



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0063MA-1 for Boston Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

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

- The narrative of the applicant describes a feasible and exhaustive vision that is built on their existing plan, structured and approved in 2009, the Accelerated Agenda, outlines, Academic Targets, Key Strategies, and a Vision for the Boston Public Schools Graduate, which includes stakeholders, utilization of data analysis and progress monitoring.
- The applicants' vision sets ambitious targets for improving student achievement across all grade levels and communities. building on proven strategies including extended learning time, project based learning and personalized education through multiple approaches, including differentiating instruction.
- The applicant describes and presents a detailed classroom for learners involving a focus on literacy and writing across content areas where teachers will facilitate collaborative, project-based instruction supported with digital tools and content. This includes a personalized map for students using interactive and culturally relevant digital content that students can access anytime, anywhere. Students will have mobile access to online learning environments.
- Applicants' plan provides a thorough and comprehensive concept of personalized learning for students in grades 6 - 8, with Blend and Personalized learning. Blended learning involves digital learning tools along with traditional learning systems in and outside of the classroom. Personalized learning is a blended learning environment that enables personalized learning, tailoring of curriculum and learning environments to meet the needs of the student with the extensive use of technology.
- The use of project-based learning, online assessments, and mobile access to online learning environments inside and outside the classroom will accelerate learning of the students and is a strong method to assure success of the students."
- The applicants' goal to design a space where, "the classroom is virtual, learning is perpetual, and achievement expands through innovative uses of technology," is a comprehensive vision that includes adopting standards and assessments designed to prepare students for succeed in high school and beyond, but the vision is lacking a key element of describing a plan for recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals to carry out their ambitious plan, which is integral part of the four core educational assurance areas, resulting in a mid range score.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

- According to the applicant, the monies from this grant will initially impact 5200 primarily low-income students in grades 6-8 in approximately 20 schools (out of a total district enrollment of 57,100 students).
- These 20 schools are not yet specifically identified, and will compete for inclusion according to the applicant delineated criteria listed in Appendix A20, Serial XVI via request for proposal applications during the first 100 days of the grant implementation. Clearly Boston 365 as depicted in applicant's proposal will not affect all students of the entire school district.
- The applicant explains that their intent to focus on traditionally low-performing schools from the outset will be adapted to all district students after deployment and fine-tuning of proposal components. There are apparently thirty-six (36) schools with grades sixth through eighth, eligible to eventually comprise the twenty schools that will in the end makeup the schools involved in this grant proposal.
- An area that is not sufficiently clear in the proposal, is the method the applicant will use to scale up the proposal implements to the larger body of the district wide students. This lack of required clarity

decreases point potential, resulting in the lower sector of the high point category.

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

**10**

**5**

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

- Applicant does not put forth a structured, high-quality plan to permit LEA proposal to expand to district-wide application. Applicant appears to rely heavily on implied associative relations and subjective interpretations to scale up this proposal as evidenced by statements such as: No reform can grow into significant improvements without students being excited about learning; Students in non-participating middle schools can observe and be inspired by the way Boston 365 students take ownership of their learning...and use free online sources or demand their own schools adopt similar learning environments. LEA seems to rely on peer pressure to promulgate wide reform and change. To their credit, LEA recognizes that they will need to consult higher education partners and researchers to implement a high-quality plan that will ultimately improve all student-learning outcomes, but such a plan was not readily apparent in the proposal, therefore point total is low.
- Applicant is relying on the build up of capacity, the capacity of the student, family and partner to take on a greater portion of the educational responsibility, while the LEA simultaneously trains, develops and shapes a core group of technological learners and teachers, that the LEA hopes will drive district-wide reform and change. Per requirements of the grant proposal, high quality plan should describe the plan will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform for district-wide change. It was unclear how the applicant would achieve this criteria with plans as listed herein.

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

**10**

**7**

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

- Applicant will use the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) as their summative assessment tool. The tool identifies scoring ranges to determine student proficiency level. The tool categorizes students by sub-groups and has ambitious yet achievable annual goals during the life of the proposal and beyond.
- Applicant provides goals that will be achieved through the BPS 365 Acceleration Agenda, which is the applicant's comprehensive strategy to deliver a personalized approach to learning. The applicant's academic achievement goals are clearly listed with details displaying the academic success over the years. The set goals are reasonably set for success of the students in grades 6, 7, and 8.
- The applicant list in a chart form, the achievement gaps and denotes improvement among the subgroups and comparison groups, indicating achievement gaps differences in composite performance index between subgroups and the state's highest performing subgroups in English, Language Arts and Mathematics from the Baseline school year 2011 – 2012 to the post grant year of 2017 – 2018 for grade levels 6, 7, and 8.
- Applicant displays success and growth for the graduation rate. Although, not at 100%, the first few years showed an increase with the final goal of 90% at the end of implementation.
- The applicants show gains in the college enrollment rate. Part of the goal with the applicant is preparing all learners to become college and/or career ready when they graduate.
- The applicant did provide elements of criteria according to the grant requirements, but a more detailed plan would have been the basis for more points. As such, the applicant earns the mid range points.

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

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

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

- Applicant presents a narrative of improved success for various categories, however the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement; increasing equity in learning and teaching lacks raw student data, and other evidence.

- The applicants' description of success is comprehensive and convincing showing improvements, but the RTTD competition request a clear record of success in the past four years, therefore the applicant receives a medium score of 10. Evidence of the past four years was not presented.
- The narrative mentions many significant accomplishments, such as the Broad Prize for Urban Education 2006; and improved student achievement while reducing achievement gaps; broad academic growth across all demographic groups in English Language Arts (ELA); and at one Turnaround School, student proficiency rates in English Language Arts jumped 60 percent from 39 percent in 2012. For African American students, the rate of 81 percent this year, up from 38 percent in just one year was convincing, but the patterns of increased proficiency rates was not discussed. The applicants data was presented in a narrative form with sparse documentation of charts or graphs, raw student data, and other evidence that demonstrates improved student learning to support B-1.

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

**5**

**3**

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

- The applicant specifies the posting of all data on their website which includes all funds budgeted by accounts, programs, schools and departments.
- The applicant narrative states the availability of public access to all personnel salaries. In fact, the applicants' convincing narrative offers public access to all monies expended in public education, including school's budgets.
- The applicant narrows the interpretation and scope of this criterion by limiting their information to mention of websites and newspapers containing the district's finances and budget related data, therefore a mid range score was given.
- The applicant provides a relatively generalized idea of personnel salaries but was not consistent with the requirements as listed in this grant request, RTTD.

