



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0029LA-2 for Avoyelles Parish School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district presents a reform vision that addresses “every student from every subgroup” with quality instruction being the “key” to the vision. The vision addresses all of the core educational assurances. Through the district’s partnership with the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), there has been demonstrated success in turning around the two lowest performing schools. Furthermore, the district has presented a reform vision that uses student, teacher, administrator and school data as a significant factor in the decision making process.</p> <p>The weaknesses of the reform vision can be found in a vague explanation of how the four different data systems will be intertwined as stated in the application. Furthermore, the use of a whole faculty study groups by the district seems to be incompatible with current research on effective collaboration through small group professional learning communities. It is unclear when the district will implement professional learning communities as the language regarding professional development changes through the application. Finally, the district provided no evidence regarding the classroom experiences for students and teachers in an individualized learning environment.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provided appropriate information regarding the meetings held by the Superintendent and Central Office leaders, the State Network team, principals, school board members, and members of local community agencies. The district also provided a clear list of participating schools with evidence of student demographic information as well as the number of educators at each school who are participating. The district’s desire to have every school and every teacher participate in the grant project provides convincing evidence that the project will achieve a high quality implementation through the district’s Learning Walk teams to implement a tiered support system. Additionally, the district’s strong commitment to professional learning and ongoing coaching supports the evidence that a high level of implementation can be achieved.</p> <p>It was unclear if parents were involved in the meetings held by the Superintendent. The perceived lack of parental involvement is a significant omission. The district did not clearly provide any evidence to clarify if parents were involved. This was a weakness found in this section.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district has presented most of the indicators of a high quality plan. The application described the key goals, specific activities, a detailed timeline, the desired deliverables, and the people who will be responsible for meeting the demands as presented in the plan. The need to address district wide change was irrelevant because every school in the district is participating in this application.</p> <p>The weakness in the plan was the insufficient information regarding the rationale for the various activities and the lack of an explanation of the district’s change theory. This section would have been strengthened with the inclusion of a narrative describing the district’s change theory as well as detailed information regarding the rationale for the activities described in the plan.</p>		

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provides evidence of student performance indicators with baseline data from 2011-2012 as well as 2012-2013. The data also provides annual achievement goals through 2017-2018. The district also provided graduation rate baseline data from 2011-2012 as well as 2012-2013 along with the annual goals through 2017-2018. The application stated college enrollment data nor postsecondary degree attainment was not reported by the state.</p> <p>While the district provided annual targets, a 3% increase in all demographic groups in the Reading/Language Arts as well as Mathematics assessments seems to be inadequate for the establishment of ambitious yet achievable performance goals. The increase seems to be very conservative. The district did not provide any evidence to support the claim that a 3% increase would be an ambitious goal for their population of students. Additionally, there was insufficient information describing how the vision would result in a decrease in the achievement gap. Finally, while the state does not report college enrollment rates or postsecondary degree attainment, the district provided no evidence detailing the operational definition of how it would begin to track the data for college enrollment or postsecondary degree attainment.</p>		

**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 district demonstrated a record of mixed success over the past five years with an inconsistent increase of students scoring proficient in Math and ELA. The overall trendline from 2009 to 2013 shows an increase but it has not been steadily increasing each year from 2009 to 2013. Furthermore, the 2012-2013 actual performance data was unavailable at the time of writing so projected data was included instead. Without the 2013 data, it is difficult to determine if the district has made measurable success. The projected data showed an increase that appears to be greater than the trend line based on the previous three years. While this increase is reasonable, there was no evidence to support the optimistic scenario. Additionally, the individual schools demonstrated mixed result in achieving higher scores based on the School Performance Scores. Only 5 out of the 10 schools (50%) demonstrated a gain in SPS scores. However, the district demonstrated it can achieve favorable results with turning around low performing schools by providing evidence of success after two years of implementing a school reform initiative funded by a School Improvement Grant.</p> <p>The district inadequately provided information regarding its ability to close the achievement gap. The tables included in the application only demonstrated two years of data and the data was only for grade 4 and grade 8 students. The district also did not demonstrate a significant increase in graduation rates. The data provided indicated a 6.3% increase. The narrative was unclear if this increase was statistically significant.</p> <p>Finally, the district provided appropriate information regarding the ability to make student performance data available to the students and educators through the online resources of JPAMS and Discovery Education. However, the district provided no evidence about the process or system it has in place and it did not provide a reasonable alternative to web-based data systems. The district stated 86.4% of its students are economically disadvantaged. It is unrealistic that all parents would have internet capabilities to access student performance records. The district provided no evidence to address this concern.</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>The district describes evidence of having high levels of transparency in its processes, practices, and expenditures. The district provided evidence regarding salary schedules for instructional and support staff as well as a report for non-personnel expenditures. However, the district did not provide any evidence that instructional and support staff salaries were available at the school level. The application stated district salary schedules were available for all staff but it is unclear if this information is disaggregated by school.</p>		

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provided reasonable evidence to support the required autonomy to successfully implement the grant. Under Louisiana Act 54 of 2010, student performance data will be tied to teachers' and administrators' annual evaluation which only serves to inspire the successful implementation of a personalized learning environment. Further evidence to support the conditions of autonomy necessary to support personalized learning environments was the implementation of the School Improvement Grant in 2010. There were no weaknesses noted in this section of the application.</p>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provided a thorough description of how the stakeholders were engaged in the development process of the proposal. The collaborative process included student participation through surveys and focus groups as well as parental participation through task forces and advisory committees. Additionally, the district provided community members an opportunity to learn about the proposal and offer feedback at public presentations. The district provided evidence of support by key stakeholders, including letters of support from local mayors, State and Federal legislators and community partners. Finally, the district also provided evidence that teachers were engaged in the planning and are supportive of the project as indicated by the signature of the teacher's union representative and the signature pages of the teachers in support of the project.</p> <p>The district provided insufficient evidence that the students and parents had meaningful engagement, however. There was a lack of detailed information regarding how the district used the results of the student surveys or how much of an influence parents had on the development of the project. It was unclear how the project may have changed due to the students and parents involvement.</p>		

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provided comprehensive details that describe its high quality plan to provide students access to technical resources; improve instructional strategies; improve data management access to all key stakeholders, including the students and their parents; allow teachers and students to personalize instruction through traditional courses as well as blended instruction using high quality open educational resources such as Khan Academy; and provide students opportunities to master the curriculum content in order to be fully prepared to meet college and career readiness standards. This plan included specific goals and activities to accomplish the goals, a feasible timeline that was not too cautious nor too bold, specific deliverables and who would be accountable for those deliverables. Furthermore, the district was convincing in the description of their plan to implement their proposal as it obtained community partnerships with a variety of stakeholders. The district clearly indicated how all students, including those who are defined as high need would be engaged in a personalized learning environment.</p> <p>Overall, the plan to improve student learning is strong. Some of the more innovative strategies include the focus on critical reading and thinking skills across all grade levels. The district also recognized the importance of supporting social and emotional needs of all students as they strive to achieve academic excellence. Another key feature and strength of this proposal is the idea that students will be able to demonstrate learning in a wide variety of ways, ranging from tradition pen and paper tests to work products that will help solve community problems in the real world. Finally, the proposal is feasible and likely to be successful in achieving its goals due to the support of key stakeholders and the local community.</p> <p>The weakness in the proposal is the lack of information regarding how the parents without internet capabilities will be included in the efforts to support individualized student learning. Additionally, the district does not clearly indicate how students will be trained to use the technology that will allow a highly personalized learning experience. Another weakness in the application is the lack of operationally defining the goal setting conferences. The inadequate information regarding this process was a weakness in the application. Furthermore, the sparse evidence of parental support in the development of goals and a personalized sequence of instruction was a concern that the project would be able to achieve its goals. Finally, another concern is the number of different data systems being utilized by the district. This could be strengthened by the use of a single sign-in system that provided all the data in a central location to eliminate the need to have multiple</p>		

systems.

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

**20**

**17**

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

The district provided details that describe its high quality plan to provide educators access to the technical and professional resources necessary to improve instructional strategies; improve data-driven decision making, improving the educators' ability to personalize instruction across all grade levels and provide relevant and useful ongoing progress monitoring assessments to measure students' success in achieving high levels of mastery on the CCSS as the students strive to reach college and career readiness. This plan included specific goals and activities to accomplish the goals, a feasible timeline, specific deliverables and the parties who will be accountable. Overall, the plan to improve instruction and therefore improve student learning is strong. Some of the more innovative strategies include the focus on critical reading and thinking skills across all grade levels. The district also recognized the importance of supporting teachers in Professional Learning Communities as they use data to make instructional decisions to help students achieve academic excellence. The plan indicated the district has policies in place that will provide the necessary support for the transformation to PLCs. Finally, the proposal is feasible and likely to be successful in achieving its goals due to the support of district leadership and key members of the local community.

The district did not provide an operationally defined explanation of the student mentoring process. While the concept is a powerful method to improve student achievement, the lack of detailed information regarding this method is a weakness in the application.

