



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0179ME-1 for Auburn School Department

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Auburn School system describes a vision that is based on nationally recognized school reform initiatives and matches the requirements for this grant. College and Career readiness is describe in the model through the use of the state adopted Common Core State standards and the proficiency model of master of standards that will be used by the system. A College/Career Coordinator will be hired as part of the grant to provide activities that will promote college and career readiness throughout the grade levels. The organizational structures of the reform model is a clear guideline for school improvement. Districts who have used this model have demonstrated success in improved student achievement. The district wants to build teachers who are well trained in techniques of personalized learning. Leadership will support personalized learning. Curriculum, tools, learning management systems, policies and procedures are all described as a part of the work to create a personalized learning system.

The vision is a feasible approach to developing a personalized learning system. Recognizing weakness, finding a strong, research based model and creating the systems to support the plan is strong in this section.

Strengths

- A school committee consisting of 80 parents and community members , partners, teachers and students developed a collaborative mission statement called Vision 2020. Part of this vision calls for the educational program to focus on student interest, career exploration within a standards-based, interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum; and is flexible which allows each student's learning journey within an adjustable time frame and routes. Part of the expectations for staff include helping the students set learning goals, and helping to identify customized and individualized learning experiences for students.
- The district adopted Customized Learning which was envisioned by the Reinventing Schools Coalition, which is a well-supported reform vision. Marzano supports the coalition. Another school district won the Baldrige award for adopting the Reinventing Schools Coalition for producing excellent student achievement results.
- The district recognizes that two core principles of Customized Learning--students learn in different timeframes and students learn in different ways, does not yet support the principles.
- The district provides details how it will address the goal of Customized Learning in all of the four core assurance areas. Standards will be organized into Marzano's framework. The district will implement a student data system. Support for educators will be through professional development, coaching, leadership development, adopting appropriate policies and procedures, development of educational resources and fostering community support. Turning around low-performing schools will be via building capacity for Customized Learning as detailed above, identification of strategies that will help students and families of poverty, developing strategies for special needs students, developing strategies for English language learners and by offering an enhanced summer program.
- The Customized Learning model is comprised of 4 components: Leadership, Shared Vision, Personalized Mastery and Continuous Improvement
- Teachers in the district described what Customized Learning would look like in their classrooms. These included remarks from Kindergarten, 2/3 Grade, Third Grade, and Middle School. Generally the remarks revolve around students working at their own level, demonstrations of standard mastery, keeping track of progress toward meeting standards and the teacher as a coach or facilitator.
- The Maine Commissioner of Education in Maine is spearheading an effort to develop customized learning in the state. Auburn is part of a 29 district cohort working on this model.
- A College and Career Coordinator, with job description in the appendix will help coordinate efforts to meet the college and career readiness of students graduating from the district.

Weakness

- A description of what a Customized Learning system would look like in a high school classroom was lacking. Because most high schools are so seat time dependent, a look into how the system would work at an Auburn high school would reveal much more about a personalized learning model. The implementation details speaks volumes over general comments about such a system.

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

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Auburn proposed to include all students and schools in the reform initiative. This will include over 3,600 students with a 54% poverty rate.

The implementation was done via a systematic process that involved the entire school community. The district did some preliminary research which ultimately lead to the adoption of the Customized Learning Project. The vision creation, lead to a design team which will include input from all schools in the proposal.

The implementation was done in a systematic fashion which involved people from the entire school community. The plan is to involve all of the district's 3,600 students and all 338 staff. This will be rolled out to 5 elementary schools, 1 community school, 1 middle school, 1 high school and 1 alternative school. The low income rate is 54%. This is a strong implementation plan.

Strengths

- The district researched Customized Learning by visiting other districts using the program.
- The district consulted with an associate at Marzano Research lab as part of its plan to study the model.
- The vision--Vision 2020, was created with representation from teachers, administrators, students, parents, city leaders, area businesses, employers and other community members.
- All schools in the district adopted the vision
- All schools as well as the School Committee and Union endorsed the project.
- After the preliminary work, a design team was established

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

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9

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

This applicant has laid out a well-thought out vision and implementation plan. Some pilot teachers are already working on customized learning and all the staff have received awareness training related to the model. The district recognizes the scope of the project and understands that the whole implementation can not be successfully completed as a whole. The project must be broken into smaller steps that are recognized and described in the plan.

The applicant also recognizes that this project can not succeed unless teachers build their capacity to improve instruction. They plan on aligning their evaluation system with the customized learning program which strengthens the effectiveness of the model and aligns teacher and administrator performance. This is a reasonable plan that ties learning to educator effectiveness.

The applicant will help address the college and career readiness aspect of the proposal by hiring a College/Career ready coach with specific responsibilities.

Since the state of Maine is requiring a standards-based diploma by 2018, the district is involved in a number of initiatives to meet this goal. They will also use a Humanities and STEM based committee to help guide and implement the curriculum.

The district is a technology pioneer and is committed to expansion of technology throughout the district.

The district will develop leadership of both students and staff though research-based programs. This will support collaboration, teacher leadership teams and professional development.

The district will foster stronger relationships with the community with a Parent and Community Engagement Coordinator. Another postilion--a Family Liaison will work with vulnerable students and families.

The applicant describes new programs such as extended learning programs--an elementary summer lab school, a summer transitions school for middle grades and an extended summer school for high school. ESL students will be supported with a Cultural Broker.

The district also describes how the training for a customized learning program will allow that same concept to be used for teacher training. Coaches and teams will work collaboratively to support the professional development program.

A design team will work to modify structures and set or change policies for the initiative.

Overall this is a strong plan that is well designed, linked in appropriate areas (customized learning and evaluations) and appropriate for a personalized learning environment. Through the strategic creation of positions, building of leadership capacity, engaging the school community and providing professional development a high quality plan is described. A detailed high quality plan is described in A(4) that includes all the elements. The continuous improvement plan is the weakest (in relative terms) part of the section. a High score is appropriate for this section.

Strengths

The district did some preliminary pilots at the high school in the 2011-2012 school year. In June of 2012 all teachers in the high school participated in awareness training. Two coaches provided additional support to the staff.

In the fall of 2012 teachers pilot teachers at the elementary and middle school level attended training sessions. Further professional development of all staff poise the district to move forward in customized learning.

The district's plan involves the hiring of a project director, administrative assistance-half-time, and using an external evaluator

The district understands that full implantation can not occur in an "all at once" fashion. Phases are described that include: an awareness phase, Classroom Culture phase, Instructional Design & Implementation phase and Structure phase.

The district will continue to be a part of the state Cohort for Customized Learning and will disseminate information learned from this project

The Customized Learning model is being proposed as a common method of instruction which will help build teacher capacity.

The Customized learning model will be used as a basis for the teacher and administrator evaluation system. They will contract for a software system that will collect data, help coaches and align with their system.

A College/Career Coordinator position will be established. This is one of the many job descriptions that are clearly defined in the appendix. Their plan will be to foster partnerships with colleges and businesses, establishing college visitations and expand college aspiration programming to the middle and elementary school level.

The district is part of the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning which is creating a standards- based curriculum that articulated progressions of learning targets for students.

Marzano's framework of measurement, learning targets, progressions scopes and scales will be used to organize the curriculum.

The district was the country's first to implement a 1 to 1 learning and technology initiative. The have iPads for all children in grades kindergarten to grade 2. They have initiatives that will provide iPads to students in grades 7-12 and laptops to students in grade 6. The grant will fill in the technology gap in grades 3-6 and provide a technology support person for equipment and educational technicians that will provide support to students and teachers. A Policy Technician Consultant will provide curriculum alignment support for software, apps and educational materials that will align to the curriculum.

Leadership development will be provided for students and staff. This model will be base on Marzano and McNulty's work. Leadership teams, collaboration, goal setting, feedback systems and professional development will occur with this model.

Job descriptions are included for all positions that will be created for this proposal.

Weakness

The design team will be used to monitor the project. A Marzano or McNulty continuous improvement program is implied but not fully described.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

This section describes a high quality plan that includes goals/rationale, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties. It is presented in a logical sequence. Missing is the component to build teacher leadership. This is an important aspect of school reform and needed in light of the use of teacher based teams.

Student performance groups are detailed using state assessments. Goals over the term of the grant are ambitious. Graduation rates are divided into subgroup goals. College enrollment rates are also provide using the entire student population. The goals are ambitious. The applicant has created a plan that is logical and of high quality that targets the growth in these areas. Since the instructional strategy is researched based, tied to the evaluation system and the applicant has created a detailed plan to approach all the required areas, the assumption can be made that these goals are achievable. A high score is appropriate.

Strengths

- The high quality plan addresses these components: project management, improving instruction, college/career readiness, standard-based curriculum development, leveraging technology, student & administrator leadership development, parent & community engagement, supporting vulnerable populations, staff training/development, policies & structures, and continuous improvement.
- Reading and math scores for white, black, limited English proficient, special education and economically disadvantages in grades 3-8 are presented. The method to calculate the growth data is explained and based on a state (Maine and Colorado) system approach. The target goals are ambitious and the proposal aims to meet the targets.
- Decreasing achievement gaps are described for the same groups as listed above. They are compared to female, Asian, students with 504 plans, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific islander. These goals are ambitious for all groups.
- Graduation rates for white, black, limited English proficient, special education and economically disadvantage are provided. The goals are ambitious.
- College enrollment rates are provided with a post rate goal of 75% of the students enrolled in 2 or 4 year programs after high school graduation. There are ambitious goals that the applicant will attempt to address.

Weakness

- Student and administrator leadership development is targeted. Teachers also need leadership development, especially in light of the teacher lead teams that will be established. Instruction, facilitation, coaching and mentoring at the teacher level is critical to the success of the project. Teacher development as well as building teacher leadership go hand in hand to change school culture and create a successful project. Teacher leadership, through the design and implementation phases is vital to the success of the grant.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Auburn has shown evidence of its success in the past 4 years. The data from a 1 to 1 iPad program at the kindergarten level was evidence of its success. The fact that the data from the project showed a statistical relevance in the area of Hearing and the Recording of sounds in words demonstrates the effectiveness of that project.

Data is presented showing that the district addresses needs. State testing data is not used to make a case for success in this section of the proposal. The data presented shows some gains but a glaring weakness is in the local assessment scores for the low quartile student population. This data is low over a 4 year time period. There is no evidence to support that this group was targeted for assistance. Since state test score data was not presented to help support a clear record of success, a mid-high score is justified. Districts and schools are judged by their state assessment scores. Data from that source would shed further light on the district's successes during the last 4 years.