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

**10**

**10**

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

- The applicant narrates it has the necessary autonomy under Massachusetts and federal law to implement the personalized learning models for this grant.
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Mayor, School Committee, Superintendent and Boston Teachers Union all support the applicants' efforts to provide education on the forefront for the students of Boston.
- The applicant provides evidence of statutory code and legal authority permitting the applicant to engage in the proposed personalized learning environments, therefore the applicant receives a high point range.

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

**15**

**11**

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

- The applicant indicated they "engaged over 2,300 city residents", to solicit solutions to what is apparently a long-standing problem area, dealing with student school assignments. While not specifically addressing school choice itself, the 27 member advisory panel utilized community feedback to suggest programs to raise academic quality within the school district. The applicant would have earned more points if specifics cause and effect of their actions were provided in relation to city residents (stakeholders) and how the proposal was revised based on citizens input.
- The applicant provided excellent examples of engaging teachers and Union leadership through high-level meetings with the Superintendent and multiple occurrences of meetings with frontline teachers to get their insight, feedback and suggestions to shape the final proposal (Boston 365).
- The applicant also provides letters of support from existing community partners who expressed commitment and full engagement to the proposal.
- Missing in support of this section, and decreasing the total points earned, was the lack of named business organizations providing written letters of support for the applicant's proposal. Evidence of student support was included, but business community support was or at least, not readily discerned in the proposal.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the ways the applicant chose to define “deep learning experiences” related to student academic experiences involving close association between reading and writing. Specifically, reading as a means to acquire new knowledge and writing as the tool to gain deeper learning. This seems highly appropriate for the category of C1 – Learning.</li> <li>• The applicant states that beginning with 6<sup>th</sup> graders and continuing through to graduation, the (LEA) will explore career focused and college-ready learning goals. Not readily apparent however, was the methodology of confirming the students understood their learning efforts were tied to accomplishing established goals.</li> <li>• The applicant hosts adequate online capability and specifically the Student Information System (SIS) to show student and teachers learning objectives and progress towards achieving these goals. The applicant satisfies this section’s criteria in a robust manner through already established tracking mechanisms and others in the production stage. Examples of these are the SIS, graduation tracker, and Common Core State Standards. MassCore references the state’s graduation requirements against college entrance requirements to assure a college-ready student, if they should chose the college route. Very little attention is provided toward career paths in lieu of the college-ready path. The applicant demonstrates its intent to develop and teach the whole students by currently using the Academic Achievement Framework (AAF) selected by BPS schools. Other assessment tools available to all schools provide up-to-date access to student progress in achieving state standards and classroom instruction.</li> <li>• The applicant will rely heavily on a blended learning environment and integration of technology to deliver a culturally responsible teaching and learning experience. No specifics were given beyond the inclusion of representatives (parents, businesses, and students) to shape the curriculum reflecting their diverse community.</li> <li>• The applicant again emphasis the use of educational technology and the tools currently used and available to today’s learners. Blogs, social media, data searches, are given as the newer platforms for assisting the student in mastering critical academic content and are set forth as a means to develop the skills and traits included in this grant requirements This applicant places great stock in using the Internet and its many tools as the base upon which the student will develop and refine these traits and ultimately display mastery of them in the classroom.</li> <li>• The applicant indicates it will provide student access to personalize, high quality instruction mainly with technology tools. The teachers will develop personalized instructional plans based on competency-based and online assessments. This important task as given to the teachers, will have to be coupled with a robust “teach the teacher” program and significant professional development and ongoing instructional development, to which the applicant adequately addresses. The applicant has indicated they will use technology and Internet based programs to extend structured learning opportunities outside the classroom to the student’s home and community.</li> <li>• The lack of further details to be included on the LEA efforts to teach students how to use the hardware and particularly the software, which will bear the brunt of realizing success or failure in their efforts is lacking, resulting in the applicant receiving less than the highest score in this criteria.</li> </ul>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant currently has various programs in place through a central office in charge of implementing teacher/educator professional development. This grant proposal requires a high-quality plan to demonstrate teacher/educator training.</li> <li>• Applicant indicates that their proposal—Boston 365—will maintain their current practices, and assess faculty at participating schools relative to the six components of the grant proposal. Multiple LEA/district administrative offices are charged with developing the high-quality professional development plan as required in the grant</li> </ul>		

application.

- One impressive portion of the applicants demonstration meeting the requirements of this criterion, is the plan to have educators/teachers of participating schools participate in their own version of personalized online learning, through development of their personalized blended learning models.
- Applicant has current programs of measurement and assessment systems, but proposes further standards as outline under Processes and Tools to Match Student Needs. Additionally, providing participating students access to high quality teachers is facilitated, according to the applicant, through the Boston Teachers Union October 2012, which permits the applicant officials and principals increased decision making in professional development schedules and courses.
- Through Boston 365, online learning courses would be offered to students of schools where these courses are not offered. Applicant states it will offer courses and best practice videos of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) for students and teachers, thereby enabling access to instruction methods from effective and highly effective teachers. Applicant demonstrates the capacity and infrastructure to implement requirements of this criterion. However, the applicant placed most emphasis on existing programs as evidence of a high quality plan to satisfy these criteria; not readily apparent was a robust program to provide on-going plans to make sure the teachers know how to use the tools, data and resources to accelerate student progress to college and career-readiness.
- Overall, applicant satisfies the majority of these criteria thereby earning high points.

#### 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>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Given the applicant’s stated importance of professional development and ensuring that the frontline teachers fully understand how to utilize the technology that is clearly the backbone of applicant’s proposal, there should have been increased emphasis and details—in this section—on how BPS will provide online and face-to-face professional development to teachers relative to implementing blended learning with technology.</p> <p>LEA has taken steps to enhance the accountability and operational support of district schools by reorganizing into a network of schools with less distance between the front office and the frontline teacher/educator. Additionally, located within the existing Office of Information and Instructional Technology (OIIT), will be staff hired dedicated to implementation of Boston 365. LEA depicts a hierarchal fishbone of departments with detailed responsibilities designed to ensure proposal implementation.</p> <p>LEA demonstrates a track record of allowing school-level flexibility and autonomy through its current 21-Pilot Schools. Created explicitly as crucibles of research, development and educational experimentation to create effective urban public school education, these schools were given increased flexibility to organize key aspects of school functions, including budget, staffing, governance, curriculum, school calendar, etc. Applicant therefore is familiar with bestowing this criterion as required by the grant. LEA/applicant states it has received a waiver (through the State of Massachusetts) to the Federal program No Child Left Behind that will permit LEA to make local decisions in policy, rules and practices.</p> <p>For the criterion related to LEA giving students opportunity to earn educational credits based on demonstrated mastery rather than the amount of time spent on the topic, applicant refers to its intent to use Tobin Schools vision as a plan to satisfy this section. Applicant’s plan will call for participating schools to outline specifically how they will satisfy this section’s requirement. It was unclear with the verbiage provided. The applicant would be more thorough with the details of their plan. This lack of clarity served to decrease point total earned.</p> <p>Applicant demonstrates it has access to resources and practices that are adaptable enough to address the needs of all students. Specifically students with disabilities and English Learners, through various listed programs and technologies.</p> <p>Overall, applicant adequately addresses the intent and requirements of this criterion, with some lack of clarity as mentioned above, thereby earning low range of high point category.</p>		