**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>15</b>

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

The district provided details in the proposal to indicate the central office would provide the necessary support to implement the activities in the schools. Each school has been empowered to create an Instructional Leadership Team to support high levels of implementation at the school site. Further evidence of support was found in the flexibility the district already provides for categorical and support fund expenditures as well as the implementation of data driven action plans based on the school's needs. Additionally, the district has demonstrated a desire to improve grading and assessment practices through the creation of a Grading and Assessment Task Force. This task force is charged with finding innovative ways for students to demonstrate mastery of the material through multiple methods and not to be based on "seat time" in the course. Finally, the district has provided an appropriate narrative explaining how all students have access to their own data through the Data Director system and how students have access to credit recovery systems through the use of PLATO. The district also adequately explains how students with disabilities and other high risk students can accelerate their achievement through the use of personalized instructional systems.

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

**10**

**5**

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The district provided information detailing how students would have access to online curriculum such as PLATO. Additional information provided evidence of an initiative that would allow schools, students, and their parents to help drive individualized instruction as the students prepared to reach the college readiness threshold.

The weakness in the information was found by the inadequate explanation of providing extended hours in the school's media centers to provide time for students to work on assignments outside of school hours. The lack of a clear, operationally defined narrative regarding the extended media center hours detracted from this proposal. Additionally, the sparse details regarding how the technology demands of the project would be support was a weakness in this proposal. The district also did not address the interoperability of the data systems between Data Director and PLATO.

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

	Available	Score
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<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district presents evidence of a high quality plan to implement a rigorous continuous improvement process. There were aspects of the plan that lacked clearly defined operational information, such as the ASPTT meetings. There was no information provided about the frequency of these meetings and how the information from these meetings would be used to improve implementation. The application also did not clearly explain how the investments would be publicly shared. The application gave sparse evidence about using an external evaluator but it was unclear if the evaluator would be sharing information with the public.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district presented information that demonstrated the various ways the district maintained ongoing communication ranging from participation with community groups to share information in town hall meetings, the district website, school websites, and other media sources.</p> <p>The district's weakness in this criteria area was the lack of clearly describing a high quality plan. The district did not operationally define how information would be shared. The plan did not address a timeline or deliverables.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provided details of an achievable plan to improve student learning and performance along with a clearly stated rationale for each measure.</p> <p>However, the goals were not very ambitious. Many of the projected increases were less than a 5% increase. An ambitious yet achievable plan would have projected increases from 5% up to 10% based on the performance data. The fact the district did not indicate how their goals were ambitious for their student population was a weakness to this proposal.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provided a feasible narrative to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed activities through a mixed methods research approach. The district intends use descriptive statistics for quantitative data as well as a case study approach for more qualitative research approach. Finally. The district has stated it intends to use an independent evaluator.</p> <p>The weakness found in the narrative was the lack of details regarding the hiring process for the independent evaluator.</p>		

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

	<b>Available</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district clearly identified the funds that will be used to support the project. The district also provided a rationale for each item in the budget. Overall, the budget appears to be reasonable and will provide the necessary support for the proposal to be successfully implemented.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district provides specific evidence of how the proposal will be sustained. Most of the expenses in implementing the</p>		

proposal are highest in the first year of implementation. The district also clearly demonstrates support from community stakeholders. The financial support of the community stakeholders along with other state and federal funds will provide approximately \$2 million over the next 3 years.

The weakness in the sustainability budget may be an underestimation of the actual cost required to keep the technology purchased by the grant fully functioning. Additionally, replacement of the technology did not appear to be considered as the hardware may need to be replaced.

### 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 district's strengths in this proposal were found in the evidence of a strong partnership with the local community and in the narrative description of the multiple ways students will be able to engage in individualized learning and demonstration of mastery as they prepare to enter college or careers. Another strength can be found in the support of professional learning. The transformation of professional learning opportunities from whole faculty to smaller Professional Learning Communities demonstrates the district is committed to building collaboration. Finally, the district did not identify more than 10 desired results, keeping within the requirements of the Competitive Preference Priority.

The district's weakness was in the identification of ambitious yet achievable goals. In the areas of weakest performance, many student improvement gains were less than 5%. A specific example of this can be seen with Grade 3 ELA scores for free/reduced lunch students where the gains increase by 3% annually. Another weakness was found in the establishment of the 2013-2014 target being set higher than previous trends may have predicted. An example of this can be seen with the Grade 3 ELA scores for American Indians increasing from a baseline score of 25% proficient to a target score of 40% proficient. The lack of a clear rationale describing why this target may be achievable resulted in the concern regarding whether this was an attainable target. Additionally, the narrative did not provide a clear explanation of the integration of public and private resources in a partnership to improve student performance through addressing the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the students and/or families. The district also provided only limited evidence of the process to improve the effectiveness of the project for each year of funding and beyond the funding cycle and how the project evaluation data would be utilized between the district and its partners.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Overall, the district met the requirements. There was ample evidence of improvements in instruction, leadership capacity and quality, as well as student learning as measured by a variety of methods ranging from the integration of technology to other classroom methods. The emphasis on developing individualized learning initiatives was a benefit to this application. The weaknesses found in the lack of parental involvement, the lack of operationally defined aspects of parts of the project and the limited rationale in the establishment of ambitious and attainable growth goals did not significantly detract from the district's ability to implement the project and meet the requirements of Absolute Priority 1.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>153</b>
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0029LA-3 for Avoyelles Parish School District

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant builds on two of the four core educational assurance areas well. The applicant describes a clear and credible approach to adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to building data systems. The applicant was less clear about an approach to recruiting, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most and turning around the lowest-achieving schools.</p> <p>The applicant articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support. The applicant was comprehensive in including support for students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members as part of the vision. The applicant also addresses strategies for students at all levels: elementary, middle and high school. The applicant proves that there is a need for resources in their district because there are several high-needs students, and over 80% of the students in the district receive free and reduced lunch. The applicant also proves some ability to move forward with this vision because they are currently working on implementing Common Core State Standards and data-driven instruction, which will be furthered by this grant.</p> <p>The applicant lacks a complete description of the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning. The applicant describes several resources (Open Educational Resources, Discovery Ed., etc.) that will help students, teachers and parents assess learning and move forward; however, the applicant does not tie all of these resources together into one coherent classroom experience. The applicant also mentions project-based learning, but it is not clear what the classroom experience will look like for students and teachers.</p> <p>For A1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 6 because the classroom experience was not fully described, and two of four core assurance areas were not clearly described.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant describes some steps in a decision process to include all 10 of the schools in the district; the process included a variety of stakeholders. The applicant makes an argument that 10 schools is feasible to scale the program to, and that all 10 schools have a high population of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch that need this program: 83.3%. The applicant does not discuss how they will approach high-quality implementation in 10 schools at one time. There is a tiered support system to help with project implementation, but there is not evidence that the district can achieve high-quality implementation in all schools at one time.</p> <p>The applicant provides a table of the schools to be included as part of the plan, and the table includes convincing data regarding student need.</p> <p>The applicant earns a mid-range score of 7 for A2 because the applicant states that the approach to implementation is feasible but there is not concrete evidence to support that high-quality implementation district-wide is feasible.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant presents a high-quality plan that clearly delineates key goals, activities, rationale, timeline, deliverables and parties responsible.</p>		

The applicant's plan is ambitious, but it moves at a very fast pace. The plan includes a lot of training for educators in the summer and fall of 2014. The applicant does not address how teachers will be able to assimilate new information about math, Marzano's strategies, KAGAN strategies, Data Director and technology integration all at one time. The applicant's timeline is fast paced and does not guarantee improved student learning outcomes. The applicant states that there will be some coaching to support new classroom strategies for professional development, but the applicant also assumes that providing the professional development, in and of itself, will translate into meaningful reform. For example, the applicant states, "teachers fully aware of how to use data to drive student growth" (as a deliverable). Teachers will be trained on how to use Data Director, and it will be the focus of six yearly meetings at the school level, but that does not necessarily mean that all teachers will be "fully aware."

The applicant's plan does include activities to train parents and community liaisons to support the plan.

For A3, the applicant earn a mid-range score of 6. The applicant includes all elements of a high-quality plan; however, the timeline is fast paced and may not translate into meaningful reform.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents realistic annual goals for performance on summative assessments. For example, for the EOC in 9th, 10th and 11th grade, 12% of students with accommodations were proficient in 2012-13. Post-grant, the goal is 27%, which is ambitious but achievable. The applicant did not define the relationship of their goals with State ESEA targets; there is some indication that the applicants goals are greater, but it is not evident.

The applicant's goal for decreasing achievement gaps was around 5% per sub-group, which also seems ambitious, yet achievable.

The applicant's goals for improving the graduation rate did not always seem ambitious. For example, the graduation rate for student with accommodations in 2012-13 was 20.3%. The applicant's goal by 2017-18 is 25%. The overall graduation rate was only projected to increase by 1.5% per year, which is not a very ambitious goal.

