



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0195VA-1 for Augusta County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

This section scores in the middle range. The vision describes the at-risk preschool program currently in place within Augusta County Public Schools (ACPS) and includes the fact that ACPS has adopted Virginia Foundation Blocks for Early Learning and assessments (Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG)) to prepare students for meeting kindergarten standards (CCSS standards). It has also adopted the Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) which include staff qualifications, the learning environment and adult/child interactions as a data driven model to build a system of high quality programs for preschool age students.

ACPS will utilize data systems (RTIM Direct, TSG) to measure student growth and success, as well as PreK PALS and Numeracy. It is stated that ongoing assessment data collected by teachers is available for family review through a family friendly version of the website. ACPS supports the use of data to create personalized learning environments for the students not making adequate progress with Tier 1 interventions using Response to Intervention (RTI). These are shared with families after their development by the Family Service Worker (FSW).

Professional development is offered as a way to develop, reward, and retain effective comprehensive preschool teachers. Teaching assistants also receive ongoing professional development. There is no description or statement of adoption of evaluation procedures for superintendent, principals, or teachers included with this information.

ACPS currently serves 223 high-needs 4 year olds, and an additional 27 3 year olds for a total of 250 students served within ACPS. Data provided indicates an average of 175 students who enter kindergarten with no preschool experience which impacts their success. ACPS plans to decrease this achievement gap by increasing the numbers of students participating in preschool by collaborating with community partners to accommodate the need by purchasing slots with the community partners for the targeted population. Data provided by ACPS indicates the budget request is 5-10 million dollars to serve 2000-5000 students. The numbers provided in this section do not meet the student number portion for the application.

The middle score is listed because even though there is a listing of curriculum and assessments currently used, there is no clear description of what the classroom experience will be like for the students at both ACPS and community partner schools. ACPS indicates the use of data for identification of progress, but does not describe this will accelerate achievement and deepen learning. There is discussion about professional development for ACPS and no clear description of how this will be carried over to community partners. There is no information provided about superintendent, principal, teacher evaluation for ACPS or how this will be taken care of at the community partner sites. This section does not meet the four core educational assurance areas that are required.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ACPS has 17 preschool classrooms distributed among 11 elementary schools, which are all Title I schools serving 223 students. The classrooms are staffed with a certified teacher and a FSW. The FSW sustains ongoing contact with the parent, conducts parent training, and facilitates at home skill interventions. Data on student success is tracked and provides: educational, familial, attendance, etc. The plan will allow for implementation of an integrated data base to provide information to teachers and parents. The plan will also allow the data to flow to schools the students transition to after preschool. This system will be provided to the community partners also. The plan proposes adding community partners to increase the number of students who can participate.

The selection process for community partners began with identification of community preschools. A survey was sent out to all licensed providers. Those who responded with interest were provided detailed information about requirements (including: willingness to receive and implement evidence based curricula, participation in VSQI rating and mentoring system, professional development, facilitating FSW, and strengthen transition processes(included interoperability data system). Feedback from parents listed affordability and hours of availability as barriers to preschool work was done to recruit programs where there was a known need. This was done with phone calls, personal conversations, and email contact. Community partners were asked to sign a letter of intent. ACPS states the collaboration will continue when funds are awarded. There was no clear selection process for community partner schools, other than returning their survey indicating interest in participating in the RTTD plan.

This section scores in the low range because there is no list providing total number of students participating in ACPS by school or approximate numbers from community partners. It is unclear at this time whether the community partners will meet the requirements of the proposal because they are not named and there is only a letter of support from them provided. The plan indicates between 7-9 schools have indicated interest in participating. There is no evidence of formal agreement by any at this time with any community partners at this time.

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

**10**

**5**

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

This section scores in the middle range because it does not clearly demonstrate the implementation of a high quality plan. All participating schools, student numbers, community providers are not listed. The total number of students to be served is unclear. There is no clear statement about the use of teacher, principal, superintendent instruments, the VSQI is used to evaluate programs and guide programs and is not administered on an annual basis. There is a model of a logic model employed in the planning process and going forward, but how it will be applied in assisting students to become college and career ready or perform successfully with their personalized learning plans is not evident.

There is a clear listing of professional development, curricula and assessments, and plans for use of data systems to guide process. The training received will provided all partner schools with skills needed to assist students to become ready for success in the regular kindergarten classroom. There is no of how the plan may be extended into other community preschools that do not participate.

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

**10**

**3**

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

Diagram 1, Appendix A is used to show how measures used by ACPS to strengthen early learning, increase family support, special needs/interventions, physical health, mental health, and nutrition for preschools students will provide an integrated program to support 3 distal outcomes: increase graduation rates, establish a sustainability of quality, and improving school achievement. Graph 1 lists the percent of students not meeting Spring Bench Mark for Print and Word Awareness on Spring PreK PALS from 2008/09 to 1012/13 ( no N is provided, the list is not divided by school site).

Summative assessments for PALS & Numeracy Universal Screening are listed on table correlating to A-4 in Appendix A. PreK lists specific skills under subgroup heading with Baseline Data from 2012-13 provided, no annual target goals are listed for any of the grant years. K-3 lists Baseline as Ave Sum, no skills listed, and no annual target goals are provided on the table. No information for community partner schools is listed.

No data for decreasing achievement gap measurement (grade, assessment, subject) is provided on Table A-4-b for either ACPS or community partners. No data is listed on Table A-4-c graduation rates. No data on Table A-4-d college enrollment is listed. These areas were listed as distal outcomes in the section narrative.

This section scores in the middle range because of lack of data indicating annual target goals based on benchmark for preschools students, no information about subgroups and goals/targets for them, no information from any community partners.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>

**(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

Graph 1, Five year percent of students meeting spring benchmark for PreK PALS shows the average growth of over five years, no annual growth is provided. The graph shows the percent meeting benchmark in the fall and the percent meeting benchmark in the spring. No "N" (total population) is provided so the number of students assessed is unclear. Graph 2 and 3 shows scores of ELL students in 2012-13 compared to non-ESL students. No "N" is provided, so unclear about the size of this sub group. Graph 4 and 5 compare spring and fall math comparison (PreK Numeracy) in terms of district average and ESL average. No "N" is provided. ACPS has determined for purposes of the proposal that lowest achieving program as the community preschool programs who have limited history of using data driving instruction. There is an expectation for the number of special education students to grow as the result of community programs.

Family Service Workers (FSW) facilitate communication between schools and home. They will share information about student performance with families, assist the teacher in communicating working on skills development in the home. ACPS plans to use progress monitoring to measure the growth of students who enjoy active family life in comparison to those families who do not engage in at-home interventions. There is no mention of how/when interventions are determined or how families are included in their development.

In addition to the FSW, TSG will be available to families. It is a comprehensive library for skill support and development. Activities are in parent friendly language and can be shared with families throughout the academic year. The TSG offers parent log-in, where they can view student progress. For families without computer access, the mobile literacy classroom will have laptops or Ipads available for parents to use. There is no information detailing how parents will receive training on TSG. There is no information about what is available for the ESL student and their family.

This section scores in the middle range because the data is not provided by school; there is no information about sub groups provided; community partner schools have been identified as the lowest performing with no list of those schools, number of students, or benchmark data from those schools; communication with parents appears to be limited to information from the FSW and website.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

ACPS states that actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional and support staff can be found in the F-33 survey found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/f33agency.asp>. Actual non-personnel expenditures can be found. They state they take appropriate action to provide information consistent with law and policy in forms that the public can find, such as: Board notes, local newspaper, and the ACPS website. ACPS is exploring ways to expand access to information and providing feedback by stakeholders. There is no salary or expenditure information provided for the community partners. This section is scored in the middle range.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

ACPS provides information about implementation of RTI grant as the method used to develop personalized learning environments as described in the proposal. ACPS has been awarded a grant to implement RTI in the District. The proposal mentions elementary schools and a high school, but no specific grade span is provided so it is unclear whether pre-school students are included in the process or not. The Virginia Standards of Learning and Standards of Quality support the development of personalized learning environments. Further information is a listing of Virginia state law/policies to guide education in the state. There is no discussion about how this context will be transferred to the community partners, any identified sub groups (ESL, SPED). This section scores in the middle range.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The planning process began with a group of early childhood related professionals from the school and community (9 total members), several community preschool teachers and directors were also invited, as well as the Working on Wellness Coordinator, Head Start. The meetings were at a central location at 2:30PM. The initial meeting involved 14 people, with 4 unable to attend. Meeting notes were sent out electronically. The meeting was facilitated by ACPS Preschool Supervisor. Attendees received a prior email with a request to bring ideas and suggestions for brainstorming. Ideas were collected and the group evaluated each based on sustainability, impact, and need. Action steps were developed and assigned to participants. The proposal is the result of components suggested by each participant that was to meet Absolute Priority 1. Input was received from LEA principals at a monthly principals meeting. ACPS instructional staff provided input at an instructional staff meeting. Another meeting was held to review steps in action plan. A survey was developed to distribute to 36 potential community partners. Seven community partners have provide written or verbal

willingness to participate, with another also agreeing after consulting with her staff. Sixteen teachers in ACPS were emailed the intention of the proposal. Recipients were asked to read the content and respond. All sixteen responded positively. There is no information indicating any parental involvement in the planning process.

