategies to ensure students are college and career ready.

However, while each strategy is important on its own there is no unifying them to bring them together. For example the EPIC model for developing pathways to and through college appears to be geared to students in grades 6-12 and helps students develop important thinking skills. Additionally, teachers will be selected to participate but there is no discussion on how this will happen.

The applicant has proposed that it will implement Reasoning Mind for grades 2 – 6 and each teacher will be trained and certified to administer the program. And while all teacher will be chosen for the program and a description of the training process has been included.

The applicant will also provide training for an extended school program to teachers. The training will enable teachers selected to allow students to accelerate and advance their learning to provide access to advanced coursework and preparation for colleges and careers. There is limited evidence presented on how this program will work or how teachers and others will be selected other than as the applicant states employees will be assigned to the program.

The applicant has not clearly identified specific goals and objectives for students to identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards, college- and career ready graduation requirements, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals. Even though mastering critical academic content and developing skills and traits such as goal-setting, are part of the EPIC model the applicant has made a broad brush attempt to show what they have in mind but not how it will be implemented.

The applicant has also not clearly developed systems to ensure each child K-12 has the supports and the assistance to ensure that he personally and continuously has feedback on his individual learning goals. For example they have defined programming in math for grades 2-6 but nothing for younger children (other than a partnership with Day Nursery of Abilene

for PreK children), or any indication how they will serve children with disabilities or other high needs students.

The EPIC program is for grades 6-12 but there is no discussion of how the child will be served, only that teachers will be trained to implement the model. There is therefore not a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments to ensure a high-quality plan will be in place - including all activities, timelines, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities. As for high-quality content, including digital learning content, the applicant proposes that programming is measured daily through student progress in mastering of concepts, testing, as well reviewed periodically throughout the year using district benchmarks, state assessment scores, and progress checks within the system. Who is responsible for ensuring that each child has an individual plan is not stated, however.

There is also nothing mentioned about diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives or how the applicant has discussed how the high needs learner will be involved in this discussion of programs to be implemented, or mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

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

20

5

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the projects proposed through their grant proposal meet the goals of the RTT program for Teaching and Leading. They indicate that they have addressed the extent to which they have a plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. This plan however does not include an approach to implementing differentiated instructional strategies (adapting learning for each student's needs) for all participating students - including for example those who are at risk, those who are failing and those with disabilities – since they are focused mainly on enabling participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements. And the plan does not frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators.

They do not discuss in detail and across the applicant's LEA how educators will improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards. They do not indicate how all participating educators have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements. They do not have a plan for example that helps educators identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests.

They speak about how the algebra program will include grades 2-6 but do not give details about how it will be implemented or how all participating educators will engage in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity to support each child's learning.

The applicant indicated that the program proposed will provide teachers with extensive professional development to ensure that the classroom teacher has everything necessary to lead a successful reasoning mind classroom. But they do not explain how this will happen or who at the local level on a regular basis will be there to ensure that there is continuous reinforcement and support for the teacher in the classroom.

The applicant has not provided enough information to suggest whether it has the ability to train school leaders and school teams in the policies, tools, data, and resources that are needed to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs.

Regarding providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches, the applicant does not describe specific individual approaches but rather speaks in broad language of supporting and implementing a personalized learning environment and strategies that meet each student's needs in the pursuit of a college and career education. It is lacking clarity on what exactly the personalized system will look like.

The applicant has made statements about providing frequent access to students, parents and others regarding student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, but it is not evident how or where the portals or processes will work – other than the access via email by parents on the EPIC program and access to a grading and homework system.

The applicant has not discussed its system to ensure a comprehensive effective teacher and leader professional development including the development of a learning community for teachers and teacher evaluations.

The applicant has not identified high-quality plan to help educators to identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests. It has indicated that it will increase the number of students who receive

instruction from effective and highly effective teachers but does not give a timeline or training agenda and it does not include staffing hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science), and specialty areas (such as special education). The applicant has indicated that it will hire specialists to train teachers in reasoning mind and EPIC and in the extended school program but there was no discussion about differentiation of instruction of high needs children.

