



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0001PA-1 for Allentown City School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The District puts forth a plan that builds on its four core educational assurance areas. The district describes an integrated coherent framework that is based on their Allentown School District (ASD) Framework. A strength of the proposal is the ASD framework focus on (1) Pathways to Success, 2) Quality Instruction, 3) Safety Nets, 4) School Culture, 5) Professional Development, and 6) Recruiting and Retaining Quality Staff and Six components to Improve Student Academic Achievement.. These devices are evidence that the proposal will support the four core educational areas. These present a structure that would seem to foster the district's goal of equity by accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning through personalized student support. This approach includes such innovations as an Intervention and Enrichment period at the Elementary and Middle School level, and personal plans for success for each student. Additionally, the Intervention and Enrichment period will be used in the future at the high school level. The District narrative stresses a goal to instill a culture of educational value. The district hopes to accomplish this by including in their framework: targeted learning, mentoring, and parental support. The district is using Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching to ensure quality instruction. Two graphics are provided showing the framework and components to build success. However, little detail is provided. Only general information is provided regarding what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>A list of participating schools was provided. The list included the total number of students from low-income families, high-need students, and participating educators. No school had less than 84% low-income students. The tables provided evidence that a substantial number of minority and "high risk" populations will be served by the grant. However, no information was provided related to the process used to select participating schools. This lack of information about the process for selecting the schools lowered the potential score.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>There was no information provided in this section. However, the district presents a Framework for Academic Achievement graphic in the Appendices which can serve as a logic model. This graphic combines with Appendix C serve to provide a general direction for the proposal. However, no specifics are provided related to timeline, activities, evaluation, teacher recruitment, etc. Without these details it is difficult to judge if the plan is able to be implemented. Though not explicitly stated, it seems like the district is including all schools in the current proposal. Information from several sections of the proposal and budget, generally paint a picture where quality instruction, Safety Nets, School Culture, PD are used to improve student outcomes. The lack of details about the who, what, when and where of the proposal does not lead credence to it being a high quality plan.</p>		
<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district has set achievable goals for its students on indicator "a", about 3-4 % growth per year. Similarly, graduation rate increases seem to be adequate and achievable at a 3% increase per year for a total increase of about 17% across the life of the grant. In examining the table for mathematics indicators, it is not clear that these goals are ambitious, as all goals appear to be below that of the state ESEA goals. Another weakness is that there appears to be no goal set for</p>		

decreasing the achievement gap. For instance, the math scores for whites are currently at 67% and for Blacks at 48% for meeting target. This is a 19 point gap. At the end of the grant period the goals are for 89% and 70 % for white students and black students respectively for meeting target. This is still a 19 point gap, which is the same gap as in 2012. While there is a goal for all students to achieve at higher levels, there is no attempt to close the gap in order to increase equity among the groups. This pattern is consistent throughout the table. The table related to achievement gaps specifically only lists schools but is not otherwise disaggregated. There is no explanation for why the gap is listed this way. There is no verbiage in sections 4a-c to clarify the reasons for this happening. The district has commendable goals for increasing post-secondary attainment as they are seeking to go from a 15.5% rate to 31% which is a 100% increase. This is strength.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The district provides data that suggests only modest improvement has been made in the past several years. Only nine out of sixteen elementary schools (55%) made AYP. Additionally, seven of eleven schools that had made AYP are now in warning. While the district graduation rate has gone from 62.89% to 68.47%, this change was due to growth in only one of the two high schools which went from 65.45% to 74.56%. The second high school had a flat graduation rate of 61.82% to 62.37%, a growth of just over half a percent over 2 years. While there has been some growth in NCLB targets, the district is over 20 percentage points away from NCLB targets. No data were provided regarding closing the gaps and no data were provided related to college enrollment. Both the lack of data and the modest gains in some areas does not show a clear record of success in the past four years. (b) The district has implemented several strategies in some of the schools. Three elementary schools are implementing <i>Success for All</i>. Another innovative program being implemented is the IE periods to provide time for intervention and enrichment periods. The "<i>Pathways to Success</i>" model is being used to expand enrollment in Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment programs. An example of an innovative strategy is <i>Newcomer Academy</i> which is designed to help ELL students to transition into the mainstream school. These and other strategies seem to be significant reforms across the district. Less information is provided related specifically to low performing schools such as the high school with the stagnant graduation rate. (c) The district mentions using "Data Dashboard" to monitor student progress and sharing the information with administrators and educators to improve instruction. However, no information is provided related to how information is to be made available to students and parents. The mixed record of success and lack of details, related to making data available to stakeholders weakens the narrative.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The ASD narrative describes a reasonable process for disseminating information about indicators a, b, c, &amp; d through several mediums. These include mediums such as minutes of Board meetings being posted on website, and the annual ASD report. These mediums are appropriate devices for dissemination. Another sound process is that the community/district teams reviewed patterns of expenditures and made recommendations to the board during open forums. Specific information about current salaries was provided in the appendices for all staff: instructional staff, teachers; administrative and support personnel. No specific information was given regarding non-personnel expenditures.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The narrative notes that there are two conceptual frameworks by which the district is guided: Pennsylvania's Standards-Aligned System and Pennsylvania's Response to Intervention and Instruction. Within these two frameworks ADS appears to have extensive autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments. Within these frameworks, ASD has the autonomy to structure personalized learning that meets the frameworks goals. The narrative describes a series of conditions that are focused on building a personalized learning environment. The narrative details two state level conceptual frameworks Standards-Aligned System (SAS) and RTII. ASD's comprehensive multi-tiered standards aligned strategy provides convincing evidence of an environment designed to provide a personalized learning environment for students at risk. Using multiple tiers should allow the district to select appropriate tiers for individual students to enable individual growth. Another strength is the intervention/enrichment period at the elementary level. Though not noted in this section, earlier in the narrative evidence was provided that innovations such as virtual classes, AP classes, New Comer</p>		

Academy, expanded Transition Programs, and Pathways to Success provide ample evidence of an environment that would foster personalized learning environments. These strategies are focused on enabling individual students the ability to learn at their own pace, and way.

**(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)**

**15**

**10**

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Sparse information is provided related to meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal. The narrative cites that parents and various stakeholders were involved in developing their Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plan. The narrative also notes that this plan is shared with various stakeholders. However, there are no specifics directly related to the grant provided. ASD does provide lists of stakeholders involved in Comprehensive Planning and Reviewing. These lists identified only eight parents out of about 250 participants across 20 meetings. This and the fact that no students and only one community member were listed on rosters is a weakness. Teachers and administrators were involved in all of the meetings. However, no information is provided regarding the content or processes of these meetings. An adequate number of letters provided evidence of community support. These letters came from organizations such as: the Art Museum, DaVinci Science Center, United Way, and PTSA. There is a list of eighteen teachers (teacher union representatives) who participated in a review of the Race to the Top Grant. A weakness is that there was insufficient evidence or verbiage indicating that the union representatives had significant direct engagement and/or support for the proposal. In general this section did not provide sufficient evidence to support the idea that there is significant stakeholder engagement and support.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The ASD describes several methods in this and previous sections that should ensure that students identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards and to understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals. A primary method for this is individual learning plans in ASD's "Pathways to Success" project. Less information is provided regarding access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual learning. Evidence is provided regarding procedures to enable students to master critical content through the retraining of guidance counselors and through using PA value added assessments to evaluate teachers and principals. A strength of ASD's proposal is their plan to revise guidance practices to address student aspirations, career aspirations, career awareness, and dropout prevention. The narrative adequately describes the use a combination of comprehensive instructional approaches and environments such as "SpringBoard"; New Comers Academy; AP courses, and electronic courses to personalize the sequence of instructional content. ASD appropriately has aligned their curriculum to the PACCS. ASD's narrative generally delineates a process where Professional Learning Communities (PLC) will work to personalize instruction and skill development. Few specifics are provided regarding frequency of data updates and other processes. More extensive information (such as Newcomer Academy) is provided regarding ELL students and their needs. However, less information is made available regarding other high-need students other than to say that safety nets will be in place. Great detail is provided regarding behavior interventions. The interventions for behavior follow an RTI model, which research suggests is an effective means to modify behavior. Sparse information is provided regarding academic interventions. RtII is a framework that will be used. A general statement is made that guidance practices will address student aspirations, career awareness, participation in Pathways, and prevent dropouts. However, few details are provided about how this will be accomplished. The narrative articulates many ideas and strategies and structures that will support learning. However, these ideas are not presented in the form of a high quality plan. The plan is missing the details of a timeline and persons responsible.

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

**20**

**13**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Scant information is provided regarding training that educators receive outside of PLCs. Under Professional Development (PD), a list of teacher and ESOL PD needs is listed, but the process is not. The lack of timeline weakens this section.