The proposal is signed by the leader of the local bargaining unit. There are letters of support from teachers at the school sites, however it is unclear what support from teachers at the community partners is.

A copy of a community partners survey is provided. There is no information about responses received, only the list of questions asked. There is a chart provided listing the names of community partners who showed support with the number of slots that can be purchased by each for a total 291 additional students to be served. This brings the total student count for ACPS (213) and community partners (291) to 504.

There are letters of support from community leaders, business partners, teachers, community partners. Each letter within each group is worded exactly with the changes being the name of the school and other minimal changes.

This section is scored in the middle range because all stakeholders were not part of the planning process (parents) and it is unclear if teachers from the community partner schools were involved in the planning process.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>

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

The learning program appears to be separated between ACPS and community partner preschools as the proposal is written. ACPS has a comprehensive preschool program to serve at-risk preschoolers. The use of evidence based curricula and universal screeners to generate data to plan instruction. Teachers use a variety of content instruction driven by the data to create personalized, targeted interventions. (TSG, Virginia Foundation Blocks for Early Learning, Blueprint, HWT, CSEFEL, PreK PALS, and PreK Numeracy). The proposal is to provide materials, instruction, and support to community preschool programs to develop additional comprehensive preschools to support students needs. The training and information to be provided to the community partner schools is targeted to the needs of the students who will be attending the schools.

Family Service Workers provide support to families and high-need students by assisting in goal setting, encouraging school attendance, and communicating learning strategies. The teacher may collaborate with the family to reflect an individual child's interest in personalized instructional strategies, the FSW is responsible for developing skills within families to work in the home on personalized learning strategies. The FSW support will continue through grade 3.

Curricula is based on Virginia Foundation Blocks for Early Learning, CSEFEL, HWT, TSG with universal screenings (PreK PALS, PreK Numeracy to follow implementation based upon child development. Instruction will be delivered through large and small groups, teacher directed activities, and child-directed play/activities. The proposed purchase of RTIM will provide support for data driven instruction, goal setting, and planning. TSG is a curricula based upon on-going assessment of the child. There is a parent component that supports the learning happening in school.

Professional development and direct mentoring opportunities will assist in preparing teachers who may be unfamiliar with the proposed curricula. The proposal will provide professional development for the community based school teachers from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning (CSEFEL) based on the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Youth. TSG also focuses on social emotional skills.

ACPS is proposing to purchase slots at the community preschools to provide additional access to preschool for at-risk preschool aged children. Several curricula will be purchased to support the plan ( TSG and Blueprint) as well as Virginia Foundation Blocks....contain introduction and instruction of cultural diversity.

Community partner schools will be expected to participate in the VSQI rating process. This measures program quality based on staff qualifications. The results would be used to help plan professional development. This is not an evaluation of superintendents, principals, or teachers. A CDA program will developed as an online tool to increase staff skills.

RTIM Direct is a data system to assess student growth and use as a planning tool. TSG data will also be collected 3 times a year and shared with families . This will also assist in planning student IEP's.

Community preschool teachers will receive funded professional development and direct mentoring on TSG, screening tools, and other materials to be used in developing their program and plans.

ACPS plans to migrate student data into an interoperability data system (ie, DataChain) by 2014. This will allow preschool data to follow the student into kindergarten from whatever preschool he attends.

Table Two - timeline provides information about activities, responsible parties, and deliverables by year 1-4 of the grant timeline.

This section scores in the middle range because it does not address identification process for sub groups (ESL, SPED) other than use of universal screeners. There is no description of teaching, professional development, or program to meet the needs of ESL students even though this is a sub group that data is provided about that demonstrates a need for intervention/accommodations. There is a literacy bus listed in Year 2, it has not been discussed within the proposal at this time. There are no consistent numbers listed for participating students from community partner schools--one table shows 291, this section states 100 at risk preschoolers. It is difficult to plan when the number is moved regularly. There is no evaluation process in place for community school leaders and teachers. There does not appear to be a process to bring the 2 programs together into one program communication provisions are not present.

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

**20**

**13**

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

The proposal plans to support personalized learning environments and strategies to meet student needs through implementation of PreK PALS, use of TSG, and data systems to track student information. These will be supported with professional development for community partner teachers and directors. Professional development activities will encompass how to use the adopted curricula to support learning for large group, small group, and individual instruction with an emphasis on multi-modal learning. Professional development will include direct instruction and mentoring to build skills in using data to drive instruction. RTIM Direct will be provided to target student growth. All data will be in one interoperable data system to provide ease of use. Frequent monitoring of progress will assist in assuring students are ready to enter kindergarten perform successfully in kindergarten content skills (CCSS).

Funding will be used to provide mentoring to the community partner teachers.

The VSQI Star Rating has been identified as the evaluation system, providing guidance to the programs and mentors for targeting areas of weakness (staff qualifications, learning environment, and adult-child interactions). ACPS suggest a repeat rating after a period of mentoring would be used to document improvements.

The proposal also puts in place an online CDA program for community partner preschool programs. This would be a digital resource designed to build performance in early childhood settings and is based on CDA competency goals and functional areas. A demonstration classroom will be set up designed to serve high risk students while being staffed by master teachers. CDA candidates can accrue hours in the classroom and it will also be used to complete assignments. The classroom will need to be set up next to the Valley Vocational and Technical Training building.

The proposal states that it will provide community partner schools with curricula and instructional support to implement and gather data. Student needs will then be identified with the use of data from a program such as DataCation. The data will used along with universal screenings data will be used in RTIM Direct. The proposal will purchase such for community partner sites, along with computers and professional development on RTIM Direct, and ongoing mentor support.

The proposal identifies 2 populations it intends to serve: ACPS preschool students and community partner preschool students. ACPS comprehensive preschool serves 211 at risk 4 year olds per year. Fall PALS indicates students who participate in the program are more successful. Teachers who receive professional development on data driven instruction, along with the tools and supports for implementation increase student success. ACPS plans to work closely with the Department of Social Services to identify students who will benefit from its program. ACPS intends to use data gathered to increase the number of students who attend preschool with the addition of purchased slots at the community partner preschools. It is unclear how many students are to be served because there is a lack of information presented about who and what numbers the community partners will serve--with both staff and students.