Strengths

- Literacy instruction has been a target. Test data using NWEA and STAR show gains in literacy for grades 4-6 in the

proficient category.

- A 21st Century Learning Grant has provided extended (after school and summer school) instruction and academic support for low-performing students. On STAR and NWEA tests, a majority of students showed improved achievement (75% - 81%).
- The 1 on 1 iPad device program for kindergarten students, which compared kindergarten classes who used iPads with those who did not over a 3 month period of time showed overall higher scores and a statistical advantage in the area of Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words for the classes who had the iPads.
- Graduation rates since 2010 have increased while the dropout rate over the same time period has decreased. A credit recovery program for juniors and seniors is shown to increase the credits earned by students.
- College enrollment rates as measured by the Mitchell Institute shows an increase of college enrollment from 51% to 66.1% for the graduating class of 2011.
- A college for ME program that allows students at the high school to enroll in college coursework has shown gains in students enrolled and college courses taken.
- The AP pass rate is higher than the Maine and global average. This is in spite of more students at the high school taking AP courses.
- Three elementary schools were targeted for assistance because of low achievement on the state assessments. Two schools made there way out of this classification. One remains in. The district has targeted food programs, partnership programs the the iPad program at this identified elementary school. In first grade classrooms at the target school, 2 teachers, both trained in Reading Recovery are assigned. Data for English Language learners in Kindergarten and First grade show gains in above proficiency rates in phonemic awareness, reading and writing. Gains from over 60% to 1% are presented.
- Some anecdotal information is presented on the establishment of the Reinventing Schools Coalition training showing that the coaching and implementation of a customized professional development was helpful. This was followed up by data showing that the local pilot teachers failed far less students (8.2% to 2.2%) than the non pilot group
- A data warehouse system was purchased that allows parent access. This information is also used in parent-teacher conferences. Another system called Educate is being piloted that allows students to have a more active role in directing their learning.

Weakness

- Lowest Quartile students in reading took losses on assessments from 2009-to now. The data showed lower scores in the spring for every year and grade level but one--6th grade in 2012-13. This is very interesting data. This group should have been targeted for assistant after reviewing the data.
- Much academic data is presented for the elementary grade levels. Outside of some AP test scores, high school data is very limited.
- District state testing data is limited in scope. Most of the data to support the clear record of success was from local assessments.

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

The budget process, educational expenditure data, web site locations for information and local budget procedures were described. The process to approve a budget in Maine has transparency built in but the specifics required in this section of the grant were not provided. A mid score is appropriate for this section.

Strengths

- The legal process of developing and approving a school budget in Maine leads to community input and some level of transparency. City council has to approve the budget. The public can comment on the proposal. These meetings are televised and streamed online. Once that process is complete, the budget must be voted on by the community.

Weakness

- This section did not have specific evidence to support transparency of data meeting the requirements of the proposal. General statements and procedures were described. Specific reports were not shown in the narrative or appendix. Web sites were not specifically identified.
- There was no evidence to support the availability of personnel salaries at the school level, instructional staff salaries at the school level and non-personnel expenditures at the school level. A list of required cost centers was presented. Specific details on each cost center was lacking.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes state support for a Response to Intervention Model and the requirement that districts have a standards-based diploma by 2018. Districts who implement research-based school reform models have advantages over districts that choose not to. The research has been done and districts can follow implementation plans that have shown academic success. With this approach added to the state support for customized learning, the district has validated structures already built into the plan. This section describes the concept of "Multiple Pathways for Learner Achievement" but implementation details are unclear. Overall the state is supporting the Customized Learning plan. The direction is set at the state level. Local implementation details are lacking. A mid-high score is justified.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state of Maine supports the Maine Customized Learning Consortium of which Auburn is a participant. • The state is going to require standards based diplomas by 2018. Part of this law reaffirms that students must have the opportunity to gain proficiency through multiple pathways and to demonstrate proficiency by presenting multiple types of evidence. • The Maine Education Commissioner has proposed a plan that puts learners first through effective, learner-centered instruction, great teachers and leaders, multiple pathways for learner achievement, comprehensive school and community supports and coordinated and effective state support. <p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School policies that need to be addressed or updated are not described. Because schools are so Carnegie unit defined, there is a possibility that school policies for mastery versus seat time need to be addressed. • The actual details of moving students via mastery instead of seat time are not documented. 		

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	15
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<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All the components of this section were addressed. Evidence was presented that included community engagement, union support, letters of support and grant development based on input from students, staff and the community. Many pages of comments from the entire school community supported the engagement and support section. The applicant supported this section with ample evidence of engagement which prompts a high score.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district researched customized learning by consulting with the Reinventing Schools Consortium and bringing to the district, Bea McGarvey who provided the details of customized learning to the school and school community. After this introduction to the concept, community members participated on the district design team. Meetings on the initiative were held at various locations which were also televised and streamed online. • Department staff who are members of various community groups helped to communicate the goals of the proposal. • Teacher and student input for the application was gathered through surveys. Input from these sources helped shape the proposal. • The union voted unanimously to support the project. • Many letters of support are presented in the appendix. • Fifty eight pages of comments from parents, community, administrators, students and teachers are in the appendix. Meeting minutes from the design team are also included as evidence of engagement and support • The district applied for the grant last year, yet all the letters of support were written in 2013 indicating a level of care and detail for this proposal. 		
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C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18

<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district is very serious about the development of a personalized learning system. It uses research-based school reform</p>		
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models that have shown to be effective in other districts. In areas that the applicant has not developed, it seeks partners and research to support the goal of customized learning. The components of a high-quality plan are given more detail in this section. All components support the plan. The personalized learning plan is based on a reform model (Reinventing Schools Coalition). Schools that choose reform models gain prior-experience, support from the reform organization and a framework to follow in implementation. Although some areas are not fully developed, overall, all participating students will be positively impacted by the project. The customized learning project supports all students including special needs and those in subgroups. College and career ready standards are part of the state of Maine requirements.

The use of digital content, apps and software programs will be researched with the help of a company that specializes in that type of work.

Although the district is becoming more culturally diverse, they recognize the need to bring in a Cultural Broker to help support all students in the district.

A learning management system is under development that will allow students to track progress toward mastery and even suggest follow up activities to do. The implementation plan includes training for staff members in its use. Student training for the Educate system is not included in the implementation plan.

The research, descriptions and overall plan is feasible. Research based strategies are used throughout the implementation process. Some areas such as early childhood education and English Language Learners needed more development. Details on multiple pathways to gain proficiency was obscure.

This was a strong narrative representing how a personalized learning system could work in the district. Some issues need further clarification. Overall the description supports the concept of a high quality plan and seems feasible. A mid-high score is appropriate.

Strengths

- Their customized learning plan will include 3 strategies: quality guidance--to develop goals and set their academic program, freedom to pursue areas of academic interest--students will have choices of topics within courses allowing them to developed their interests and goals, and teaching knowledge and skills in context--finding community connections and authentic audiences for work.
- Using the state rigorous content knowledge standards, organized in a Marzano curriculum framework the district will allow students to pursue a rigorous course of study
- The Customized Learning model will focus on complex reasoning and life-long habits of mind targeted at college and career ready standards
- The curriculum framework has measurement topics, learning targets, scopes and scales that will allow a student to achieve goals and track progress toward their goals
- The curriculum model is linked to a taxonomy level which pushes the depth of knowledge component. The district has been working on this complex reasoning strategy though the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning. With the help of Marzano associates the complex reasoning strategy has been broken down into these components: comprehending knowledge--through symbolizing and integrating; analyzing knowledge--through comparison, classification, error analysis, deduction & induction, perspective analysis and constructing support; and using knowledge--through decision making, problem solving, experimental inquiry, and investigation & invention.
- A Cultural Broker will be used to supplement the already growing cultural diversity in the district.
- Critical learning content is required based on Maine's college and career ready standards. These standards will be supplemented with a Life-Long Habits of Mind Curriculum that is based on the Search Institutes 40 Developmental Assets research. This curriculum has also been organized into a Marzano framework that matches their work in the content knowledge area and the complex reasoning area.
- Although the curriculum organizational work has been completed, a learning progress software management system has yet to be installed.
- The plan involve developing student voice and choice as a foundational element of a personalized learning system.
- The applicant has chosen Marzano's book *The Art & Science of Teaching* as the basis of instruction for all teachers in the district.
- The district will use the research based Meaningful Engaged Learner framework to address the component of student motivation.
- The district will continue to expand its technology program that includes laptops and iPads. The district presents data that shows student achievement gains with the 1:1 kindergarten iPad in language arts and math.
- The learning management system allows students and teachers to develop learning resources and activities that are aligned to individual learning targets.
- The district would like to use a company that helps schools leverage technology resources toward achievement. Data was presented to show the effectiveness of this partnership.
- Auburn and the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning are working with a company to develop a learning

management system to monitor learning progression, provide a database of instructional resources, to suggest next step learning activities and a repository for student artifacts and other evidence of learning.

- Because the system is designed with opportunities to meet learning targets, all populations including special need students will be addressed. The district uses an inclusion model.
- Research showed that 18 strategies used in high poverty schools can all be found in the customized learning system. These include effective leadership; engaging parents, schools and communities to work as partners; high expectations for all students; target low performing students-particularly in reading, align, monitor and manage the curriculum; create a culture of data and assessment literacy; build instructional capacity; and reorganize time, space and transitions.
- The applicant lays out a detailed phase-in plan for students and the community. The phase-in includes awareness, classroom culture, engagement and leadership phases for the student and community. The learning management system will be an important component of learning within a proficiency-based system.

Weakness

- The description and use of digital learning in the system was limited but the district recognizes that outside organizations can be used to provide support in this area
- The implementation of a customized learning program must include the development of multiple pathways. This section was unclear. An example of how this might occur in a real situation would have been helpful
- How customized learning for ELL students would operate needed more explanation.
- The section on early learners was unclear. It made the case for more early learning programs at the pre-kindergarten level, but made no comment on the existence of those types of programs in the district. A comment was made that customized learning will expand reach to early learners with strategies such as working with parents to provide resources and strategies to promote learning at home. How this would operate was limited in scope.
- The description of how student learning can be accelerated through the customized learning program was sparse.
- Student training in the use of the software systems was not included in the implementation plan.

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

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan is presented in the application. All the categories of a high quality plan are presented and explained. It is evident that the district is moving down this path as evidenced by their membership on the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning and their research in best practices including The Reinventing Schools Coalition and Marzano's research on best practices.