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The initial impression LEA seems to establish, shapes the perception that from the very outset each participating student will have/own a personal wireless device that will permit them to log on and learn from anywhere at any time. That is not quite the case. Beginning in year three of the proposal, only then will the students be permitted to take their wireless devices home. This is not an altogether un-wise decision. To maximize utilization of these consumable products, LEA must guard against loss, theft and decay. It is unclear, but the assumption seems to be that in the meanwhile, students that have internet access at home, and students with their own personal mobile devices can, will and should access educational content via 4G wireless connectivity. Those students without internet access at home and without their own personal mobile devices, will utilize school libraries and technology lab spaces. The practicality of their mobile-device home decision has merit. Otherwise, applicant lists several avenues for teachers, students and families to engage in the technology/internet based application proposal: Technology Goes Home; Parent University and School-based Family and Community Outreach Coordinators and Student Run Technology Support Programs. Applicant lists multiple avenues for technical-support to assist all users of the technology that is a critical component in this proposal. Applicant outlines robust security elements to safeguard against misuse of student and stakeholder information. Interoperability appears to be sufficiently addressed by assuring intuitive access to needed information and applications via programs such as GetClever. Com and LearnSprout.com. Overall, applicant earns medium range points though their narrative of how it is currently addressing some of the criteria; plan on developing structure to address same and believes the synergy of these detailed interactions will develop further growth in the process.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant provides partial evidence of a high quality plan and a timeline component is lacking.</li> <li>• Although the applicant describes various tools and components of measuring and comparing multiple variables, in order to determine the beginning of positive academic and social student progress, a definitive timeline was not provided. The RTTD is a grant application of such magnitude that any proposal will need course-correction during deployment.</li> <li>• This applicant identifies various current procedures and newer, blended models to carry out its continuous improvement processes. Applicant plans to use its current information data sets as tools to satisfy this criterion, however that addition of an external evaluator specific for this grant proposal will focus on continuous improvement processes for Boston 365. Teachers can measure their technology proficiencies in an organized manner through applicant's Technology Self-assessment Tool, which is being updated with tools from University of Florida's software. These measurement and effectiveness tools are stated to be capable of maintain assessment capability beyond the grant period, which will permit applicant to continue impact measurement on a continuous basis.</li> <li>• Applicant has at its disposal a collection of named assessment tools by which to accomplish continuous improvement (TSAT, Technology Integration Matrix, L4L, Teaching and Learning with Technology, and other existing data sets). Support toward a medium range score is further secured by the applicant's intent to use the program evaluation to disclose and discuss proposal results to partners, parents, students and the public at large. Also contributing to the medium range point total is their forthright manner of intending to utilize public disclosure of success and challenges and the detailed plan to systematically fine-tune the process.</li> </ul>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant demonstrates a high quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement of its proposal with tools such as newsletters (BPS This Week; Connections, a monthly school district e-newsletter; social media with twitter hash tag and twitter handle; Boston 365 a quarterly newsletter that goes out to participating schools/families/partners.</li> <li>• In addition to these district promulgated communication vehicles, the LEA indicates it will provide avenues to solicit and utilized information gained from internal and external stakeholders (families, partners, students, teachers, educators). This will be realized through LEA's narrative places, great emphasis on communicating and engaging</li> </ul>		

families as the crucial, enabling interface that sustains effective pedagogical practices between teacher/educator and student. Evidence of developing this important resource is seen in various initiatives and support for engaging and communicating with families and students. Some examples are: Parent Portal Help page; accessing site information in native language; training sessions for parents in various languages; planning city-wide portal outreach campaign. These mixed forms of communication print and electronic offer a high-quality plan of communication and engagement and thereby earns the applicant high points.

- Applicant earns points for currently having multiple outlets for ongoing communication and engagement with students, parents, teachers and the non-school community. Mainly focused on electronic communication format, applicant also still sends out a print publication to all participating schools, families and partners. Higher points would have been earned, if further insight was included on how the OFSE produce/promote engagement of families, communities and students in focusing on student academic achievement and school improvement. Additional information on how the MCAS item analysis affects this criterion might have earned applicant additional value points. Overall however, applicant satisfies this criterion as outlined in the application, thereby earning high points.

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

**5**

**5**

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

- Applicant hinges their measure of proposal performance on two socio-emotional indicators – enthusiasm for learning and feelings of acceptance.
- Each containing eight specific measures, these indicators will provide a pre-warning of possible student disengagement from the school/learning environment resulting in behavioral problems, with dropout as the possible end result.
- Applicant states others indicators of performance are daily attendance, suspension information and academic grades.
- The applicant provides specific correlation of this grant proposal and performance measures by subgroups, with annual targets including applicant proposed measure.
- It is impressive that between 41 and 56 % of students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 received a grade of B or better in the core content areas of ELA, math, science and social studies.
- The anticipated 10 percent gain in student engagement including enthusiasm for learning and positive identifications and perceptions of school.
- The applicant provides the number and percentage of student by subgroup who are on track to college and career-readiness.
- The applicant provides information to justify a high score in this category.

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

**5**

**1**

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

- The applicant has prepared a structure to make sure their proposal is actually being implemented at the student/teacher level. The extent to which the external evaluator monitors the strategies outlined in their proposal will determine the validity investment effectiveness.
- Applicant indicates their main tool used is a school walk through, the Educator Effectiveness Rubric (appendix A/45). Applicant has adopted their current review process and applied it to this grant proposal.
- The applicant uses the Teacher Rubric At-A-Glance that has 4 Standards, 16 indicators, and 33 elements for teachers. This rubric is too detailed to be a satisfactory tool for a teacher/administrator walkthrough. A teacher walkthrough will last perhaps 30 minutes or less and there are too many indicators to evaluate in such a short time frame to measure student progress.
- To monitor the effectiveness of the investments, the use of central office staff members to monitor the usage of the digital learning tools and blended learning strategies will take an office staff member many hours in the classrooms to successfully monitor the program and this method would not effective.
- The use of data packets and the quarterly reviewing is convincing, but did not mention the students having their own data to begin the review.
- The need to measure effectiveness of this grant is not readily met by transferring these criteria. Applicant earns low points for not tailoring measures specific to this grant proposal as outlined in grant proposal.