This section scores in the middle range because the evaluation system identified for use (VSQI) is a program evaluation system, it is not a teacher evaluation system. There is no clearly presented superintendent, principal, teacher evaluation system presented. The opening signature indicates that ACPS will use an approved evaluation system for ACPS identified staff, however no such indication is present for the community partner schools. There is no clear provision of professional development for ACPS pre school teachers. The professional development plan presented for community partner schools meets the stated needs to implement curricula and use of data for instruction. There does not appear to be provision for communication between ACPS preschool staff and community partner staff other than the implementation of the data system.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ACPS is divided into 5 vertical teams that include: a high school with elementary and middle schools that feed into it. Curriculum Supervisors, psychologist, social worker, and special education facilitator, site administration, school counselor, and other school staff as needed are assigned to each Vertical Team. There are team meetings held quarterly and focus on the correlation of student success to drop-outs. An annual meeting is held with representative group from the elementary school to meet with the middle school, and the middle school to meet with the high school. The focus is to look at trends which may impact graduation: students moving, reading levels, parent education, student retention. There was no information provided indicating communication about the RTTD proposal implementation or what structures are in place in support of the community partners at the district level.</p> <p>Each elementary ACPS has a Leadership Team consisting of grade level representative, intervention specialist, reading specialist, principal. Individual schools have scheduling autonomy as long as they conform to State requirements. The division (district ?) calendar is followed by all sites, with individual events left to the sites. Principals collaborate with Curriculum Supervisor to interview staff, with personnel decisions left to the Principal. Site budgets are under the direction of the principal. There is no information about how this will be set up with the community partner schools.</p> <p>Student opportunity to demonstrate mastery is governed by State regulation which relies on seat time. Students are allowed to participate in some online courses which do not have a seat time requirement.</p> <p>ACPS goal is for students not to demonstrate mastery of content knowledge or new technologies, it wants them to master the learning process. Universal Design for Learning is implemented to assist students in this in conjunction with RTI. There is no information about how this correlates to community partner schools.</p> <p>ACPS has implemented RTI in elementary and middle schools. It states that all students are part of the RTI process. It provides no indication that RTI will be implemented at the community partner schools. Data is used to assist in the design and implementation of personalized learning. STAR is the current student data system. There is currently not accessible to parents and students. There are plans to implement this access in the 2014-15 school year. SPED students are served with an online IEP system. There is not information provided about program or monitoring for ESL students. The 4 year plan with activities, responsible parties, and deliverables is attached as Table One-Timeline and provides an overview of the RTTD implementation plan.</p> <p>This section scores in the middle range. There is information provided in support of this section for ACPS, but it is unclear what/how this will be implemented with the community partner schools. There was no information describing the organizational structure of the community partner schools and what autonomy and flexibility will be in place for those sites. It is unclear who will be making decisions about the program implementation at the community school sites, what the classroom structure will look like, and how they will work with students who may have special learning needs.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The RTTD plan presented plans to provide access to necessary tools, content, resources. The plan will provide additional technology in the community partner classrooms. ACPS has also partnered with the Augusta County Library which has technology access. The resource bus will bring services to outlier communities in Augusta County. ACPS plans to begin to provide this service in the 2014-15 school year. ACPS plans to provide an interoperable data system and hardware to community partner schools so student data can be transferred.</p> <p>The data system does not provide access to parents so they can easily track their child's information.</p> <p>This section scores in the middle range because of the lack of access for students and parents to data about student learning. There is information describing how student information may flow between community partner schools and the school district as the plan is implemented. There is little description about how this access might be supported through the use of the literacy bus and public library, which is where parents will be able to go to access what is made available.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The District RTTD Coordinator will facilitate monthly RTTD committee meetings to evaluate data, review timelines, consider feedback, and make ongoing corrections and improvements. The RTTD Coordinator is also responsible for sharing information and data with the public through the ACPS website, in print through the newspaper, at Board meetings.</p> <p>Community partners will begin the process by participating in the VSQI, with the first administration to be considered the benchmark data. The VSQI is a star rating system of the program based upon qualified staff, program, etc). The data would be used by the mentors to plan for professional development of community school staff. Subsequent VSQI ratings would occur every two years. Based upon the data the community partner and the mentor will create a quality improvement plan (QIP) to be discussed at monthly meetings. The QIP will be shared with the RTTD committee. It is unclear how evaluation on a bi-annual basis will lead to timely implementation and adjustment to programs that might be required.</p> <p>This section is scored in the middle range because of the reliance on a bi-annual rating program to monitor the success of the community partner inclusion in the RTTD plan. In order to provide timely data about any changes or problems with plan implementation, any evaluation needs to be conducted on a regular basis that allows for any changes to be implemented as they become apparent. If the rating system is administered bi-annually it does not allow for timely changes to be made as they occur. There is not complete information provided about communication between district preschool and how it will be monitored and share information with the public other than the information to be provided by the RTTD coordinator.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>ACPS will share information about RTTD at monthly Smart Beginnings meetings and to submit a monthly report to the Superintendent of ACPS. There will be a standing offer to present RTTD information at Board meetings. There will also be monthly RTTD committee meetings to be facilitated by the RTTD District Grant Coordinator. There is no information provided describing the role of the parents in any of the planned on-going meetings. There is no information describing ongoing communication with external stakeholders (parents and community).</p> <p>This section scores in the low range. There is no clear information presented here about communication to individual sites from the RTTD Coordinator other than district committee meetings. There is no information presented about how information will flow back and forth between ACPS and the community partners. There is no provision included for outside stakeholders, especially parents to receive information.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The RTTD plan will utilize multiple measures to assess the effectiveness of efforts and to make data based decisions for next steps. The use of PreK PALS, K PALS, PREK Numeracy and TSG provides data on student progress in the learning environments with the use of VSQI to incorporate teacher/child interactions and environmental ratings. Implementation of an interoperable data system will facilitate the use of this data. The table provided lists 17 performance measures, not all of which are based upon student performance (ie, family service worker contact). There was no information provided describing the process used to select the performance measures. When goals are listed, there is no benchmark information for either the district or the community partner schools. The goals do not have annual target growth listed.</p> <p>Performance Table b provides baseline (no year identified) student counts for students participating with effective teachers and principals. The student counts do not match student counts provided throughout the RTTD proposal. The total number of participating student is listed as 3330, previously this count has ranged from 217 to 250 not including community partner students. Community partner counts and baseline number of effective principals and teachers is not provided. There is no information providing target goals through the end of the grant. E-3 performance measures are listed with who the population is and baseline percentages for 2012-13, no target growth is provided through the end of the grant period. No information for community partner schools is provided. No sub group information is provided for any of the performance measures.</p>		

There is no information provided describing how the measures will be evaluated over time to ensure they are providing the data that is needed to assist in planning instruction to support student success.

This section scores in the low range because all required data has not been provided.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

ACPS states that to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTTD plan it will decrease the number of children who do not have preschool experience by 25% each year of the grant. It is not clear if the plan is to use student enrollment in preschool as the measure of evaluation to demonstrate effectiveness of the plan. They will work with DSS to find those children and recruit them through the mobile literacy classroom. They have curricula and screenings in place at the ACPS sites and will purchase such for the community partners. Table One - Evaluating Effectiveness provides a list of professional services along with evaluation of their effectiveness. There is no information provided about baseline data present or target goals thought the RTTD process, there is no description of who is responsible for gathering the data and presenting it for each item. Since there is no benchmark information or target goals listed in measurable terms assessing growth/success for the items listed will be difficult and possibly inaccurate.

This section is scored in the low range because it does not provide information that documents how the plan will meet the four core assurances and prepare students to become successful with college and career ready standards. There is no evaluation plan provided or information about who is responsible for administering the evaluation and sharing the results with all stakeholders. It was not clearly stated that the same expectations are in place for both the district preschools and the community partner preschools.

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

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

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

The overall budget summary provides annual spending by category for the RTTD plan. There is no listing of other District or external foundation funds, or State or Federal funds to be used in support of the proposal.

The budget tables are complete and appear to be reasonable to support the RTTD plan as written.

Purchases are identified as one time or ongoing throughout the grant period. There is no discussion provided about sustainability of the ongoing expenses within the budget worksheets. The purchase of the technology and the professional development provided to ACPS and community partners will assist in carrying the program beyond the limit of the plan.

This section is scored in the high range. Not all points were awarded because there is no inclusion of any other funding sources in the budget pages and there is no focus on strategies that will ensure long term sustainability provided in the narratives.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The RTTD plan for sustaining the project goals upon the end of the grant includes support expressed by community partners, Smart Beginnings of Shenandoah Valley, Augusta Public Library, Augusta County Schools.

A train-the-trainer model is planned for the community partner schools to continue the professional development that was received during the RTTD plan. All curricula and software, technology, and furniture will remain at the community sites. ACPS will continue to provide support to technology glitches.

Professional training was one time. A VSQI coordinator position will be assumed by Shenandoah Valley Smart Beginnings. They will also continue the mentor program. CDA certification become the responsibility of Valley Vocational Technical School.

ACPS believes that the purchased slots will continue at the community partnership schools as the result of initial funding for curricula, equipment, and training already provided to centers.

Classroom furniture will remain with the classroom with maintenance of such the responsibility of the site.

The Library will continue to provide outreach services and maintain the literacy bus. Fund raisers will be used to support this process.

Personnel positions will become the responsibility of the site where it is located.

Table One - Timeline is provided to show annual activities, responsible parties, and deliverables. There is no addition of cells for the years continuing beyond the RTTD plan.

This section is scored in the middle range because there is no clear evaluation plan presented to evaluate improvements and outcomes and assist in post-grant planning. Data that would support the sustainability will be lacking without an evaluation plan in place. There is no information provided about who is in charge of formal evaluation of the plan and what the evaluation will look like. There are indications of support from participating partners in the RTTD plan, but no budget for three years beyond the grant as required. The information provided is inadequate to clearly support the sustainability of the plan.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The RTTD plan identifies partnerships with the Department of Social Services, collaboration with community partner preschools, Smart Beginnings Shenandoah Valley, Valley Vocational Technical center, and August Public Library. A description for each details the elements of the partnership between ACPS and each entity. The ongoing collaboration with the provision of professional development opportunities for the community partners will continue to go forward. This competitive preference priority meets the requirements of providing integrated services through partnerships with other community resources. All available points were not awarded because of the following:

A table listing information for 2/3 a,b,c,d is provided. There are 9 results listed which describe what measure will be used to track information over time, how the data will be used to target the students most in need, the strategy that will scale the measure beyond the scope of the RTTD plan, and what results over time will be. This table is not complete--with only 1 listing information needed in all 4 categories; 3 list information in 2 categories, and the rest just list the measure with no supporting data. Table Two - Timeline (the 4 year plan is also attached to this document). The goals for the identified desired results are not listed in measurable terms.

There is no discussion about how these partnerships would assist in integrating education and other services for all students in preschools beyond the identified partners and what the service is and who would maintain it going forward.

The plan assumes the prior training and train the trainer model will be used to continue to provide the services that are part of the RTTD plan. There is limited planning to take account for staff changes and the influx of any new community partner schools.

Parental involvement is a key component of the core assurance areas and there is little discussion about how parents and families will be be involved in decision making about the RTTD plan as it is put into place. The FSW will provide information, but this is not a decision making entity. Students are not part of the discussion either, and can be contributed to their age and experience.

There is no discussion about how the progress in implementing the plan will be evaluated by either the district or community partner schools.

There are no specific performance measures listed or benchmarks for students as a whole group or in identified subgroups.