Collaboration and shared leadership may be an issue for the applicant as evidenced by the statement that running and facilitating the design team work is a strategy that some district leaders may need support implementing.

The applicant understands that there is an emotional side to the implementation in a change in instructional techniques. The district hopes to address this issue through providing positive support, providing resources removing barriers and understanding the problems that face teachers.

The applicant provides justification for a customized learning system. It is unclear how a teacher evaluation system would be used to impact the effectiveness of the project. The only details presented explain that the customized learning system will be adopted by the district and the evaluation system would be based on this strategy. Details are undocumented.

The applicant describes researched based practices that will lead to good teaching and leading. Implementation details are lacking as to how this would look because it is such a change in culture and instruction. The concepts presented are appropriate. Details are lacking on how the teacher evaluation system would relate to the project. Overall this is a good description with some details needing clarification. A middle high score is justified.

Strengths

- A learning management system with a database of educational activities and resources matched to learning targets is being developed. This can be a key component for a personalized learning system. This system is designed to be improved over time. It will be used for instructional issues as well as coaching teachers. It is a fundamental unit of the customized learning program to be implemented in the district.
- The district continues to look for partners that will help them develop resources and vet content that can be used in a customized learning project.
- The district uses screening tools such as CPAA and STAR to make adjustments to teaching and learning strategies.
- The district will utilize peer coaching to build capacity with the teaching staff. Feedback will focus on classroom

practice.

- Technical support is provided by research based organizations.
- The district recognizes that leadership development is a critical element in a reform effort. Leadership teams consisting of students, teachers, administrators, school committee members, parents and community members will help guide the project.
- Implementing this type of project will involve redesigning structures in ways we have not yet fully imagined. This shift in thinking will require a shift in the internal practices of teaching and learning. This will require collaborative problem solving and inventive thinking.
- The comment that educators are frustrated because they are trying to meet rigorous college and career ready goals with a set of structures, practices and tools designed for another time and purpose is very relevant to this project.
- The district recognizes that a phase in plan is required ("not all at once"). The awareness, classroom culture, instructional design, instructional implementation and school structures phases are listed with deliverables for each component. A shared leadership team will be used to guide and facilitate this part of the plan.
- The Reinventing Schools Coalition and the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning is helping develop and implement the professional curriculum designed to support teachers and build capacity in the organization for this new learning structure.
- The professional learning curriculum for staff needs to reflect the customized learning program for students. Many teachers have not been exposed to this type of learning process so the district is using several approaches to provide modeling for customized learning. This will be accomplish through networking (possibly via tweeting or blogging) and by accessing The Maine Department of Education's Center for Best Practices which has data on personalized clearing systems.
- Professional development will be guided by design team members, coaches and administrators who will work with teachers to design, uncover and identify formal and informal professional development opportunities.
- Although the Reinventing Schools Coalition supports the work at Auburn, the district wants to build internal capacity to train and lead staff.

Weakness

- The move from a traditional learning system to a personalized learning system is a huge cultural shift for any school district. The application is full of research-based data and language and short on implementation by actual teachers in the classroom.
- The application is full of proper research and tools that are important to a personalized learning system. There is a lack of specific information as to how this system would actually work in a school district setting. The actual implementation plans are vague.
- The applicant notes that a shared leadership team component may be a strategy that the district leaders may need support in implementing. This hold on power defeats the effectiveness of teacher leadership teams.
- The evaluation system is not discussed in the section of the proposal. Stated earlier, the evaluation will be based on the instructional model adopted by the district. Details of this evaluation and the tie-in to customized learning is not documented.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This applicant describes many learning resources that are in place in the district. It also has many community partnerships that add opportunities for students in the district. The grant controlling structure is sound which includes a director and leadership teams who will work in collaboration to support customized learning. The district recognizes the need for professional development in the program, especially for the leadership teams. Coaches will also be used to support the teachers in a customized learning environment. Specific details of how students at any level progress through mastery rather than seat time is unclear. The operation of this type of program at the high school level is vague. Overall this section rates a mid-high score.

Strengths

- The applicant describes how the district will support the proposal from a central office perspective. A grant

coordinator (Director) will work with the district design committee to facilitate the program. The director will be responsible for approval of grant activities, implementation, reporting, meeting organization, review of policies, and deliverables as noted in the plan. Meetings with the district design team will be at least monthly. In conjunction with the teams and administrators, the director will look at school schedules, calendars, personnel decisions, staff roles and responsibilities, budgets, grading policies, and teacher, principal and superintendent evaluation systems.

- The leadership team (Design Teams) will be made up of students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members. These teams will work in collaboration with school administrators and the grant director. These design teams will be at the district and local level.
- The applicant recognizes that professional development is important for the leadership teams. This training will help them through second, order change which was described earlier in the grant.
- A student design team will be used to support the customized learning program, contribute input to the local design team, assist teachers in implementation and be a community advocate for the program.
- The proposal describes how the financial aspects of the grant will be checked through auditing, RFP processes and spending procedures.
- Coaches will be used to assist in the design of individual implementation plans for students, providing formative feedback to teachers, assisting in technology integration and support for moving into the next level of classroom implementation.
- The district offers other support systems for students. These extra supports can be used to support at risk students, gifted students or special education students. How these fit into the overall customized learning program is not described. These supports include:
 - a summer school that is designed with low class sizes, high quality instruction, curriculum matched to student needs, consistent school attendance, parental involvement, targeted student recruitment, a grade 2-8 concentration on language arts & mathematics, and a program evaluation component.
 - a College and Career Partnership Coordinator who works with students starting in Kindergarten to increase post secondary school aspirations
 - The state of Maine has passed a standard-based diploma law that requires that students demonstrate proficiency in 8 content areas to graduate.
 - An environment education land lab consisting of a variety of learning opportunities for students. These include: a ropes course, hiking trails, gardens, sundial, science labs, GPS instruction, and academies for special needs groups (low, high and behavioral need students).
 - A 21st Century after school program for grades 3-8.
 - A public library program for 9th and 10th graders (health, career center, mentoring)
 - Community partnership supports for welding (at-risk students), culinary arts instruction through the local Police Athletic League, and market/crop growing with a local farmer
- The district created one of the first alternative schools in Maine

Weakness

- The details of how students progress via mastery rather than seat time is not described in detail. Scheduling and moving students through such a system at the high school level is unclear.
- The details of how students will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways is vague.
- Most of the programs described are already in place in the district. There is little information provided on how the customized learning program would impact students with disabilities and English language learners.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A school infrastructure is in place for the development and use of a personalized learning system. This starts with legislation at the state level, followed by the support system at the local level. All students will have access to the customized learning system. A software program will be developed to track student progress through standards. The district wants this program to suggest the next learning topic for students as they have gained mastery. This will be available to teachers, parents and students. The district currently has programs in place to promote expectations for college enrollment. The district hopes to expand its one on one computer program to grade levels that have not yet had that opportunity. Although computer software programs are described for staff, students and parents, the ability to transfer data was not documented. The inter operable nature of the programs was described in one sentence. This sentence did not provide any information on that topic. Specific information on the district technology infrastructure was lacking. It has to be inferred that the system has the capability to meet the needs of this proposal. Overall the applicant describe most of the infrastructure to support a customized learning environment. A mid high score is appropriate.

Strengths

- All students will be participating in this program. College expectations for all at starts at the Kindergarten level with all students getting t-shirts with with their graduation year imprinted on them.
- Middle school provides transition activities for students entering high school.
- At the high school teachers serve as mentors, college visitations occur--both special interests and general visits.
- The technology plan for the district includes the purchase of equipment for grades that have not yet been provided equipment (K-2 and 9-12). Coaches and additional technicians will help support technology for teachers.
- Teachers, parents and students have access to a software system that provides assignments, attendance data and grade information. This will be supplemented by a package that will track student progress toward learning targets. This new software system will also include the curriculum.

Weakness

- Although the applicant describes how it sets expectations, provides opportunities for students (college, vocational and credit recovery), there is little on how the applicant would adapt these programs to a personalized learning system. The programs described are all currently in place. Nothing expands the section into how these programs would fit into a customized learning program.
- Inter operable data systems are not addressed. The applicant lists the software packages that are used, but there is inadequate information provided that addresses the ability of the programs to transfer data as required in this section.
- Technical support for parents was not described in this section
- Some of the specifics of the technology program were not included. Wireless capability, internet capability for parents and the setup of the district technology infrastructure was lacking. Data on how many parents have Internet access is lacking. How the district will instruct parents on how to access the system is not explained.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has provided elements of a continuous improvement process for the proposal. By linking the continuous improvement process to the implementation plan would have strengthen this section. Details of a continuous improvement plan are sparse. This section of the proposal is weak because of the limited nature of the continuous improvement plan and the fact that it is not really linked to the implementation plan. A high quality plan for continuous improvement is not described. The implementation plan describes establishment of a director, working with the Standards-Based Curriculum, Leveraging Technology, student leadership development, leadership development, parent and community engagement supporting vulnerable populations, staff training and development, policies and structures and continuous improvement. Some of these areas will be reviewed through the continuous improvement cycle as listed in the strengths section. A continuous improvement plan tied directly to the implementation plan would provide data on how those investments paid off in the development of a customized learning project. The details of how the plan will monitor, measure and publicly share the information on the quality of its investments is obscure. Elements of a continuous improvement process are sprinkled throughout the proposal. This section does not assimilate all those components. This is the weakest section of the proposal. A mid level, low to mid level score is justified.

Strengths

- The continuous improvement process is a part of the implementation plan described in the vision section.
- An evaluator will facilitate the collection of data and its analysis.
- The proposal has established goals around the 4 essential components of the grant--College and Work Ready Standards, Student Data, Developing and Supporting effective educators and turning around low performing schools. Each component has a description of how a continuous improvement system would work under that section.
 - College and Career Ready area--annual review of standards based learning system, revised by teachers, work done in partnership with the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning, based on student achievement data and teacher feedback
 - Student Data Systems to Inform Educators--quarterly review, ongoing and formative process with district and Maine Cohort for Customized Learning, protocol for modifying the software system

Developing and Supporting Effective Educators--teachers fill out surveys after professional development to determine next steps, coaches provide additional feedback, a learning progress management system will be developed for teachers--similar to the student process, shared leadership will be used to support large-scale change, rubrics will help guide the continuous improvement process

- Turning around Low Performing Schools--student achievement data will be collected on an ongoing basis, the school and evaluator will review the data on an annual basis, a self-assessment rubric will be completed annually

A rubric in the appendix included elements of a continuous improvement plan, moral purpose, change adept & system alignment, and relationship sections.