**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>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant provided detailed information on use of monies from RTTD, including plans for continued implementation beyond the life of this grant, combined with other external and internal sources. Increased point allocation is earned for emphasizing the high value budget areas of Collaborative Virtual Spaces and Blended Learning.</li> <li>• Full point total might have been realized in increased details would have been included regarding the use and source of outside monies to fund the crucial Extended Learning category.</li> <li>• Also, as mentioned by the applicant, the involvement of families, community and partners is a vital part of their success strategy, more points would have been earned by including more details on monies spent on this sector. Overall, applicant provides adequate details related to criteria required for this section, earning them high-point totals.</li> </ul>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant states that their plan is sustainable in a cost-neutral manner, in other words, beyond the monies desired through participation in this grant process, no further financial support will be necessary to sustain/perpetuate their high-quality plan. Their logic in assuming sustainability focusing on building system capacity and assuming that past practices learned by target student group (middle schoolers) will drive funding from current resources.</li> <li>• From the narrative provided under this section and throughout the application, the applicant emphasizes a shift in knowledge acquisition responsibility from the district to the families, students and partners. The schools—according to applicant—will take on the role of facilitators, after teaching/training the student and their support group to obtain the knowledge through use of integrated technological tools. Ultimately, for the district, the high costs of being knowledge providers will decrease in amounts that will make the transition cost-neutral. One-fourth of the grant funds will be allocated to teacher professional development, the goal of which is to fully enable the teacher to affect blended learning to its fullest, which should in turn liberate the student from the current learning module. The assumption being that the new way of delivering, accessing and gauging mastery of subject matter will be largely via technology, available for access and interaction twenty-four hours a day, from anywhere. The grant calls for a high-quality plan to offer more empirical, concrete sustainability goals, rather a heavy reliance on subjective, ground swell of influences to drive a cultural shift among students.</li> <li>• Their logic is assuming sustainability focusing on building system capacity and assuming that past practices learned by target student group (middle school students) will drive funding from current resources.</li> <li>• Applicant does depict two scenarios of likely sustainability funding, but this is strictly assumed perpetual sustainability, without allocation of monies in these future investments, therefore the applicant earns mid-range points.</li> </ul>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicants' successful Summer program, BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) data tracking shows that disadvantage students closed the gap between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers.</li> <li>• Applicant outlines multiple examples of ongoing, track-able, successful involvement with named community partners.</li> <li>• Applicant has a program entitled Academic Achievement Framework already in place with the goal is to</li> </ul>		

address the student needs in the areas of social, emotional and behavioral aspects.

- The LEA is relying heavily on a newly developed rubric (A47, Appendix 28) to provide personalized options for students and the participating partner. Applicant further solidifies its adherence to grant criteria by stating the Academic Achievement Framework will leverage the power of technology to track selected indicators, use data to target resources, develop a strategy to scale the model and improve results over time.
- The applicant has established a program (Network Model) which will reorganize schools in groups of 15-17 schools, to ensure a more coordinated, community-based approach to helping schools implement the AAF Problem Solving Process. This will allow schools to track their success in implementation and to maximize impact.
- Applicant does in fact has a relationship with numerous private and public agencies to deliver student assistance leading to student academic success.
- LEA has established four student populations that will receive additional support, with defined outcomes. The four population based student groups are: All participating students; Boys of color; ELL, and SWD. Emphasis is placed on all students to demonstrate proficiency (grade of B or higher) in core course grades of math, science, social studies and English. Extra support will be provided to high-needs students (Boys of color, ELL and SWD) to address their social, emotional and familial needs. LEA has a newly established Network Model that is charged with helping identify students within these special emphasis groups and align resources to assist students away from negative outcomes and toward the goals established by LEA. This is a major undertaking that needed more details and specifics on plan implementation.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

- Applicant meets this criterion by collectively outlining its intent to utilize technology and the internet as the main tool for significantly improving learning and teaching through personalization of strategies.
- Their intent to take advantage of the pervasive impact of wireless technological devices in the lives of students and educators, and the extensive array of information databases and differing methods to convey knowledge, leads the applicant to create personalized learning environments for participating schools.
- Applicant has structured hierarchy in place to build on the technological learning aspect and a track record of using the hardware and software to achieve its goals. By using research based learning tools and partnering with universities, the applicant states it intends to utilize grant monies to deploy programs and methodology that can be measured for success and ramped-up for broader allocation.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>151</b>
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## Race to the Top - District



## Technical Review Form

### Application #0063MA-2 for Boston Public Schools

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

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant presents its approach for using technology within a comprehensive reform vision for supporting personalized learning at the middle school level, with a particular focus on literacy competencies—reading, writing, and speaking.</p> <p>In the proposal titled Boston 365, six coherent areas of action are described and together provide strong support for personalizing learning as a school transformation strategy: learning blended with technology; extended learning opportunities; inclusive environments; engagement of families and communities; collaborative spaces for learning; and assessments that inform instruction and demonstrate learning.</p> <p>As shown in a table within the narrative, the four core educational assurance areas—standards and assessments, data systems, effective teachers and principals, and turning around lowest-achieving schools—are fully addressed.</p> <p>Applicant describes how it will create personalized learning environments, including within classrooms, by blending hands-on activities with technology to tailor curriculum and learning activities in response to the needs and aspirations of individual learners.</p> <p>The highest score is awarded for this section because it fully and effectively addresses all related criteria.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides an overview of the district’s middle school student demographics that include 87% nonwhite, 22% with disabilities, 46% ELL, and 59% low income (% rounded to nearest whole number).</p> <p>The applicant clearly and succinctly describes the process and school population that will be used to select participating schools, students, and educators in the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A competitive request for proposals (RFP) will be sent to all Boston Public Schools (BPS) and Charter schools in Boston that serve students in grades 6-8. BPS enrolls approximately 11,280 students in grades 6-8 who attend 42 middle and K-8 schools with approximately 300 educators. In a table in the appendix, the following information is provided about each school in the population: # of potential participating educators; # of potential participating students; # of potential participating high-need students; # of potential participating low-income students; total number of low-income middle students in the district; total # of students; potential % of participating students in the school; potential % of participating students from low-income families; % of total potential low-income population.</li> <li>Each school responding to the RFP can develop its own customized plan for including the required six areas of action to transform its environment for personalized learning.</li> </ul>		

- Based on a committee (including a teacher union representative) review of proposals focused on nine publicized, explicit criteria, up to 20 schools and 5,200 students (representing all students enrolled in each participating school) will be recommended to the Superintendent for project participation within 100 days after the grant award.
- Participating schools will sign a performance agreement with the Project (Boston 365) Steering Committee, representing stakeholder groups (e.g., district senior leadership, teachers, students, community partners, and private sector leaders), which will oversee project implementation and achievement of outcomes.