Adequate information is provided in this and other sections related to educators meeting in teams to monitor student progress. The narrative describes a thorough process where PLCs meet weekly to discuss students; discuss common challenges with specific portions of the curriculum, and share effective classroom practices. There are quarterly meetings to discuss strategies to be used in the upcoming quarter to enhance student progress. A strength is the "Sapphire Data System" which provides comprehensive student data to teachers and staff. No specifics are given related to how feedback from teacher and principal evaluation systems are used to improve instruction. All teacher have access to the Sapphire Data system. This provides evidence that teachers have access to actionable information about individual student's academic needs and interests. The narrative in this and other sections provide ample evidence of high quality earning resources such as virtual classes, AP classes, RtII process, small learning communities, and focused interventions for ELL students. Weekly and quarterly meetings provide evidence of having a venue for teachers to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting students' needs. No information is provided related to using sources such as the district's evaluation systems to take steps to improve educator effectiveness in this section. In section D there is a reference to using teacher/principal evaluations; however no details were provided related to process. There is a listing of PD needs, but scant information is provided about the training processes involved in implementing PD. A strength is the PLCs. Scant information is provided related to a high-quality plan for increasing the number of highly effective teachers and principals. ASD provides a brief description of their recruitment strategies such as advertising in major metropolitan areas, and working with universities to develop programing. No information is provided related to retention of effective teachers and principals. The narrative describes several strategies that should prepare students who are college and career ready. However, there are insufficient details to present a high-quality plan. Generally, the proposal narrative was missing the details of timelines, persons responsible and specific activities. The district is to be commended for listing goals, a logic model, and general activities. However, without the afore mentioned details the narrative does not reach the level of a high quality plan.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>ASD presents an organization chart that suggests that it is feasible that the LEA will be able to provide support to all participating schools. The structure centers around a Director of Special Projects and the Chief Academic Officer. These two administrators and the COO and support team of directors work with principals to ensure effective instruction. No information is provided regarding school leadership teams autonomy over factors such as schools schedules and calendars, personnel decisions, etc. The ASD narrative, in a previous section, annotates that students will be able to demonstrate mastery through a test, and not only through the amount of time spent on a topic. This is a strength. The narrative also notes that a student will be able to demonstrate mastery at multiple times. Less information is provided regarding demonstrating mastery in multiple ways. A major strength of this proposal is the amount of thought they have put into supporting students with special needs, in particular ELL students. The proposal presents a large array of strategies such RtII, to tutoring, and Blueprint for resiliency for making the curriculum accessible to all students. While there are strategies presented that would be helpful in supporting project implementation, the dots are not connected to form a high-quality plan. Details such as key goals, timeline, and parties engaged were missing. Evidence is not available to support the conclusion that the district has a high quality pan in place.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>ASD's narrative suggests that participating students and educators have access to necessary content, tools and other learning resources in school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. These include transition programs, Pathways to Success, Sapphire Data Systems, Read 180, etc. in the school environment. There is little verbiage related to access to resources outside of the school environment or by other stakeholders such as parents. Scant information is provided related to technical support to any of the stakeholders. Again there is no information related to using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information to an open data format and to use the data in other learning systems. While several systems are annotated in the narrative (Teachscape, Sapphire Data Systems) no information is provided relating to their ability to be interoperable. Additionally, while there are some strategies noted, the lack of specifics related to timelines and persons responsible meant that this is not a high quality plan.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ADS' narrative on continuous improvement only provides a weak general description of their plan for implementing a rigorous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback. There is insufficient information as to how the district will monitor, measure or share information on the quality of its investments funded by RTTD. The narrative only states that the Director of Special Projects is responsible for establishing a comprehensive plan and timeline. It also states that at the middle/high school levels Instructional Leadership Teams are trained to monitor progress, but no details are shared as to the who, what, when, where and how of the monitoring and feedback loop. This lack of detail fails to provide evidence that there is a high quality plan in place.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>A high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders was not presented in the narrative. The ASD narrative notes that the ASD Communication Office will disseminate information. It is noted that the Communications Office oversees such venues as: websites; Facebook and other social media sites; printed media, publicity etc. However, no specific details (i.e. timeline, activities) are provided related to RTT-D communication and engagement. This lack of evidence meant few points could be awarded.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ADS is currently in the process of developing a highly effective data system. No information is provided about its rationale for selecting performance measures including 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, or how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress. The applicant has an appropriate number of performance measures. However, they are not broken out by subgroup but rather by school. Without this evidence it is difficult to see if all students are making gains. Additionally some of the reported data is confusing. For example, according the first indicator "all students" have teachers and principals of record who are effective, but only 0.2% of students are on track to college and career readiness in one high school. This statistic seems to indicate that not all teachers and principals are highly effective.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ASD provides a general statement that they will hire a consultant to monitor and evaluate the project. They also plan to continue to utilize the Superintendent's Core Cabinet Team of Directors. These two statements do not make a high-quality plan. Items such as: timeline, key goals, activities, parties responsible were not made available to the reader in the narrative.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The narrative and budget identifies all funds that will support the project including other Federal and State Funds such as the High School Graduation Initiative grant. The narrative presents a cogent rationale for the use of the funds based on current and future needs. For example, with a very large ELL population, a large sum (\$2,263,223) is targeted at accommodations and scaffolds for this population. The district provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities focusing on three major projects: <i>Pathways to Success</i>, <i>School Culture and Safety Nets</i>, and <i>Quality Instruction, and Professional Development</i>.</p>		

There is a description of other funds that will be used (High School Graduation Initiative). Funds are disaggregated based on one time purchase vs. recurring costs. For example, Common Core aligned instructional materials are listed as one time purchases. The narrative thoughtfully annotates that PD is one way to ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments. Less information is provided regarding future plans for new personnel and their role in sustainability of the new projects. The district provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities of the project.

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

**10**

**2**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The ASD narrative provides little evidence to support the idea that the grant will be sustainable after the term of the grant. They note that the school board in the past has supported initiatives that have been successful. They also note that there is an Allentown School District Foundation that raises funds to support the district. The narrative suggests that the Foundation will be able to support the initiative as the grant winds down. However, no evidence is provided related to that financial outcome. No details are provided for budget or evaluation of parts of the proposal post grant. There is little evidence (timeline, persons responsible, activities, goals) of a high quality plan to sustain the project once the term of the grant is ended.

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

No plan was provided.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The narrative provides evidence that the district will meet the core educational assurances to create learning environments that will be used to improve teaching and learning. The narrative lists such innovations as Newcomers Academy for ELL students, intervention/enrichment periods, and individual learning plans for all students. The narrative articulates ways to enhance educators' effectiveness (PLCS) and to ensure students graduate from high school career and college ready (such as dual enrollment, distance learning and mentoring). The narrative suggests that such strategies as Newcomers Academy and intervention/enrichment periods in combination with individualized learning plans will facilitate a decrease in the achievement gap. The applicant minimally meets Absolute Priority 1.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>119</b>
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**Race to the Top - District**

**Technical Review Form**

**Application #0001PA-2 for Allentown City School District**



## A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Allentown School District's (ASD) reform vision does not fully comply with the requirements of Criterion A(1).

ASD highlight that their goal is to instill a culture of educational value, beginning at birth, by creating an aligned and coordinated support system that will ensure all high school graduates will be college and career ready. They also state that 'the plan is especially designed to improve student performance at the secondary level', and highlight that they are striving to raise students' aspirations to complete high school and attend college. They state they will attempt to achieve these goals by providing support systems at every level of the system by means of targeted learning support, mentoring, and parent support.

Further details are provided in the *ASD Framework for Academic Achievement*, which identifies six components, namely: 1) Pathways to Success, 2) Quality Instruction, 3) Safety Nets, 4) School Culture, 5) Professional Development, and 6) Recruiting and Retaining Quality Staff. The details listed below point to a comprehensive and coherent reform vision.

In discussing Pathways to Success the *ASD Framework* highlights that curriculum will be aligned to core standards from PK-12. Every student will have an individualized academic plan, and with expectations and assistance to ensure that every child makes at least a year of growth in grade level proficiency. Three options, from which student can choose to progress towards college and/or career are delineated (though not discussed). The options seem to offer alternatives for different types of achievement patterns amongst students, thereby holding the prospect of providing every child with the opportunity to progress to college or career after high school. Although not argued as such, this seems an important way to raise students expectations to complete high school and attend college. The framework also clearly identifies a number of strategies and initiatives to support Quality Instruction; ASD's discussion is strongest here. It includes mention of the ASD Virtual Academy which hosts their cyber program for personalized learning, (although this too is not fully developed). Good examples of initiatives for School Culture are also provided, which, along with the beginning discussion of Safety Nets, suggest noteworthy approaches to student support. ASD indicates that the Safety Nets program is already in use, drawing on data to inform intervention strategies for students where needed. This in particular, along with Pathways to Success, seems to go some way in addressing Criterion (A)(1)(b). Adherence to *Educator Effectiveness* and *Danielson's Framework for Teaching* are highlighted as ASD's strategy for Professional Development; they will also develop articulated career ladders as incentives to retain teachers.

The framework does not develop and discuss ASD's plans for Professional Development, and Recruiting and Retaining Quality Staff as well as it does the other four categories. They only list the details mention above.

Generally, the narrative is somewhat underdeveloped, and the argument for meeting Criterion A1 implicit. In particular, the narrative lacks explicit discussion of how and where ASD are addressing the requirements of this competition, as well as a focused discussion of how the reform vision is integrated and will work. The following reviews some issues surrounding this observation:

Where the narrative seems to address the comprehensive and coherent nature of the plan, it lists and briefly describes each component of the *ASD Framework* (highlighted above) - and refers the reader to Appendix B for further elucidation. Appendix B is a graphic representation of the narrative; it does not, however, provide further insight into how the plan will work.

Further, ASD state that 'the plan is especially designed to improve student performance at the secondary level and to ensure Rewards status under the new Pennsylvania NCLB waiver for all ASD schools'. This suggests that ASD is building on past work; the extent to which they are focused on building on work in the four core educational assurance areas of this competition is uncertain. The four core educational areas are not explicitly addressed. (It is possible to discern and accept the discussion on Pathways to Success and Quality Instruction as responding to standards and assessments leading to college-and-career readiness; similarly, together with Safety Nets, ASD also address systems to measure and inform on student progress.) The evidence for recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers is sparse. It is also not clear that there are specific initiatives for the lowest achieving schools.

Further, the discussion on personalized learning is not developed. ASD state their goal of providing customized education, which offers

part-time and full-time programs, including Advanced Placement, online courses as well as electives and credit recovery. This does not provide sufficient information as a description into what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments. The limited discussion also curtails assessment of the extent to which ASD meets (A)(1) (b) and (c).

ASD also mentioned, as highlighted above, that their strategy would include mentoring and parent support; however, there is only passing reference to teacher mentoring, and for the most part, ideas for mentoring and parent support are not reflected and developed in the narrative. This is an important omission as ASD premises its Pathway to Success on the notion 'that all students can learn with the support and nurturance from family, educators and the community'.

Therefore, ASD's vision seems likely to positively impact student achievement: the strengths discussed in ASD Framework support this view. However, their articulation of their vision is not fully developed; further their argument for meeting the requirements of this competition is limited; this impacts the extent to which their reform vision can be assessed to be comprehensive and coherent.

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

**10**

**7**

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD's approach to implementing its reform will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of their proposal.

ASD provided detailed information on the numbers of participating schools and students as defined by this notice.

The chart provided by the RTTTD competition is fully completed showing compliance with the competition rules. The figures reveal that the LEA has many students who are high need (100%) and from low income families (86.6%). ASD intends to include all such students in the schools identified, ranging from PK-12.

A list of schools is identified as part of the chart completed.

ASD also provides the total number of participating students and educators as required at (A)(2) (c).

ASD does not provide a specific narrative in this section, which details a description of how they selected schools to participate as requested at (A)(2)(a).

Therefore, while ASD is in compliance with competition rules for identifying schools and participating numbers, the absence of a description here of how participants were selected affects their score.

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

**10**

**6**

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD did not include a narrative, which specifically addressed Criterion (A)(3). There was not a response to this section.

However, ASD's response to Criterion (A)(2) indicated that all students in the 20 schools identified were included in its plan.

If there are only 20 schools in the LEA then, according to the rules of the competition, ASD did not need to provide further justification - except to state that all schools in the LEA were included.