Weakness

- Although a high quality plan is described in the vision section, the direct link to a continuous improvement process is not made. This link would have tightened the proposal and provided an appropriate feedback system to monitor and improve the grant as it moves forward. The commentary in this section is general in nature and provides some evidence of continuous improvement planning. That direct correlation to all the sections in the improvement plan would have further supported the proposal.
- The details of the continuous improvement plan are sparse in the actual implementation plan. In this section the applicant provides some more details of continuous improvement related to the essential components of the grant.
- An actual continuous improvement plan--written as a high quality plan--goals, activities, rationale, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties is sparse in nature. Some of the components are included in the narrative--goal areas, activities, rationale and timelines. The link to some of the investments made in this project is not made so the quality of those investments may not be determined.
- The rubric described in the turning around low performing schools was described as being done by all schools each year. It was unclear if this was done for all schools in the district or those perceived to be low achieving.
- The designation of low achieving school was not defined.

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

The implementation plan includes a section on parent and community engagement. Instead of building on this part of the work, the applicant describes strategies that will be used to engage internal and external stakeholders. Much of the engagement in this section revolves around external stakeholders. This is part of their high quality implementation plan. Little is mentioned in this section about engaging and communicating with staff. A mid level score is justified.

Strengths

- The implementation plan includes a section on parent and community engagement. This includes surveying parents, establishment of a Parent/Community Engagement Coordinator, development of engagement strategies, recruiting community members for committees, implementing a wide range of communication strategies to inform the public of the work and development of process for connecting at-risk students with adult mentors.
- Communication strategies will include use of the district's web site, use of the district's Facebook page, 2 public forums, creation of a student leadership team that will meet at least twice annually, a bi-annual report to the School Committee, reporting to the public during town hall/district meetings, detailing activities in the budget booklet, monthly attendance at the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning and other methods to be developed during the implementation process.

Weakness

- A plan to engage and communicate with the staff is missing. Assumptions can be made that this will be through the normal methods of school district communication, but they are not defined in this section.

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

Performance measures are described. A rationale, how the measure will provide information and how the district will review and improve the measure over time is included. Calculation details are undocumented for all the target points. There is a lack of information on the teacher evaluation system. The students who will have highly effective teachers and principals seem low at the conclusion of the grant--50 to 65% according to the chart. Some of the data used to support the

performance measures was not supported by research. For instance the link of discipline referrals to college and career readiness needed more explanation. The relationship of grades to college and career readiness was not research-based. This section rates a mid-low score.

Strengths

- Performance measures are identified and the rationale and use of data to inform instruction is described for the self-selected performance measures. This is in table format.

Weakness

- There is little discussion on the elements of the teacher evaluation system that is being developed. The only comment is that it will link to the customized learning program that will be implemented district-wide. More details on this component would document the link between evaluation and student achievement. This student achievement link is undocumented.
- By the 2017-18 school year, only 50% of the students will have highly effective principals or teachers. This seems very low especially in relationship to implementing this proposal and providing the professional development to support the project.
- The use of disciplinary referrals to measure college and career-readiness for grades 4-8 is very interesting. The choice of that measure is not supported by research in the proposal.
- Failing grades as a way to measure college and career-readiness for grades 9-12. This is not supported by research in the proposal.
- A career preparatory experience is used to measure career-readiness for students in grades 9-12. Details on these experiences is lacking.
- Performance measures are listed and identified in tables that include subgroups. The performance measures include the percent of 3rd graders in reading and math that are on or above grade level by the end of the grant, percent of grade 3 students who have a positive social-emotional school experience, 4-8th grade students on track to college and career-readiness, grade 4-8th students in reading and math on grade level by the end of the grant, grade 4-8th students who report a positive social-emotional school experience, grades 9-12th on track to college and career readiness, grades 9-12 students who successfully complete a career preparatory experience during high school, 11th graders who are proficient in reading and math on the state test and the percent of 9-12th graders with no discipline referrals. The methodology for calculating the Reading or math measure over the period of the grant is not described. For instance Special Education students are listed in 12-13 as having a reading proficiency of 11% on the state tests. This is to improve 9 points each year until 17-18. How the 9 points are determined was not described.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the grant is not in evidence. There is a high quality plan to implement the proposal but none is described to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the investments needs to link to the implementation plan so all the aspects of the grant can be evaluated. This critical element was not addressed making this section incomplete. The only part of the implementation plan that was discussed was professional development and its evaluation was sparse. A comment that other district funded activities would be evaluated listed--professional development, technology, productive use of time, productive use of staff, productive use of money, working with community partners, compensation reform, modification of school schedules and structures, school leadership teams and decision -making structures. Some of these items are not even listed in the implementation plan and no details were offered on how these would be evaluated. There was no description of any type of plan to increase student access to highly effective teachers or principals. Overall this is a weak section and a low score is justified.

Strengths

- Professional development will be evaluated using a feedback loop. This feedback will be used to make adjustments to the professional development offered to teachers.

Weakness

- A high quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the project is not described
- The narrative only describes how professional development would be evaluated during the grant. There is no data on how it would be evaluated the effectiveness of the project director, curriculum development, use of technology, student leadership development, leadership development, parent and community engagement, supporting vulnerable populations, and policies and structures. The link to the implementation plan would have addressed these issues and provided a much stronger case for evaluating the effectiveness of the investments.
- This section provides no information on how the applicant would address increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. Although listed in the performance measures, this component of the grant has little narrative. The final goal for students having only 50% of the students receiving instruction from a highly effective teacher is seems low. There is no high quality plan that is described to address this issue. The description and development of a teacher and principal evaluation system is inadequate.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant describes the budget in detail showing where the grant funds will be placed. Overall the applicant is requesting 7% of the total funds that will be used to support this project (7 million requested out of a 47.7 million dollar budget). The assumption can be made that the district is committed to this type of reform effort with or without this grant. The information in the grant budget ties directly back to the implementation plan. The details of the budget support this plan. The information in the budget is reasonable and sufficient based on the plan and monies requested. There is no documentation of where the 93% of the other funds used for this project will come from. This lowers the score to mid-high.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant is asking for 7% of the total funds that will be used to support the initiative. • The budget narrative provides a brief summary of the project broken into the grant requirement areas and how the applicant will divide the work. The subsections are all detailed and provide justification for the amount determined. • The details of the budget were clear and sufficient to support implementation of the proposal. The locations in the grant of primary associated criterion and additional associated criterion were identified. • The cost figures were easy to identify as ongoing or one time. The strategies that were funded were appropriate to the development of a customized learning program. The fact that the State of Maine is supporting this type of project helps lend credibility to the sustaining of this type of project. <p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the budget was detailed and easy to follow, there was no documentation for the identification of all other funds that will be used to support the project. This question calls for the identification of all funds that will be used for this project. The grant funds could easily be identified, but other fund sources--Title funds, special state funds, etc. were not identified. With only 7% of the total funds coming from this grant, 93% come from other sources and this information was not provided. 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Although not in written as a high quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties), a plan does exist to sustain the customized learning project. A budget is provided with the assumption that federal, local and state funds will be used to sustain the project as is. A high quality evaluation plan that was not evident would provide justification and support to continue or cut various elements of the project. Because the continuous improvement plan may not evaluate the effectiveness of some of the staff positions, data would not be available to support their continued funding post grant. The continuance of these positions post grant is unclear. The fact that is project is supported by the State of Maine and a collaboration of districts in the state, a mid-high score is appropriate.</p> <p>Strengths</p>		

- The customized learning project is supported at the state level. The district also supports the plan through its involvement with the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning and its locally developed vision. The district will continue to be an active participant in the Cohort.
- The budget expenses focus on building capacity for Customized Learning--through professional development, instructional coaches, leadership development, and staff positions.
- Policy and infrastructure focus helps set the ground work for a sustained program. Technology investments both in hardware and software will be used to sustain the project.
- Although not detailed, customized learning is supported by state and local policy changes (standards-based diploma state law).
- Community engagement will be used to support the project post grant.
- A 3 year budget post grant is provided. The 45 million dollar cost is to be supported by the local community, Title I, Title II and Title VI funds. The district and Cohort will also look for additional grant funding sources.

Weakness

- The sustainability plan is missing some elements of a high quality plan. Goals, timelines, activities, deliverables and responsible parties are not defined. The lack of detail in the section could hurt sustainably.
- The evaluation plan described in the previous section sheds little light on the effectiveness of past investments. Because of this, some aspects of the grant may not be worthy of funding in the post grant period. Having a better plan to rate the effectiveness of the investments would provide evidence to support cutting or continuing that aspect of the grant.
- It is unclear if some of the funded positions would continue post grant. This would include the Director, Family Liaison, College and Career Coordinator and Community Engagement Coordinator.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposed a partnership with a local camp that will develop, teach to teachers and assess over the time line of the grant a socio-emotional curriculum. The curriculum targets social and emotional needs as well as leadership development. The camp itself provides opportunities for students who are referred by counselors, social workers and other personnel. Although not specially targeted at children with special needs, nearly 95% of the participants have some sort of issue including a range of learning and/or behavioral challenges. The project will target students in the middle school after piloting in the 6th grade. This project is heavy on teacher involvement and light on community and parental engagement. The load of the program is on the shoulders of the teachers at the middle school level via additional paperwork, assessments and reporting. The content of the project is appropriate to develop the social-emotional needs of students. Performance measures are provided as are target goals. The assessment methods and assessments are not described in detail. Overall this is a reasonable plan that is dependent on teacher engagement. The target measures are sound, the methods of assessment are limited, A low high score is appropriate.

Strengths

- The district has a long history of partnerships which include the police department, Advocates for Children, Healthy Androscoggin, Big Brothers and Sisters, A regional health center and Literacy Volunteers of America
- The district proposed to work with Camp Susan Curtis to address the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students aged 8-17.
- Almost 1,000 students from the district have participated in their programming
- The curriculum includes nutrition, fitness, literacy, financial responsibility, leadership and environmental education.
- Once a student is enrolled in the camp, they are invited to come back. Data shows that 96% of long-term campers (attending for 4 years) graduate from high school and 80% of those go on to some form of post-secondary education.
- The applicant proposes to use "Habits and Skills for Lifelong Achievement" in partnership with Camp Susan Curtis, with teachers in the district. The curriculum includes cooperation, communication, collaboration, setting goals, accept feedback, decision-making, conflict management, problem-solving, risk taking, task completion, accepting differences, pooling of resources, anti bullying strategies, overcoming group and individual barriers, building trust, public speaking and leadership development. This curriculum will be implemented in the schools with the teachers receiving annual training and technical assistance. The goal is for these strategies to be woven into the daily

curriculum. Data will be collected to tailor the program to specific needs of students in grades 3-8. This will be in addition to the regular summer camp offered each year. Teacher, parent and student assessments will be used with specific target data. Over the course of 10 years, all students will have academic content and life-skills content (through the Camp Susan Curtis program).