The project implementation plan documents each of the project’s four years and a fifth post-grant year.

A high score is awarded for this section because it effectively addresses all related criteria with the exception of not identifying the specific 20 schools and 5,200 students who will participate in the proposed project. The process for selecting the participating schools is clearly described in the application. However, the table for (A)(2)(b) provides the requested information for all schools in the district with middle-grade students without identifying which of the schools will participate in the project.

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

**10**

**6**

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

The project’s implementation plan is clearly described for each of the four project years and a post-grant year—goals, activities (to be undertaken and their rationale), and parties responsible for particular tasks. However, timelines and deliverables are lacking in the implementation plan discussed in the narrative and outlined in the appendix.\*

The applicant describes a strong framework for implementation of the project over four years, including the following specifics:

- Groundwork for the scale-up strategy of the project begins during the first year with the focus on *planning and incubation*—selecting the 20 participating schools and bringing their teachers and administration staff on board with school-level planning, professional development for creating personalized learning environments with blended learning, and exploring digital learning tools and content. A beta version of an online portal also will be launched in Year 1 so that students have access to digital resources anytime, anywhere.
- The focus for Year 2 is *phased implementation*, including expanded professional development, further development of the online portal and digital resources, and a pilot involving 1,000 sixth grade students who will receive a 1:1 device (tablet) for use and evaluation. Existing technology devices will be reallocated and used by students in grades 7 and 8.
- *Full implementation* will begin in Year 3 and continue through Year 4. Along with additional professional development for educators, all project services will be extended to all participating middle grade students (n=5,200), who will each receive a mobile device [a “PAARC-ready tablet”] to access digital content and instruction.

The applicant appropriately states that, based on successful efforts to personalize learning through the effective use of technology in the 20 participating schools, the project will be scaled up for district-wide change beyond the participating schools. However, the applicant does not address how the project results would evolve into a district-wide strategy for scale-up.

The project’s implementation plan is soundly supported by the applicant’s logic model (or theory of change): improved student learning requires improved instruction; schools are the unit of change for instructional improvement; and, use of the six tenets of action to create personalized learning for all students is an effective school transformation strategy. The applicant’s clear statement of overall intent is that, with a strong foundation in middle school, students will be better

prepared for high school and subsequently for college and careers.

A moderate score is awarded for this section because it effectively addresses all related criteria with the exceptions of (a) explaining how the project will scale up its successes to the district level and (b) including timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan. It is also noted that the application does not address how the 1:1 mobile devices for students will be selected, pilot tested, evaluated, scaled up, and maintained over time. Statements in the “Budget and Sustainability” section hint at these concerns but offer little explanation. In responding to DESE questions [shown as an appended document], mention is made of an existing “laptops for learning program” and exploring a BYOD approach, but these concerns are not brought into focus in the application narrative or tables.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

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

**10**

**7**

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

As evidence of improved student outcomes and increased equity, applicant clearly identifies ambitious yet achievable improvements from the baseline line years (2011-12 and 2012-13) through each year of the project (2013-14 to 2016-17) and the post-grant year (2017-18) by grade level (6, 7, and 8), student subgroup (high needs, low income, students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and race/ethnicity) and overall for:

- student proficiency (language arts—the literacy focus for the project—and math);
- student growth (language arts and math);
- decreases in achievement gaps (language arts and math);
- graduation rates; and
- college enrollment.

However, student proficiency, student growth, and decreases in achievement gaps are provided only for grades 6-8 and not for grades 3-5.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because it effectively addresses all related criteria for grades 6-8 (the target focus of the project) with the exception that it does not include proficiency, growth, or achievement gap goals for grades 3-5, which are to be included as state ESEA targets for the criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>

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

The applicant clearly describes its record of success over the past 4 years in (a) closing achievement gaps, (b) improving student achievement and graduation rates, and (c) reforming low-achieving schools.

For example, over the past four years, the percent of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in the district who scored proficient or advanced in the state English Language Arts assessment increased from 58% to 79%, and the achievement gap for African American and Hispanic 10<sup>th</sup> grade students was reduced from 30 percentage points to approximately 10 percent points. During this same time period, the district's four-year graduation rate increased from 58% to 66%, with comparable increases among student subgroups.

Particularly pertinent to the reform of its persistently lowest-achieving schools, most of the 11 turnaround schools in the district are outperforming district student growth in English and Math. The applicant's efforts in improving turnaround schools is reflected in the district's "Acceleration Agenda," "Achievement Gap Policy," and "Academic Achievement Framework," along with an i3 grant to replicate and codify turnaround school improvements linked with extended learning time (ELT).

The applicant's track record of success was recognized in 2010 by McKinsey & Company, who named the district as one of the 20 "most improved school systems in the world," an acknowledgement shared with just three others U.S. school districts.

Student, family, and educator portals are in place to share student performance information from the district's data warehouse, a repository of information useful for improving participation, instruction, and services.

A high score is awarded for this section because applicant effectively responds to all related criteria, with the exception of not providing clear evidence of a track record of success in college enrollment.

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

**5**

**3**

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

Applicant clearly explains that district salaries for all employees are made public annually on the websites of two local newspapers and the district's website, which provides an overview of all funds budgeted and funding allocations by a weighted student funding model for school budgets. A chart is included in the narrative that shows how the weighted student funding allocations are derived for each school in the district. Reports of budgeted funds are broken down further by account (including type of staff—teacher, paraprofessional, instructional coach, etc.), program, school, and department within school.

Applicant also describes that principals share copies of their school budget with members of their school site councils, which include representatives of parents and students.

A moderate score is awarded for this section because, while the applicant addresses each of the minimalist requirements, transparencies in district processes and practices other than budget allocations are not mentioned.

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

**10**

**10**

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

Applicant provides explanations of sufficient autonomy and successful conditions at the *state level* to implement the project's personalized learning strategy supported by blended learning and digital technology, including but not limited to:

- 2010 Act Relative to the Achievement Gap
- A state waiver from NCLB
- State part of national Race to the Top program

- Common Core aligned curriculum frameworks in English Language Arts and Math
- New legislation enabling districts to apply to establish virtual schools

Because the applicant effectively addresses the criterion for this section, the highest score is awarded.