It should be noted that elsewhere in the application, information provided suggests that there are 22 schools in the district, including alternative education programs.

Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether all the schools in the district were included; it is also uncertain how their plans will reach non-participating schools.

It is not clear how much information ASD needed to provide to satisfy (A)(3).

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

**10**

**5**

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

It seems likely that ASD's vision will result in improved student outcomes.

Their vision seems to be of steady, incremental gain on performance on summative assessment, closing achievement gaps, and in Graduation rates and College Enrollment rates, increasing on average, by 4 points annually throughout all participating schools and across time to 2017.

ASD did not provide detailed information consistently across all sections. Where they provided detailed information showing projections for the state and the district by subgroups, of the 12 subgroups, 3 ASD subgroups make gains closing the gap between the district and the state. For the most part the achievement gap is not closed; most often it fluctuates and increases. The following provides further discussion:

It is noted that ASD's figures indicate dramatic projected increases for the state, and this seems to impact ASD's progress against the state's.

Comparing the projections in performance for the district against the state, gaps between the state and the district increases overall; there are noticeable increases in gaps for ELL (42.5), IEP (35), Blacks (27), Latino Hispanics (20.5). Against this pattern, ASD's Whites and Asians projected performance against the state is better at the end of the same time frame; their gaps decrease, with Asians showing the greater gain in performance of 11.5 to Whites' 2 against the state's projected performance.

When ASD's projections of each racial subgroup is compared with Whites, it is seen that Whites are ahead of Blacks (by 19 points) and Latino/Hispanics (by 17 points), but slightly behind Asians (by 6 points) at the baseline. By the end of the time frame, the difference in the gap between Blacks and Whites holds (19); the difference between Latino/Hispanics decreases slightly (to 16.5) in favor to Latino/Hispanics; and Whites who were behind Asians at the baseline, make small gains (1.5) in projected performance against Asians.

At the end of the same time frame, the gap between the state and the district in terms of the multiracial subgroup decreases overall.

There is not a gap in performance between boys and girls within ASD district. When the district projected performance is compared with the state, the gap between the district and state increases for both boys and girls, ie ASD's boys and girls perform less favorably against the state; the increase in the gap between the state and district is greater for boys (4.5) as opposed to for girls (2.5).

ASD did not provide information for optional criterion A(4)(e).

(A)(4) requires ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the LEA(s). ASD highlighted that a waiver had been sought at the state level to no longer use the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) federal legislation, which required increased achievement targets. Instead, in August of 2013, the state moved towards School Performance Profiles. (Elsewhere in the application, there is a suggestion that the waiver had not been in place at the time of writing the application.) While this detail remains unclear, ASD highlighted that their methodology for determining growth was based on value-added, mean growth percentile, and change in achievement levels. The difference between RTTTD's requirements for measuring performance and the methodology adopted by ASD for their projections may account for the finding that, upon close scrutiny of detailed information provided, ASD's goals may not be not equal to and may not exceed the state targets. Increased equity does not appear to be substantiated by the evidence provided: groups that do well continue to make better progress; this may be in part because all schools are expected to make the same rate of progress. This seems to impact the extent to which the vision can be said to be ambitious, as per the expectations of this competition.

Therefore, while ASD's goals for improved student outcomes are achievable, their vision is not ambitious.

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

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

### (B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The data ASD presents do not support the view that they have a clear record of success in the past four years.

There is strong evidence that ASD is very engaged and focused on improving students learning outcomes and achievements. They report that the district is involved in many education reform initiatives to improve its School Performance Profile status, and it has been 'making progress' since 2006. Against this, they face challenges of underachievement, associated with poverty and the effects of newly arrived diverse immigration populations. The district's turn to focus on social factors and the alignment of the curriculum includes a number of notable and innovative initiatives and strategies. Newcomer Academy, Response to Instruction and intervention, the Social-Emotional Learning Initiative and the expansion of the summer transition to college program, for example, seem to reflect their focus on serving the needs of hard-to-reach, underserved and/or new communities - and improving theirs and their students' performance generally.

Their account highlights a search for solutions, which necessitates changes by themselves and is also subjected to changes beyond their control,

which impact their progress. For example, they highlight that a new team of vibrant committed educational professionals have been promoted from within the district to key administrative positions. At the same time, there has been three superintendent changes in 24 months. In defense of their recent record of performance, they highlight that

Although the scores reflect a decrease in 2012, long- term, the District is headed on an upward momentum. Last year’s scores were lower due to several factors: the implementation of a new program of studies; fewer teachers; 120 teachers reassigned, but not experienced with subject matter or grade levels; and a change in testing protocol. Benchmark assessments do not indicate the drop, but instead showed improvement. There has been success with several programs—Success For All, Systems 44, and Read 180...

Their explanation that a dip last year in an otherwise upward momentum of achievement seems reasonable. The data they presented of their NCLB performance indicators for the past decade shows steady incremental improvement. Their performance in Math is better than in Reading, with their performance in Math generally keeping up and sometimes exceeding the NCLB targets. Performance in Reading does not meet NCLB targets but generally shows marginal improvement year to year.

It is to be highlighted, nonetheless, that the evidence they present is difficult to follow, and is sometimes inconsistent across the narrative. For example, discussing graduation rate at one point in the narrative, they suggest figures of 66.03% for AY11-12 , and 62.89% for AY10-11. The information presented later in Table 3 reporting graduation rates figures does not support this; the table either evidences mistakes and/or omissions. It seems possible that their graduation rate has increased over time as they claim; it is not possible to ascertain precisely what the record of success is for the past four years.

No evidence was presented for college enrollment.

There was further difficulty ascertaining their results and performance with respect to their elementary schools. Seven of 11 elementary schools that made AYP last year are now in Warning; this seems an overall decline in the numbers from 11 to nine schools.

Notwithstanding, ASD uses data in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction and services for students; they seem to do this very well using data to inform innovative focused interventions to catch students falling behind. There is more evidence of the data being available to educators than to students and parents.

Their programs and strategies seem strong and pertinent to their context, as discussed above for example, in relation to their focus on serving the needs of hard-to-reach, underserved and/or new communities. It is also worth highlighting, for example, that they have identified a specific intervention for Reading; 'the overarching purpose of this program is to accelerate rising 9th graders reading level and prepare them for high school', beginning from 4th through to 9th grade. There is a 'placement out of district' program in middle and high school, for which more information was necessary to assess its contribution to district improvement.

ASD seem committed to and have evolved responses, which seem likely to achieve significant reforms in persistently lowest achieving schools or low performing schools over time. Perhaps they have a more conservative approach and time frame. While this may be understandable given their context, the reforms are not ambitious as per RTTTD's expectations..

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD seems committed to a high level of transparency. Their strategies for sharing information on their practices and investments include:

- 1) Posting Board of Directors meeting minutes on the ASD website
- 2) ASD Annual Report
- 3) US Department of Education Comparability of State and Local Expenditures Among Schools with a District
- 4) Costing – Out Study
- 5) Last year, ASD contracted with George Anderson of Knowledge Design Inc. to conduct and analyze all District programs and implement an operational planning process.

Substantial detail was included in the Appendix of the application to support their practice of maintaining and increasing transparency. The enclosures evidenced, for example, expenditures for K-12 instruction; instructional support; pupil support, school administration; actual personnel salaries; non-personnel expenditures at the school level.

ASD fully complies with increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD demonstrates evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement personalized environments.

Their response to B(3) highlights two frameworks that the state uses to guide all intervention and innovation. ASD discuss the details and merit of these two frameworks, suggesting that these are used within and support their own approach to improvement. One framework supports an online program, Standards-Aligned System (SAS); this in turn is supported by the second framework, Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII). ASD highlights that

Using these frameworks, ASD is aligning systems and education inputs with differentiated instruction and intervention based on each student's performance, strengths, and challenges. Changes are being made at the classroom level. These frameworks guide District plans for improving high school graduation and college and career readiness. The District endorses inclusionary practices to create a community of diverse learners supported by general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff. The classroom teacher delivers academic and social emotional learning curricula at all levels.

Earlier in the application ASD spoke of a cyber program, an online approach to personalized learning and support, which seems to operate within these frameworks; they also effectively establish that the state is actively committed to reform, being involved in many reform initiatives and 'making progress' since 2006.

It seems ASD's is operating within a supportive climate for the implementation of their personalized learning environments: the state is supportive of reform and ASD's programs and strategies make use of approaches already in place.

**(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)**

**15**

**7**

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD evidences engagement with stakeholders in the development of their plans for school improvement. It is not clear the extent to which all stakeholders were engaged and the extent of there engagement; further it is not clear the extent to which there was stakeholder engagement specifically for the development of the Race to the Top District proposal.

ASD asserts that:

The extent to which the Allentown School District has demonstrated evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the planning and development of the proposal is connected to our PA Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plans. Required by PDE, each school Principal invites, involves and shares their Comprehensive Schoolwide Plan with students, families, and teachers.

The applicant refers readers to Appendices F & G in support of meeting the criteria of B(4).

Appendix F evidences 22 lists of School Level Planning Teams within the district. Of these 22 schools, five show parents as part of an otherwise professional collection of members, which includes teachers; seven parents in total participated in planning teams. This included the PTSA president. There is no evidence of students involvement.

Appendix G provides 6 documents attesting to Community Support for ASD Race to the Top District Competition proposal. These include letters from: the PTSA President (unsigned); a university Center for Developing Urban Educational Leaders; United Way; DaVinci Science Center and Allentown Art Museum. There is also a list with 18 signatures from the ASD Teacher Union to a *Review Race to the Top - District Grant* document dated 26 September 2013.

The evidence suggests that ASD provides opportunity for parents to be involved; this opportunity may not be widely taken. Teachers and principals were engaged in the PA Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plans - if this is evidenced by the Planning Meetings mentioned. They also meet the stipulation at (B)(4) (a.)( i).

Further, there is strong evidence throughout the application that ASD has given much thought to school improvement; the Accountability Plans, for example, speak to NCLB targets and the districts response to meeting them. However, it is not clear that the PA Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plans were intended to meet the requirements of the RTTTD 2013 competition. Irrespective of the extent to which the plans may align to RTTTD 2013, it does not appear that students were engaged in the development of the Accountability Plans, and it is not clear the extent to which families were engaged. Evidence for support throughout the community is limited, but the support evident seems very meaningful for ASD's goals.

Therefore the extent to which ASD can be said to have demonstrated meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal is limited.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD did not provide a high quality plan for preparing students for college and career.

The primary problem with the plan, specifically, the narrative of the plan, is that there are two sets of ideas running through it.