- The Camp Curtis Program will help improve drop-out and graduation rates. In 2011-2012 58 students dropped out and the graduation rate was around 75%.
- All students in grades 6-8 will participate in the curriculum project.
- Performance Measures for this program are listed in table format including applicable population, baseline and target data through 2018. These match the curriculum components listed above.
- The applicant describes 3 population level results including becoming reflective learners, self-directed and collaborative workers.
- Assessments by teachers, students and parents will provide data on plan implantation and for a continuous improvement cycle. The assessment targets are listed by teacher, parent and student. The assessments will be via observation and perception with a goal of 75% of the students will show progress in 8 out of 20 target areas.
- Although the program targets middle school, there is a plan to expand the program district-wide.

Weakness

- The assessments and measurement tools are not described. It is unclear as to what will be measured and how the results will be interpreted. The impact of parent assessments and student assessments are also unclear.
- It is not clear how this new curriculum will be measured through the teacher evaluation system. Extra paperwork and assessments are part of the program and the details of implementation with staff is unclear.
- The program is dependent upon teacher implementation. There is little connection to family support issues except for an assessment that parents are asked to do each semester.
- Most of the details in the narrative relate to how the Camp will train, support and improve the program with teachers. Community and parental engagement issues are not explained.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant makes a strong case for a customized learning program in the district. This is supported by the State of Maine laws and through their membership in a school collaboration for customized learning. The vision is feasible and sound especially in light of their current implementation of the project. The district is moving down this path regardless of the grant. Their request for funds only amounts to 7% of the budget. The implementation plan is of high quality and appropriate to the development and support of a personalized learning environment. Although only mentioned, the district is going to link the customized approach to learning to the teacher and principal evaluation system. The goals for improved student outcomes are achievable. The district shows data for a record of success but some discrepancies are noted. The lower quartile of students show negative growth on assessments year after year. After reviewing this data, the staff needs to address this situation. Transparency issues are addressed but the documentation is incomplete. Some of the areas of that section were not addressed. The district has a record of collaboration with community groups. A high quality plan for improving teaching and learning is not described. The implementation plan which describes some components of the teaching and learning plan is of high quality. The approach to the learning component is sound but lacks some of the specifics as to how this would work in a middle or high school environment. The comment on mastery versus seat time is made throughout the proposal, the details at the school level are obscure. The use of technology is described from one to one iPads or laptops to software to measure and track student progress through standards. Parent, teacher and student access to these software packages is explained. The proposal does not describe how the software systems can transfer data or talk to one another. The district is going to implement leadership teams to help implement and refine the project. The weakest section of the proposal is the continuous improvement process. This should be linked to the implementation plan to make a unified project. With the lack of this link, the evaluation of various components--technology, personnel and others is sparse. The budget is extensive but misses the identification of all the other fund sources that will support the project. The competitive preference priority section presents a plan to have middle school teachers use a social-emotional curriculum to support all students and address areas from bullying to goal setting. Overall this was an achievable and appropriate proposal.

Total	210	158
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0179ME-2 for Auburn School Department

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant thoroughly set forth a comprehensive reform vision that builds upon the applicant's current work on the four core educational assurance areas. The district recognized several years ago significant reform was needed. Assessment data validated the need of the reform work. Third grade literacy proficiency rates were 60%, third grade math proficiency rates were 64%, and the four-year graduation rate was 68%. The district's reform efforts started with a group of more than 80 stakeholders, including students and parents, and tasking them with developing a vision to move the district from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. The result was <i>Vision 2020</i>.</p> <p>The goals of <i>Vision 2020</i> provides a clear and credible approach to the goals (A)(b) of this criterion. The applicant states goals for the following groups: students, educational program, staff members, and community members. The goals include accelerating student achievement, increasing equity through personalized learning systems, and also addresses the social and emotional needs of students and staff (as leaders). This is clear strength of the project because it is comprehensive for students K-12 and all staff. The four components of the proposed school reform framework are leadership, shared vision, personalized mastery, and continuous improvement.</p> <p>The proposal is centered around Customized Learning as envisioned by the Reinventing Schools Coalition (RISC). This model has demonstrated clear positive results throughout the country. For example, the Chugach School District received the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2001.</p> <p>The applicant describes what the classroom experience will be like for students by including direct quotes and descriptions from four teachers in the district. The kindergarten teacher included the use of iPads as an instructional tool. The grade 2/3 multiage teacher included the uses of a capacity matrix during daily instruction to provide students with voice and choice on how they document, demonstrate, and defend their understanding of standards. The middle school social studies teacher states her students use a Plan/Do/Check/Adjust (PDCA) to assist with their daily planning for what they need to accomplish in class. These are all strong examples that support the applicant's understanding of what a personalized learning environment is like for students throughout the grades and curriculum.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>As part of the development of <i>Vision 2020</i>, the group of over 8- stakeholders determined the entire district (3,600 students) needed reform efforts to realize a high-quality education in the Information Age. Fifty-four percent of the district's students are classified as economically disadvantaged based on free and reduced lunch rates. A list of all schools (nine total) is provided and includes the demographics required within this criterion. These demographics include low-income families, high-need students, and participating educators.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a thorough high-quality plan to describe how the reform efforts will be scaled up. The foundation of</p>		

this scale-up is based upon the district's successful pilot of RISC. In June 2011, ten high school teachers attended RISC training and implemented new approaches in their classrooms for the 2011-2012 school year. The success of the pilot resulted in the entire high school receiving the RISC training in the summer of 2012. In the fall of 2012, all high school staff received the second level of training, Classroom Design and Delivery. The district supported these efforts with the addition of two instructional coaches at the high school. This second year pilot resulted in the expansion to the elementary (11 teachers) and middle schools (7 teachers). The proposal seeks to expand this along with other supporting reform efforts to all staff.

The plan includes key goals, rationale, timeline, deliverables, and the parties responsible. The professional development is divided into four phases: Awareness, Classroom Culture, Instructional Design, and Instructional Implementation. Additional support will be provided by the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning (MCCL). Another strength of this section is the applicant's plan to share all resources created including rubrics and professional development models with any district that requests the materials. This supports change beyond the district and a spirit of camaraderie.

The applicant's focus on "form follows function" is evidenced throughout the proposal. This mantra will support the vision of meaningful reform.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to address eleven components as part of the comprehensive reform vision. These components are in direct support of the four core educational assurance areas. The applicant provides descriptive charts for each of the components which include the rationale, activities, timeline, responsible parties, and deliverables. The charts are evidence of a well-thought out plan and vision which is likely to result in improved student learning and performance.

The applicant also proposes to show improvement on summative assessments overall and by the subgroups (African American, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Special Education, and Economically Disadvantaged). The overwhelming majority of the annual goals were ambitious, achievable, and supported by the plan detailed by the applicant in previous criteria. The applicant also details the methodology for determine the goals. The goals of the applicant are more aggressive than those created by the State and the anticipated increases are expected to occur during five years as opposed to six. However, the common metrics used for each subgroup does not acknowledge or address the different needs of the subgroups.

There were some instances detailing significant decreases in LEP from 2011-2012 to 2012-2013. For example: Grade 7 Reading Proficiency in 11-12 was 46% and then decreased to 17% in 12-13. Similar decreases are noted in Grade Seven Math, Grade Five Math, Grade 6 Math, and Grade 6 Reading. The applicant does not state reasons for the decreases. It is possible these decreases are a result of not having the RISC plan in place at the middle and elementary grade levels, however the applicant does not state this. The applicant does not include postsecondary degree attainment rates, these are optional.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates a clear record of success in previous years as part of the RISC pilot and *Vision 2020*. Examples are detailed in several charts including significant gains in reading proficiency levels in grades K-6. Small group reading recovery strategies were used with fifty special needs students. Data collected on these students demonstrated an average gain of 12.88 text levels and 11.5 points on the NWEA reading test from fall to spring.

Graduation rates have increased from 67.58% in 2010 to 78.21% in 2012. However the applicant does not detail any additional high school data.

The applicant provides a strong rationale and supporting data for the expansion of the iPad 1:1 initiative to grades 6-8. The applicant deployed the iPads to kindergarten students in two waves. The group of students receiving iPads in the early fall clearly outperformed their peers who received in the iPads in the winter on all measures. The largest gain was future reading ability (Appendix F).

The applicant states the availability and transparency of the project within other criteria.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates evidence of transparency in eleven cost centers which addresses the required following four categories: personnel salaries for school-level instructional, support, and instructional staff and non-personnel expenditures. The applicant provides this information in eleven different cost centers. During the budget development process the budget is presented to the City Council and School Board. These presentations are made available on the local public access channel and also streamed online. In addition, the school budget must be approved through a community referendum.</p> <p>The applicant did not provide an example of what is provided to the public in the appendix. Including this would have been evidence of high-level transparency.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates evidence successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the proposal. This is further evidenced by the pilot programs detailed in previous years which the applicant proposes to expand upon. The pilot programs included RISC initiatives, professional development opportunities, and 1:1 iPad initiatives at the elementary and secondary levels.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	15
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates a high-level of transparency throughout the development process of the application which resulted in high-levels of engagement and meaningful stakeholder support. In addition to the development team of <i>Vision 2020</i>, the applicant sent flyers home to all K-6 students' families informing them about the proposal and requesting their input through an online survey. This was also facilitated at the middle and high school levels. Each secondary teacher presented the proposal components to students and they were in turn provided with the survey link to address the following areas: how can we make teaching and learning more personalized for all students; what are the things we could do to increase student achievement; what are your ideas for reducing the dropout rate and keeping kids in school; how can we best prepare students for college and career after high school; and what support would parents or the community need as we work to achieve the above goals? The actual responses from the community, staff, parents, and students were included in the appendix (58 pages total). The student responses were particularly telling as they are the primary beneficiaries of the project and producers for the district.</p> <p>The applicant has support from the Mayor of Auburn and the State of Maine. The State provided feedback which resulted in revisions to the project. The proposal also has the necessary support of the teacher union.</p> <p>Letters of support are included from a variety of community partners including the local library and MELMAC Foundation.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	19
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Overall, the applicant details a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment for all students. This includes a strong emphasis on college- and career-ready standards. The applicant clearly addresses each component of this criterion. Some particularly noteworthy ideas includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Knowledge and Skills in Context: Making real world connections isn't telling students how the content is used in the real world. It's about student using what they learn in a way people use in the real world. For example: giving students real work to do and finding authentic audiences for that work. • Deep Learning Experiences: An emphasis is placed on, not only on a student's ability to use knowledge and think critically, but how teachers ask students to apply these skills and the use of scaffolding. • Access and Exposure to Diverse Cultures, Contexts, and Perspectives: The applicant proposes to contract with a 		

Cultural Broker to create student-citizens that are compassionate and responsible.