This section is scored in the middle range because of the above identified concerns.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<p><b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The RTTD plan has put in place a comprehensive listing of screening tools and evidence based curricula to support student learning in a variety of methods, including personalized learning. The curricula selected is designed to prepare preschool students for success with Kindergarten (CCSS) standards and beyond. The assessments selected for the age group in the proposal are appropriate and will work to identify student learning needs. The plan as presented is designed to meet the requirements of a high quality plan by planning to increase student success at the identified preschool programs.</p> <p>ACPS is working on implementation of a data system that will be applied in ACPS preschool sites as well as community partner sites. There is little or no current access to student learning data available to parents. The systems in place do not have parent portals available.</p> <p>ACPS signed the statement indicating the adoption of appropriate evaluation instruments for superintendent, principals, and teachers. It has stated that it will use ASQI to evaluate community partner preschools. This is a program evaluation and not an individual evaluation instrument, in addition it is to be administered bi-annually and used to determine needs for staff and program. This does not meet the third requirement of the core educational assurances.</p> <p>There is little or no information provided about how the RTTD plan proposes to turn around achievement at the lowed performing schools. There is a lack of data provided for individual student performance as a whole group, or by identified subgroups. Goals are stated with no annual targeted growth accompanying.</p> <p>There is no information about community partner school student data provided. All is listed as TBD, other than a list of programs with possible available slots listed. It was unclear throughout the plan exactly how many students are to be served.</p> <p>There is little communication or planning that includes parents and families.</p> <p>This RTTD proposal has met Absolute Priority 1.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>110</b>



## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0195VA-2 for Augusta County Public Schools

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

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The initiative to reform the current early childhood programs in Augusta County Public Schools (ACPS) is impressive. The school district vision is clear and comprehensive and is aligned with the four core educational assurances defined in the RTTT-D notice. Program goals for the district include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing quality learning and instruction for all students utilizing student assessments and student data to measure growth</li> <li>• Support for families</li> </ul>		

- Quality special education and health services

Measures used to accelerate student achievement are well documented. Multiple tools are used within the school district to determine student progress. For example, ACPS has incorporated The Virginia Foundation Block for Early Learning, Virginia Star Quality Initiative, Teaching Strategies Gold, the PreK Phonological and Literacy Screening, and the PreK Early Numeracy screening. The LEA's expectation for teachers and principals to keep parents and students informed about the progress of student achievement has been thoroughly described within the grant application. It is clear that input all stakeholders are vital to student success. Efforts to ensure that learning is personalized for each student are understood. Students are assessed multiple times throughout the school year and the district provides appropriate interventions for students that are not on target.

Classroom experiences for teachers and students are clearly described. The focused desire to target enrollment on high-need students is commendable. The LEA provides adequate support for all stakeholders that work with preschool students. Teachers and support staff are encouraged and financially rewarded to attend professional development.

The applicant, ACPS, has articulated a coherent reform vision to build a comprehensive educational community. Full points have been assigned.

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

**10**

**4**

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

The school district notes that seventeen preschool classrooms are distributed among eleven elementary schools. Only high need students are selected for the district's preschool program. The 9:1 student ratio ensures that students receive adequate instructional support. Parents apply for preschool program. The rationale for the district to recruit in neighborhoods with known needs is commendable. The district makes multiple efforts to ensure that preschool children have access to early learning programs.

250 preschool children are served currently served in ACPS. The district states that it would target 2,400 students per year.

The district's application lacks a list of schools that will participate in grant activities nor a clear criterion on how schools were selected. Also, the school district did not clearly state the total number of participating educators. Six points have been assigned.

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

**10**

**6**

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

Efforts to increase the number of preschool students that enter kindergarten equipped with the skills and knowledge to be successful is understood. The school district has included a logic model that addresses efforts to reform student achievement and graduation rates within the school district. The desire to collaborate and enhance community preschool programs is ambitious and will assist with improving student learning outcomes. By addressing student learning needs prior to a student's initial enrollment in schools, the district has demonstrated a commitment to ensure that all students' long term achievement and intervention needs are addressed .

The weakness with this application are that it is not clear how partnering schools were selected nor has the applicant included a high quality plan to scale up the grant beyond the selected schools. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Six points have been assigned.

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

**10**

**4**

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

It is clear that the school district desires to improve student learning outcomes. Included in the grant application are three measures to improve learning outcomes within the district. The district is committed to the following goals:

Increase graduation rates – the LEA has described efforts to turn around the lowest performing schools. Its plan is to address student weakness in early grades. The district states it will use data to identify schools that perform consistently low in an effort to address student needs and increase preparedness for college.

Sustain quality – Within the application is research on the importance of preschool learning. The district has demonstrated commitment to equip high-needs students and their families with skills and instruction content to be successful beyond grade school.

Improve student achievement – The district desires to provide pre-screeners and assessment to all preschool students. In addition, the

goal to analyze their long-term achievement is understood. Within this measure is a desire to create an interoperable system so that as student's transition to other schools, their academic performance travels with them within the school district. Also, the desire to communicate student performance data is clearly defined. ACPS efforts to provide professional development to educational stakeholders are sound.

Documentation of decreasing achievement gaps is included in the grant application. The district has provided on the number of students not meeting spring benchmark for print and word awareness. The percentage of students not meeting district not expectations has decreased over the last five school years. Also, the district has included performance on the kindergarten fall phonological and literacy screener. Over the last five school years, the performance gap of all Augusta County kindergartners and those who complete Augusta County preschools decreased. This provides further rationale on the importance of a quality effective preschool program.

The district has included data on performance and summative assessments but did not provide clear goals for each student subgroup as required in the notice. Also, there is limited information in the grant application on the extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to result in increased college enrollments. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Six points have been assigned.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The grant applicant has provided some data of the average growth students made on universal screeners in math and literacy. According to the data, 80% of students met Spring targets on universal screeners in the developmental range. The district also displayed charts demonstrating English language learners (ELL) performance trends on literacy and math universal screeners for the 2012 – 2013 school year.</p> <p>It is the desire of the school district to use RTTT-D funding to purchase additional data driven screening tools and curricula.</p> <p>The district's application lacks specific evidence of a clear track record of success for four school years as defined in this notice. There is also no description, supporting evidence of charts and graphs, and raw data of the applicant's efforts to raise overall student achievement within the school district, increase high school graduation rates, and increase high school enrollment.</p> <p>Augusta's application lacks a clear description of how it has reformed persistently low achieving schools. The applicant does however; provide a detailed description of how each family Service Worker (FSW) will assist with communicating future student needs and successes with parents. The planned communication with the each FSW demonstrates an effort to increase communication with parents and students. The plan to have each FSW collaborate with teachers to inform parents about student performance is sound.</p> <p>There is a lack of evidence that supports prior records of successes and conditions of reform and information on how all stakeholders have access to data as defined in the notice. . The applicant has scored in the low mid-range and six points have been assigned.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Efforts to increase transparency within the school district have been described by the grant applicant. The August School Board provides school level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional and pupil support, school administration, and investments in its meeting minutes. The school district also publishes funding practices, as defined by this notice, in local newspapers and on the school district website.</p> <p>There district notes that it has made efforts to increase feedback from all stakeholders.</p> <p>The applicant partially addressed all sections in criteria B(2). This application does not describe transparency within each partnering preschool. The applicant did not describe how stakeholders have access to salaries and non-personnel expenditures in partnering preschools. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Three points have been assigned.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Evidence of school district autonomy to implementing Response to Intervention (RTI) initiatives is apparent. For six years the school district has been success in support student needs by providing personalized learning interventions. The district began an intervention model after being awarded resources and support from the Virginia Department of Education. The school district has adequately</p>		

described how it was selected as a pilot district in the RTI division initiative and how it has support from both the Virginia Standards of Learning and Standards of Quality for efforts to ensure students have personalized learning environments.

Throughout the grant application the LEA has described how it established preschool programs in the district. It was noted that Virginia does not mandate public preschool for students.

The description of successful conditions and autonomy under state requirements is evident in the grant application but a detailed description of autonomy with community partners is lacking the grant application. If funding is awarded, it would be important to disclose the organizing efforts to implement personalized learning environments in each partnering schools. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Six points have been assigned.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Augusta County Schools provides a description of the development of its RTTT-D application. The grant applicant has provided evidence of actively seeking input from workers in the school district and from community preschool teachers and directors. The district has also provided sound evidence of how it created a survey to gain feedback from people who did not attend RTTT-D meetings. It is clear that the grant application was composed from ideas from multiple participants.

The LEA has collective bargaining representation. The signature of the union representative has been included. The school district also states that it sought support from current preschool teachers within the district and that support for the grant application was unanimous. In addition, the grant applicant has included several letters of support from Augusta County school administrators, preschool teachers, and community childcare and preschools. The grant applicant has also included support over twenty letters of support from representatives from the state and community.

It is not clear what input teachers had in developing the grant proposal. Augusta County Schools grant application lack clear evidence of parental input at initial meetings. This grant application also lacks evidence that parents were asked to provide input electronically or through surveys. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Eleven points has been assigned.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>

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

Ensuring that students are prepared for kindergarten and beyond is clearly outlined in Augusta's grant application. The school district has outlined a clear plan to provide personalized learning opportunities for high-needs students. The district's plan appropriately relies on input from parents.

The goals set out in this grant application are specific. Providing a quality preschool program for high-needs students is evident. It is ambitious of the district plans to progress monitor frequently. Included in this grant application is a timeline that outlines yearly activities and deliverables. The professional development structure that includes professional development for instructors and teaching assistants, collaboration between the home and school community through frequent home visit with the Family Service Worker, and continuous efforts to raise student achievement by incorporating student data and universal screeners into classroom instruction.

Instruction will be varied, but the grant applicant did not write a clear description on if students will have an opportunity to have choices in what they learn.