ASD's answer to (C)(1) arises from the Allentown School District's transformation plan. The transformation plan is said to be designed to build capacity and resilience throughout the system. ASD claim that it is especially robust at the secondary level to improve student performance and ensure students graduate college and career ready. Within their approach to transformation sits *ASD Framework for Academic Achievement*; this is said to consist of 11 goals and 6 interventions that will improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment so students graduate college and career ready.

ASD's narrative at (C)(1) essentially presents information on ASD's transformation plan; further, the narrative seems to address how ASD will build capacity and resilience. In places, in a fragmentary way, there are attempts to suggest that the transformation programs and initiatives discussed meet the requirements of the RTTTD competition. This constitutes the second set of ideas running through the narrative, and tends to be linked to the *ASD Framework*. As an argument for RTTTD, this second set of ideas is secondary and more implicit; the focus is on discussing the six components of the *ASD Framework*.

Programs and initiatives in the transformation plan perhaps could be translated into a plan for RTTTD. However, there is a strong sense of the reader needing to discern how this may be done; ASD does not present a focused narrative of how the transformation plan meets the requirement of a high quality plan as per the RTTTD competition. The discussion also fails to address some specific requirements at (C)(1). The following provides a discussion that illustrates these observations.

In the preamble that opened the narrative, ASD discussed the transformation plan. ASD posited the idea of the community school model as their strategy for personalizing the learning environment and meeting the needs of high need students, in particular. They propose nine community schools: three schools are currently operational and six more are planned. ASD argue that, '[c]ommunity schools support a personalized learning environment for students because the school serves as the center for academic and social supports for the student and their family'. ASD does not develop this idea of how the schools serve as the center for academic and social supports for the student and the family. Instead, ASD argue for their rationale for using this model because it addresses:

several community risk factors that affect the positive outcomes of students: poverty; population growth of low-income residents; crime (violent and property crime rates surpass national rates); gang activity; availability of drugs; availability of firearms; and low neighborhood attachment. Other security risk factors include: rebelliousness, academic failure in elementary, and lack of commitment to school. The risk factors correspond with ASD's high rate of truancy—2,449 truancy citations issued in 2009-2010.

While the strategy of the community school model may address several community risk factors that affect the positive outcomes of students, it remains to be demonstrated how community schools lead to personalized learning for all participating students within the nine community schools. Furthermore, ASD does not show how the nine community schools address the needs for personalized learning for participating and non-participating schools and students in the district that are not in the nine community schools. This is important as elsewhere in the application, ASD suggest that 100% of the participating students in the 20 participating schools, from the total 22 schools in the district, are high need. Given that 100% of students are high need, it does not appear that nine community schools will reach all participating students within all participating schools as defined by this grant. It also does not seem likely that these nine schools will be able to scale up to accommodate the needs of the two non-participating schools.

Besides this, as indicated above, the primary weakness in their response at (C)(1) was that the information provided was not generally presented in way that could be seen to be directly matching requirements. An example of this occurs where ASD refers the reader to Appendix H for details on their goals and interventions to address criterion (C)(1). Appendix H is a document entitled *Allentown City SD District Level Plan*, and is in excess of 260 pages. In addition to not being provided with a page number, it was difficult to ascertain the specific information ASD intended to be assessed.

This weakness carried through to the actual response provided at (C)(1). ASD organized their response in terms of their *ASD Framework for Academic Achievement*. They listed the six components of the framework and provided narrative under each heading, which highlighted a number of programs and initiatives. These, however, did not build to a coherent focused response directly addressing the requirements of (C)(1). For example, the subtitle for one section reads, 'Quality Instruction: The District will add value to student performance based on the PA Value-added assessment system'. This seemed to be referencing another initiative, or goals for something other than the specific focus of RTTTD 2013.

Where the *ASD Framework* can be seen to clearly intersect with the requirements in this competition, for example, under the section

'Pathways to Success: The District reform goal is to graduate students who are college and career ready by improving learning and teaching throughout the grade span', they present an excellent example of how goals in their transformation plan, which are also goals of RTTTD, will be delivered. The discussion under Pathways to Success, reveals a clear and focused plan to revise career guidance practices from elementary to high school to address student aspirations, career awareness, participation in Pathways, and prevent dropout. They will provide workshops for parents and students on important topics such as financial aid and scholarship opportunities, career options, 'high priority' occupations and well-paid careers. This seems both an excellent long-term strategy to realize their goal of building capacity and resilience throughout the system, while also impacting their more short-term goals of building students' aspirations for college, and graduating college and career ready students in the near future. Added to this, they mentioned the expansion of the Advanced Placement program (SpringBoard) and the Dual Enrollment program allowing acquisition of college credits while in high school.

Their narrative under Professional Development also provides excellent discussion, detailing a number of initiatives which seem likely to build capacity and change how teachers teach. Their goal is to move practice to student-centered instruction and report that they have already begun 'to see evidence of positive instructional change focused on process rather than product and on student centered learning. This professional development model, combined with support from the ASD instructional coaches, generated enthusiasm among teachers that sparked the beginning of a cultural change in the way high school teachers viewed instruction.' Their discussion under Quality Instruction picks up on and reiterates the line of teacher development, but otherwise breaks down into listing disparate ideas around curriculum development and instruction. Under School Culture there is another excellent discussion, with a focus on their plan to change the culture within schools beset by bad behavior. It is an especially convincing narrative suggesting how they will intervene in and correct bad behavior, help students stay in school and improve school culture. Finally, under Safety Nets they highlight that educators across the faculty work in professional learning communities as teams focused on personalizing instruction and skill development to help students achieve their individual learning goals and graduate on time. This ties into their focus on discussing and addressing academic and behavioral issues that promote early intervention approaches and a healthy classroom community. The section also advances teacher professional development in line with differentiated instruction for all students. ESOL/ELL students are specifically identified for support and individualized learning plans; ASD presents a very convincing narrative of an excellent approach for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment - for these students.

The foregoing, the paragraph above in particular, is presented to highlight that this assessment of ASD's submission to (C)(1) does not seek to discount the excellent work that ASD seems to be accomplishing; instead it draws attention to the analysis that the submission presented is not clearly focused on the specific goals and requirements of the RTTTD competition in general and the requirements here at (C)(1). Their narrative evidences a number of excellent strategies and initiatives. It is clear they plan to build capacity and resilience through improvements in teaching and school culture. In the pursuit of these two primary goals, some RTTTD foci are incorporated and/or implicitly addressed. Notwithstanding, some RTTTD requirements simply do not ring through the narrative, for example, Parental involvement, high quality content and digital learning and ensuring students know how to use tools and resources; that students will be able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest; have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning.

Consequently, ASD did not make and sustain a convincing argument that shows how their work and plans fully address the requirements at (C)(1).

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

**20**

**16**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD makes a strong and convincing argument in support of their ability to prepare students for college and careers.

The *ASD Framework for Academic Achievement* is presented as the means by which ASD will realize (C)(2). They argue that it supports personalized learning environments for all students so they can graduate college and career ready, and identify the six interventions, which they argue will improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps, increase college enrollment, raise student achievement and high school graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and increase college enrollment.

The narrative evidences an excellent discussion, particularly under Pathway to Success providing insight into their emphasis on academic and social supports for students, and building relevance at the middle and high school levels. This discussion can also be seen to be an argument for their claim in relation to RTTTD, to increase students aspiration for completing high school and going to college; it is not expressed as such. Nevertheless, they list a number of innovative and integrated initiatives which inform and/or constitute their work here: The Career Linking Academy, Career Pathways, Career Cruising, Career Gates, Career Counselor and career counseling and a Parent College where parents can access information on college options. Quality Instruction discussed Instructional Resources and Technology, and effectively addressed issues to do with the provision of high quality content, including digital learning content. Their Safety Nets is a well-developed and detailed approach which uses data to inform intervention for students. It has a system of annual, quarterly and weekly data review meetings, and an intervention strategy to address

students causing concern. There is also a rich, well-developed set of proactive and exciting initiatives to accelerate learning (though not argued for as such) evidenced in their reorganization of their two high schools and the four middle schools into Small Learning Communities, an Extended Learning Time program that offers opportunities to students, Peer Tutoring, Focused Interventions for ELL students and Systematize Reentry Supports and Tracking, including GED for drop-outs and those at risk of dropping out. All students have Individual Learning Plans. Discussion under School Culture continued the discussion of their strategies which use data to intervene and improve the experience of schooling for students. They also indicate how they involve parents.

The discussion on Professional Development, a heading from the ASD Framework which would be seem a concept more closely aligned to the requirements of (C)(2) was brief and presented in terms of the needs to be addressed amongst staff. However, it is not the case that their fuller narrative did not provide appropriate evidence. To begin, the second paragraph above indicates that ASD presented information in terms of learning outcomes; thereby seemingly missing the focus on teaching and leading in (C)(2). They do on the surface level speak in terms of learning outcomes. And to this extent, the narrative under (C)(2) would have sat better under (C)(1) - and vice versa; under (C)(1) they strongly discuss their ideas in terms of professional development and building capacity in this way suggesting how they provide personalized learning environments for improved teaching and learning. Please see my own analysis there. Following the *ASD Framework* has been limiting in this application. Under (C)(1) it had a bigger negative impact than under (C)(2). Under (C)(2) the narrative did provide the evidence which addressed requirements under (C)(2).

The series of initiatives discussed met most of stipulations detailed at (C)(2) (a-d) in a convincing way.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD has some policy and infrastructure in place to support project implementation.

It is highlighted that ASD combined its response to (D)(1) and (D)(2) in one continuous narrative, and also did not identify and delineate where they addressed subsections for each in their response; it was difficult, therefore, to ascertain their precise evidence for meeting requirements here.

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that there is a central office, with a governance structure to provide support and services to all participating schools.

The evidence on (D)(b) appears to be missing; the information presented did not discernibly address this requirement.

ASD highlighted that Gifted students will have access, essentially to enrichment provision and acceleration. This does not address the requirement that all students have the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. It also does not fully address an opportunity to demonstrate mastery at multiple times. It was stated that Safety Nets will address barriers to learning consistently and promptly through an articulated continuum of support focused on increasing achievement and graduation rates for all students. This does not significantly strengthen their case for meeting the requirements highlighted. Their claim that each student will be surrounded by a network of district staff focused on meeting the academic, social and emotional needs are believable in light of ASD's answers to previous sections in the application; this piece of evidence therefore helps their argument for their approach in meeting requirements (D)(1) (c-d). The idea is nonetheless not fully developed.