- Variety of High-Quality Instructional Approaches and Environments: Approaches detailed by the applicant include: summarizing and note taking, reinforcing effort and providing recognition, cooperative learning, learning by doing, advance organizers, student voice and choice, and real world connections. These are all research-based and supportive of the college- and career-ready standards previously identified by the applicant.
- Frequently Updated Student Data: The use of Individualized Graduation Plans is a noted strength, however, the applicant does not describe these.
- Meeting the Needs of Special Needs Students, English Language Learners, and Early Learners: The applicant addresses enhancements as a result of the project for these students. This includes aligning IEPs with the newly written curriculum goals, providing more early learning opportunities to achieve the third grade reading proficiency goals, and recognizing the length of time often necessary (5-7 years) for ELL students to reach their full academic potential in a second language.
- Technology Usage: The eSpark student growth noted is a perfect example of ensuring high-quality content on the iPads. However, the applicant does not clearly state how the eSpark program will ensure a data driven approach on the iPads.

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

20

18

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to customize learning through five phases: awareness, classroom culture, instructional design, instructional implementation, and school structures. The applicant details deliverables for each phase and notes that teachers are just like students in that they learn and grow at different paces. The utilization of the five phases will help to ensure all teachers are growing and are aware of the next step(s) in this process. The use of phases will also assist in meeting the component of this criterion regarding professional teams.

The applicant plans to sustain the professional development component by identifying teachers who can be trained and supported to lead the trainings in the future.

The applicant notes the importance of social, physical, and emotional needs of students throughout the proposal and supports the need for school leaders to be aware of the "human side" of developing, not only students as learners, but teachers too.

The applicant details the annual increases expected for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals as a result of the focus and training on RISC.

The applicant does not thoroughly address the teacher evaluation process or how that will be used for continuous improvements. This is essential to the components of this criterion.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has sufficient policies and structures in place to support the project and provide the services as described within the proposal. The project will be led by a Grant Director who will hold meetings at least once a month to address the design and implementation of the proposed personalized learning approaches and professional development for teachers and principals.

The district's policy is guided by state legislation that supports students progress and the ability to earn credits based on mastery. The applicant states several innovative high school alternative opportunities, but does not address mastery at the secondary level.

The applicant details multiple opportunities for students' mastery of standards including a Land Lab. The Land Lab is a 25 acre facility owned by the district which provides many learning opportunities for students academically, socially, and emotionally. These include summer camps, Science/Do It Yourself Camp, special needs programming, extensive work for low-performing classes, and academies for science remediation. The Land Lab is a unique option for students. The applicant also details 21st Century Learning Centers for afterschool programming for students in grades 3-8, Franklin Alternative School in partnership with the local police department, welding program, and an agriculture program.

The applicant addresses providing resources for English Language Learners, but does not specify what those are.

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

10

9

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant will provide transportation to all students and has done so in previous pilot programs with success. This is significant in ensuring low-income barriers are eliminated in participating in available opportunities. High school students will have faculty mentors who will hold weekly meetings with their mentees and accompany them on college visits. This will ensure students have access to the necessary resources regarding college-readiness. The applicant is using Educate for tracking students progress and proficiency toward identified learning targets. The district curriculum will be available online. This is significant for transparency and engaging all stakeholders.

The applicant states all data systems are interoperable, but does not elaborate or provide evidence regarding this. These include Pearson Inform, Powerschool, Transfinder, Nutrikids, Infinite Campus State Edition, ADS, Google Docs Edu, ePals, Edmodo, and Edline.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant will use an external evaluator to facilitate the collection of all data and to assistance the district analyze the data. The applicant established goals for the four core assurance areas: college- and work-ready standards, student data systems to inform educators, developing and supporting effective educators, and turning around low performing schools.</p> <p>The applicant addresses all areas of a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides regular and timely feedback throughout the proposal. However, the applicant does not clearly state how evaluation information will be shared publicly. This is mentioned within other criteria, but not clearly stated who is responsible and how often the information will be updated.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant details a high-level of transparency to continuously improve its plans. Specific strategies include: updates to district's website and Facebook pages, at least two public forums during the year, posting of all meeting minutes, calendar of key activities, creation of a student leadership team, and a bi-annual report to the School Committee. Ongoing communication is also detailed throughout the application.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant provides twelve performance measures and includes a rationale for each. The measures support the proposal. For example: the applicant details a performance measure regarding a positive social-emotional school experience for all preschool-third grade students. The college- and career-ready focus also is embedded throughout the measures. For example: the percentage of students in grades 4-8 who do not have any discipline referrals will be monitored. This will provide the district with time to intervene early. Other early intervention focuses include reading on grade level by third grade and monitoring students who fail a course during their ninth grade year. The measures are ambitious and achievable. The methodology for determining annual goals is not provided and is not consistent.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Throughout the proposal, the applicant details a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the project, specifically student achievement , professional development, and technology usage. This includes the use of Facebook and the Internet. In addition, the applicant details a high-quality plan for continuous improvement within section (A)(4). This includes a rationale, measurable goal, parties responsible, tactics, and deliverables.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's budget and narrative tables identify all funds that will support the project; is reasonable and sufficient to support the four core educational assurance areas as stated by the applicant; and provides a clear, thoughtful rationale throughout the proposal regarding the project's needs. The applicant details all funds that will support the project, including external support. This includes identifying one-time costs and ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during the grant.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a well throughout sustainability plan as part of the district and State's ongoing commitment to customized learning. This includes support from the State and the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning (the applicant was one of four district's to form this grassroots effort). The cohort now has 29 district members. The project and budget focus on capacity building and infrastructure. This includes professional development and the building of skills for current staff. The learning coaches and professional developers are "one-time" costs. These costs will implement long-lasting changes such as curriculum design, software development, assessment work, and technology infrastructure. The applicant provides a post-grant budget for 2017-2020 that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and use of funds. The budget and corresponding narrative support the sustainability of the project.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant sufficiently describes a coherent and sustainable partnership to support the project including the police department, Advocates for Children, Healthy Androscoggin, Big Brother Big Sister, St. Mary's Regional Health Center, and Literacy Volunteers of America. The applicant identifies ten population-desired results for students specific to 21st century skills necessary for college- and career-readiness, which will also result in increased academic success. These skills include flexibility, collaboration, decision-making, application of skills, conflict management, problem-solving, and public speaking.</p> <p>The applicant provides annual expectations, but is not clear in how these will be measured or assessed. For example: the applicant states students' ability to cooperate with one another will be assessed in 2014-2015 in sixth grade. "As a whole, each classroom will increase incidents of effective collaboration, communication, and flexibility." As stated, this is subjective. The skills stated are important, however, no clear measurement or training of teachers is included as part of the assessment and evaluation component of this criterion. This also makes it difficult to assess the ambition of each measure.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant thoroughly set forth a comprehensive reform vision that builds upon the applicant's current work on each of the four core educational assurance areas. The district's reform efforts started with a group of more than 80 stakeholders, including students and parents, and tasking them with developing a vision to move the district from the Industrial Age to the</p>		

Information Age. The result was *Vision 2020*.

The goals of *Vision 2020* provides a clear and credible approach to developing a personalized learning environment. The goals within the proposal include accelerating student achievement, increasing equity through personalized learning systems, and also addresses the social and emotional needs of students and staff (as leaders of change). This is clear strength of the project because it is comprehensive for students K-12 and all staff. The four components of the proposed school reform framework are leadership, shared vision, personalized mastery, and continuous improvement.

The proposal is centered around Customized Learning as envisioned by the Reinventing Schools Coalition (RISC). This model has demonstrated clear positive results throughout the country in professional development and educator effectiveness.

Total	210	191
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0179ME-3 for Auburn School Department

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant puts forth a clear and comprehensive reform vision that addresses students' academic needs while building on the applicant's work in the four core educational areas. The applicant builds on the four core educational assurance areas by adopting state career and college-ready standards and aligning them with Marzano's standards-based learning systems principles so that learning becomes the "constant and time the variable." They appear to effectively use student data systems to inform educators and they describe a process for developing effective educators that includes activities to encourage professional growth supported by a coaching component. They appear to have some success with turning around low performing schools by implementing PD for customizing learning in all their schools in a phase-in process that seems to be taking hold among teachers. The classroom environment is described in great detail at a variety of levels as one in which students and teachers will be provided opportunities to meet standards through a variety of modalities and activities: 1) kindergarten students are described in various student groupings, some working on iPads, others with magnetic letters building onto word walls; and 2) multi-age classroom is described by teacher as one in which she regularly assesses students and organizes them according to need, providing mini-lessons as needed and allowing choice for students in their demonstration of mastery. These classroom descriptions have the potential of deepening student learning by allowing them to achieve at rates that are differentially challenging and standards-based. In order to engage in these kinds of teaching environments, the applicant describes their intention to expand their data systems and to provide teacher training that builds upon some pilot work that has been successfully implemented in the district already.

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

The applicant makes a compelling case for the need that all schools, students and teachers in the district be included in order for the initiative to be implemented systematically and make a systemic impact. Data are provided that show that significant percentages of children meet the definition of high need, especially in the elementary schools (1273 of 2019). They also describe a process in which stakeholders did focused research on the elements of their vision, consulted with RISC and a senior associate with Marzano's Research Lab, and held meetings with various other stakeholders on Customized Learning. The Vision was created by a varied group of administrators, educators, parents, students, city

leaders, and local business and community members. All schools in the district adopted the vision. The applicant provides a list of all schools in the district and identifies all students and teachers as participants; data are provided on high-need students.