Finally the applicant has not provided an overall view of how each child with his interests and abilities will be served using the proposed activities of the grant model to assess needs and strengths and develop a program to fit these attributes. The child it appears will be afforded three programs only, depending on his age/grade level.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	7

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to create a new central administration RTT Office, with a director, assistant director, and administrative assistant. The applicant has also indicated that it will develop a community advisory committee consisting of all stakeholders and community business members to review performance and implementation of the proposed grant. Having students on the committee would insure further transparency however.

Based on the applicant's statement that the new RTT office is responsible for all grant activities it is not made clear who is specifically responsible for principal supervision, and a focus on school-level results, among other areas.

The applicant also indicates that the proposed RTT office will have flexibility to change class schedules, calendars and make school personnel decisions and staffing models. It is unclear however how this will happen since there is no discussion about what impact the changes might have on the applicant's ongoing programs and who the grant administrator will be collaborating with to make systematic changes.

The applicant also states that all instructional materials will be developed in a manner that will be fully adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners but does not give examples of its application of tis idea. The applicant has not stated that it will provide students with differentiated entry points and multiple metrics to achieve learning mastery using technology and to support self-paced and differentiated learning for all populations of students.

The applicant has indicated that it has seen an upsurge in the numbers of students served in the extended school program and the use of web-based learning tools since its inception in 2010 but the charts are not easily understood. For example one chart shows the key statistics for the school year 2009-10 and includes District 4 – Completion rate but nowhere in the proposal is there noted a District 4 (or District 5) or what RHSP/DAP rate is.

The applicant has proposed that teachers and specialists will develop common assessments that will allow multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery. Missing are examples of what these assessments might look like and which students in which curricular areas would be included. (Already included is reasoning mind for grades 2-6 and extended school program (8-12). English at the elementary grades is not discussed.

In summary the applicant does not provide a high quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. Further what is missing from a high-quality plan is key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is proposing that the new RTT program Administration will conduct stakeholder forums on a monthly basis, conducting outreach to different organizations each month, to ensure that all feedback can be received for the benefit of the program.

The applicant has also indicated that it collects and publishes timely data to educators and their supervisors regarding student growth, but there is no discussion of how this system (collection of state scores along with district target tests and benchmark scores) will be used in the proposed project to further the development of its plan.

The applicant has stated, however, that its proposed technical infrastructure includes parent access with a log-in to access their student's grades, homework, and progress. Students who do not have computer access will be allowed to checkout a netbook through the school tech lending program which will be created by the RTT Grant. Furthermore, trainings will be held for parents to ensure proper use and accessibility of information pertaining to their student and the district. This program will be built on transparency, and appropriate information will be available for interested stakeholders.

The applicant has indicated that it will conduct a needs assessment to determine the extent to which current systems meet the requirements of the RTT program and will develop a Request for Proposals to secure the necessary technology systems that will allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to ensure that the data can be used in electronic learning systems. There is no budget item for this expected expense. As a result of the needs assessment, the required information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems (e.g., electronic tutors, tools that make recommendations for additional learning supports, or software that securely stores personal records) is not included in the application.