ASD did not fully demonstrate how it met the requirements of (D)(1). The narrative did not demonstrate that they had a high quality plan.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD's plan for LEA and school infrastructure that support personalized learning is not strictly aligned to RTTTD's expectations.

It seems ASD's plan for personalized learning does not focus on a technology system and network per se; it includes this but their focus is broader. For example, they explain that:

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) model is in place at the high and middle schools. Teams from all of these schools were

recently trained through the DuFour Institute. The establishment of research-based PLCs supports a collaborative school culture and provides a vehicle to reinforce the concept of student learning.

Sapphire Suite is a data warehouse and student information system, which they use within their overall strategy. Notably, this is one amongst eight things identified by the district used to ensure a systemic approach to educator effectiveness. They do not highlight that the other seven things support their efforts in technology. The Sapphire Student Information System is noted for:

Generating reports that enable teachers and administrators to identify individuals and subgroups requiring the greatest support

Facilitating comprehensive schoolwide planning

Providing data at the desktop level for teachers – to individualize student learning

Making Study Island assessment data available immediately for reading, math, and science

They claim that teachers are trained in the use of data and time is regularly scheduled for data review meetings and collaborative planning, and that Sapphire has also been utilized to develop an early warning system to regularly alert staff about students in danger of dropping out or in need of additional supports; it is seen as a key element in their federally funded High School Graduation Initiative.

While the information is sparse; there is evidence that they meet some requirements around educators being able to access and have support using the system. The system has some features of being interoperable.

There is no information on how parents and students use and benefit from this.

Therefore the extent to which ASD can be said to have LEA and school infrastructure that support personalized learning is limited in terms of a technology system. A technology system is not the focus of their strategy. Its treatment is underdeveloped in their narrative here and their response to (D)(2) is subsequently weak. They failed to demonstrate that this was a high quality plan.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>ASD have a good plan for continuous improvement.</p> <p>They have a good rationale for the approach they have decided to use, noting the importance of data in decision making process. They will rely on The Pennsylvania’s School Improvement framework, Getting Results! and their Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plan, which provides step-by-step instructions for using data to identify performance problems and gaps, root causes, and potential solutions will support this initiative. In addition, they will be making use of a number initiatives to monitor and evaluate progress in general and educators performance in particular. Educators have received training in evaluation, in ways which seem to facilitate sensitizing as well as educating them to the process of continuous evaluation and continuous improvement. This training seemed a strategic decision to facilitate continuous improvement. Consequently, ASD seems to have a good foundation for generating information, which monitors and measures progress while also providing feedback to educators positioned differently within the district. Principals and administrators, as well as two personnel appointed to distinct roles for overseeing the various aspects of the process, are identified responsible parties for monitoring and assessing. This includes timelines and review of the document which houses their plan.</p> <p>There is no indication of how ASD plan to share information publicly, particularly on RTTTD investments such as professional development, technology and staff, with all stakeholders, especially with those who may not be educators.</p> <p>Further, although ASD's plan has evidences their thinking on continuous improvement, they did not write explicitly to RTTTD expectations for a high quality plan. They explicitly identified the person who would be responsible overall for overseeing continuous improvement; this person is expected to generate timelines when in post. Some stipulations were discernibly, but implied, for example their rationale and deliverables. This challenges the extent to which their paln can be said to be a high quality plan as per RTTTD requirements.</p> <p>ASD's continuous improvement plan meets most of the requirements of (E)(1).</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD has a plan for ongoing communication and engagement.

The plan expects ASD to make use of support within the Allentown School District Communications Office. It is said to support the District, its schools and numerous programs through a wide variety of communications and public relations services. ASD highlighted that it is the goal of the Communications Office to provide timely and accurate information to all District constituents – both internal and external – about District and school matters. The Communications Office oversees:

District and individual school websites

District Facebook and Twitter social media venues

All printed publications, such as: ASD Bulletin, Annual Report and Code of Conduct

All printed collateral, including (but not limited to) brochures, flyers, guides and posters

Daily media relations and publicity

Dissemination of all District public information

They expect that Race to the Top – District grant information and updates will make use of these channels.

While this systems gives indication of support for how information will go out; there is less evidence of how it will encourages engagement with various stakeholders. Further, while they speak of what the Office is supposed to do, there is not a strong sense of how ASD will ensure what they need to be done will be done. There is not a clearly discernible responsible party. Timelines are not explicitly stated, and in general the plan is not altogether reassuring. This limits the extent to which it can be said to be credible, and therefore of high quality.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD's measures and targets are not ambitious but they are achievable.

They explained that performance measures are currently being developed by PDE using the Charlotte Danielson model and the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS). This seems to be presented in support of the extent to which they can provide ambitious yet achievable performance measures and annual targets: their projection is generally between 3 and 5%. Their rationale could be argued to be reasonable, with ASD showing compliance with expectations within the state, although it is not demonstrated that these are the measures expected. A good rationale is provided for collecting information on FASFA: they identified a gap in gathering information effectively and efficiently in this area.

ASD highlighted that they are working towards highly effective teacher and principal data systems. PDE has moved towards School Performance Profiles this year, which will give individual school data and profile rates. They discuss some deliverables, for example, the they assert that the data will help determine which staff are effective at improving student learning and college and career-readiness and which staff need additional supports. The new Educator Effectiveness Instruments will also help pinpoint problem areas as the district adopts and implement the Common Core Standards. They do not indicate responsible parties and timelines to suggest how their plan might be revised and adjusted accordingly. This undermines the quality of the plan.

They list eight distinct measures. RTTTD requires 12-14.

They complete RTTTD forms provided.

ASD met some of the requirements under (E)(3). They did not provide a high quality plan.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

ASD has an adequate plan for rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of investments.

They plan to hire an external evaluator and to utilize their Superintendent's Core Cabinet Team of Directors to serve as leaders to continue to implement and monitor best practices that have been implemented into the school district from past grants. They seem to have confidence in this approach since 'our data show that we have been moving this School District in the right direction over the past 5 years' despite many challenges.

They did not expand on what it is that the Core Cabinet actually does, or indeed what exactly the evaluator would be expected to do.

ASD meets the requirement of (E)(4).

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

### (F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

ASD identify all funds that will support the project.

The budget is \$32m: \$23m is being requested; \$9m (27%) will be contributed by other local, state and federal sources.

The budget is presented in terms of the ASD Framework, highlighting the distinct subprojects, associated costs and contributions. Each project indicates a description of all funds that will be used to support its implementation, as well as the total revenue from all sources.

Pathways to Success: requested, \$18,260,096; state and local funds to be contributed, \$4,615,060

School Culture and Safety Nets: requested, \$7,240,260; state and local funds to be contributed, \$1,304,984

Quality Instruction and Professional Development: requested, \$6,476,978; state and local funds to be contributed, \$2,785,944

Under Quality Instruction they highlight a one-time investment of \$1,224,400 to purchase supplies to assist the alignment of their PK-12 curricula and assessments to PA Common Core Standards. This is a good investment, for which they have a good rationale, namely to assist the alignment of the curriculum to Common Core standards and generate a more rigorous and robust curriculum. They also detailed their calculations by classroom, grade levels, teachers and students. This one-time investment of \$1.2m in a budget of \$32m, also draws attention to what would then be considered on going costs.

Overall, ASD assert that their vision and associated budget are rooted in their experience and knowledge arising from years of transformation efforts in their district: they have confidence in knowing what works for their district, so intend to build on best projects. This informs their use the *ASD Framework*; the six *ASD Framework* sections are further organized into three sections in the budget. Pathways to Success stands alone, School Culture and Safety Nets, and Quality Instruction and Professional Development, are combined respectively; Recruiting and Retaining Quality Staff, the sixth *ASD Framework* section, does not appear as a distinct category in the budget.

It can be seen that their plan is to invest greatly in the Pathways to Success section of the *ASD Framework*. This is said to be currently supported by federal funds from the High School Graduation Initiative grant; they are seeking RTTTD funding for two years to continue the project. They do not provide a rationale here for why their emphasis is on Pathways to Success - as opposed to the other two subparts presented in budget; nevertheless, their rationale for Pathways to Success is good.

[It] includes projects that give social emotional support as an early warning measure by providing outreach to students and parents while intervening early in barriers to school success through home visits, family meetings, drop-out prevention, career and college preparedness, and interventions....We want to continue on the successful path we have started and use what we have learned about what brings success to our students, families, community, and staff by continuing the increased support that poverty students and families need in the area of social emotional and mental health.

Quality Instruction and Professional Development and School Culture and Safety Nets seem aligned to the fundamental premise of their overall plan to effect change throughout the system. Pathways to Success seems more focused on RTTTD goals of graduating college and career ready students. It presents two specific strategies to this end: Math 180 and Read 180 (\$5,585,900), for both middle and high school students; and an integrated set of initiatives aligned to college and career readiness in which ASD acquire resources for SpringBoard (\$674,000) and train teachers to use it, expand initiatives such as dual enrollment, cyber credit recovery and enrichment opportunities (\$1,428,286), and provide outreach workshops (\$694,400). A further \$2.3m will be spent on ELLs; it is not clear whether this is for high school students only.

As far as using RTTTD funds for safeguarding college and career readiness, this investment in Pathways to Success seems a good approach. The extent to which it can be said to be reasonable, sufficient and sustainable, as an overall budget, has challenges. For example, ASD highlighted that their plan is intended to build capacity throughout the whole system. This is evident in the budget: the distribution of funds matches the emphasis in their vision; ongoing costs also seem high against their stated one-time investment.

ASD also argue that their plan is for system change, but is robust at the secondary level. Accordingly, their overall budget shows expenditure on Personnel, \$11,484,500, accounting for the largest share (49.35%) of funds requested. Together with Fringe Benefits (\$6,079,525; 26.12%), it accounts for 76% (\$17,564,025) of total funds requested. Resources are similarly distributed within Pathways to Success: Personnel is \$6,957,000 (50.9%); together with Fringe Benefits, this totals \$10,146,534 representing 74.28% of funds requested. Further, it is unclear how much of the expenditure on Supplies (\$2,150,000) will remain within the ASD system for future students. Without additional insight to the contrary, it would appear that a large sum of money will be spent on only a small portion of their system and a comparatively small amount of students. This can also be seen as a significant investment in the present high school student body.

Consequently, ASD's budget evidences a thoughtful rationale, but has some challenges that impact reasonableness and sufficiency, and sustainability after the project.

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

**10**

**6**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

There are challenges associated with ASD's approach to sustainability.

ASD highlighted evidence, which they argue will safeguard sustainability: they have the support of the school board, which is also generally supportive of transformation efforts; they also have a foundation, now four years old, that raises funds to support the district and is expected to grow stronger in this role by the end of the RTTTD grant.