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

**15**

**10**

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

Applicant provides a description of stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal that includes but is not necessarily limited to:

- Three school principals who participated as part of the design team for the project.
- School principals who responded to a survey in order to contribute to the project design.
- A teacher focus group (n>25) on the role of digital media as a learning tool.
- A digital learning webinar series (n=15-20 educators) on social media, blended learning, and differentiated instruction with technology.
- A teacher survey (n=15) on professional development related to the project.
- A needs assessment among district administrators, school leaders, and external partners regarding an online vision for the district (n not specified).
- Teachers (n not specified) in a middle school who developed an “innovation school” proposal to personalize learning through blended and project-based models.
- Two middle schools (n of participants not specified) involved in i3 grant planning for extended learning time (ELT) with the use of technology and digital content—features adopted in the design of the present application.
- Student focus group (n not specified) which provided feedback on the project executive summary and whose suggestions were included in the project plan.
- The district’s Student Advisory Council (n not specified), comprised of student representatives, who provided input used in the application for digital literacy and technology needs of students.
- High school principals (n not specified) who responded to a survey on blended learning in their schools.
- The district school committee and teachers union, both of which reviewed the application and approved it for submission.

Further stakeholder involvement in and support of the application is indicated by letters of support in the appendix from groups such as the city mayor, the state department of elementary and secondary education, the district school committee, the teachers union, the district’s middle school principals association, the parent council of a local technology-focused high school, the district’s student advisory council, and individuals involved in private industry and local universities.

While the applicant addresses all of the criteria in this section, a moderate score is awarded because: (a) the applicant omits some details that would have been helpful in more fully understanding stakeholder engagement and support (such as the population and sample involved in surveys, focus groups, and planning groups); (b) the extent of parent, teacher, and principal involvement in the development and support of the application is not clearly evident; and (c) it is not clear how or why stakeholder involvement in, and the content of, the application submitted for the FY12 competition changed for the FY13 competition.\*

\*The following footnote was included in the application regarding stakeholder engagement and support: “While many of these actions took place in 2012 in preparation for Boston’s first, highly ranked (30th out of 370), submission of the Boston 365 plan for the 2012 Race to the Top District application, the proposal’s design, scope, and focus remains constant. Additional stakeholder engagement occurred during Spring and Summer 2013 in preparation for Boston’s resubmission, including the establishment of a cross-functional team of district leadership that has developed a district-wide digital learning strategy, of which Boston 365 is a critical transformation strategy for middle school grades.”

### 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:**

Applicant clearly and comprehensively addresses how the proposed project will engage and empower all learners within a personalized learning environment. Covering all four project years, the applicant provides succinct goals, activities, and responsible parties for preparing students for college and careers, including:

- Structure and support to develop literacy skills.
- Opportunities for students to gain and demonstrate knowledge through writing.
- Access to learning with technology.
- Access to culturally competent instruction and culturally relevant curricula.
- Opportunities for students to engage deeply in learning.
- Data-driven instruction.
- Assessments of, for, and in learning.
- Using diagnostic tools to place students in interventions as necessary.
- Increasing Common Core alignment.
- Increasing the rigor and extent of literacy instruction.
- Increasing engagement through enrichment activities.
- Increasing the effectiveness of common planning to identify student needs.
- Opportunities for students to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy.

More specifically, the applicant clearly describes how students will be engaged and empowered in:

- Understanding how what they are doing and learning is linked to standards and skills for college and career readiness through means such as daily learning objectives, graduation and skill trackers, literacy learning targets, extended learning opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships or workshops), review of existing digital tools and resources, and frequent assessments and demonstrations of learning.
- Identifying and pursuing learning goals and structures linked to college- and career-ready standards (i.e., Common Core) through means such as graphic organizers, collaboration online with other students in shared writing activities, engagement with online learning modules, curriculum-embedded argumentative writing tasks, and feedback to students regarding their progress and performance against state-level, college-ready graduation requirements.
- Involvement in deep learning experiences through means such as integrated reading and writing (reading to acquire information and writing to gain deeper learning and meaning), personalized learning experiences linked to the student’s academic interests through print and digital resources, writing that uses digital storytelling tools, PowerPoint and other digital tools to present information and research to others, and digital learning tools such as Text to Speech, on line pronunciation guides, and online dictionary to help build vocabulary.
- Access and engagement in learning about diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives through means such as blogs (e.g., students express their views of race ethnicity and how cultures and values of diverse ethnic group impact social customs, practices and laws) and the presentation of cross-curriculum content in a variety of formats that represent a broad range of cultures and a personalized path for celebrating diverse backgrounds.
- Mastering critical academic content and skills through means such as literacy learning across writing assignments and content areas (that provide structure and support for developing skills such as decoding, vocabulary, background knowledge, fluency, comprehension, and the ability to gain new knowledge through reading in all content areas), engagement in online learning modules, online collaboration with peers and educators, and projects designed to develop teamwork, problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking.

The applicant also clearly describes how students will have access to:

- A personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development through means such as online assessments, individualized pacing, differentiated instruction, and content or themes selected to match student interests.
- A variety of high-quality instructional approaches, environments, and content (aligned with the Common Core)

through means such as project-based learning, online learning modules, collaborative learning teams, and individually-guided activities.

- Ongoing and regular feedback in a tiered system of instruction and intervention supported by means such as summative information of student achievement (assessment of learning), formative and diagnostic information that can guide teaching and learning while it is in progress (assessment for learning), and assessment-embedded learning activities that apply metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies, self-monitoring of learning and good habits of mind, and build capabilities for reflection on learning (assessment as learning).
- Accommodations and strategies for high-need students through means such as text-to-speech readers and voice-to-text software that can enable students with disabilities to access content and document their ideas and online apps that enable English Language Learners to pace to their learning and share what they know through visual depictions while developing their language fluency.

The applicant describes how mechanisms are in place to provide students with training and support for using resources and tracking/managing their own learning through means such as the graduation and skills tracker tool available through the district's student portal and print resources, digital media, games, and podcasts to educate students and families on the effective and prudent use of digital resources.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.\* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

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

In support of the student learning component for personalized learning environments, the applicant provides a coherent and comprehensive plan that includes goals, activities, and responsible parties for professional learning covering each of the four project years, focused on:

- High quality instruction and rigorous content assessments for all students.
- Targeted professional development (PD) focused on educator needs.
- Teams of teachers using data to personalize instruction.
- Meaningful feedback that strengthens educator effectiveness.
- Additional time and resources to support struggling learners.
- Continuous improvement.
- Increasing access to highly effective teachers.