The applicant did not provide any college enrollment rates or goals in that area.

For A4, the applicant received a mid-range score of 5. The applicant presents ambitious yet achievable goals for summative assessment and increasing achievement gaps. The graduation rate goals were not as ambitious, and college enrollment was not addressed.

**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:**

The applicant's data shows some improvement in student learning over the last four years, but it does not show significant growth. Some of the schools decreased on Louisiana School Performance Scores over a four year period. The applicant did not present four years of data to illustrate a decrease in achievement gaps. The applicant showed data from 2008-09 and 2012-13 and then the percent difference. It is not evident that there has been a clear record of success over the past four years.

The applicant did not show ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools. The scores over four years increased and decreased. Some of the schools received School Improvement grants, but even those schools did not show ambitious and significant reforms. The applicant's graduation rate is fairly flat: hovering around 60%. The applicant only presented data from two years regarding college enrollment, and the data shows a decrease in students enrolling to college.

The applicant shows how data is available to parents, students and teachers, but they did not provide evidence of how parents, students and teachers are using the data to inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

For B1, the applicant received a low mid-range score of 6. The applicant did not demonstrate a clear record of success over the past four years. The applicant shows some minor areas of success (i.e. graduation rate increase from 57.9 to 64.2); however, college enrollment dropped significantly in one year. There is not a clear record that over the past four years, even with data available and School Improvement grants, that the district has been able to sustain improved student

learning.

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

The applicant states that salaries are available via a website; however, it is not clear if this data is made available by school. The applicant describes televised board meetings, which are an innovative way to make some information accessible.

For B2, the applicant receives a mid-range score of 2; the applicant describes some transparency but does not detail the level of transparency.

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

The applicant shows successful conditions within the state to support the applicant's proposal. For example, the state adopted Common Core standards, and the state has emphasized digital learning.

For B3, the applicant received a mid-range score of 7 because the applicant addresses many of the conditions for autonomy that the applicant needs to implement the proposed reforms. The applicant did not detail all legal, statutory and regulatory requirements, such as required seat time, that may be hurdles to the plan. The applicant argues that the successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under state rules are emerging, but there are still some details that need to be addressed. For example, the state is working with district leaders to build a proficiency-based system.

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

The applicant describes a meaningful process to engage stakeholders in preparing the plan. For example, students and teacher participated in surveys and focus groups. The applicant also involved a parent advisory committee and community groups. The applicant illustrates a collaborative process to writing the grant that included team meetings. There was also a publicly televised presentation regarding the proposed plan. However, the applicant does not provide evidence of the type of commentary received during the surveys and focus groups, nor is it evident how that feedback was used to revise the plan.

The applicant includes signatures of support from teachers in participating schools.

There are 14 letters of support included. Some of the letters are authentic interactions with the plan, and some of the letters are form letters of support. The letters represent a small cross-section of stakeholders (i.e. mayor, school board).

For B4, the applicant received a mid-range score of 11. The applicant includes evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement in preparing the plan; however, there was not evidence of authentic commentary and how that was incorporated into the plan.

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

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

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

The applicant includes a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching.

The applicant includes effective strategies for goals linked to college and career ready standards such as creating plans at the 6th and 8th grade years to help students focus on college and career. The applicant also includes a testing progression for all students that includes EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT to get more students thinking about their college options and preparation. The applicant mentions some resources that will involve students in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest and providing access to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives, but the applicant does not offer many ways that these will be accessible to students.

The applicant involved parents routinely in district events, including a conflict management workshop in lieu of suspension

after an altercation.

The applicant does not detail a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development. The applicant lists resources that are available and assessments that the student will take and data that will be available from those assessments; however, it is not clear what an individual student's plan might involve. The applicant describes a lot of professional development and training that the teachers will undergo, but there is not evidence that this will translate into meaningful reform and improved student learning.

The applicant provides several strategies for ongoing and regular feedback.

The applicant did not address accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students. The applicant discusses resources (i.e. a social worker), but does not address the unique challenges with preparing high-needs student for college and career.

The applicant does not describe how students will be trained to be accountable to tracking their data and progress. The applicant describes teacher training, but it is not clear how students will be trained to effectively use the data.

For C1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 12. The applicant includes several useful tools for improving student learning; however, the applicant does not connect them all in a way that effectively personalizes education for all students and improves their success.

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

**20**

**16**

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

The applicant provides a high-quality plan for improving teaching and leading. The applicant proves that all participating educators engage in training, and in in professional teams or communities. The applicant provides several programs that will result in effective implementation of personalized learning environments because it will be an on-going focus, and there will be several opportunities for reflection and growth.

One of the effective strategies the applicant discusses is Learning Walks, which are conducted four times a year for each teacher. These walks provide accountability to monitor and assess how the teacher is doing with implementation of the plan.

The applicant also presents an Inquiry cycle between teacher and principal to get the teacher to be reflective and change teaching.

The applicant also shows that teachers will be given tools to assist them in improving instruction (i.e. Discovery Ed., instructional coaches, etc.). Teachers and principals will also be trained in Center for Educational Leadership, and students' assessment results are tied into evaluation. The applicant has included on-going professional development and collaboration to ensure that teachers are using data to accelerate student progress in the classroom. As part of the plan, school leaders will be working to ensure that teachers are effectively using the data they have available to them.

The applicant presents a plan to provide school leaders with training, policies, tools, data and resources that enable them to structure effective learning environments. The applicant presents a teacher evaluation system that is comprehensive in addressing what teachers are doing in the classroom to improve instruction.

The applicant does not show how it will attract highly effective teachers and in hard to staff areas, but the applicant shows that through professional development and on-going monitoring and accountability, all professionals' capacities will improve, and more students will then have access to highly effective teachers and principals. The applicant does state that the best principals will be assigned to the most challenging schools in order to improve the climate and change the school.

For C2, the applicant received a high-range score of 16. The applicant fully addresses how teachers and leaders will be developed, monitored and held accountable for their actions. The applicant is not always specific regarding resources and processes, but there is overall an effective plan to improve teaching and leading.

**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>12</b>

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

The applicant has a well laid out tiered system for the district office to support individual schools. The tiered system is

comprised of comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need. The tiered system provides a framework for classroom practice, school practice and district practice.

The applicant has granted sufficient flexibility and autonomy to school leadership teams, and there are Instructional Leadership Teams at each school.

While the applicant does not currently have a plan for students to progress based on mastery, the applicant commits to revisit a Pupil Progression Plan. The applicant has a Task Force dedicated to explore options for flexible student credit.

The applicant notes students can demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways (i.e. PLATO, Data Director).

The applicant provides a credible approach to providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students through a Family Resource Center and parental involvement liaisons. These opportunities provide additional support for the students who need it most, and they make the resources accessible to students with high-needs.

For D1, the applicant received a high-range score of 12. The applicant thoroughly addressed all areas, except there was not a specific commitment to allowing students to progress based on mastery.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

As part of the applicant's high-quality plan for project implementation, high school students will have 1:1 laptops and elementary students will have 3:1. This provision allows for all participating students to have access to necessary content, tools and other learning resources; however, it does not guarantee access. The applicant explains that last year they provided air cards to students where there was no Internet service available, and this system did not work. The applicant plans to have extended lab hours to help these students; however this does not guarantee that students will have the access they need. The extended hours are not defined, and this limits students who cannot afford internet or are in areas that do not have internet access.

Technical support was not always evident in the applicant's plan. The applicant describes a Family Resource Center and parental involvement liaisons, but it was not clear how the devices would be technologically supported or if there would be other technical support for stakeholders.

It is not clear if the technology systems allow parents and students to export information in an open data format or if the data systems are interoperable.

For D2, the applicant receives a low mid-range score of 4. The applicant proves that some of the infrastructure is in place (i.e. the devices and data systems), but the applicant does not fully prove how these systems work together or how stakeholders will receive technical support.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

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

The applicant presents a high-quality plan that describes a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback.

The applicant's plan has multiple levels of oversight: Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT), District office personnel, and an external evaluator; however, a lot of the monitoring and review occurs at the ILT level. While this gives autonomy to the schools, it places a lot of burden on these ILTs who may not have all of the training or be consistent in monitoring the plan.

The applicant's plan provides a variety of effective ways that it will monitor, measure and publicly share information. The applicant does not address how ongoing corrections and improvements will be addressed. The applicant provides several ways to monitor, measure, and reflect on progress, but it is not clear how they will make changes based on the findings from the data and the reflection.

For E1, the applicant received a mid-range score of 11. The applicant addresses all components of a high-quality plan in

a way that will truly evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and 21st Century learning tools. The applicant did not receive the full amount of points because the effectiveness and efficiency of the ILTs was not fully established, and it is not evident how the applicant will approach ongoing corrections and improvements.

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

**5**

**3**

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

The applicant presents multiple effective ways to engage stakeholders, both internally and externally. For example, the applicant lists monthly televised school Board meetings as one form of external communication. The applicant also includes the Equity Task Force that meets monthly during the school year; this includes parents, students and community members. While the applicant has many sources for communication, the engagement is not evident. The applicant does not describe what they will do with input received from stakeholders.