Specifically, ASD addressed the question of sustainability by means of their investment in: highly effective instructional materials and supplies; the training of highly effective staff, which they argue will build their capacity as experienced teachers teach new recruits, to sustain positive changes; their support of highly effective initiatives that have taken root and produced results.

They indicate a one-time investment of \$1,224,400 to purchase supplies to assist the alignment of their PK-12 curricula and assessments to PA Common Core Standards. This is a good investment, for which they have generated calculations to indicate full costs. The details of their subprojects indicate further investments in Supplies. These also include the acquisition of technology; not explicitly developed, this is, nevertheless, in line with RTTTD's focus on technology and personalized learning environments. It is also not clear how much of this additional investment into Supplies will remain within the ASD system.

ASD takes a strong stance on investing in teachers as the fulcrum of their vision. For this strategy to be sustainable it seems necessary for these highly trained personnel to remain in the district; teachers can leave the district. So while this strategy seems likely to have impact after the grant, the extent to which its impact will reach into the future is dependent on ASD being able to hold on to the workforce. At another point in the application, ASD highlighted the negative impact of staff instability on progress in the district. As such it is a noteworthy omission that the sixth aspect of the *ASD Framework* was not included in the budget. This sixth section is concerned with recruiting and retaining staff. It would seem that attention to the sixth section would be a crucial step to complete their plan. Given that success of this vision is so heavily reliant on and put such demands on personnel, it seemed important that the budget addressed rewarding and retaining teachers.

The strategy of supporting other existing and successful initiatives in the district, is a good strategy, both in terms of building on successes and also to safeguard their own by creating connections to other transformation efforts; this promises to help to embed their own into the district.

It is noted that many initiative are reliant on always finding and replacing funds. The percentage of ongoing cost, as argued in this application, is well over 90%. ASD present evidence of local and state financial and other support, and their own ability to secure funding for their projects; they are contributing 27% to the overall budget from monies generated from the local, state and federal sources. Nevertheless, that their strategy is highly dependent on continued renewal of funds is highlighted.

They suggest that they have evaluated the effectiveness of past investments and have used and will continue to use such data to inform their project. They did not provide a description here of how they will evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget, they also did not develop a discussion on an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds.

Consequently, the extent to which ASD's plan for sustainability can be said to be of a high quality is compromised.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b> No response was submitted.		

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

ASD demonstrated that it has a comprehensive and coherent plan to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies and support for students and educators.

They propose a system change throughout their district, from PK-12. Further, they wish to focus on emotional and social needs, and build student and educator capacity in this regard. This is a comprehensive and ambitious vision.

They argue for their vision in light of their confidence in knowing the needs within their district and the response that is necessary at this time to move the district forward. The vision works on the logic that their approach will increase capacity necessary for increasing achievement; by extension, if not immediately, it will also, eventually, deepen learning and accelerate achievement.

Consequently, at the moment, ASD's direct immediate focus is arguably not so much on meeting the academic needs of all students.

They also indicate a commitment to building on previous initiatives and working within the overall plan of achievement and transformation across the district. This seems to impact the rate of progress projected: it arguably limits efforts to decrease achievement gaps - that is, in the short term period of this grant.

Their attempt to specifically address the requirements of this RTTTD grant seems to focus on their efforts to graduate college and career ready students; they argue that their plan is especially robust at the secondary level. Together with personalizing the learning environment by building student and educator capacity to address the social and emotional needs of students, ASD evidences an excellent approach to graduating college and career ready students. Their approach and initiatives for college and career readiness seem excellent for the described ASD context; they are also innovative and integrated.

ASD is committed to using the *ASD Framework* in a commitment to building on transformation efforts within their district. The *ASD Framework*, as the plan submitted to the RTTTD competition, created some tensions for the application. For example, *the ASD Framework* is a comprehensive plan for building capacity and resilience. RTTTD is focused on four core education assurances. The *ASD Framework* perhaps could also meet the expectations of RTTTD. Where aspects or goals of the *ASD Framework* were also clearly aligned to specific RTTTD goals and requirements, ASD make a convincing case. Where aspects of their vision were not so clearly aligned or articulated, noticeable tensions were evident. For example, the *ASD Framework* is focused on investing in personnel to build capacity. Accordingly, the plan did not focus on, develop, or otherwise explain, how their district and plan, meet RTTTD expectations with regard to the role of interoperable systems in personalized learning for improvement. ASD actually highlighted that their strategy for personalized learning environments was the creation of nine community schools; this strategy was not adequate to meet RTTTD criteria. Further, while their approach to college and career readiness was exciting, it sits within their argument that the *ASD Framework* is robust at the secondary level. Two of the 20 participating schools are high schools, comprising 4,786 participating students, of the total of 17,105 participating students. ASD is seeking funding at the level of \$20-25m, (precisely, \$23,271,346) in a plan that they suggest is robust for 28% of the student population. This calls into question the extent to which the vision and budget - as per their argument - are reasonable in terms of RTTTD guidelines. Finally, whereas it could be discerned how their plan addressed three core educational assurances, their application was weak in terms of recruiting, rewarding and retaining staff; it did not feature in their budget. Recruiting and Retaining staff is the sixth section of the *ASD Framework*; the lack of development in terms of the RTTTD requirements, seem an important oversight in a plan strongly focused on developing effective teachers; it raises questions around sustainability.

Perhaps, ASD did not explicitly demonstrate how the *ASD Framework* met the goals and requirements of RTTTD consistently and sufficiently throughout their application. While the extent to which ASD's plan can be said to be comprehensive and coherent is negatively impacted by the presentation of the plan, it is possible to discern a strong and committed focus on transformation. It seems likely that ASD will increase the effectiveness of educators, expand student access to effective teachers, and increase the rate at which students graduate college and career ready, especially in the near future. Should the initiatives hold, it also seems likely that, over time, they will accelerate and deepen student learning and possibly close achievement gaps for all students. In terms of personalizing strategies and supports for students and educators, (notwithstanding their claim above for community schools), and taken as a whole, the application is bold and exciting, and with promise to realize RTTTD goals, if under different names/designations.

There is an investment in their human resource and providing educators with further resources to perform. It is not an investment in technology per se, although their approach makes use of technology. The focus is on educators and schools – meeting the needs of students.

Their vision certainly reflects the spirit of RTTTD. It meets the Absolute Priority.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>123</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

#### Application #0001PA-3 for Allentown City School District

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

#### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(1) The applicant detailed a comprehensive plan for preparing students for college- and career-readiness. This plan calls upon the wrap around support of several initiatives for building greater capacity and resiliency beginning in Kindergarten through 12th grade. The plan is especially enhanced to improve student performance at the secondary level.

(a) The comprehensive plan, Framework for Academic Achievement, contains six components that are designed to encompass the four core educational areas designated by this grant competition. The applicant provides an accompanying visual display of this six-component plan. The applicant addresses core educational assurance area #1 - adopting standards and assessment, through a component called Quality Instruction, by ensuring all standards are aligned with the state common core standards. This includes a comprehensive set of summative and formative assessments with courses available online. For core educational assurance area #2 - building data systems and inform teachers and principals, the applicant uses the component Safety Nets, which provides tracking data of individual students which school-level leadership teams use to inform the improvement of instruction. The applicant also includes a component called School Culture where students at all levels are directly taught social emotional skills. Core educational assurance area #3 - recruiting, developing rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals is supported by the two components, Professional Development and Recruit and Retain Quality Staff. Core educational assurance area #4 - turning around the lowest achieving schools is supported by component Pathways to Success, in which all students will be able to choose from a variety of pathways including career technical training, AP coursework, and college experiences during high school.

(b) The applicant provides an easy-to-understand visual display of a Leverage Map that is designed to show the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. This includes an individualized

learning plan designed to accelerate student achievement, and opportunities to deepen student learning and engagement through enrichment activities, project-based activities, and activities based on their interests. Specific ways equity will be achieved were not addressed.

(c) The applicant worthily states that every students is expected to experience a year or more of growth and will receive extra academic support through the embedded safety nets. Specifically, an important part of the personalized experience is the opportunity for student to participate in the Intervention and Enrichment period at the elementary and middle Schools which provide the opportunity to participate in interventions or enrichment based on formative data. Curricular options are available at the high school level to accommodate student needs and interests. From additional information provided in selection criterion (B)(3), the applicant further clarifies that Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) will be a cornerstone of the instructional framework through universal and formative assessment, tiered instruction, data-based decision making, flexible grouping, fidelity of instruction, and parental engagement.

The applicant receives a high rating for this selection criterion.

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

**10**

**7**

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(2)(a) It is unclear if the twenty one (21) schools listed in the grant proposal include all of the school in the district. There is some indication that there may be twenty-two (22) schools in the district. This sub-criterion, the process used to select schools to participate, was not addressed in the proposal narrative.

(b) The applicant sufficiently provided a listing of the schools that will participate in table form to include twenty one (21) schools.

(c) The applicant adequately reports in table form that the total number of participating students to be 17,105, all of which are considered to be high-need, and 15,015 of these students are considered to be low income. The total number of participating educators is 883.

The applicant sufficiently answered sub-criterion (b) and (c). Sub-criterion (a) was not addressed in the proposal narrative. The applicant receives a mid-range rating on this selection criterion.

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

**10**

**4**

**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(3) The applicant's LEA-wide reform high-quality plan including key goals, activities and rationale, timeline, deliverables and parties responsible was not specifically addressed in this section or in another part of the application. The applicant did not respond to selection criterion (A)(3). The applicant does provide information in the appendix on overall LEA goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible. However, these are not specifically linked to the applicant's six-component plan in this proposal and do not address the essence of this selection criterion, how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools and help the applicant reach its outcome goals. However, the applicant does report that twenty-one (21) schools will be participating in this grant proposal, which may represent the totality of the schools in the district, indicating scaling up to all schools within the district is part of the grant's four-year activities.

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

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

**10**

**7**

**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(4)(a) The applicant has set increasing goals for improvement (over the course of the grant period). There is some indication that at least some of these goals are less than the state targets in math and reading for grades 3-11. For

example, according to table data provided comparing 2011-2012 PSSA math targets for Grades 3-8 and Grades 11, district targets are much less than state targets.

It is commendable that the applicant has also set high targets for science in grades 9-11. The applicant has chosen to use each school population as the subgroup.

(b) The applicant has also set goals for decreasing achievement gaps based on a comparison group's established benchmark and summative assessments (Study Island Benchmarks, PSSA). The goals show increasing improvement scores over the four years of the grant. The applicant has chosen to use each school population as the subgroup. Efforts to increase equity were not addressed in setting of these performance targets subgroups (entire school population was subgroup).