More specifically, the applicant clearly addresses how educators will be helped to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student learning by engaging in professional learning:

- All participating teachers (PD focused on rigorous content, assessment, cultural competence, culturally diverse learning, and using data for student subgroups such as students with disabilities, English learners, and Black and Latino boys) through blended means such as online professional learning and collaboration facilitated by the project's literacy coaches and the Education Development Center's Ed Tech Leaders Online Program; professional learning teams that test strategies in the classroom and then convene in workshops and meetings to share, reflect, and refine their practices; online discussion forums; and online resources and examples of technology used for personalized learning.

- All participating principals (PD focused on managing change in practice and culture in their schools) through blended means such as a year-long professional development program run by the district office, an online program focused on leading schools in a Web 2.0 world, online communication support (for principals to share challenges and solutions, support each other in their own digital literacy development, and document instructional strategies in their schools), monthly Superintendent's Learning Sessions and monthly principal learning sessions (for reflection, planning, and networking within the existing district structures for leadership development) and Professional Learning Networks organized by principals by academic level and instructional topic.
- Instructional coaches to support teachers' ongoing learning for continuous improvement, organized into 6-8 week cycles to help teachers adapt and personalize content and instruction by leveraging blended and project-based learning approaches, student collaboration, student interest, and digital media and learning tools to personalize the learning environment. Coaching will be differentiated so that school with the greatest need get the highest level of support.
- Instructional and literacy coaches to use instructional practices and language standards that will benefit all learners, provide differentiated instruction all students (including those with disabilities, English learners, and advanced students), working with culturally diverse learners (especially Black and Latino boys), build school capacity by training teacher leaders, and develop teacher's ability to use data effectively in adapting content and differentiating instruction. Specialists at the district level will monitor and determine if any school needs additional coaching and training in order to implement project activities with a high degree of fidelity.
- School-based teacher leaders, who will work with instructional and literacy coaches to help build capacity within the school and to sustain and advance its transformation to personalized learning environments by infusing technology into classroom instruction and learning, to develop specific skills in academic priority areas, professional growth and evaluation, rigorous implementation of state curriculum frameworks with differentiated supports, and data inquiry and analysis.
- School-based professional learning teams, linked to a district-wide professional learning network, which will meet during common planning time and online to analyze student progress, reflect on practice, develop strategies to personalize learning, and collaborate for professional learning.

The applicant also describes how processes and tools to match student needs will be embedded in all professional learning with educators.

In addition to feedback from systematic in-school observations mapped to the six action areas of the project plan, the applicant describes how educators will receive feedback on their performance from assessments that are in part linked to the district's Employee Development and Feedback System. The district evaluation system is designed to support both the growth of all educators and their accountability for meeting student needs within a five-step process that involves the educator and an evaluator: self-assessment; analysis, goal-setting, and plan development; implementation of the plan; formative evaluation; and summative evaluation. Feedback is embedded in both formative and summative assessments that involve the following components:

- Progress in student learning and professional practice goals.
- Proficiency in the four standards on the effective teaching rubric (curriculum, planning and assessment; teaching all students; family and community engagement; and professional culture).
- Prescriptions that include an indicator attached to the prescription, a statement of the problem or concern, evidence/description of the problem or concern, and a prescription for improvement.
- Overall comments by the educator and the evaluator.
- Rating of goals, four standards, and overall rating.

The applicant clearly explains how an online clearinghouse of tools and resources will be available to all participating educators, as evidenced by examples such as: high-quality, targeted PD focused on educator needs; teams of teachers using data to personalize instruction; meaningful feedback that strengthens educator effectiveness; additional time and resources to support struggling learners.

To accelerate student progress, the applicant describes how (a) schools will administer two interim assessments (one in English language arts and one in math) aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC Model Content Frameworks in order to pinpoint student progress and to help determine where differentiated instruction is needed and (b)

the district's online formative assessment system will provide student results organized by standards and sub-skills to help inform instructional practice in real time.

Linked to the new contract agreement between the teachers union and the district, the applicant clearly maps a plan to ensure that all students have highly effective educators:

- Educator evaluations are strengthened because all include student performance as a factor and new teachers who receive a rating of unsatisfactory will not be eligible to receive as step increase.
- Flexibilities in hiring and teacher transfers replace the seniority-driven process, because principals and teachers together decide which qualified candidate is the best fit for their schools.
- Class size is reduced in schools that need extra support.
- Professional development is connected to salary and classroom needs.
- Flexible schedules for professional development can be set.
- Parent and student input are strengthened because of their increased presence on school-site councils.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.\* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes. Also, more detail would have helped to further explain how training and support will address the district's teacher and principal evaluation system for continuous improvement.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

#### 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>11</b>

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

Applicant succinctly describes the proposed organizational structure for the project. Specifically, the project will be supported by the Office of Information and Instructional Technology (OIIT), with a team of over 50 IT professionals led by a Chief Information Officer, who will hire a project director (who will oversee all aspects of the project and have a connection to the Chief Academic Officer for alignment with curriculum and instruction) and project manager (who will support day-to-day logistics of the project). Appropriately, project staff will include three 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy specialists, four technology support specialists, school-based teacher leaders (who will receive an annual stipend for their work in coordinating the school's efforts to faculty capacity for personalized learning across grades, content areas, and differentiated student needs), and school transformation teams (comprised of existing school instructional leadership teams and student representation).

At the school level, applicant describes practices, policies, and rules involving staffing, roles and responsibilities, budgets, curriculum, and other issues that vary by type of school. Applicant explains that five types of schools are eligible for participation in the project: tradition, innovation, pilot, in-district charter, and local [out-of-district] charter. In general, innovation schools have more autonomy than traditional schools, and pilot/charter schools have more autonomy than innovation schools. The applicant implies that these differences across school types should not hamper school leadership teams because the state's NCLB waiver enables the district to award flexibilities and autonomy to schools in various functions to improve student achievement.

By example, applicant describes how the project provides opportunity for students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery and that students have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways.

Applicant also describes how the project director will be responsible for assuring equitable access to learning resources and professional development for instructional practices, including but not limited to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and differentiation, both of which provide adaptability and accessibility for students with disabilities and English learners.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.\* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

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

**10**

**7**

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

Applicant clearly specifies how all stakeholders in all participating schools in the project—students, parents, educators, and others—will have access to the components defined in the project (blended content, digital learning tools, inclusive practices, family and student engagement, collaborative space, and other learning resources both in and out of school) through student, family and community engagement, and educator portals. For example:

- **Students** will receive a wireless-ready mobile device that enables access to digital content aligned with Common Core, personalized, and differentiated for each student's unique developmental needs.
- **Parents** will have access to their children's performance data in a downloadable format from a designated portal, can develop digital literacy skills through the Tech Goes Home program, and can gain help in their parenting/caregiving roles through opportunities provided through Parent University.
- **Teachers** will receive training for using technology and online content to differentiate instruction, aid teaching, and personalize learning that takes place in classrooms and beyond (training will be provided through a combination of self-paced and collaborative PD, school-based PD, and blended learning).