The applicant has not demonstrated that it has the capacity or a program design in place to ensure that all participating students, parents, educators, 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 a high quality plan including key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has indicated that a needs assessments will be conducted twice a year to see where adjustments and improvements need to be made in the proposed project. Also core area teachers will collaborate with the applicant's Curriculum and Instruction Directors and Content Teacher Specialists to develop district benchmarks and learning targets.</p> <p>the applicant has also discussed how it will train teachers to use the extended school program but not who will be trained specifically, and it discussed the use of netbooks and the use of other technology for credit recuperation and college credit but not in enough detail to know who will be trained to implement the programs or how.</p> <p>As an example of how the applicant will publicly share information it will hold open forums every 2 months, disseminate a monthly newsletter with information regarding news about the RTT Grant Program and any information about upcoming meetings, along with email addresses and phone numbers which stakeholders may call to ask question and state any concerns in between forums.</p> <p>While these are good first steps they do not constitute a high quality plan showing how the applicant will continuously improve the project, provide regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. There are no operational measurable objectives noted here. The applicant states that the proposed program staff will work with each site to implement individualized plans, goals, and expectations based on student and school need but not how or when. Therefore there is not a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals since these are not defined and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant since they have not presented a well defined high quality plan discussing the 4 core assurances.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has indicated that it will communicate publicly and share information on proposed projects but there are no specifics to see how this will be done other than regular stakeholder meetings (open forums every 2 months) and a newsletter. The applicant has discussed elsewhere who the stakeholders for the grant are but there was no mention of students or the kinds of community representatives that would be included other than a few local businesses.</p> <p>Finally, the applicant has not provided a high quality plan. For example, there are no timelines presented to confirm the applicant's progress toward goals for the proposed grant activities; no descriptions of the responsibilities of those charged</p>		

with managing the communications or managing the effectiveness of the proposed project other than indicating that the project would be implemented by a director and the assistant director of the proposed project.

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

The applicant has provided 6 performance measures (math, reading, ELA, attendance, behavior, discipline) for all subgroups and across grades pre-k-12, all of which it currently uses and each is aligned with a datum point that the applicant collects. Each performance measure appears appropriate to meet the requirements of the grant application. There is no reference to resilience or social emotional indicators beyond grade Pre-K which might be used as a good indicator of persistence in K-12 and beyond for children at risk of failure.

Additionally, there is no discussion about ambitious or achievable performance measures, overall or by subgroup. There are however, annual targets by subgroup and the applicant has stated that for example 25% of high school students will be enrolled in dual credit courses with a local college or technical school, enrollment in Algebra 1 courses in the 8th grade will increase by 50%, and Algebra I will be offered in 7th grade. Additionally, there are specific academic targets for each grade level in each of the performance measure areas. Since most of the proposed improvements in scores have no prior baseline except for the current year, it is not possible to clearly assess the applicant's ability to set ambitious and achievable targets. If they had reported past data for ELA, math, reading, etc it would allow an assessment of the efficacy of their predictions into the future.

. But there are no specific student objectives related to the 4 program areas (Reasoning Mind and Extended School technology-based learning programs expansions; Technology Lending Program; College & Career Readiness including dual credit expansion; and District Wide Professional Development) to measure project success. Furthermore, the information presented does not answer how the data presented will be used to provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding its implementation, success or areas of concern.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There is no plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed activities, such as professional development to be conducted for teachers and activities that employ technology. Also there is a category for effective principals on the data reported each year and the applicant indicates that the number of effective principals will increase but there is no objective or training schedule to show how this will happen.

Additionally, throughout the proposal, there are snippets of discussions about what technology will be used and what teachers will be trained but nowhere is there a discussion about how each school or principal will be involved or how parents will evaluate the proposed activities. There are no references to surveys, website development, or how technology will be pervasive throughout the delivery of its services to students or, its ability to evaluate the efficacy of each proposed project activity.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has stated that the budget for the proposed projects is \$24,999,681 and it will add \$12,253,000 through local funding for the cost of personnel for reasoning mind, other programs, and transportation for students in the Extended School Program as well dual credit courses over the grant period. The bulk of the requested RTT funding is for technology and personnel training.

The budget request does not appear to be sufficient to conduct the proposed 4 Projects: Reasoning Mind and Extended School technology-based learning programs expansions; Technology Lending Program; College & Career Readiness

including dual credit expansion; and District Wide Professional Development, as well as establishing a separate RTT Administration to manage this program. The applicant provides a rationale for investments, especially the funds for infrastructure and teacher training. Half of the requested money will be spent on the reasoning mind program for annual teacher training and the cost of each child's materials. It does not, however, discuss satisfactorily, why it must use a contractor to train teachers each year instead of bringing the training inhouse after the first year, using a train the trainer model as it is using elsewhere in its projected activities.