The grant applicant describes a learning environment that is student friendly. Augusta Count Public Schools (ACPS) desires to create an environment that is nurturing and one that allows preschool children to participate in multicultural/authentic learning experiences. The school district's goal to provide age appropriate learning experiences where preschool children can engage in play is clearly understood.

It is ambitious to include a vision where the teacher, Family Service Worker, and parent work collaboratively to set student achievement goals. It is also ambitious to include in the vision a plan to for all key stakeholders to meet three times a year to monitor student progress. The district shows a commitment to student learning when it describes plans to make multiple home visits with each student's family within one school year.

The district application focuses on providing a personalized learning environment for all students. However, this grant application does not include a description of instructional content and skill development that is designed to enable students to achieve learning goals and ensure that they can graduate on time and college and career ready.

ACPS plans to incorporate a number of evidence based curricula with grant funding. It is not clear how the school district will provide a multitude of learning environments within the school community. It is impressive that the district has located instructional content for preschool students that are accessible at school and at home. The district has a realistic goal to provide mobile literacy classroom for parents with limited access to technology.

Providing feedback with parents is understood. The transition plan for teachers who will receive preschool students is sound. The district has an open communication environment and the transition plan demonstrates the vested interest it has on the individual learner.

There is no evidence within the plan that students will be equipped to understand their developmental progress, this is understandable due to the maturity of the student targeted in the grant application.

The weakness with this section is the school district does not a clearly describe approaches that will be used to implement instructional strategies to ensure that student graduate on time and are college and career ready. The grant application has quality plan that has scored in the mid high range. Sixteen points have been assigned.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The grant applicant vision to develop a comprehensive early childhood community program is clear and concise. Within the vision are provisions to provide the teachers and teacher assistants with specific professional tools and training that relate directly to working with preschool learners. The LEA has also adequately described how it will provide direct instruction and mentoring for preschool educators and directors. Within the quality plan provided by the school district, is a detailed timeline that describes activities, responsibilities, and deliverables to ensure that all components for an effective preschool program are intact. The description of the professional development that will be offered to employees is aligned with goals to increase student achievement, aide in progress monitoring, and support district personnel in communicating effectively with parents. The goals are clear and specific and a highly aligned with college and career ready standards. Based on the sequence of professional development, it is clear that students and parents will be provided detailed information of student's understand learning goals and will be supported by knowledgeable staff members to ensure goals are personalized and age appropriate.

Augusta plans to provide differentiated instruction within evidence-based curricula. The goal of providing instruction to meet the needs of the individual students is understood. Instruction will be varied but the grant applicant did not write a clear description on if students will have an opportunity to have choices in what they learn.

Progress monitoring is a key component to the Augusta's preschool community achievable vision. Frequently monitoring kindergarten readiness skills and creating an interoperable data system are goals that will be financed if awarded RTTT-D funds.

In section C(2) of the grant application, the district desires to utilize the Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) to serve as an evaluation system to align teacher and directors practices. Earlier in the grant application, the description of the VSQI is one of a tool that embeds high quality early childhood care, education and health services. It is not clear if both descriptions on the systems capabilities are realistic. The applicant has not provided solid evidence that teachers' and principals' practice can be improved utilizing the VSQI system. There is limited information within the grant application on individual measures to assess teacher effectiveness that is aligned with RTTT-D criterion C(2). Also, there is no specific information on how students will obtain access to a highly qualified teacher and principal throughout the years of the grant cycle.

The grant applicant describes procedures on how it will progress monitor for high needs students that are not on target. However, there is no evidence within the grant application of how student learning can be accelerated for high achieving high needs students.

The grant applicant has scored in the mid-range. There is lack of evidence of an evaluation tool used to assess effectiveness of principals and teachers. Also, there is limited information on how students will have choices in learning. Ten points have been assigned.

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

	Available	Score

<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Augusta has described the alignment of vertical teams in the district. The description provided does not address how vertical teams support the community preschool programs what are connected to the school district.</p> <p>The grant applicant describes flexibility with the twelve elementary schools. Each school is stated to have a leadership team. The school district describes autonomy in hiring, creation of school calendars, and budgets. The grant applicant did not include information of autonomy at community preschools.</p> <p>A description on how to support struggling learners is clear. However, there is little information within the grant application on how it supports students that excel in learning. The applicant also describes a number of tools used to evaluate students but the tools described for example, PreK PALS, PreK Early Numeracy, measure specific skills. There is limited information that students have master standards at multiple times and in comparable ways.</p> <p>There is no mention within the grant application of how learning resources are accessible to English language learners and students with disabilities.</p> <p>The applicant has not addressed at length how its practices, polices and rules facilitate personalized learning. The applicant has scored on the high low end. Three points have been assigned.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>It is appropriate that Preschools will have access to technology during the school day. It is commendable that the district has a traveling literacy resource bus that will provide support to students in outlier communities.</p> <p>However, there is little information in the grant application on how students and parents will have access to learning programs outside the school day. It is not clear how personalized learning outside of the school day will be expected from students. A high quality plan that describes how the district will provide high-needs students with necessary tools to support learning outside the school day is lacking from the grant application.</p> <p>The applicant states that technical support will be provided through a range of strategies, but how this will be accomplished is unclear. This application lacks specificity on appropriate levels of technical support.</p> <p>The grant applicant was unable to address how parents and students can export information in an open data format because the district currently does not provide access to stakeholders in this manner, and although the district does have data systems, these systems are not interoperable.</p> <p>This applicant has scored on the high low end. Two points have been assigned.</p>		

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The school district plans to hire a grant coordinator is appropriate. The plan to have monthly meeting to evaluate data, review timelines, and make corrections and improvements is sound. It is the district's desire to have the coordinator to also provide information to all stakeholders. Although it is ambitious to assign these tasks to one person, there is insufficient evidence in this grant application that the grant coordinator can effectively carry out all duties assigned</p> <p>Limited information has been provided on how the grant applicant will provide timely feedback. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Six points have been assigned.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant describes how teachers and the Family Service Workers will share information with parents. The plan to</p>		

conduct home visits three times a year is ambitious. It is clear that the goal for increased communication with all stakeholders is desired in the school district. The plan to provide information at school board meetings is appropriate. Also, the district desires to hold monthly RTTT-D meetings to share information, gather feedback, and assess project goals. The applicant's vision includes a sound plan to share with internal and external stakeholders is sound. The applicant has scored high. Full points have been assigned.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**  
 Seventeen items are listed as performance measures but the grant applicant does not provide yearly targets or a clear rationale for selecting each measure. The applicant does however, provide baseline for some performance measures and appropriately provides overarching goals with the inclusion of timelines. The data figures listed in this section do not include projections for providing students with high quality teachers and principals. The district has a goal to purchase slots for preschool students. The applicant's plans lack the anticipated number of slots that will be purchased with grant funding and the district does not describe the preschool sites of where slots will be purchased. Also, it is unclear how the district the processes and tools used to assess growth during the grant cycle. The applicant has scored in the mid-range Three points have been assigned.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The grant applicant has provided a form that list professional services and evaluating effectiveness. The grant application does not have a timeline included on implementation of each item listed in the form. In the application's timeline that is included, the grant applicant does not assign specific responsibilities for each activity. There is limited information on details of how and what tools will be used to measure effectiveness. Also, the district desires to provide staff development for mentors, Three points have been assigned.  
 The district desires to have state mentors trained to support student academic achievement. The district will provide professional development and anticipates that this training will be an one time investment for each mentor The plan included does not address the number of mentors that will be trained nor does it assign a responsible party to conduct the training. There is a lack of supporting evidence for the need to provide extensive training for mentors.

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

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

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The district has included a budget supplement that describes funding needs for the four years of RTTT-D funding. Grant funding requested per line item is reasonable. The grant applicant has not included information on how other funding sources will be used to sustain the project. The weakness with this section is that there is no evidence within the grant application of external financial support from the state or other federal funds.  
 The budget narrative includes clear rationales for funding. The master teacher job description requirement for an educator with ten or more years experience is appropriate. Technology and printer one time investment descriptions given by the LEA are sound. The district has written that it would like to purchase slots at community centers for students, It is not clearly stated how many slots will be purchased with grant funds.  
 The applicant has clear descriptions of cost needs for curriculum and assessments that will be utilized to increase student achievement. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Seven points have been assigned.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The idea to collaborate with existing partners is realistic. The grant applicant has provided sufficient letters of support from community leaders. The district has stated that existing partners have expressed a commitment but there is limited information in the grant application of the amount of funding each partner will contribute to sustain the project.

The school district has not included information of how much the district will contribute to continue to sustain the project upon completion of grand funding. The grant applicant lacks funding estimates for three years after the term of the grant. The explanation of sustainability for this project lack depth. The applicant has scored in the mid-range. Six points have been assigned.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

Collaborating with the Department of Social Services to identify the most at-risk ad highest priority preschool children is justifiable and is aligned with the goals of the project. In the grant application, Augusta also describes the collaborative efforts of Smart beginnings Shenandoah Valley and Valley Vocational Technical center. Partnering with these groups also contribute to equipping students and educators with opportunities to gain knowledge and professional development. The support and partnership described with Augusta County Library is reasonable. The partnership encourages early reading and exposes students to literacy activities.

Ten population desired results are included and are aligned with the district's grant application. The grant applicant has included appropriate provisions to track four of its population desired results. Monitoring student's attendance can be achieved and tracking students that have two unexcused absences will assist with limiting future chronic absenteeism.