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

10

10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has already begun making LEA-wide reform and change in providing students with Customized Learning. They provide a clear and credible description of the 5 phases (Awareness, Classroom Culture, Instructional Design, Instructional Implementation, and Structure) of preparing for and implementing the initiative. Since all schools in the district will be engaged in the initiative, there is no intra-district scaling possible; however, the applicant describes their membership in the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning (MCCL) as a way in which they will both be learners and make adjustments in their reform and provide information to the cohort for realizing change on a state-wide scale. They clearly describe their needs for some additional personnel to help them reach their outcome goals. Some of these needs are in technology support as they work to provide opportunities not only for students to have customized learning but also for teachers to engage in customized professional development. The applicant aligns a strong and compelling narrative with tables that clearly demonstrate that they have proposed a high-quality plan that provide clear deliverables, timelines and persons responsible for carrying out the individual initiatives to impact district reform.

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

10

6

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has chosen to use a metric that is more aggressive than the state's metric on meeting performance standards accepted in the state's ESEA waiver. This description of this general approach to this metric makes these goals more ambitious than the state requires and would appear to make them achievable. However, when looking at some of the data, both aggregated and disaggregated by subpopulation, it is not always clear that some of these goals are achievable. For example, the post-grant goal in Grade 6 math is an overall passage of 83%. Yet when the data are disaggregated by subgroup, no single group is projected to attain 83% (the highest is White students at 82.8%) and both Black and LEP students are projected to achieve 71.8 and 63.6%, respectively. Barely half (51.8%) of Special Education students are projected to pass; this group is a special anomaly because in the 2011-12 school year, fully 40% passed this test, yet the district appears to be taking advantage of what was a one-year decline (to 25%) to begin the base year calculations (which appears allowable but will still mean that the gap for Special Education students in this test will have increased from 26% to 31% between the 2011-12 year and the first year post-grant). Similar concerns are present in Grade 7 reading. For these reasons, the argument for using the common metric loses some of its credibility. It should be noted that, because the 2011-12 year was optional, the applicant did not include it in their gap calculations and that their data in the tables shows significant closing of gaps in all academic areas. The goals for graduation rates and increasing college enrollment do appear to be both ambitious and achievable, given the vision of the grant

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	9

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's record track record is uneven on evidence of advancing student learning and achievement in the past four years. They cite the large increases in raising student achievement in 3-6 reading after instituting literacy training and coaching. While there are some impressive gains in different years at specific grade levels (e.g., 16% and 12.4% improvements in grades 4 & 6 reading, respectively in 2009-10), their citing of these gains can partially be attributed to maturation and instruction. The more appropriate look at the data would be cross-sectionally, which has looked more like peaks-and-valleys on a year to year basis (e.g., at 4th grade the percentages each spring, after the longest instructional time with trained teachers, was 60%, 57.4%, 75.5%, and 69.6%; whereas for 6th grade, the picture is less rosy at 74.1%, 62.9%, 55.2%, and 61.5%). If one were to look longitudinally, a similar picture appears (e.g., in Spring administrations, 3rd graders in 2010-11 had 52.5% passage, in 4th grade the next year there were 75.5% and in 5th grade the following year, there were 64.8% passage rates). The data for a cohort of special education students is more promising as they showed an average gain of 11.5 points on NWEA reading assessments from fall to spring (with 3 points identified as a significant difference) because they are normed by time of year. The district also appears to be providing support for high-needs students through summer programming that they believe is leading to gains in standardized scores by low-performing

youth (approximately 80% of regular attendees increased performance on STAR tests in both math and reading in 2012-13). There is an 11% increase in graduation rates between 2010 and 2012, as well as an impressive increase in the number of students (17 to 29) participating in college classes and the number of classes taken (22 to 44) between 2010-11 and 2012-13.

The applicant provides some evidence that they can make reforms in low-achieving schools as they report that 2 of their 3 schools identified as CIPS-1 schools made adequate progress in the 2012-13 to have that status put on hold. The applicant should be commended for these efforts as their data from the kindergarten indicate that students are coming in less proficient (e.g., Below proficiency percentages on running records went from 75% in 2010-11 to 100% in 2012-13 at the Fall administration and students by Spring administration in 2012-13 had 72% Proficient by the Spring) each year which will make changes in performance more challenging.

The applicant makes student performance data available to educators, students and parents through Pearson Inform and the PowerSchool Portal. They are also piloting Educate, a proficiency-based data management system that will allow students to more actively participate in their learning so as to improve instruction and services.

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

The applicant lacks evidence of a high-level of transparency in the school expenditure practices and processes. The applicant indicates that salaries for each personnel member are readily available on the state website. They state that costs are reported according to 11 cost centers that include district level costs of the categories required (i.e., salaries for instructional staff, teachers, and non-personnel expenditures). However, it is neither stated, nor are any accompanying documents provided, that indicate whether actual salaries are disaggregated by school level. The applicant describes a process that may provide transparency, including presenting the budget to the School Committee for review prior to finalizing it and presenting it to City Council.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	9
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides convincing narrative that they have sufficient autonomy to enact the Vision 2020 reform plan. They make the point that the state is one in which local districts maintain control over budgets, curriculum, and policies within the parameters of the state's requirements. They appropriately claim that customized learning will fall under an Rtl model for getting instruction targeted to individual needs. They also contend that recent legislation at the state level allows for a standards-based diploma and that, while the law does not take effect until the graduating class of 2018, any district looking to award standards-based diplomas prior to that date can secure a waiver from the state (though it is not stated that the district has already sought that waiver).

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

The district has a variety of structures in place that facilitate meaningful stakeholder engagement. Their narrative shows clear evidence of their engaging in a multivariate approach to planning that has called upon school and community members, outside experts and local leaders to engage with the school in drafting or commenting on this plan. The appendices provide multiple letters from parents, community service agencies, students, teachers, political leaders (both local and state) that convincingly makes the case for wide-ranging support; there is also specific evidence provided about revisions based on engagement and feedback that is included in meeting notes provided in the appendix. There was also support from the local education association and unanimous support of the proposal by the School Committee, who is responsible for overseeing district initiatives.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an elegant and comprehensive plan for improving learning that prepares students for college and

career that has all of the elements associated with high-quality plans, though not in the traditional way. There are clear and detailed activities with compelling research-based rationales for their inclusion. For example, the use of Life-long Habits of Mind as an organizing principle is likely to allow for deep connections with content that will help them master academic goals in ways that promote higher order thinking. Along that same vein, the use of Marzano's curricular frameworks, specifically the performance standards descriptions, will provide students with one of the sources of feedback that can allow them to chart their own progression toward their learning goals. This is likely to be especially meaningful as the applicant describes their intent to help students recognize the connections of content to the real world, not by having teachers tell them these connections, but by having them engage in creating knowledge in the world and, therefore, to realize how the content is connected. One of the ways they propose to do this is through place-based learning opportunities. One of the unique examples of these is having students provide ongoing technology support for their peers and, more importantly, for parents and community members at open office hours.

All students will have access to customized learning sequences that will engage all learners in high-quality strategies (e.g., through Marzano's Classroom Instruction that Works research); this should be especially beneficial for high-need students as they are likely to see greater academic growth toward college and career goals by being provided with high-yield strategies. In addition, the proposal discusses leveraging technology for learning by building on their past success with laptops for middle grade students and iPad for kindergarteners, as well as partnering with a group, like eSparks, to provide data support for personalizing learning that would allow teachers and students to drill down to particular standards that are being accomplished and with which students are struggling so that appropriate interventions can be done.

The applicant also identifies the deliverables within the plan for enhancing learning opportunities and provides a clear description of the phases of the project for engaging parents and families, as well as students. However, while they do fail to provide a specific timeline that is part of the definition of a high-quality plan, they do cite that there are specific phases through which students and their parents will work and that mastery of one phase will lead to opportunities within the next. This seems appropriately aligned with the intent of customizing learning and honors the apparent organic nature of the phases while providing a clear sequencing of events, if not the precise timing.

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

20

15

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As with the previous criterion, the applicant provides an elegant and comprehensive plan for improving teaching and leading, in all but one area, that will prepare students for college and career and that has all of the elements associated with high-quality plans, though, again, not in the traditional way. There are clear and detailed activities with compelling rationales for their inclusion. They make a strong case for the phases (Awareness, Classroom Culture, Instructional Design, Instructional Implementation, School Structures) being tantamount to personalized learning and that educators will benefit from engaging as learners as they learn to better engage their learners, thus creating an organic professional learning community. Just like the students, teachers and principals will have access to customized learning sequences that will engage them by leveraging technology for learning (e.g., Educate combined with their current "Plan, Do, Check, Adjust" goal setting process) that will allow teachers and their principals to use data, including those that arise from the evaluation system, to improve educators' performance. The applicant also identifies the deliverables within the plan for enhancing learning opportunities and provides a clear description of the phases of the project for engaging teachers in improving their abilities to deliver customized learning to help students reach their goals. They will be able to measure student progress by using a variety of screening tools (CPAA, STAR, Rigby running records) in order to make adjustments for individual learning needs.

They cite numerous resources that will be available to educators to accelerate students progress toward meeting goals. Educate, the learning progress management system, provides longitudinal data that will track student interests and needs. There is a plan for identifying a partner to help the applicant teach educators how to apply analytics to measure the success of each learning resource and determine its impact on student achievement and growth. The applicant already endorses specific resources, like apps for the iPad, as high-quality and empowers their teachers to make quality control decisions so that students will have access to resources aligned with the standards. The use of tablets, laptops and iPads also provide students and educators with the tools to create and share their own resources.