The applicant also describes two effective ways to communicate with internal stakeholders: Instructional Leadership Teams and Professional Learning Communities. These are effective forms of communication because they are already embedded in the school, and the groups are part of the change process.

For E2, the applicant received a mid-range score of 3 because the applicant cites innovative and effective strategies for on-going communication; however, it is not apparent what the applicant will do with feedback from stakeholders.

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

**5**

**5**

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

The applicant fully develops 13 ambitious yet achievable performance measures. The measures address a variety of student issues, not just assessment (i.e. attendance, suspensions, etc.).

The applicant provides strong rationales for each of the performance measures. For example, math proficiency by the end of 6th grade is one of the measures because that leads to being on track in 9th grade, which leads to being college and career ready.

The applicant selected performance measures that are appropriate to the age of the student. For example, one of the performance measures is "students entering kindergarten who achieve age-appropriate social-emotional skills on DSC."

The applicant's goals are ambitious yet achievable. One example of this is the the planned increase in students applying for FAFSA. The baseline for 2012-13 was 14%. The target for 2017-18 is 77%. This is an ambitious goal, but with education and support from trained personnel along the way (which is what the plan calls for), this can be an achievable goal.

The applicant provides solid questions for the external reviewer to use in providing feedback about the performances measures and the district's progress on those measures.

For E3, the applicant received a 5 because they present sound performances measures including all required components.

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

**5**

**5**

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

The district presents a multi-level high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of RTTD funded activities. Specifically, the applicant addresses how professional development and technology will be evaluated.

The most compelling part of the high-quality plan are the questions developed for the external evaluator to use in providing feedback about the plan's effectiveness. These questions illustrate fore-thought on the part of the team to determine what success would look like and the team's willingness to be reflective about the process and change the things that are not working.

For E4, the applicant receive a high-range score of 5 because they comprehensively addresses a plan to rigorously evaluate effectiveness.

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

	Available	Score

<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant identifies all funds that will support the project; their list includes federal funds, other grants, community resources, and district monies. In the overall budget request, the amount of funds from other sources is almost equal to the amount of the grant request. The shows the applicant's support beyond RTTD funds.</p> <p>The applicant presents a reasonable and sufficient budget that addresses such items as teacher stipends for training and required substitutes that might get overlooked in preparing a budget.</p> <p>The applicant provides thoughtful rationales for investments and priorities. All funds are listed and identified (specifically named) for each item in the budget. Funds are labeled one-time and on-going.</p> <p>For F1, the applicant received a high-range score of 10 because the budget is well detailed. The applicant provides detailed justification for the items in the budget, including how the items fit in with the applicant's vision for reform. The applicant also provides detailed descriptions of costs (i.e. not just "personnel" but "Media Specialist Staffing full-time staff at each school site to identify and push out digital resources to classroom teachers. 10@ \$40,000").</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has a plan for sustainability; however, the plan is not fully developed to continue to support high-level personalized education. One of the key components of sustainability is a train the trainer approach; instead of paying for professional development, the district will use their own people. There are deficiencies to this approach (i.e. the training can get outdated; trainers may not deliver a consistent message). The applicant did not evidence the effectiveness of the train the trainer approach; it is also possible that staff who are highly trained may be recruited to other jobs.</p> <p>The applicant lists community and federal dollars that have been infused into their schools in the past and are projected to continue. The applicant does not provide proof of on-going support from these sources, nor from the state and/or local government leaders. The applicant also does not show a clear pattern of success resulting from this financial support in the past.</p> <p>The applicant includes many costs that will be required beyond the life of the grant. Additional costs, such as replacing old and/or broken devices and materials are addressed.</p> <p>For F2, the applicant received a high mid-range score of 7. The applicant has a high quality plan for sustainability, but it does not illustrate full support and commitment to keep the proposal going.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant describes a coherent and sustainable partnership that is already established but would be furthered.</p> <p>The applicant identifies population-level results--these results are well tied into applicant's RTTD proposal and will support teachers and students in improved learning (i.e. student health issues and student pre-k preparation).</p> <p>The applicant plans to track indicators and use data to target resources. The scalability was unclear. The applicant says that they will focus on the low-performing schools; however, it was not clear how they would move beyond that starting point. The applicant did present a convincing argument that the partnership, for some students, would improve results over time.</p> <p>The applicant's partnership addresses students' needs on all levels (health, behavior, emotional).</p> <p>The applicant discusses some building of the capacity of staff in participating schools, but this was not addressed in depth.</p> <p>The applicant presents ambitious, yet achievable performance measures that are tied into their proposal.</p> <p>The applicant received a mid-range score of 6 for the competitive preference priority. The district has already established effective partnerships and programs within those partnerships to support students' social/emotional/behavioral health which</p>		

impact students' ability to be educated. The applicant did not prove scalability of the program or the building of the capacity of school staff in order to expand the effectiveness of the partnership.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents personalized learning environments through:

- professional development to build the capacity of teachers to improve student learning
- 21st Century learning tools (Open Educational Resources, Discovery Education, personal devices)
- coordination of public services (the community partnership in the competitive preference priority, as well as support staff in the buildings)
- learning plans at 6th and 8th grade that are monitored to ensure that students are college and career ready
- implementation and assessment of Common Core standards
- academic student parent teacher teams to support students

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>141</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0029LA-1 for Avoyelles Parish School District

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

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

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

The APSB school district has set ambitious and comprehensive goals that encompass the four educational assurance areas. They have a clear and credible approach based on having highly effective teachers and principals, utilizing a variety of resources and partnerships. Students and their parents will set goals, have on-going information about progress, be taught by teachers who will have learned new instructional strategies and utilize a study guide to keep track of their goal progress. Professional development for teachers, with the understanding that effective teachers are the most important part of personalized learning, is the cornerstone of this vision.

The classroom experience is described, although briefly and some terms are used that are not defined. Some of those terms include "IBC", "Work Keys" and "Kagan Strategies." They are referred to in several sections of the application. The reader might infer their meanings, but they are not directly described which hampers a full understanding of the strategies to be used.

The comprehensiveness of the vision, as well as the fact that it addresses the four educational assurance areas puts this vision in the higher range. However, some points were lost due to the lack of descriptions of key elements mentioned and some vague references to strategies in the classroom experiences. Therefore, this vision merits an 8 overall.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

All 10 of the schools in the APSB school district will participate in this project. This was decided by a representative group of stakeholders who believed that all students, K-12, should benefit from the changes being implemented. Since much of their plan is based on professional development, that part is workable. The lowest performing schools are their top priority. They especially mention the achievement gaps between white students and African American students. They also note the disparity between whites and students who are economically disadvantaged which is not as great. However, they do not focus on those students with disabilities who have a wider achievement gap with the other groups. Each school will be supported by a district team and will begin at a "tier 1". The tiered level of support is referred to, and described in the appendix. The lowest performing schools and students are identified and student data is listed that shows low income and high needs categories.

Much of the implementation is based on summer workshop professional development for which teachers will be given stipends to attend. This is considered by the district preferable to pulling teachers out of the classroom. Although peer observation and collaboration are encouraged and will require long-term substitutes. The professional development will address both math and literacy strategies, as well as student engagement and technology integration. Each teacher is also required to be part of a faculty study group. The emphasis in this part of the implementation plan appears to be on having a highly effective teacher in each classroom through various professional development models.

The APSB school district already has a Compass Evaluation system in place that includes student achievement data. It is set up for teachers and administrators. This is one of the steps, along with the professional development, used by the district to ensure high quality teachers in every classroom. Their proposal addresses the needs of students for whom there is an achievement gap by indicating that these students will be taught by the most highly qualified teachers. This section includes charts that indicate the demographics and number of participating students at each school in the district.

The professional development in this section is thoroughly described and having a comprehensive evaluation system already in place puts the district ahead in the implementation process. The first section involving the priority schools and the services for students with disabilities is not clearly explained, therefore this part of the application is in the middle range.

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

**10**

**7**

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

The Logic Chart for this school district outlines Core Areas, Inputs, Activities, Intermediate and Long-term Outcomes. Again there are activities planned that provide professional development, either through summer workshops or by coaching, to every teacher. It is stated that highly effective teachers will work with the neediest students. The professional development aspect is well described and is planned for the first three years of the grant which will give all their teachers a solid grounding in the strategies taught.

There are plans to hire 10 media specialists and 1 technology trainer. It is not clear what those 10 media specialists are intended to do. This is the only place in the narrative where they are mentioned. They also plan to hire a data director to coordinate all the data gathering and community liason people to teach parents both strategies for use with problem behaviors and how to use the technology. Parents are also included on academic parent - teacher teams. Mentors are planned for 7th and 11th grade students. There are groups and staff members assigned to each part of the plan, some groups have more tasks than others, but the tasks appear to fit the positions and titles of the groups so it is likely the tasks will be accomplished. All but the media specialists have clear purposes in being part of the plan.