Augusta's vision to provide Response to Intervention early is understood. It is clear that the district's goal is to support high need and high risk students.

There is limited information within the grant application on how the project proposal can be scaled up beyond the scope of the vision. The LEA desires to purchase curriculum and interoperable data systems that will track student's progress in preschool and follow them to elementary school. There is limited information within the proposal on how the district will adjust and track student performance beyond elementary school years. Within the grant application Augusta mentions that it will provide teachers with professional development to improve student behavior and social emotional needs. It is unclear how Response to Intervention and other forms of professional development will adequately address the district goals.

The district's desire to provide professional development is ambitious. Also, supporting teacher assistants by encouraging enrollment in Child Development Associates will equip adults with skills to raise student achievement.

There is evidence presented in the grant application on hoe the district will continue to monitor the needs of students and the community. It is clear and ambitious to hire Family Service Workers that will meet with parents to discuss data findings. Also, the plan to have transition meetings in the spring demonstrates the school system's desire to monitor student achievement and include all in the decision making process.

Augusta County Public School (ACPS) efforts to hire a grant coordinator to collect data and monitor the project's effectiveness are sound. The district desire to utilize this person to assess progress is feasible but may be overwhelming. This one person is responsible for communicating with all stakeholders' the outcomes and deliverables of the project.

Performance measures included in the grant application are sound and are directly tied to the project's goals. The applicant has scored in the mid-range due to lack of evidence to sacle up beyond the scope of the current needs. Six points have been assigned.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The initiative to reform the current early childhood programs in Augusta County Public Schools (ACPS) is impressive. The LEA's expectation for teachers and principals to keep parents and students informed about the progress of student achievement has been thoroughly described within the grant application. It is clear that input all stakeholders are vital to student success.

Efforts to increase the number of preschool students that enter kindergarten equipped with the skills and knowledge to be successful is understood. There is a specific focus in the grant application to target high need students. Also, the grant applicant mentions frequently in the grant application that grant funding would be used to purchase additional slots for preschool students. Augusta has effectively demonstrated a need to advocate for early learning. The applicant has provided sound research in the importance of students obtaining a solid preschool academic foundation. Data within the grant application has effectively been presented that students with preschool experiences perform better in kindergarten than those students that lack a preschool foundation.

The grant applicant has provided evidence of actively seeking input from workers in the school district and from community preschool teachers and directors. The district has also provided sound evidence of how it created a survey to gain feedback from people who did not attend RTTT-D meetings. It is clear that the grant application was composed from ideas from multiple participants.

It is ambitious to include a vision where the teacher, Family Service Worker, and parent work collaboratively to set student achievement goals. It is also ambitious to include in the vision a plan to for all key stakeholders to meet three times a year to monitor student progress. The district shows a commitment to student learning when it describes plans to make multiple home visits with each student's family within one school year.

Within the vision are provisions to provide the teachers and teacher assistants with specific professional tools and training that relate directly to working with preschool learners. The LEA has also adequately described how it will provide direct instruction and mentoring for preschool educators and directors. Within the quality plan provided by the school district, is a detailed timeline that describes activities, responsibilities, and deliverables to ensure that all components for an effective preschool program are intact. The description of the professional development that will be offered to employees is aligned with goals to increase student achievement, aide in progress monitoring, and support district personnel in communicating effectively with parents. The goals are clear and specific and a highly aligned with college and career ready standards. Based on the sequence of professional development, it is clear that students and parents will be provided detailed information of student's understand learning goals and will be supported by knowledgeable staff members to ensure goals are personalized and age appropriate.

The data systems the district desires to purchase is described to assist with making learning personalized for each student. It is clear that the district has a goal to provide learning opportunities that a specific to student weaknesses. The goals to address learning weakness early will assist in ensuring that each student graduates college and career ready. The district has demonstrated a commitment to encouraging growth in professionals that it hires. Teachers are encouraged and rewarded for obtaining advanced degrees. Also, teacher assistants receive a five percent pay increase for completing child development coursework.

It is evident that the district desires to close achievement gaps by targeting instruction on early learning. The school district has an ambitious plan to collaborate with stakeholders within the community to provide high needs students with access to preschool. The school has meet absolute priority one.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>114</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0195VA-3 for Augusta County Public Schools

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

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:		

(A)(1) Having established the value of a high-quality early education, using RTT-D funds as leverage the proposed project envisions raising student achievement and decreasing the achievement gap across student groups primarily by strengthening the broader community's ability to increase the number of high-need students who participate in high quality preschool programs. Mainly, the proposal would expand the provision of high quality services to preschool children ages three- and four-years-old, with a percentage of high-need children and families continuing to receive interventions from social workers through third grade. Rather than create new pre-K classrooms within the LEA's schools, the district would collaborate with community partners to strengthen their existing programs into high quality comprehensive early childhood programs. With the RTT-D grant, the district would build and support its community partners with materials, curricula, professional development, quality measures, and mentoring consistent with the LEAs approach to RTT-D's core educational assurance areas. The district would also use funding to purchase slots in those programs for the targeted population (high-need 4-year-olds). In this way, the LEA envisions building a "sustainable comprehensive early childhood community." To personalize services for participating students, the project would employ a Response to Intervention Model (RTI) and use data to create personalized learning environments. For students who are not making adequate progress, teachers would personalize interventions based on students' needs and interests. The Family Service Worker would coach families on how to use the personalized interventions to support the development of their children. While the personalization features of the vision seem routine, the proposal offers a novel, challenging yet doable, approach for broadening access to high-quality early education that makes sense in this context where many children are enrolled in pre-K programs outside of the purview of the LEA. The proposal could benefit from a more detailed discussion of the following: (1) a sketch of the pre-K classroom experience for participating teachers and students in both the district and in partnering community pre-K programs; (2) the scope of services provided to students in grades K-3; and (3) how the pre-K program would interface with K-12 program (especially elementary schools). (SCORE: HIGH - 8)

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(2) Both District schools and community-based pre-K providers (community partners) would provide services to pre-K children. The LEA will select preschool community partners using the following criteria: interest in participating, willingness to receive and implement evidence based curricula, participation in the state quality (VSQI) rating and mentoring system, participation in ongoing professional development, facilitating FSW (Family Service Worker) support, and developing and strengthening transition practices (which includes the development and use of an interoperable data system). The proposal provides aggregate student participation numbers for the LEA -- including totals (2,520 pre-K-3), high need (1008 pre-K-3), and low income (1,568 pre-K-3). However, no data are provided for individual schools (presumably data are available for the LEA's existing pre-K schools). Because community partner pre-K programs have not been selected, no data -- individual or in the aggregate -- are provided for community partners.

The participation numbers presented in the proposal would benefit from explanation. While the proposal indicates that 2,520 of the LEA's pre-K-3 students would participate in the project, the narrative states that the LEA's comprehensive early childhood program currently serves 223 three- and four-year old children. The proposal is not clear on how and to what extent the 2,000+ K-3 participating students (i.e., 2,520 - 223) would benefit from the project's approach, especially given the project's primary focus is pre-K. (SCORE: LOW - 2)

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(3) The proposal presents a broad plan that summarizes project activities, responsible parties, and deliverables by project implementation year. The project proposal presents a logic model and related charts that clarify the anticipated impact of the project (early learning, family support, health, mental health and nutrition, and special needs/early intervention) on important outcomes (i.e., increased graduation rates, sustainability of quality, and improved school achievement). The plan states that in its 4th year, the project intends to scale-up pre-K support to all high-need children in the community (i.e., "Continue to explore funding to support all four-year-olds with a comprehensive early childhood program experience."). The plan would benefit from greater clarity and specificity regarding activities -- both for pre-K and K-3 -- who would bear responsibility for undertaking these activities, the timeline for undertaking these activities, as well as planned deliverables. (SCORE: MED - 5)

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

(A)(4) Information regarding LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes is limited. The following was extracted from the proposal's narrative: "We intend to demonstrate the long-term outcome of higher graduation rates and college/career

preparedness. Within the time frame of our funding, we will use the third grade SOL scores and truancy rate averages K-3. Current third-grade SOL scores for the at-risk population indicate a pass rate of 76.56%. The current truancy rate in ACPS K-3 is 6.6%. We propose increasing SOL scores by 10% over four years, and lowering truancy rates by 5% each of the four years." While the goals for increasing 3rd grade SOL scores and reducing truancy rates seem reasonably ambitious, the proposal does not specify goals regarding (increased) graduation rates or (increased) college/career preparedness. While a table in the proposal provides baseline pre-K performance data by curricular area (e.g., writing name, alphabet, sounds, and rhyme), the table does not include any of the aggregate goals cited above. Baseline performance data are also provided for the District's K-3 students by grade level. However, annual goals for K-3 are neither set in the aggregate nor for student sub-groups. Because the proposal focuses predominately on pre-K interventions, it leaves a huge programmatic gap between project action and long-term outcomes for students (e.g., performance in primary and secondary grades, graduation rates, and college attendance). This gap sorely reduces the likelihood that the initiative will result in improvements in its articulated longer-term outcomes. (SCORE: LOW - 2)