The plan, however, is less than one of high-quality for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals in hard-to-staff schools or subject areas. Other than to note that all staff will be included and that, therefore, they will be "growing their own" highly effective teachers in all areas, there is no specific plan for ensuring that hard-to-staff schools and subjects get any extra attention or effort to accelerate learning for these teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	9
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to add personnel (Grant Director) to oversee the activities of the grant and be responsible for supporting project implementation in collaboration with the Design Team. The director will be responsible for ensuring that all grant activities are carried out at school sites with fidelity and in accordance with requirements and expectations. The individual school Design Teams consist of varied stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, community members) who have the autonomy to establish calendars and schedules, as well as make budgeting decisions, in collaboration with the district leadership. As stated earlier, the applicant already has embraced the state's legislation that allows students to progress and earn credit based on mastery. They also provide an expansive plan for providing high needs students with additional support through summer loss prevention programs and by leveraging technology (all students will have an iPad) to provide them with additional opportunities to learn. The applicant states that students are provided with multiple ways of demonstrating mastery through such programs as the Land Lab and a basic welding program for at-risk students. While these are varied ways of demonstrating mastery in specific ways, it is not clear from the narrative and there are no supporting document that these are comparable to some of the standards that students will be required to master for a diploma. They also state that they will provide resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and full accessible, however, no specifics are provided as to how, when or who will make this happen. This is a medium response to this criterion</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While it is clear that the district already has many current practices and protocols in place to support personalized learning, the applicant has limited characteristics of a high-quality plan. Those characteristics include having a plan that provides activities and their rationale, deliverables and the persons responsible for ensuring their completion and a timeline for getting these activities done. The applicant discusses what they currently do in ensuring that all participating students have access to content, tools, etc. For example, they specify that transportation is provided for after school activities so that students will not be prevented from attending due to lack of resources. They also offer extended summer learning activities that could support learning. They do not, however, indicate to what extent these opportunities might be enhanced or utilized/expanded with RrrT funding. They also cite that they have a technology plan and infrastructure (instructional tech coaches, extended hours for families and students) to ensure that there is technical support but they lack the details of a high-quality plan. For example, the applicant mentioned that they will have student techs provide support and office hours, but they never discussed the timeline for that, who will be responsible for supervising, etc. The plan also shows how evidence flows from the school to users through their data system (Educate); however, there is no reference made that the flow is reciprocal, which is a requirement of the application. Finally, they cite multiple data systems but make no statement that makes it clear that these systems are interoperable; if they are not already interoperable, there is no timeline for making them so or choosing other systems to meet this requirement.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides most of the elements of a high-quality plan that, if implemented as proposed, will complement and advance their current practices and infrastructure for managing their continuous improvement process. The applicant proposes reviewing their efforts on meeting the goals of their application in relation to the four core components with clear timelines within each component (e.g., review and revise on an annual basis the curricula documents that address college- and career-ready standards; quarterly reviews of the data system, including gathering feedback that can inform further development; etc.). Timely and regular feedback is also appropriately planned into developing and supporting effective educators as they mention that training sessions will be evaluated during and after the trainings to that adjustments can be made both within and between PD sessions. They also cite appropriate tools to gather information, like the Organization Self-Assessment Tool that will be completed annually by staff to measure implementation and allow for adjustments. Ongoing meetings with stakeholders will enable adjustments based upon both internal and external data. Regularly scheduled meetings of various groups (school departments, public forums etc) will ensure that information is publicly shared</p>		

in to internal and external audiences. The one element that is missing from the high-quality plan is the clarity around the individual(s) responsible for implementing the plans; the applicant refers several times to "the school department" as the responsible party and that vagueness could negatively impact on meeting the expectations of a high-quality plan.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a multi-pronged approach to providing ongoing communication and engagement with both internal and external stakeholders. This includes both face-to-face (department meetings, public forums) and virtual (Facebook page, district webpage) modes of communicating with constituents (i.e., educators and their students) and stakeholders (i.e., parents and community members). They provide timelines for some of the communications (e.g., minutes of all meetings will be posted after conclusion; public forums twice/year; student leadership team will meet twice/year minimally) as to progress in meeting objectives of the grant. This has most of the elements of a high-quality plan. The one element that is missing from the high-quality plan is the clarity around the individual(s) responsible for implementing each of these strategies; the applicant, again, refers several times to "the school department" as the responsible party and that vagueness could negatively impact on meeting the expectations of a high-quality plan.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides annual goals in both required and applicant-proposed measures that meet the expectations of the criterion at all grade bands. While the choice of measures and rationale for their choices are clear and compelling, there are serious concerns about the figures that are provided to question how ambitious and achievable are these measures. They have chosen measures that are importantly aligned to their goals and can act as proxies for the potential success of customizing learning for most students. These measures include appropriate academic and growth measures within each of the required categories. For example, as they look to change school culture by providing more choice and voice for students, the applicant proposes to survey 3rd grade students on their social-emotional experience. Their academic goals, in general, are ambitious and achievable. For example, they propose to increase the percentage of third graders at or above grade level reading by 6%/year until they achieve a post-grant high of 90% of all students at or above grade level. However, there are concerns raised about the equity of these goals when disaggregated by subgroup. For example, in the same 3rd grade reading measures, all subgroups (Black, LEP, Special Education, Economically Disadvantaged) have the same 6% increase projection. If this performance standard is met, therefore, the academic skills gap that existed at the beginning of the grant period will still be there after the investment of RttT-D funds. Clearly, this is not what is intended for this funding stream. That said, this one area may be an anomaly as other performance measures show a closing of the gap that currently exists, though in some cases the closing is not as dramatic as one might anticipate. For example, in 4th grade reading, the applicant proposes closing the gap between White students and Black students from 31% to 16% from baseline year to post-grant. Unfortunately, even this more dramatic performance gap reduction is questionable in terms of the applicant's mathematics on this measure. As identified earlier, the math on this is off as the applicant proposes that overall grade level reading will be at 83% of students, while no subgroup rises to that level when the data are disaggregated.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant fails to provide a high-quality plan that will rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of RttT investments and activities. They state that they have a high-quality plan and identify that they will evaluate professional development and activities that employ a technology feedback loop to monitor implementation. They also say that participants in PD will be asked for their feedback. However, specific timelines on these activities are never stated and no individuals are ever named or identified by title as being responsible for overseeing these efforts. For example, the applicant provides no details as to who will be responsible for creating and maintaining this technology feedback loop, nor the skills and qualifications of someone charged with this responsibility. This is an important omission because, in this example, someone with the technical skills to create the tech-fueled feedback interface may not have the knowledge and skills of an evaluator who knows how to evaluate professional development. This lack of clarity creates grave questions regarding the ability of the applicant to effectively evaluate the investments.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

Available

Score

(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's budget appears to be sufficient to support the development and implementation of the project. There appear to be no one-time investments in hardware or software. Training costs are identified, including teacher stipends for their participation in the PD required to improve their practice. Specific personnel (e.g., project director) to be paid from the grant are identified. The applicant identifies contractual expenses for an external evaluator to collect and analyze data. These expenses are not likely to be ongoing ones and it appears that the district is adept at using local funds as appropriate for sustaining the personalized learning environment beyond the grant period; the fact that they did not request a large investment in technology and their intention of building teacher capacity to deliver and facilitate learning through increased skills gives further credence to their intent and ability to sustain while indicating that their budget requests are reasonable and appropriate. The applicant does identify its own funding streams and the total amount requested is approximately 1/7 of the district's investment during the same period; this limited and short-term investment in teacher training and school climate reform is another factor that engenders some confidence in the sustainability of the project beyond the life of the grant. It would have been helpful to see a disaggregated breakdown of funding streams to get a more complete picture of the likelihood of sustainability.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant lacks a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project. They provide a budget and the prediction that their community will continue to support funding for this project post-grant. While they state that they will use local and federal funds, specifically funds such as Titles 1,2, & 6, there are no specific streams of funding attached to the specific categories that they cite for continuation. That said, the applicant does have a strong record of collaborating within a state consortium for customized learning and it is clear that they have already committed to this reform, regardless of support from RttT funding. Their commitment is one of the strongest pieces of evidence that the reform will be sustainable and that RttT funding will allow them to accelerate the implementation of customized learning for their students and educators. Their post-grant budget appears underdeveloped. That is, there is a plan for flat funding beyond the grant. This does not appear to take into account the normal cost of living increases that are part of yearly life. For example, the expectation that the peer coaches will be able to be flat-financed does not take into account increases in steps for teachers or fringe benefits. There is no evidence that they will continue to evaluate effectiveness of past investments, though one may be able to infer that their work within the collaborative and their internal monitoring may play a role in this aspect.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes a comprehensive approach to integrating community resources and align these efforts to help students and families be successful in meeting college- and career-ready goals. They cite numerous organizations that have potential impact on youth, including local police department, Advocates for Children, Healthy Androscoggin (tobacco, drug and alcohol prevention), and Big Brothers/Big Sisters, as partners in their efforts to change youth culture. They cite their partnership with Camp Susan Curtis, for example, and the intention of having the camp curriculum, which focuses on leadership and emotional well-being, being gradually implemented in the schools. This will be done initially by virtual connections with camp staff and gradual scaffolding of Auburn teachers' skills at delivering the curriculum and modifying it for the customized learning environment. The successful implementation within the school will bring to scale a curriculum that is currently delivered to smaller groups of high-need individuals. Scale up will also occur as one of their goals is to ensure that LEAs would be hubs of social and emotional well-being; the success would be measured by having school educators deliver the curriculum themselves to larger populations of students until it became a staple rather than an addendum to the curriculum. They further propose to do a needs assessment as a way of determining the precise needs of the students, staff and community and to be certain that goals of the grant and these other activities are aligned. They have a clear plan for engaging parents and families of participating students by providing parents with student assessment of their progress toward goals; this will be provided to all parents in writing and will be followed up with an opportunity for parents to ask for questions or clarifications. Yearly open houses will also be planned for incoming students as a way of engaging parents new to the district and those who wish to find out more about the customized learning. They provide ambitious yet achievable goals for improving students' decision-making skills, conflict management skills, and abilities to</p>		

cooperate with others, in addition to other goals. They identify desired results for the outcome but do not provide specific performance measures (e.g., it's not clear how some of these somewhat subjective characteristics, like ability to collaborate, will be measured) as to how these results will be attained, This inability to effectively measure progress toward goals was one factor that dropped the assessment of this response into the high mid-range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant coherently and comprehensively addressed the core assurance areas by:

- adopting college- and career-ready standards in their plan within a personalized learning management system
- building upon currently-available data systems to improve the potential for students to enhance the current mastery context in which they have been freed from seat time requirements
- developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals by establishing a master teacher ladder
- addressing the needs of learners by setting achievable goals designed to improve learning for all students and close achievement gaps for high-need students through the systemic implementation of the personalized learning environment

In addition, the plan to provide a customized learning for their students has the potential to significantly improve learning for students as they strive to meet college- and career-ready standards by meeting their individual needs more effectively; most interestingly, the alignment of teacher learning to mirror that proposed for their children has great potential to engage a true learning culture within the schools. The proposal provides a clear plan for improving educators' effectiveness and, since it is a district-wide initiative, this will expand student access to effective educators. And, even though the performance measures are sometimes questionably determined, more effective educators working in a customized learning environment should decrease achievement gaps and increase graduation rates if implemented with fidelity.

Total	210	152
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