The district also plans to pull together a team to look at sustainability. This is not described or defined in the chart and is alluded to later in the narrative. Other parts of the chart, such as the assessment pieces are more clearly described. Although after listing the STAR Enterprise in math and reading, it states that teachers will use the data. Later in the narrative they indicate that teachers will be taught through professional development.

The timeline is feasible since they begin with professional development for all staff, using assessment to monitor progress and then build up to involving students and parents in goal-setting, sharing data, and using technology devices. The sustainability of having devices in each student's hands has also not been addressed in terms of upgrading or replacing them.

The district plan is ambitious and of high quality since they plan to address the professional development of all teachers and principals in the district with emphasis on the lowest performing schools. They also plan to improve student achievement for all students in the district. The professional development is what especially makes this plan feasible since the teachers will become more effective and that will continue long after the grant is done. Since there are several unclear areas as noted here, this part of the vision merits 7 points.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>There are three different assessments reported in this section along with the graduation rates. A baseline for the past two years is included as well as goals for the overall group and all sub groups. The goals indicate expected gains from year to year and there are gains made between the two baseline years. The goals exceed that of state requirements and charts are included to show the changes made at the state level. The district states that they intend to close achievement gaps particularly between African-American students, their biggest subgroup, and whites. However, in their projections, through the use of the grant activities, the gap does not actually close. There are still <u>projected</u> gaps between these groups by the fourth year. While they are less, from 25 to 13% on one measure, there is still a gap. The projections also show this to be the case to a larger degree between students with disabilities and those without. On one measure, the overall proficiency level was projected for 78%, but African-American students were projected to have 45% proficiency and those with disabilities 27%. There were not huge gaps between whites and those in the free/reduced range. This would indicate that while the goals are achievable, they may not be ambitious.</p> <p>Similarly with the graduation rates, their current rate of 62.9 % is projected to rise to 72% by the end of the grant. A 9.1% improvement overall may be achievable, bus is not ambitious. African American student graduation rates are expected to increase from 57% to 68%. This would be an 11% increase over 4 years which does not seem very ambitious.</p> <p>The district uses more than one measure of proficiency and is trying to close achievement gaps to some extent. However, even the proposed goals for proficiency continue the gaps although to a lesser degree and the graduation rate is still below the national average. The district is likely to see gains in student achievement and graduation. It is likely that the achievement gaps between some groups will become smaller. The goals are not ambitious, however, and therefore the gains are not as great as they could be. Therefore, the score is in the low mid-range.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The data charts included by the district showed overall gains in achievement on the state educational assessment exams. These showed an increase of about 4% in ELA and 5% in math. The state also gives each school and district a performance score. Some of the schools had been identified as being "in need of improvement" previously and are now at or above the state requirements. The "end of course" exams for 9th and 10th graders in ELA and math showed a closing of the achievement gap between African American students and white students. African American students showed a projected increase in ELA from 27% proficiency in 2008-9 to 55% in 2012-13. White students increased in ELA achievement from 44% proficiency to a projected 80% proficiency in the same time periods. Economically disadvantaged students ELA performance is projected to increas from 33% to 65%, and students with disabilities showed improvements in ELA from 13% proficiency to a projected 50% in that time period. Math achievement scores were not quite as dramatic, and students with disabilities dropped 1% in proficiency. In English/Language Arts, the district shows a track record of some growth, but most of it is projected optimism. The district shows data over the past 2-3 years, but not before. It raises the question of what assessment they used previously and the results they had.</p> <p>The graduation rate too is slowly improving from 57.9% of students graduating in 2005-6 to 64.2 % in 2011-12. The state produced a report that the district had a declining number of students enrolling in college in 2009-10 from 2007-8. This is the last report on that subject produced by the state. The district attributes this decline to economic hardships and therefore students did not attend college. Since they did not include a post graduate survey, this is speculation, but the national economy had difficulties during that time.</p> <p>The district no longer has schools performing at the lowest range in the state. Four schools are at the next level up. All of the elementary schools are Title 1 schools and their four high schools are "Targeted Assistance Title 1 Schools." This indicates that the schools have a high level of poverty, 79.4%- 96.8%, which can adversely affect student achievement. The funding they received is to support the instruction of their neediest students in terms of academic achievement which should help them close the achievement gaps.</p> <p>All of this data shows that the district has narrowed the achievement gap slightly. They have shown a track record of some success for many of their students. They have targeted the lowest achieving schools which is evidenced by the fact that none of their schools are in the "F" range on state performance measures.</p>		

By making their lowest performing schools their highest priority, they hope to provide an equitable education to all students, in all sub groups. They also plan to target those sub groups who show greater achievement gaps with white students. This is a laudable goal and given the data they provide, it seems a reasonable and achievable goal. The district cites poverty and their geographic location as barriers to post secondary education. They have built a partnership with the state university and other groups to overcome these barriers.

The district has a system and process for making student data available to educators, students and parents. They describe the process by which data can be accessed including attendance, scheduling, grades, transcripts, standardized test results, and discipline reports. Parents must request the access and receive log-ins to contact teachers and monitor their student's progress. In-services are provided to parents to learn to access the information throughout the school year. This system is already in place and is another step toward achieving their goals.

The district has explained achievable goals designed to help their schools and students with the greatest gaps achieve to the greatest level. As mentioned previously, teaching their teachers through professional development to become more effective teachers will help to make these goals a reality. These are significant reforms based on best instructional practice, personalizing the learning environment by including parents and students in goal-setting and monitoring progress. The goals of closing achievement gaps are noted through projections of the current data and what is expected in the four years of the grant. While the achievement gaps are not projected to completely close, they are a great improvement over recent practice, and since the district expects to improve education for all of its nearly 6,000 students, this makes them ambitious goals. Therefore the score for this section is in the medium high range.

**(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)**

**5**

**4**

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The district publishes their annual budgets and presentation on the district website, and has done so for 5 years. They also present this on television and have a "public viewing" of the budget. District staff salaries are also available on the website. They have a communication initiative through which their goal is greater fiscal transparency, including their strategic plan and core processes. The four levels defined in this section are already addressed in district processes and the district has a goal to continue and expand their fiscal transparency. It is not clear from the narrative if this level of transparency is only at the district level or if it is also at the school level. Therefore this section is scored in the high range.

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

**10**

**10**

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

The mayors of the various towns and cities involved in the district have endorsed the project, giving it their full support as evidenced by the letters included in the application. The district already has virtual and extended learning opportunities in place. The state is working with districts to build frameworks for proficiency based systems and opportunities for personalized learning. The state has adopted the Common Core Standards and in 2014-15, all state testing will be through an online system. The ultimate goal by the state is to have all students equipped with 21st Century learning skills and a high school diploma. The state also offers and sponsors professional development opportunities for teachers some of which will support the district's efforts in this grant project. Finally, the state requires the teacher and principal evaluation system that the district has in place, based on Charlotte Danielson's work, which includes student achievement data.

All of these opportunities and systems lay the ground work for the grant project. The district will have the necessary autonomy and conditions to achieve their goals.

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

**15**

**11**

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

The team that developed the Race to the Top grant application included teachers, principals and district leaders. It was decided that they needed to not only be able to understand the goals and motivations behind the reforms in the project, but needed to be able to communicate these goals and motivations to students and parents. The district cited several groups and committees that included parents, community members, and regional and national partners with whom they work in various capacities not directly related to the grant. Twelve of these wrote letters of support included in the appendix, although the Tunica Biloxi Tribe did not write a letter. Students were surveyed, the draft proposal was shared with the community in a televised presentation and input was sought from all members of the community. The appendix also included signatures from over 400 district staff members and students in support of the project.

The district was diligent and thorough in connecting with staff and students from all the schools and their partnership groups both in the community and around it during the grant writing process. The only group not included directly in the

writing of the grant were parents . Their involvement was evidenced only by the televised presentation and by a letter from a parent volunteer. Since partnering with parents often provides key support in reform efforts, this is a great oversight. Principals and teachers were directly involved with input from other groups. For these reasons, the score in this section is in the high medium range.

### 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 district plans to integrate a wide variety of means to ensure that students understand that what they are learning is key to accomplishing their goals. These include goal setting conferences with students, parents and teachers, multi-year academic and career plans, assessments (Explore, PLAN, ACT), "Journey to Career" courses, Career Fairs, project-based learning, service learning, parent education sessions, online courses, resource coaches, after school programs, dual enrollment, AP classes, and teachers customizing content based on student needs. They have also integrated technology both as a means to track progress toward goals and as a learning tool.

There is the expectation that teachers and administration, through their work with Common Core Standards will also become experts in college and career ready standards and assessments. Students will map out, at the end of 8th grade, their college and career plan for the next 4 years. There is a "WorkKeys Test" that is to be taken by students to assist in setting this plan. The assessment though, is not described beyond this mention. In addition to AP courses, a school to work transition program, called the JAG Program, is offered to all high school students. Career Day is held in the fall and spring and is extended to 8th - 11th grade students. It includes colleges, the military and various industries who show students what is available after graduation.