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(B)(1) In discussing the track record of the LEA's success, the proposal presents data showing significant improvements in the relative performance of high-need students (e.g., English learners) in pre-K subjects during the most recent school year. These data are made available to parents and educators in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. The proposal does not discuss the track record of pre-K students over the last four years.</p> <p>The proposal does not discuss the LEA's academic performance and achievement-gap outcomes for grades K-12. Moreover, the proposal does not discuss the extent to which the LEA has effectively improved its comprehensive pre-K - 12 educational program as a whole or for its lowest achieving schools. Because the proposal purports to influence students' pre-K to grade 12 experiences and outcomes (e.g., performance on assessments, graduation rates, college enrollment), these omissions mean that the proposal fails to demonstrate a clear record of success for the LEA. (SCORE: LOW - 2)</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(B)(2) In its discussion of district transparency, the proposal states that the LEA commissions annual audits and that the scope of these audits (proposal refers to a chart in an appendix which the reviewer could not find) include identifying: (a) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff; (b) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only; (c) Actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and (d) Actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level. The proposal further states that "The results of the audits include, by school, information on actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration and is reported to the Augusta County School Board, who makes the information part of the minutes of their meetings. The information on the expenditures is subsequently published in the local newspaper and made publicly available on the Augusta County Public Schools website." To provide evidence for these statements, the proposal would have benefitted from the inclusion of one or more sample reports from the website that shows the financial data that are readily available to the public for each of the LEA's schools. (SCORE: MED - 2)</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(B)(3) Given that RTI plays a key role in facilitating personalized support to early education students within the LEA's geographical boundaries, the proposal notes that it's RTI initiative is consistent with and supported by the state. Pursuant to the LEA's participation in the state's RTI pilot, it receives direct training and support from the state.</p> <p>Moreover, the proposal lists selected stipulations from the Virginia Standards of Learning and Standards of Quality that support the initiative of personalized learning environments. In an earlier section, the proposal noted that the state does not mandate pre-K, yet is supportive of district efforts to provide pre-K.</p> <p>(SCORE: HIGH - 10)</p>		

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(B)(4) The proposal was developed by a group of "early childhood and related professionals" from the LEA and the community. Participants included the Director of Pupil Services, the Preschool Supervisor, a Preschool Lead Teacher/Mentor, several Early Childhood Special Education endorsed teachers, a Family Service Worker, the School/Community Health Services Coordinator, an Assistant Principal, the regional Smart Beginnings coordinator, and the System Manager for Infant Toddler Connection Augusta/Highland. Also invited were several community preschool teachers and directors.... Apparently no parents or K-3 teachers were involved in the development of the proposal. 65 individuals submitted letters of support: 17 LEA school administrators, 17 pre-school teachers, 12 administrators of community childcare and pre-K centers, and representatives from 19 state and community organizations. Moreover, none of the letters of support were from K-3 teachers or parents. Given that parents and possibly K-3 teachers (a data table indicates that 2,520 pre-K - 3 students will participate in the project) are key players in the success of the initiative, failure to include them directly in the development of the project could, among other things: (1) affect the willingness of K-3 teachers and current K-3 parents to commit to the project; and (2) require a significant investment in additional planning time to bring the K-3 teachers and parents up to speed regarding the project's vision, goals, rationale, and implementation strategy. (SCORE: MEDIUM - 8)</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(C)(1) The proposal lays out a broad plan that shows how the project's key components (family service workers, curricula, professional development, and community pre-schools) support personalized learning for pre-K students. However, the plan's provisions for learners and learning as defined in RTT-D criterion (C)(1) would benefit from greater explication.</p> <p>The project would provide "materials, instruction, and support to community preschool programs to develop additional comprehensive early childhood program options for children and families who do not qualify for the ACPS program." A major goal is to produce comprehensive early childhood programs that use data to support learning and instruction for children and families. Progress monitoring data would be collected more frequently for students who fail to make adequate progress. These data would be used to create personalized targeted interventions.</p> <p>Family Service Workers (FSW) would provide support to high-need students and families by assisting in goal-setting, encouraging regular school attendance, and communicating with families about personalized learning strategies implemented in the classroom.</p> <p>The project would use Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) and RTIM Direct in its community preschool programs. "TSG is a curriculum based on the scope and sequence of skill development and on-going assessment of individual children. TSG also provides an opportunity for families to review their child's progress and ongoing assessment data with access to the parent/family version of the website. Learning objectives are readiness skills and the precursor to kindergarten content standards (college- and career-ready standards as defined in this notice). Coupled with information gained from universal screenings, teachers can determine appropriate learning goals and use data-driven instruction (RTIM Direct) to achieve it."</p> <p>"By ...purchasing slots in community preschool programs for children who did not/could not qualify for the limited spaces in the ACPS comprehensive early childhood program we are broadening the cultural experiences and perspectives for all children enrolled in community preschool programs."</p> <p>Notwithstanding these positive features of the plan, the plan suffers from a major weakness. It does not explain how the proposed core pre-K learning and teaching activities will substantially "provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready." While the plan indicates that many students in K-3 will participate, the proposal does not describe what approach(es) to learning the project will use to engage and empower K-3 students. Thus, the proposal is strong on pre-K, soft on K-3, and quiet on how the initiative would eventually affect students in grades 4-12 and beyond. As a result, the efficacy of the proposal's virtually exclusive focus on pre-K learning relies on the critical assumption that if more high-need students are accorded access to a high-quality pre-K experience, the numbers of these students who graduate from the district college- and career-ready will increase significantly. SCORE: MED - 10)</p>		

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(C)(2) The proposal describes a clear approach and high quality plan for helping early education professionals improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress. Positive features of the plan for pre-K professionals include the following:</p> <p>(a) Community preschool program teachers and directors would receive professional development to build a broad understanding of the curricula (TSG and CSEFEL) and how to use/implement screening tools and personalization strategies (e.g., RTIM Direct). Using a mentor trained in comprehensive early childhood programs, teachers and directors would have access to support in how to create effective personalized learning environments.</p> <p>(b) The use of funding to provide mentoring will improve teachers' and directors' practices and effectiveness by using feedback and mentoring strategies. The project would rate its community preschool program partners using the VSQI (Virginia Star Quality Initiative) and use that information as a basis for providing guidance to the programs and mentors for targeting areas of weakness (staff qualifications, learning environment, and/or adult-child interactions).</p> <p>(c) The project would create an on-line CDA (teacher certification) program made available to participating community preschool program instructors, vocational education students, and interested adult learners.</p> <p>(d) The project would create a demonstration classroom (staffed by master teachers) to support the development of interested CDA candidates with more than digitally based instruction.</p> <p>(e) Also, as noted in section (C)(1), the project would provide professional development for community preschool programs teachers and teaching assistants on the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children.</p> <p>(f) Educator development and support activities would begin in the first year and continue throughout the project.</p> <p>Aside from these positives, the proposal has some weaknesses. The narrative implies that key approaches would be "suggested" to community pre-K programs rather than set as a requirement for participation. This raises questions about the extent to which the project can exercise effective control over the implementation of the critical community pre-K component.</p> <p>Another weakness of the proposal is that while it states that many students in grades K-3 will participate in the project, the proposal does not describe whether or how K-3 teachers are engaged in professional development. Nor does it describe the extent to which K-3 teachers would have access to data and tools that would aid them in creating and maintaining effective learning environments. The proposal is also limited in its discussion of support and tools that would be accorded elementary school leaders to facilitate improvements that align with the pre-K improvements.</p> <p>(SCORE: HIGH – 16)</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>(D)(1) The proposal provides a good discussion of LEA and state practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning -- e.g., vertical teams, implementation of RTI in all district schools, and Leadership Teams in all schools.</p> <p>However, the proposal lacks a high-quality plan related to the implementation of its specific pre-K initiative -- within the district or through community pre-K programs. For example, the proposal states that each elementary school has a Leadership Team and that these teams exercise "sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets." However, the proposal does not discuss how Leadership Teams interface with the project's core pre-K initiative.</p> <p>A second example. The proposal describes the structure that the central office employs to support schools. A key organizational vehicle the district uses to provide support and services to schools is the Vertical Team. Each team includes</p>		

a high school and the elementary and middle school that feed the high school. Curriculum Supervisors are assigned to each Vertical Team. A Psychologist, Social Worker, and Special Education Facilitator are also assigned to a Vertical Team. Administrators from each of the schools serves on the Team, as well as School Counselors and other staff, depending on the meeting topic. The Vertical Teams meet quarterly. The proposal further notes that the primary focus of the Vertical Teams has been the correlation of student success to drop-outs. In this light, the proposal does not explain how Vertical Teams will facilitate effective implementation of the project's essentially pre-K initiative.

In short, while the proposal does a very good job of describing LEA policies, practices, and rules that facilitate the effective implementation of district initiatives writ large, the proposal does not discuss how these policies and practices will support the implementation of the project's core pre-K initiative.