It is difficult to reconcile the budget costs with the lack of controls and the nature of the 4 projects when some of the projects do not have a clear description of who will participate - which teachers, principals will be trained and the timelines for all and who will supervise at the local level of the implementation.

Furthermore, The applicant has indicated that one-time investments include technology equipment and reasoning mind materials.

The applicant will buy netbooks at \$50 a piece. This purchase is questionable especially since the case costs \$20 and connectivity will cost the applicant \$7,832,000 over the course of the grant request. This seems excessive since the applicant will be accessing the internet for 3560 netbooks. And there is no discussion about what will happen to these students and their access after the grant period expires.

The budget does not discuss how the applicant will continue the project (no proposed post grant period budget) after the hoped for funding has expired and it does not fully outline a high quality plan that is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not have a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. They indicate that they will have better trained teachers and students will have access to technology but there is no plan other than that they have a commitment from the Board of Trustees to the enhancement of college and career readiness programs and standards that will ensure sustainability beyond the grant period.

The applicant has not identified its sustainability plans either in a stand alone section in the grant proposal or anywhere else in the narrative to a degree that suggests they have a plan for all proposed programs.

Furthermore, the applicant has not proposed that staff positions supported by the grant request would either phase out within the grant period or move to a campus creating sustainable positions. And there is no post 3 year budget or specific mention of support from state or local government leaders. There are letters of support from the city manager and the mayor but both letters only indicate support for the proposed projects and no funding support.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes partnerships to address the needs of PreK students to help them be ready for full-time school; high school students to assist with attendance and special needs to increase graduation rates and improve college and career readiness; and universities/colleges to promote dual credit courses.

As for the Pre K readiness program the applicant and the partner agency have not identified how many children will be served, from what area or areas in the applicant's district children will come, the benchmarks for success and what they will do when they find there is an issue needing further support with the child or within the family. They have also not identified the criteria for enrollment other than to state that the enrollment is based on a sliding scale for payment however. There is no support letter or expanded description of the partner agency in the submitted materials.

Increase attendance is another area the applicant will focus on, and will partner with Communities in Schools to increase attendance of students. Again there is no definition of a student needing services, or how many will be served, or what success will look like – only that they will serve as many students as possible. There is no support letter or description of the partner agency in the submitted materials

Increase dual credit opportunities is the third focus in which the applicant will work with partner schools of higher education who will serve students at a reduced rate. This partnership model appears to be the program that the applicant has already included in the main proposal.

The charts representing the desired results for the competitive priority projects are all well meaning goals but only one (increased College Enrollment) has measureable projected results, and none appear to be directly related to the partnerships or their intended results.

The applicant has not proposed an evaluative process to ensure that the supports provided by partners are beneficial to each student and especially those most in need and at risk (including those with special educational needs which they mention they will serve in the competitive category).

In summary, the applicant has not clearly defined its goals, its measures of success (has not indicated any population-level desired results for students in the partnership), described how the partnership would, within participating schools, integrate education and other services, or its ability to track and change course if and where necessary, or how the partnership and LEA would build the capacity of staff in participating schools. It has also not delineated a plan to show how each child will progress from the interventions presented or its capacity to continuously evaluate its ability to deliver services with its partners to the child and to its stakeholders.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant has not comprehensively addressed how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements; accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.</p> <p>The applicant has presented several worthy ideas and the ingredients of programs needed to establish a sound educational approach. What it has not done is demonstrated in a logical compelling way that its past performance or future capability show that it can implement a high-quality comprehensive plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.</p> <p>More critically, the application does not consistently focus on the four core education assurance areas in its application and there is a dearth of information and discussion about families and children at risk – especially English language learners and children with special educational needs.</p>		
Total	210	74