In addition to these efforts to help students become college and career ready, the district is addressing the need for parent involvement and for more counselors with the Academic Student Parent Teacher Teams. These teams are designed to keep parents involved throughout their high school years, although they do not describe specifically how that is to be accomplished.

In partnership with the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership, the district is implementing with teachers, the Inquiry Cycle. The teacher meets with their principal and coach to discuss the area of focus and the relevant data, tries out the learned strategy with students, is observed by a collaborating partner and gathers data on how well the strategy worked. Then they meet again with their principal to discuss results and with their coach to consider ways to implement or improve further. This embedded professional development has been shown to be highly effective by giving immediate feedback and helping teachers to change their instructional methodology and mindset.

The district is diverse with about 46% of it's population being students of color. However, 83% of their teachers are white. They are aware of this "challenge" and work to ensure that materials and content reflect their cultural diversity. They are requesting books for their libraries, have a foreign exchange student system, and offer both French and Spanish language classes. Hiring practices were not mentioned in this context, in terms of looking for more highly qualified teachers of color.

The district application indicates that they want all of their students to graduate college and career ready. Therefore they have implemented KAGAN structures to improve ethnic relations, enhance self-esteem, develop social skills and reduce discipline problems. It may be deduced that this is a character education program, but the specifics of how KAGAN structures will do this is not included. They have also developed partnerships between state education agencies colleges and schools to focus on math and sciences. This partnership will provide professional development to teachers and hands-on activities to teach math standards. In addition, they have developed a Response to Intervention (Rtl) program to meet the needs of struggling learners as identified by benchmark assessments given three times per year at all grade levels. All of these actions in combination with the goal-setting conferences and career fairs are part of their high quality plan for college and career readiness.

The district has plans to personalize their instruction by using data to determine what each student needs. District and classroom assessment data are readily available in a data base for teachers, students and their parents. This allows the teachers to adjust and modify lessons to meet the needs of individual students based on the data, as well as to determine whether students have mastered skills. It also allows them, through their district provided laptops to keep track of student progress as well as having students and their parents keep track of progress on their district provided laptops. In addition, they have an Rtl system that provides support for students through specific interventions. All of this is the basis for the ditrict's plan for a personalized learning environment. These are good steps as far as they go, but connections for

teachers between the professional development and personalized learning are not clearly stated.

The district will also provide Saturday morning conferences for those students involved in physical altercations. The conference teaches conflict resolution and anger management skills. The parents are involved by attending with their student.

All of the above efforts are designed to place a greater emphasis on students learning the skills necessary to become college and career ready based on common core standards.

In terms of high quality approaches and environment, the district has a comprehensive professional development plan that includes all grade levels, both job-embedded, summertime and professional learning communities. This four year plan will focus on personalization and effective instruction for all students. By using technology, including devices for students and teachers, there will be immediate feedback and information on assignments, and teachers can adjust lessons accordingly. The devices also allow students and parents to keep track of student progress toward goals. The district lists a plethora of courses and materials that will be available to students online thereby providing access to up-to-date materials and, with the teachers benefitting from all the professional development, high quality, effective teachers.

The feedback includes that given through the individual student data and assessments. Presumably, the teachers will also provide feedback during the conferences with students and their parents. The district focused primarily on assessment data feedback in this section which is extensive.

In order to provide a high quality learning environment for all students, the district will provide personalized learning for each student including an RtI system for academic needs, access to social workers, psychologists and counselors, health clinics in various locations of the district, mental health clinics, and other resources. They expect to see more of their high need students graduate based on these supports, the personalized learning environment and the emphasis on college and career ready skills. At the elementary level, many of the same systems are available and they have a partnership with the Kennedy Center which provides Success Academies that support academic and enrichment learning.

Throughout all of these efforts, programs and changes in classroom instruction, students will learn how to use the tools and resources provided. The district has an extensive listing of the various parts of this plan and all the programs involved. The heart and soul of the plan appears to be the professional development provided to teachers to change the classroom environment and learning process to a more personalized setting. As a result, the district expects to see more of their students graduate and to close achievement gaps between specific subgroups. Most of the plan is well-described and is likely to achieve the intended results. Parent involvement is limited to attending goal-setting conferences, tracking progress, and involvement with disciplinary conferences. Later in the narrative there is some evidence of parent involvement in a Youth Coalition. Parents have a great deal of influence in the success, or failure, of their students.

The thoroughness of the plan places it in the higher range of the score. The relatively minor involvement of parents, even though mention is made of Academic Student Parent Teacher Teams, they are not explained; the missing explanations of WorkKeys and KAGAN structures; no mention made of hiring more teachers of color; and very little mention of what will happen at the elementary and middle school level, places this section in the upper middle level.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The district recognizes the teacher as the single most important factor in student achievement. As such, the district's goals and plans are focused on improving teachers to a higher level of effectiveness. The district will provide professional development for teachers in how to facilitate goal setting conferences with students and parents, literacy, math and 21st Century skills, allowing flexibility in timing and type of assignment, project-based and service-learning based learning, the practice of learning, and in personalizing the classroom experience for students. Principals will conduct Learning Walks four times per year and COMPASS evaluations in all grade levels and subject areas on all teachers. They will provide teachers with targeted feedback. Teachers will conduct "Inquiry Cycles" and write two Student Learning Targets each year based on student data from their classrooms, and be involved with professional learning teams called Whole Faculty Study Groups. They will learn to use student assessment data to provide RtI interventions. Student data will be used as part of the evaluation of teachers and reports will be given to all stakeholders. This will provide teachers with the skills to differentiate instruction as is necessary in a personalized learning environment making it more effective for students.

Some of these pieces are already in place: the evaluation system, the professional learning teams or Whole Faculty Study Groups. The professional development remains to be implemented as does the use of the technological devices and using student data to personalize the learning environment. This is a large part of the grant plan. Early adopters of the

strategies and practices will become lead teachers who will become onsite coaches and assistants. By the end of the fourth year, all teachers will be familiar with and will implement the strategies and practices described in this application. Once a teacher becomes more effective as is likely with this plan, they will not go back to teaching as they did before. They will continue to be effective teachers. What is not addressed in this plan, is how the district will attract new, highly effective teachers and how they will retain these effective teachers.

Based on the Discovery Ed test which is given three times per year, student growth in grades 3-12 will be disaggregated to determine which students require RtI services. Using online programs and resources, students will have a personalized learning system that will allow them to progress toward college and career ready goals. Grades K-2 are given a "paper and pencil benchmark assessment" but it is not clear if this is district designed or a standardized test. Test results for grades 3-12 are available online very quickly so that teachers can adjust their lessons accordingly. Again, this supports the differentiation necessary to personalize instruction.

The district has partnered with the University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) on a three year project to train school leaders, and teacher leaders in the use of research-based practices to turn around under performing schools that serve at-risk students. This will provide intensive focus and work on those schools that are lowest in student academic proficiencies and experience many of the achievement gaps. The exact nature of the work was not described, but it appears to be grounded in professional development for these leaders based on a needs assessment of each school. This may well be a way to build capacity for future leadership in the district.

The professional development that is to be provided to teachers is significant in terms of time; 10 days per school year over the course of 4 years. The strategies being taught cover content, delivery, technology and data use as well as how to reach learners in a personalized setting. Principals too will receive professional development regarding the standards, technology and parent engagement. The parent engagement was not described, but it was encouraging to see that the district recognized the need for this.

Delivery systems for the professional development include coaching, classroom observation, peer support, summer workshops and professional learning communities. This means that all teacher learners will be reached in ways that support their learning and implementation. The topics are directly relevant to the implementation of the grant goals and will assist in sustaining the effort long after the grant monies are spent.

The district plans to access Open Educational Resources (OER) to provide a wide variety of teaching materials to customize instruction for students with a wide variety of needs. These online resources are based on Common Core Standards and allow teachers to collaborate with other professionals on their lessons. The district will also purchase Creative Educator which promotes a student-centered, project-based approach to curriculum. Both of these resources will promote a more personalized approach to teaching and learning.

STAR enterprise assessment for math and reading has shown success in a pilot in two of the district schools since it gives immediate feedback to students and teachers. It will be purchased for the district. Since it is a K-12 assessment system and can provide progress monitoring tools, it may replace the K-2 paper and pencil assessment mentioned earlier.

Principals, instructional coaches and Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) will monitor the effectiveness of the transformational work in each classroom. The monitoring process will determine how well the professional development is affecting actual practice. This is an important component since many districts implement professional development, but rely only on assessment scores to determine whether or not the professional development has had an impact. They will also analyze student data to determine the efficacy of the professional development, but the observations will yield another perspective. The district also plans to conduct a formal external evaluation to provide in-depth and objective feedback about the reforms and whether or not they are making the desired effect. This data will be very useful for developing long-term goals and adjustments to the reform efforts. These pieces, which are often not addressed in school districts point to the high quality of this plan.