(c) The applicant has set goals for increasing the graduation rates for the two participating high schools. It is unclear if these rates coincide with state goals.

(d) The applicant has set increasing college enrollment rates over the four-year period. It is commendable that the two-year college rates represent almost half of the participating student population. It is also notable that, if the four-year and two-year enrollment percentages represent different subsets of students, Dieruff High School has set a goal for 100% of students to be enrolled in college courses after high school graduation.

Although the applicant shows goals for increasing student performance, decreasing achievement gaps, and improving graduation and college enrollment rates, all of these goals do not clearly equal or exceed state targets and; therefore, cannot be considered ambitious yet achievable. The applicant receives a mid-range score on this selection criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(B)(1)(a) The applicant reports that the school district has been making progress since 2006, and provides sufficient data in charts to document small but incremental growth in reading and math on NCLB targets. Graduation rates have shown some improvement (2010-2011 was listed twice, 2011-2012 was not listed). It is notable that the district reports improvement since instituting the USDOE High School Graduation Initiative grant. As noted in selection criterion (A)(4)(d), college enrollment shows steady improvement.</p> <p>(b) The applicant has initiated several reforms in all of its schools to enact steady improvements including national reforms with track records of success. Specifically, RtII is used to support students needing additional instruction. Data Dashboards track student progress and use an early warning system to alert school officials of impending need. Summer Transition programs help students bridge the achievement gap. Other notable programs include school wide positive behavior supports, literacy intervention at the middle and high schools, and utilization of a case management approach to ensure that the students' holistic needs are been met to support their educational progress.</p> <p>(c) The applicant notes the use of the Data Dashboard which will allow the school to be involved in real-time evaluation, review, and refinement of student programs and individual learning plans. It is not clear how this information is available to students and parents in ways to inform and improve their participation and services. Such a process is imperative to establish transparency and understanding so that all stakeholders are working toward the same vision and goals for students.</p> <p>In summary, the applicant documents small but steady growth in raising student achievement in reading and math, improved graduation rates, and college enrollment. (Graduation rates for 2010-2011 were listed twice, 2011-2012 was not listed). The applicant has initiated several successful national reforms in all of its schools. The applicant will use the Data Dashboard for evaluation, review and refinement, but it is not clear how this information will be available to students and parents to improve their participation and services. The applicant receives a high mid-range rating for this selection criterion.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(B)(2)(a-c) The applicant reports sufficient transparency in processes, practices, and investments by making such endeavors accessible to the public. For example, personnel expenditures can be accessed through the Board of Directors</p>		

meeting minutes on the district website. Other avenues of information include the district annual report, a costing-out study, comparability studies, and operational planning studies. The applicant discussed an extensive process of involving the community stakeholders in program planning and cost allocation studies. The applicant provides extensive documentation of employee salaries in Appendix E; however, (a) actual personnel salaries for all school-level instructional and support staff at the school level were not listed, (b) actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only were not provided, (c) actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only were not included, and (d) actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level were not noted. The applicant receives a mid-range score for this selection criterion

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

**10**

**7**

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

(B)(3) The applicant satisfactorily discusses the two frameworks provided by the state that allow personalized learning environments sufficient for successful conditions for personalized student learning. Specifically, the applicant addresses the Pennsylvania's Standard-Aligned System, including online tools, which ensures that interventions and innovations are aligned with standards, assessments, and instruction. Also, supporting personalized learning is RtII and Data Dashboards, as mentioned in selection criterion (B)(1). Through tiered and data-based instruction based on individual need, students are guided through research-based, standards-aligned interventions. Students at the elementary level are afforded an enrichment/remediation period built into the schedule, and the middle and high schools offer various curricular support options including before and after school tutoring. The applicant does not discuss autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements for implementing personalized learning environments.

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

**(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)**

**15**

**8**

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(B)(4) (a) The applicant provided substantial documentation in Appendix F to demonstrate that community stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, and principals of participating schools were engaged in the planning of the proposal. The district connected this activity with the Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plans required by the state. This documentation included a sign-in sheet for each school. The sheet lists the names and role of the school level planning team required by NCLB. The information does not specifically address activities related to the development or revision of the proposal.

(i) The applicant reported that they have collective bargaining and provided sufficient documentation in Appendix F to demonstrate the participation from teacher representatives on the school level planning teams in participating schools. This listing of participants does not directly address activities related to the development or revision of the proposal as noted in (4)(a).

(b) The applicant provided copies of letters and a teacher union sign-up sheet indicating representation of support for the proposal. Limited documentation included letters of support from the mayor (Appendix A), a community science center, art museum, United Way, Lehigh University Center, district teacher union, and one parent, teacher, student Association from William Allen High School (Appendix F). More information is needed to clarify the commitment of the teacher union (only a sign-up sheet, no narrative to verify commitment) and if other school parent-teacher organizations support the project. In addition, for a project this large and far-reaching, more documentation of various types of community support is warranted.

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

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>

**(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(C)(1) (a) In a partial response to this selection criteria, the applicant chose to summarize the district's six intervention components comprising their Framework for Academic Achievement as their approach to implementing instructional

strategies that enable participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college and career ready graduation requirements and accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs. These include Pathways to Success, Quality Instruction, Safety Nets, School Culture, Professional Development, and Recruit and Retain Staff. In addition, two frameworks support this effort as explained in selection criterion (B)(3) – the Pennsylvania’s Standard-Aligned System, including online tools, which ensure that interventions and innovations are aligned with standards, assessments, and instruction and to RtII, an personalized tiered learning process.

The applicant was not fully responsive in answering the elements of this criterion. Specifically they did not clearly relate this school improvement approach to a high-quality plan to include key goals, activities and rationale, timeline, deliverables and parties responsible. In addition, the applicant did not specifically address the sub-criteria (C)(1)(a)(i-v). References to these sub-criteria are found in part in other sections of the application.

(C)(1)(b)(i) The applicant details adequate plans to provide 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 through the RtII framework and frequent monitoring of Data Dashboards as mentioned in earlier selection criteria.

(ii) The applicant discusses in depth the various high-quality, research-grounded instructional approaches. Some of these include SpringBoard (pre-Advanced Placement Program), the Danielson Teacher/Principal Assessment Model to increase teaching effectiveness, and use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to address academic and behavior issues that impact student educational performance.

(iii) The applicant sufficiently documents in selection criterion (B)(3), the use of the state’s Standard-Aligned System, including online tools, which ensures that interventions and innovations are aligned with standards, assessments, and instruction.

(iv)(A-B) The applicant appropriately notes throughout the application narrative that the development of personalized learning plans uses updated information frequently obtained on individual students from such avenues as formative assessments, tiered instruction, Data Dashboards, and Professional Learning Communities. This information is assessed frequently through formative and summative evaluations to determine progress to college- and career-ready standards.

(v) In the district plan in Appendix H, the applicant sufficiently addresses the varied use of modifications, accommodations, and high quality strategies in use to support learning. For example, some of these include guided learning, hands on science, manipulatives, STEM learning, writing across the curriculum, remedial tutoring and mentoring during and after school, credit recovery, and online learning. In addition it is noted that, in their own review in the district plan, the applicant reports that differentiated learning is being implemented in 50% or less time in the schools. This is an area they continue to strive to improve.

(c) The applicant did not provide information to address the mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

Overall, the applicant provides a framework, not a clearly articulated high-quality plan with the require components (see (C)(1)(a), to personalize the learning environment in order to provide all students the support needed to graduate college- and career-ready. The proposal provides a personalized sequence of instructional content and skills through the RtII framework and frequent monitoring of Data Dashboards. This content is aligned with the common core state standards and provides a wide range of accommodations and differentiated learning supports. The applicant did not discuss how they would provide training to ensure that students know how to use the tools available to track and manage their learning.

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

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(C)(2) The applicant was not fully responsive in answering the elements of this criterion. Specifically, they did not relate this school improvement approach to a high-quality plan to include key goals, activities and rationale, timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible. It is not possible to determine if they offer a credible approach to a high-quality plan to implement the teaching and learning component of this proposal as these required elements were not expressed.

(a)(i-iii) The applicant adequately reports that educators meet in teams a week before school begins each year to review data and plan instructional strategies to meet the individual academic needs of students. In addition, there are quarterly half-day data review meetings to assess the progress to date and plan new strategies, teachers are provided with weekly collaboration times (grade level meetings) to discuss student progress. All of these are times in which selected instructional strategies are targeted for specific learning objectives. In all of these meetings, the use of formative data through frequent progress monitoring is used to inform instructional decisions for student improvement and classroom effectiveness.

(iv) Sufficient information was not provided to determine how feedback from evaluations will be used to improve teachers' and principals' practice, specifically frequent feedback on collective effectiveness. Discussion of evaluation of teacher effectiveness for individual teacher improvement were adequately provided, including discussion of use of the Danielson Framework and the Penn Literacy Network.

(b)(i-iii) The applicant provided suitable information to understand that the educators in the district participate in a variety of professional development meetings. As noted in response (C)(a), one purpose of this professional development is to understand how to use the resources available to them to optimize learning for students. As discussed in (B)(3), the district effectively ensures that curricula and instructional tools and strategies are aligned with college- and career-ready standards through the use of the state's Standards-Aligned-System. A great deal of time and effort is spent ensuring that the appropriate tools and processes match.

(c)(i-ii) The applicant sufficiently notes throughout the narrative that such structures as the Pennsylvania's School Improvement framework, Getting Results! and the Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plan provides directions for using data to identify performance problems and gaps, causes, and potential solutions. The applicant will also use the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS) which provides a student's progress data in combination with achievement data so educators can make data-informed instructional decisions to ensure the academic growth and achievement of students. The district has implemented Sapphire, an internet-based software program to serve as a data warehouse and student information system. The applicant reports in section (D)(1) that all teachers have been trained in the use of data and that time is regularly scheduled for data review and collaborative planning. In addition, the applicant will use the state adopted Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching as the overarching vision for effective instruction in the district.

(d) The applicant did not clearly articulate the elements of a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals (as defined in this notice), including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science), and specialty areas (such as special education). Requirements for such a plan include key goals, activities and rationale, timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible.

Overall, the applicant sufficiently documented that all participating educators engage in training, and in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity to personalize learning for students so that they can reach college- and career-ready standards. The applicant provided suitable information to understand that the educators in the district participate in a variety of professional development meetings and are trained in the use of data to develop personalized learning plans.