SCORE - MED – 5

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(D)(2) The proposal sketches a plan for how the LEA and school structure will support personalized learning. The proposal provides a broad description of how the LEA's infrastructure promotes transparency and ready and flexible information access to parents and students. The proposal states that participating stakeholders, parents, and educators will have access to necessary content, tools, and other resources to support the implementation of this grant, including technology for classrooms in partner community pre-K programs and through the county library, and use of a resource bus to bring services to outlier communities. While the proposal states that educators will have access to appropriate levels of technical support, the proposal does not describe what kind of support educators will receive. Moreover, the proposal does not clearly describe what specific technical support will be accorded students and parents. Currently, RTI data are downloaded and shared with parents and students. The proposal states that the LEA would strive to improve transparency and data access for students and parents. However, part of the timeline for this work is unclear. Currently, the LEA does not have a data system that is accessible to parents and students. Beginning 2014-2015 the LEA will implement a new student information system that supports a parent access module; the proposal indicates that the student information system will employ an open format. Finally, while the LEA employs multiple independently operating data systems (student and personnel data system, IEP online system, RTI student tracking system, human resources, and budget), overall the systems are not interoperable. Thus, while the proposed plan for ensuring that educators and students have access to the supports needed to facilitate personalized learning has some strengths (some systems and tools are in place, and others will be addressed by the project), some key underdeveloped areas of the LEA's infrastructure (interoperability of all data systems) remain and apparently will not be addressed through this project. (SCORE - MED 5)

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(1) The proposal describes plans for using two practical approaches for facilitating continuous improvement: (1) The project would employ the VSQI Star Rating program to rate its pre-K (including community-based) programs. Rating results would be used as a basis for planning the continual improvement of these programs. Because pre-K centers would be rated every two years after the baseline rating, this tool may have limited value for facilitating continuous improvement. (2) The primary vehicle for facilitating continuous improvement will be monthly project meetings convened by the RTT-D Grant Coordinator. The purpose of these meetings would be to "evaluate data, review timelines, project upcoming deliverables, review feedback, and make corrections and improvements." Given the scope of the project, the monthly review plan is practical; however the discussion of the plan could have benefited from additional details such as: (1) a specification of which project functionaries will participate in the meetings (e.g., project management team, pre-K teachers at LEA's centers, staff from community centers, FSWs?, mentors?, central office staff?, parents?), (2) indication whether the meetings would be open to the public; and (3) the types of data that would be discussed at meetings related to project functioning (e.g., diagnostic/formative student test data, classroom observational data). (SCORE - MED - 10)

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(2) The proposal provides a reasonable, practical plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and

external stakeholders. The grant coordinator would bear responsibility for sharing information and data with the public using various practical formats (Internet, newspaper, newsletter, school board meetings). Project reports would be shared at monthly Smart Beginnings meetings. The project would submit a monthly report to the LEA's superintendent. Information would also be shared at monthly RTT-D meetings. (SCORE: HIGH - 5)

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

**5**

**2**

**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

(E)(3) The proposal lists 17 reasonably ambitious yet achievable goals related to student and/or program outcomes (e.g., decrease # of children w/o pre-K experience, increase number of teachers using project curricula and instructional strategies, increased student performance). However, the student outcome goals are given in the aggregate but not enumerated for each subgroup.

The proposal does not expressly discuss the rationale for each of the measures. However, in most case the rationale seems self-evident. Regarding the extent to which each measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern, the proposal provides information on the frequency of measurement of some of the measures. The proposal does not discuss how it will review and, as necessary, improve each measure over time.

(SCORE: MED - 2)

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

**5**

**0**

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

(E)(4) The proposal does not present a high-quality plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed project. The proposal states that "To evaluate the effectiveness of funded activities ACPS will decrease the number of children who do not have preschool experiences by 25% each year of the grant. This will be achieved by working collaboratively with DSS (Department of Social Services) to find those children most in need as well as recruiting through the mobile literacy classroom, at apartment complexes and community events. In order to insure that attending preschool is effective in changing student readiness for kindergarten, ACPS will mirror the highly effective comprehensive early childhood program that they now have and put it into place in community program settings." While these activities support the development of the project, they do not constitute an evaluation of project effectiveness. An earlier section of the proposal states, "We intend to demonstrate that families with FSW support kindergarten through third grade have students who attend school more regularly, thereby reducing the truancy rate, a known predictor of drop-out increase." However, a plan for conducting this demonstration is not detailed in the proposal. (SCORE: LOW - 0)

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

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

(F)(1) In general, the overall project budget identifies all funds that will support the project, seems reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the project, and provides thoughtful rationales for investments and priorities. However, key areas of the budget lack adequate background information.

The total budget is \$6.46 million. The overall budget is divided into five subprojects: mobile literacy coordinator (\$0.6 million), Coordinator (\$0.3 million), CDA (certification) (\$0.3 million), demo class (about \$1 million), and Community Comprehensive Early Childhood Programs (\$4.2 million). The comments below use the budget discussion of the largest sub-project (Community Comprehensive Early Childhood) as an example.

The "project narrative" for the Community Comprehensive Early Childhood sub-project does not provide an overview of the sub-project (project description/definition and rationale, project scope and rollout). It merely lists the line items in the budget, the largest items being personnel (family service worker, lead (teacher), equipment, and contractual. While

project descriptions are generally found elsewhere in the proposal, the budget yet raises key questions. According to the budget, 8 full-time Family Service Workers will be hired, and an FSW will be assigned to each center. Does that mean that the project will work with a total of eight community pre-K centers? Will Family Service Workers service all families at each of the participating community centers or only those for whom slots are purchased by the project? To what extent will pre-K students enrolled in the LEA's schools benefit from the services of the Family Service Workers? Do staff from both community pre-K centers and LEA pre-K programs participate in professional development? \$176,400 would be used to purchase slots for students to attend community-based pre-K programs. How many slots would be purchased? At how many centers?

\$578,000 would be spent on a contract to develop a data management system to provide each center with access to an "interoperable data management system... (that) will allow for the correlation of relative information across all data collection measures. It will also allow parents to view pertinent information regarding their child's academic process." Assuming only 8 community centers will participate in the project, why is so much being spent on a data system? What does the \$578,900 expenditure buy? (SCORE: MED - 5)

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

(F)(2) This section of the proposal does a good job laying out a plan for sustaining key elements of the project, including: professional services, technology services, purchased pre-school slots, screenings, classroom needs, literacy bus, and selected personnel. In most cases, the sustainability plans seem reasonable.

However there were exceptions. For example, the project would spend \$176,400 to purchase preschool slots in community daycare centers. The proposal states that "These slots will be able to sustain themselves as a result of the initial funding, equipment purchases, and training provided to centers. Daycare centers that are participating in the grant will have residual growth and be able to support increased enrollment." My interpretation from elsewhere in the proposal is that the project would buy slots for students to attend community pre-K centers, particularly high-need students. Once the project ends, the sustainability discussion does not explain where high-need (low-income?) students would get money to pay for slots in community daycare centers. (SCORE: HIGH - 8)

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY** The proposal does an excellent job of describing its partnership with various agencies to design, fund, implement, and evaluate the project's core pre-K initiative. The proposal states that the LEA "has developed a very coherent and sustainable partnership with many public and private agencies as described below." The section then briefly describes the project's partnerships with the Department of Social Services (to identify students at risk), community pre-school programs (to extend reach of the public school system in serving pre-K students), the Smart Beginnings coalition (serves as model for this proposal), the Valley Vocational Technical center (support development of pre-K staff), and Augusta County Library (more books in the hands of children). These partnerships are discussed throughout the proposal and are included in the project's plan.

The proposal lists nine indicators (results): (1) Higher number of students with preschool experience; (2) Decrease number of students identified for PALS interventions; (3) Increase SOL scores; (4) Decrease truancy rate; (5) Increase number of Child Development Associates in community daycare settings; (6) Increase literacy practices in the homes of at-risk families; (7) Increase the number of community preschool programs that use research based curricula; (8) Increase the number of community partners that use universal and developmental screenings; and (9) Increase the number of children who enter kindergarten with personalized learning plans through RTIM Direct. For some of the measures (but not all), the proposal describes how the partnership would track the indicators, and how the data would be used to improve results for participating students. Descriptions for scale-up strategies or how the partnership would improve results over time are missing for all but one indicator.

The proposal's tabulated timeline shows what areas of the proposed project the partners collaborate on and integrate both the educational and educational support components of the project. These collaborations are also discussed in other parts of the proposal. Because the described partnership is at the core of the project, the work of the partnership to carry out the project's goals are described throughout the proposal. This work includes assessing the needs of the community for

expanded pre-K services, assessing the needs of individual students, providing educational and social support to students and their families, engaging parents in their children's education, setting ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the project, and participating in the evaluation of the project's effectiveness.

(SCORE: HIGH - 9)

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1 (SCORE: MET )

The proposal, given its pre-K focus, does a satisfactory job of coherently and comprehensively addressing how it will build on RTTT's core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators. The proposed project seeks to create and provide a comprehensive, personalized early childhood experience for ALL preschool children within the geographical boundaries of the LEA based on the academic and support needs of each student. The project would use RTTD funding to: (1) to purchase tangibles (materials, curricula, screening tools, mobile literacy classroom, technology, and equipment); (2) enhance the skills of community preschool program educators and parents (professional development, direct instruction, professional mentoring, CDA programs, Family Service Worker); and (3) purchase student slots in participating community preschool programs. Student-level personalization would come mainly through professional development for teachers, teaching assistants, and school heads as well as through implementation of RTI in participating pre-K programs.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>114</b>
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