In addition to academic support, the district is addressing school climate, particularly at the secondary level. Based on a recent survey, the district found that most students did not feel "connected" with school and that more than half of their students reported that they had used alcohol and/or drugs. It is hoped that the personalized learning in the classrooms will help students to feel more connected. In addition, they plan to develop a mentor system for students. They will monitor the mentor system in hopes that this will create a greater sense of safety and belonging which will then result in less discipline problems. The specifics of how the program was to be administered were not included. It is not clear if older students are mentoring younger ones or if teachers or community adults might be involved. The district also stated they planned to engage parents more in this section, but did not explain how that would happen. There is potential here to round out the plan to include the socio-emotional domain. It is addressed further in the Competitive Preference Priority section with information about the Youth Coalition.

Since the professional development described in this application is to be provided to all teachers in the district over the course of these four years, the end result should be that all students are taught by highly effective teachers. This is true of

those teachers who are on staff during the grant timeline. Hiring practices for future teachers in the district were not addressed. Future professional development, beyond the grant timeline was also not addressed directly, although it was mentioned in section F on sustainability . Although it seems reasonable to assume that the coaches and teacher leaders will continue to work with teachers and that they will continue to be involved in professional learning teams.

Overall, the district has developed a very comprehensive professional development plan that will impact the instructional practice of all their teachers and the achievement of all their students. This places the score for this section in the high range. There were some missing explanations, most notably in the student mentor program, how parent engagement was to be facilitated and how they plan to attract and retain highly effective teachers. Therefore the score is in the medium high range.

#### 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>12</b>

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

In this district, each school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) makes decisions about the school's program and budget based on site-level data. The team includes 6-12 teachers representative of the grades and departments in the school. The district provides broad instructional focus from which the building ILTs develop their focus, and technology support through a tech coordinator, applying for a technology renewal bond and any additional funding needed. The district's Grading and Assessment Task Force is exploring the option of flexible student credit in academic subjects. This is the only mention made of the district considering alternative ways for students to show mastery. They mention project-learning and service projects, but do not go so far as to say this is a way to show mastery of content.

Three of the low-performing district schools are piloting new assessment protocols and procedures. The outcomes will help determine practices at the other schools. Project based learning and electronic portfolios are also being considered by the Task Force, as well as showing mastery of content through personalized assessments. Data-director is an online system to provide student data quickly and easily to teachers so that they can adjust their lessons accordingly, creating a personalized learning environment.

The district currently uses PLATO credit recovery software to support students during summer institutes. It has been highly used by students and teachers in the district which indicates a need for more of this type of learning which can be provided through the OER resources mentioned earlier. More professional development in this area will help teachers maximize the benefit of online resources.

Teachers will have support not only through the summer workshops, but with their coaches and principals and peers as they work through Inquiry Circles and with their Professional learning teams. Students will be supported with the increased resources online, the literacy and math strategies that their teachers learn, the interventions through Rtl, the after school programs and outside agencies.

Assessments given to all students three times per year and progress monitoring given every 2 weeks to those students receiving interventions will indicate progress toward goals. The data will be readily available to teachers, parents and students allowing for a more personalized learning environment and support when it is needed.

The district described the personalization of the classroom to be a support especially for students with disabilities since it provides flexibility in terms of pacing and assessment, online resources, small group or station work. This type of learning is designed to engage the student rather than to cover the material, therefore students with specific learning needs are more likely to be successful.

There appears to be sufficient autonomy at each school site to focus on the instructional needs determined by that site's leadership team. Students and teachers are supported through personalized learning and professional development structures respectively. The personalized classroom means that teachers will adjust lessons, provide interventions or accelerate learning based on the data provided by assessments. The Grading and Assessment Task Force seems to have the task of studying the pilot data from the three schools that have begun implementation and determining how students earn credits at the secondary level. The relationship of this task force to the district and its impact on individual site leadership teams is not clearly described. If an individual high school leadership team were to arrange for alternative ways to earn credit, it is not clear if that would be supported unless approved by the task force first. Overall, the district has appropriate policies and practices in place to support their plan. The only thing not clear is the power and impact of this

task force. Therefore, the score for this section is in the medium-high range.

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

**10**

**4**

**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The district states that at the end of the four year plan, all students, parents, educators and other stakeholders will have access to necessary content, tools and other learning resources. Students at grades 7-12 will be given laptops or tablets on a four year refresh cycle. First through 6th grade students will receive laptops/tablets on a three to one basis. Since their district is rural, there are areas where internet access is not readily available. The district has tried to alleviate this problem with air cards, but without success. Therefore they have extended hours at the media centers at each school where students can complete homework. The online academic resources, student data system, and Data Director are all technological supports.

Along with technology support, the district has other supports such as the in-school suspension for discipline issues. It keeps a student on track academically rather than time away from school due to discipline. In addition, with teachers personalizing the classroom, using data to make instructional decisions, providing interventions and acceleration as needed, every student will receive the type of instruction they need. Parents will be kept informed both through conferences with their student and the teacher and being able to access their student's data online.

While the district has discussed the use of online academic resources and data systems accessible by educators, students and parents, there is no information on whether or not this data system is interoperable including human resource data, and budget data. Based on how students, parents and teachers are expected to use the data, it seems reasonable that this part is interoperable.

The district plans to give students devices that can be used in school or at home to complete assignments. The district also plans to have extended hours at media centers for those rural areas where internet access is limited. The support for the devices themselves is unclear. It is not stated whether there is a location for repair or trouble-shooting of devices for students. Some of the online academic resources have been explained. If there are online tutorials that the district plans to use, these have not been mentioned. Finally, whether or not all parts of the data system is interoperable has not been fully addressed. For these reasons, the criteria for this section has not been fully met and the score is in the low-average range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

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

The district plans to gather data on its reform initiatives in the following ways:

- The Discovery Ed assessment that is given to all 3-12th grade students in the district and provides timely information on what students know and can do.
- iLeap and EOC assessment data will also be available.
- Instructional Leadership Teams will collect data on the efficacy of professional development and how instruction is changing as a result.
- Instructional coaches and technology facilitators will gather informal feedback through conversations and observation.
- Parent/student/teacher conferences will provide feedback to parents on their student's progress and to teachers on parents' and students' perception of the educational experience.
- The Tech Director will connect with teachers, principals and students to collect feedback on the use of 21st Century tools and educational resources.
- Surveys will be used to gather data on the after school supports, particularly the Youth Coalition.
- There will be an external evaluation to provide formative feedback.

This feedback will be used by district and school-site ILTs to make adjustments and improve instruction on a continuous basis. The project director, implementation coaches and leadership teams will also use this information to develop sustainability plans for the future after the grant. Quarterly updates, annual reports and presentations will be made to all district stakeholders throughout the grant timeline, with a summative report at the end of the four years.

All of the criteria for this section was explained in this section of the grant application. The explanations did not go into great detail, but the criteria have been met. The chart that indicates the performance measures and rationale includes a section on how the measure will help the district continue to improve. In previous sections, charts with timelines and deliverables describing all aspects of the grant activities were included. No new charts were included in this section to explain the continuous improvement cycle in use in the district. Therefore the score is in the medium-high range.

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

**5**

**3**

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

The primary vehicle for stakeholder engagement, according to the district application narrative, is the Youth Coalition/Kennedy Center. This group includes a full-time social worker, and behavior interventionist. In addition, the steering committee includes parents, students and representatives from school sites. They connect with various community organizations including local government and faith-based organizations. The group shares information on and solicits input on student academic progress, advances in assessment, how parents can use the data system, how parent engagement is changing and to change the paradigm of the school as a separate entity to one of the school as an integrated part of the community.

Another active group in the district is the Equity Task Force. They too have parent, student and community members and meet monthly to discuss grant initiatives and progress. The district also uses their website, student handbooks, the Student Progress Center, televised school board meetings and weekly high school radio shows to keep the community informed and engaged with the schools.

Internal stakeholders use their school-site ILT, work sessions, and professional learning communities to keep informed, analyze data and make adjustments to improve instruction on a continuous basis. Eventually, as teachers become more adept at data-driven instruction, they will share practices, assessments and other resources in person and online.

The district has a comprehensive plan for ongoing communication with internal and external stakeholders, however, it is not clear who is responsible for the various tasks, what the timeline might be and what the objectives are with each of these communication efforts. Therefore, this score is in the medium range.

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

**5**

**5**

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

The district has determined that highly effective teachers and principals are the key to their reform measures. They will use both the ILT observations and notes as well as student assessment data with the COMPASS evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of each teacher and principal. Each grade level group: PK-3, 4-8 and 9-12 have their own set of assessments. The data is used with the teacher and principal evaluation system as well as to determine student achievement and changes needed in instruction. At the 9-12 level, there are also career-readiness indicators: Career Ready 101 and WorkKeys. Finally, they have a survey that measures the meaningful opportunities for students and their sense of engagement and connectedness for students in grades 6-12. In total, 13 measures are used by the district in their continuous improvement cycle.