Enough information was not provided to determine how feedback from teacher and principal evaluations will be used to improve teachers' and principals' collective practice. The applicant did not clearly link this school improvement approach to a high-quality plan to include key goals, activities and rationale, timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. In addition, the applicant did not include the elements of a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

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

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

**(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(D)(1) The applicant did not clearly articulate a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. Specifically, the applicant did not provide an understandable timeline, listing the deliverables, and persons responsible. The applicant did provide key goals, and enough information to discern activities and rationale.

(D)(1)(a) The applicant provided sufficient information to understand the organization of the central office to support the participating schools. Specifically, the Chief Academic Officer provides leadership for the design, planning, and implementation of the instructional program for the district. The Executive Director of Instruction and the Director of Special Education along with their teams work with principals and instructional directors to implement effective instructional programs at all grade levels and design programs and practices based on the instructional achievement of teachers and students. The Chief Operations Officer and support team of Directors are responsible for the educational operations at the district that include: school safety, developing and reviewing board policies, information technology, student conduct, human resources, and general accountability of district administrators. In addition, they work with school principals to ensure effective instruction in the classroom occurs with minimum interruptions, and sufficient opportunities exist for students to meet grade level expectations.

(b) The applicant did not provide adequate information to plainly understand the level of flexibility and autonomy that school teams have over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets.

(c) For credit-based mastery, the applicant sufficiently reports that as a student moves to the high school level, the students will demonstrate competencies in Algebra and literacy skills. Once mastery is achieved, the student will select from a multitude of pathways. Some of these include career and technical training, AP course work, college experiences during high school, residency programs such as apprenticeships, internships, and work- based learning. This is an excellent approach to personalized learning that involves academic guidance based on student interests and aptitudes and should promote high student engagement and successful completion of school experiences.

(d) The applicant has provided an extensive listing of assessments (District Plan, Appendix H) that give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. These include various forms of formative assessments such as performance, demonstrations, products, projects, portfolios, exit tickets, response cards, experiments, and written work. In addition, the district informs instruction through diagnostic, benchmark and summative assessments.

(e) The applicant did not provide sufficient information to understand if learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, specifically students with disabilities. Extensive information was provided to understand adaptability and accessibility strategies for English learners.

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

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(D)(2)(a) The applicant has adequately noted in other sections of this proposal that various forms of instructional delivery and access are available at no cost to students. For example, the district offers afterschool tutoring and credit recovery options as well as online learning coursework. The applicant documented throughout the application the wide range of available free content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school for educators to support individualized learning. More information is needed to understand the types of resources available to parents and other stakeholders to support the implementation of this proposal.

(b) The applicant did not provide enough information to clearly ascertain how technical support will be provided for students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders.

(c) The applicant did not provide sufficient information to understand how information technology systems allow parents

and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems.

(d). It is reported that the district implemented Sapphire, an internet-based software program to serve as a data warehouse and student information system. Information was not provided to address the use of interoperability of this data system to include human resource data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data.

The applicant receives a low rating on this selection criterion.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(E)(1) Although the applicant has in place some far-reaching continuous improvement processes, they were not organized in a fashion to address the high-quality plan requirements of this selection criterion. Such a high-quality plan should include key goals, activities and rationale, timelines, and persons responsible. However, it is worthy to note that the applicant intends that the improvement processes be continuous, using the state's <i>Getting Results!</i> and the district's <i>Comprehensive Schoolwide Accountability Plan</i>. Additional supportive structures include the <i>Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System</i> (PVASS) and the <i>Danielson Framework for Teaching</i>. PVAAS provides a student's progress data in conjunction with achievement data so educators can make data-informed instructional decisions to ensure continued academic growth and achievement of students. The Danielson's Framework for Teaching, the educator assessment system, provides the overarching vision for effective instruction and is used to maintain continuous growth in effective teaching practices.</p> <p>The applicant did not specifically address how the plan will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff other than to state in (E)(2) that the Communications Office will disseminate information and updates on the status of RTT-D.</p> <p>The applicant clearly intends to embed structures that promote the continuous improvement process and gave examples of four structures (listed above) that will be utilized to support the continuous improvement process. The applicant does not link this information to the elements of a high-quality plan (as outlined above) for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. The applicant plans for the Communications Office to disseminate information and updates on the progress of the grant activities; however, more information is needed to clearly understand how the applicant intends to monitor and measure the quality of its investments. The applicant receives a mid-range score for this selection criterion.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Although the applicant has in place a Communications Office to provide timely data and information to all internal and external stakeholders, the applicant did not clearly articulate the elements of a high-quality plan for ongoing communication (key goals, activities and rationale, timelines, and persons responsible) in order to assess the credibility of the plan. The applicant has a variety of avenues that they will use to support engagement of internal and external stakeholders. These include district and school websites, social and media venues, printed publications, and daily media publicity.</p> <p>The applicant receives a low score on this selection criterion.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(E)(3) The applicant listed 13 performance measures in table form; however they did not provide any data (no baseline or annual performance targets) for (1) highly effective principals and teachers. In addition, only baseline data (2011-2012) was provided on (2) effective teachers. Ambitious yet achievable annual performance targets were noted for the remainder of the performance measures. Specifically, (3) grades K-2 are projected to meet reading benchmark by increase scores by 5% yearly, (4) grade 3 by increasing reading percent proficient or advanced by 5% annually, (5) grades 4-8 proficient or advanced target increase by 5% annually in reading and math, (6) grades 9-10 proficient or advanced on reading and math assessments, (7) grades 11-12 proficient or advanced on reading and math assessments, (8) grades 9-12 increase dual enrollment by adding 25 students per year, (9) grades 11-12 increase dual enrollment by adding 25 more students each year. (10) Grades K-3 discipline referrals reduced per student by 10% yearly if greater than .50, 5% if less than .50, (11)</p>		

grades 4-8 discipline referrals decreased per student by 10% yearly, (12) grades 9-12 discipline referrals decrease by 10% yearly. (13) Grades 12 number of free applicant for federal student aid form turned in increase each year.

(a) The rationale for selecting the measures not provided.

(b) 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 was not provided.

(c) How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress was not provided.

Because the three sub-criteria (a-c) were not addressed, the applicant receives a low rating on this selection criterion.

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

**5**

**1**

**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(4)The applicant does not clearly articulate a high-quality plan (to include key goals, activities and rationale, timelines, deliverables, and persons responsible) for evaluating the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities. The applicant does state that the plan is to hire an external evaluator to serve as a monitor and evaluate the project. Also, as part of this plan, the Superintendent's Core Cabinet Team of Directors will monitor oversight of best practice elements currently in place. This is a very vague, incompleteness evaluation plan and does not represent a clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its project. The applicant receives a low rating on this selection criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(F)(1)(a) The applicant provided an appropriate budget narrative and tables to justify expenditures. Specifically, the applicant is requesting \$23,271,346 in RDD-T funds. An additional \$8,705,988 will come from other funds for a total of \$31,977,334 budgeted for this project. The applicant reports that they will use RTT-D, High School Graduation Initiative (HSGI) grants, school improvement grants, and other local, state, and federal monies to support the activities of this proposal. The overall budget is then broken down into three sub-projects with corresponding budgets. Specifically, the sub-project Pathways for Success is budgeted for the last two years of the grant at \$18,260,096 with the first two years of funding coming from the HSGI. The School Culture and Safety Nets sub-project is funded at \$7,240,260 and the Quality Instruction and Professional Development sub-project is funded at \$6,476,978.

(b) The project budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. Specifically, the budget is clearly outlined. Detailed budget summaries are included for each of the sub-projects costing out expenditures by category. In addition, commitment to the project is demonstrated by effort to provide strategies and structures that become institutionalized over time including training of personnel in effective use of materials and teaching strategies and the implementation of the organizational structures of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

(c)(i) The applicant provides sufficient information to understand the use of the proposed budget one-time investments that will be used to support the implementation of the proposal. These include common core- aligned instructional materials in reading and math to support 58 classrooms in five grade levels. The applicant notes that an emphasis will be on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments throughout and beyond the four years of the project. Such strategies include investment in highly effective instructional materials and supplies, investment in training highly effective staff in order to building capacity to sustain positive changes, and supporting effective initiatives in place.

The applicant receives a high rating for this selection criterion.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(F)(2) It is worthy to note that the applicant has proactively developed a District Foundation, in its fourth year, which raises funds for the district. It is noted that the District Foundation will be positioned to better support the project when grant funding ceases.</p> <p>The applicant reports that ongoing expenditures will be for professional development, teacher/principal evaluation, and common core alignment. The concentrated focus on these activities will be to ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments throughout and beyond the four years of the project. The information on sustainability activities is very vague, details on how this is to be accomplished were not provided. For example, the applicant did not clearly articulate a high-quality plan, including key goals, activities and rationale, timeline, deliverables and persons responsible to support the sustainability of the project. In addition, specific information concerning how state and local leadership support, other financial support, and a description of how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments were not explained. Also, the applicant did not include an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant. Overall, The applicant receives a low score on this selection criterion.</p>		

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<p><b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>A section addressing the Competitive Preference Priority was not located within the grant proposal.</p>		

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<p><b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant sufficiently addressed how they would meet the core educational assurance areas through a comprehensive plan, Framework for Academic Achievement, for preparing students for college- and career-readiness. This plan calls upon the wrap around support of several initiatives for building greater capacity and resiliency beginning in Kindergarten through 12th grade. There are six components that encompass the four core educational areas designated by this grant competition. The applicant provides an accompanying visual display of this six-component plan.</p> <p>In addition, the applicant provides a visual display of a Leverage Map that is designed to show the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. Specifically, this diagram highlights the Pre-K to secondary pathways for students and the keystone state assessments that guide students along these pathways.</p> <p>Two of the six components in the applicant's plan, Professional Development and Recruit and Retain Quality Staff, are intended to increase the effectiveness of educators through quality professional development and teacher/principal evaluation through the Danielson Framework.</p> <p>The applicant proposes to decrease achievement gaps across the student groups by providing students greater access to effective teachers (increasing the number of effective teachers through professional development and evaluation), high quality instructional materials, and cutting-edge technology for instruction, accommodations, and accessibility.</p> <p>The applicant's plan is especially enhanced to improve student performance at the secondary level and increase the student graduation rates. An emphasis on preparation for college- and career- readiness begins early with importance given to ensuring that all students meet grade-level standards. Equally essential, the students are given guidance on careers through career interest inventories, work training experiences, and dual enrollment/online courses to ease matriculation into postsecondary.</p> <p>The applicant has met the requirements for Absolute Priority I.</p>		

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<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>106</b>
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