The district included charts in their application that described the rationale for using each measure, the groups affected, how it is to be used and how the district will review and improve by using the measure. The chart was divided by grade levels and the rationale addressed the goals stated by the district, beginning with highly effective teachers and principals.

The performance measures used at the younger grade levels already indicate a higher level of achievement than at the older grade levels. Therefore the district has focused most, but not all, of its reform efforts at the older grade levels. All students, teachers and principals are included in the performance measures since the district has decided to address the achievement of all students in the district with priority given to its lowest performing schools and neediest students as evidenced by achievement gaps in the data.

The goals set for continuous improvement are ambitious, yet achievable since the district plans to continue and expand the efforts begun under the grant. They have shown that they are able to make improvements and they are highly motivated to make greater improvements with the grant. Success breeds success. As the district sees gains in student achievement and graduation rates, they will be encouraged to continually improve their educational system. The measures are appropriate since the goal of the plan is to provide highly effective teachers for all students, therefore the score is at the high range.

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

**5**

**5**

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

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the district reform project under the grant, the district will review all documents including meeting minutes, schedules, curricula and policies; budget documents; service utilization records of health and other supports; and feedback from key stakeholders. The input will be solicited through annual surveys with parents, students, and alumni. Annual interviews will be held with district leadership, teachers, principals and Kennedy Center partners. The district study will provide "comparison, contrast and context" This will include comparison data from a similar school district in the state. The study described is a thorough, rigorous research project that will look into the effect of the reform process not only on student academics but on their socio-emotional outcomes as well. Independent tests using student data on attendance, educational data, demographics and family background data along with focus group data will be further analyzed as they relate to the district goals. The third part of the study includes data related to disciplinary actions, juvenile probation, self-reported crime and the access students have to internet and devices for 100% of the day. This type of evaluation will yield a great deal of information that will help the district continue its improvement process.

The evaluation will be shared with the department of Education as well as the district communities. The depth of the evaluation, using both qualitative and quantitative analyses ensures progress toward the stated goals and achieving the outcomes described in this application since adjustments and changes can be made annually. The final report will summarize the findings for the entire grant period. A table is included that details the process for the evaluation.

The thoroughness, the rigor and the information likely to come from this evaluation ensures that the plan will be of high quality as adjustments and changes are made based on annual data analyses. Therefore, this score is in the high range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

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

The district budget for this project focuses most of the funds on personnel. This fits with the goal of providing professional development such that their teachers become highly effective. The district describes how the budget supports each of their seven interrelated key components. In this section the ten media specialists mentioned in part A are described as "pushing out digital resources to classroom teachers." The next big expenditures are for the digital devices and for contracts to those agencies that will provide professional development from outside the district. Assessment systems are also listed as expenditures. The amounts listed for each expenditure are divided for each year of the project and seem reasonable in relation to the activities described throughout the narrative.

On several of the pages, notably the Youth Coalition and evaluation pages, other funds, with large dollar amounts, are listed as the source, but the sources are not described. On each of the budget pages the "other funds" are listed with a dollar amount. Some have more than others. The district has received funds from Title 1, the state for the evaluation implementation and through partnerships with the Kennedy Center and the University of Washington. In section (F)(2) the district lists funds for sustainability from the Orchard Foundation, the Rapides Foundation, Families in Need, local business partners, a Tobacco grant, 21st Century Learning Community funds and Innovative Approaches funds. It is assumed that they may also contribute during the grant years.

Of the two criteria for this section, the first has been fully met since the other funds were described not in this section, but in the next and some fund sources were alluded to earlier in the narrative. Some assumptions were necessary to determine when the funding was applied. The identification of one-time and on-going investments was met since the district indicated when and how much was used in each fund. Therefore the score for this section is in the high range.

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

10

9

### (F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district plans to use a trainer of trainers model for sustainability in the use of literacy strategies, KAGAN structures, math strategies, data analysis, CCSS aligned critical thinking and deeper learning, and flexible approaches to instruction. This approach has been used often and with great success when a specific skill set needs to be learned and can then be transferred to another person through the same methods. This would utilize the coaches, teacher leaders, professional learning teams and other in-district personnel who would have been instrumental in implementing these approaches during the four grant years. They will continue the COMPASS evaluation system since it is already in place and supported by the state.

They need to develop a plan to cover the work of the project coordinator since that position will no longer be supported by

the grant, but they can use the extensive accessible collection of educator resources that support personalized learning as developed during the grant. They will need to expand their partnerships to support community/school/student centers with the Youth Coalition. They will also need to allocate resources for out of school enrichment, school based counseling, stem program development, expansion of 21st Century learning tools and early childhood education support.

The district also plans to use the trainer of trainers model for parent education in school and community engagement. This may actually enhance parent engagement since one parent is more likely to communicate and inspire another parent to become involved.

The district plans to spend fully 75% of their categorical aid on professional development to continue the initiatives begun in this project. This will support the personnel and stipends required, as well as the parent classes, instructional materials and equipment maintenance. In this section, they list several local foundations that will support their continued efforts as mentioned in the previous section. The budget is listed for the next three years after the grant and the evaluation system was listed previously in great detail in section (E)(3).

The district has a high quality plan for sustainability with the major focus continuing on professional development for teachers. They have committed a large amount of their categorical aid to this focus. They also have some outside funding and will continue to look for more to continue to support their efforts. Parts of the plan are not fully decided yet until those additional dollars are available. This is the only weakness in their plan. However, grants and funding often are available for limited amounts of time, so this is not unusual. The sustainability plan merits a score in the high range since they addressed all aspects of the grant project going forward beyond the grant timeline.

### 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 district Youth Coalition, made up of many sub-groups, is the primary vehicle for improving low student achievement due to poverty related issues. Their model focuses on social, health and educational development of students across the district. The district is one of the poorest in the state, but is under served by mental health facilities. They list 18 intervention programs desired for this effort divided among the Youth Coalition, the school district and the Kennedy Center. Some actions have already been taken including anti-bully workshops, the creation of the Youth Coalition, bus transportation for all students, guidance counselors at all high schools, the lowest performing school has a social worker and a behavior interventionist, a SADD chapter, Sudden Impact, Life skills for grades 3-6 and healthy life skills for PK-2nd grade, as well as interventions for all levels with progress monitoring and data management, and a Kid Zone dental program for all 1st graders.

These efforts are expected to achieve 6 results:

1. Children will enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school.
2. Children, youth and families are healthy.
3. Students achieve proficiency in core academic subjects and engagement in learning is high.
4. High School students will graduate college and career ready.
5. Students will have stable environments for learning.
6. Families and community support learning in school and out of school time.

Tracking for these outcomes would be at the district level through the student database. The district has a poverty level of almost 80%. These actions are directed toward those families for whom poverty is a barrier to learning and graduating ready for college or career. The data will be used to determine which intervention actions prove most effective and to inform decisions on resource allocation.

The Youth Coalition was designed to serve all high-need students in the district. The plan is to begin with the lowest performing school in the district and then lay the groundwork with the next school until all schools are involved over time. At the same time they intend to expand their partnerships and services so that more needs can be met for students and families. Since some of the actions have already been implemented, improved results have been noted. As these efforts continue, more students and families will be served and student achievement will be positively affected.

Cross-collaboration is the key to success for the Youth Coalition. Training and conversations between agencies and

school personnel expand the services to more students. Complementary needs and assessment data defines the necessary partners. The district team will then expand the partnerships to include these needs.

Engaging parents and students is also part of the plan. Training parents and students in Technology of Participation (TOP) a world-wide method for active engagement in a variety of settings, and including parents and students on the steering committee supports the program and helps families to help themselves. The chart of activities and deliverables for the whole program includes a timeline and responsible parties.

The performance measures address each of the 6 results desired through the Youth Coalition. In some cases, baseline data is not available such as participation in mental health services. Where the data is available, projections during the grant timeline are included, however the scores for third grade students seem to indicate small gains.

This high-quality plan will support the grant vision described earlier in that the mental and physical health of each student has a direct impact on student achievement. Increasing parent engagement is also likely to increase student achievement. While the plan does not directly state how it could build capacity with school staff for sustainability, these efforts would certainly fill the gap of having too few school counselors and would help student feel more connected to school and their community. The criteria set forth in this section are met by the district with an eye toward sustainability in the trainer of trainers model mentioned earlier. The difficulty in such a plan is coordinating the efforts of so many groups and finding the funding to continue those efforts. This has not been addressed directly although the needs assessment and follow-up activities were mentioned. For these reasons, this section merits a medium range score.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

This district addresses the needs of all its nearly 6,000 students through the use of professional development to create highly effective teachers. They especially target their lowest performing schools and achievement gaps between African American and white students as well as with economically disadvantaged students. This is an ambitious goal since they have one of the highest poverty levels in this state and their geographical location. Therefore, the district has met absolute priority 1. They are developing a personalized learning environment that builds on the core educational assurance areas and is designed to significantly improve teaching and learning in the district.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>154</b>
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