Applicant provides clear examples of strategies that will be used to ensure that students, parents, educators, partners, and other stakeholders in the project have access to technical support for student learning in the middle grades:

- Technology Goes Home, a nationally recognized program for equipping families and residents with tools, training, and access required for 21<sup>st</sup> century life.
- Parent University, which focuses on child development, what children are learning in schools, advocacy, parent leadership, and effective parenting skills.
- School-based family and community outreach coordinators, who foster effective family involvement in students' education.
- Student-run technology support programs, cadres of student technology leaders who provide technical support at the school level.
- District-offered technical support, including a service desk, online support and resources, and a school-based teacher leader for each participating school.

Going beyond the district's current computer support, and the interoperable data systems in place (student portal and educator portal) and under development (family and community portal), the applicant states the aim to undertake the creation of an innovation (Cumulus) that will locate student data in the cloud under the control of parents and guardians, with the idea that school systems don't own student data but parents do. The current open data format will be in place while the district seeks funding to pursue Cumulus, for which an implementation plan for a three-year effort has been developed.

To assure the use of interoperable data systems beyond the current separate portals for students and educators (and the family and community engagement portal under development), the applicant through this grant will develop a centralized portal to serve as a launching pad for all data access, requests, and communication within the district. Rather than having to go to multiple places or systems to access relevant information, all stakeholders (staff, students, family, and community members) would go to one place to obtain the appropriate information in real-time. The portal would be available internally (intranet) and externally (internet), as well as from mobile devices.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.\* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

### 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:**

An overall plan for implementing a rigorous and continuous improvement process is embedded in the appended project implementation plan, organized around goals, activities, and persons responsible for each of the four project years.\* The project narrative clearly explains the strategy for timely and regular feedback on progress toward goals, making corrections for improvement, and providing detailed information on the implementation and effects of key project elements.

The applicant demonstrates its approach to continuously improve its implementation plan as evidenced by actions that encompass monitoring, measuring, and sharing information:

- The Chief Information Officer and Project Director will work together to ensure close monitoring of both compliance to and achievement of project goals.
- An external evaluator will conduct formative research to provide feedback to district stakeholders and project partners for improvement while the project is in progress, using data sources such as a teacher survey, site visits, and document analysis.
- Personnel at the district and school levels will use existing data for measuring progress toward project goals, including measures such as student achievement (district formative assessments and state summative measures), attendance, conduct, school climate, student enthusiasm and engagement for learning, teacher perceptions and use of technology.
- Data on measures of project implementation and accomplishment will be shared publicly through the district website, in a quarterly newsletter sent to all middle school student households, quarterly updates to all district staff, a Twitter feed, and semi-annual reports to the district school committee.

An online repository of practice-centered strategies will be developed and hosted to highlight effective uses of technology in learning based on knowledge and recommendations from project evaluation.

- After the grant period, the use of technology and six tenets of action for personalized learning will continue to be monitored and evaluated in order to help demonstrate the impact that the program has had on changing instructional practices and school environments with regard to the project outcomes.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.\* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes. Also, investments in professional development (a major component of the overall project) were not specifically addressed in the continuous improvement process.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

As with other implementation components, the applicant provides an overall plan for ongoing communication and engagement in the appended project implementation plan, which reflects responsiveness to goals, activities, and persons responsible for each of the four project years. The project narrative clearly explains the strategy for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

The applicant demonstrates the components of a high-quality approach to ongoing communication and engagement as evidenced by actions that include:

- Both internal and external stakeholders will be engaged in the project through regular communication and reports on the district's website; district communication vehicles such as a weekly email newsletter; Twitter messages and comments; a quarterly newsletter sent to all participating schools, families, and partners; school committee presentations covered by local media and press; regular project and steering committee meetings; onsite visits; and online multimedia videos.
- The district Office of Family and Student Engagement will have a key role in ongoing communication and engagement with the understanding that "the effective engagement of families, communities, and the students themselves is our core enterprise; student achievement and school improvement is the main objective of our work."
- Linked with the district's Acceleration Agenda, student learning and school improvement will be supported in the engagement of families, students, and staff through examples such as a parent portal help page, a Google Translate tool to access the portal in their own home language, training of staff members on how to support families through the parent portal, training sessions at Parent University on how to navigate the parent portal, a weekly online webinar focused on blended learning, and an online community of practice for using Web 2.0 tools.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.\* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

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

Applicant clearly describes 15 performance measures—by grade level (6, 7, and 8), for students overall and for student subgroups—for assessing student outcomes as shown in charts and discussed in the narrative:

- English language arts proficiency
- English language arts growth
- Math proficiency
- Math growth
- Average student growth between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> predictive formative assessments in English language arts
- Average student growth between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> predictive formative assessments in math
- English language arts course grade
- Math course grade
- Social studies course grade
- Science course grade
- Digital literacy proficiency
- Average daily attendance
- Out-of-school suspension rate
- Student enthusiasm for learning
- Feelings of acceptance in school

A specific rationale is provided for each of the measures along with appropriate explanations for their expected rigor, formative value, and review and improvement over time.

For each measure, its appropriateness for being ambitious yet achievement is supported by evidence of a significant improvement in student academic achievement, student attitude, or other aspects of student proficiency or performance assessed for students overall and by student subgroups.

Missing from the application is the required chart showing two sets of data:

- The number and percent of participating students, by subgroup, whose teacher of record and principal are *highly effective*.
- The number and percent of participating students, by subgroup, whose teacher of record and principal are *effective*.

The student subgroups shown by the applicant include “boys of color,” students with disabilities, and English learners. In comparison, student subgroup by ESEA definition include economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. An explanation is not provided for “boys of color” as a special student subgroup.

A middle score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses part of the criteria, it does not include goals for (highly) effective teachers and principals, the full range of required student subgroups, or performance measures for grades 3-5.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>As with other application components calling for a high-quality plan, the applicant embeds an overall plan for evaluating the effectiveness of investments in the appended project implementation plan, organized around goals, activities, and persons responsible for each of the four project years.</p> <p>Applicant provides a clear explanation that the following actions will effectively monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of investments in the project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Internal quarterly review</b>, which originated as a process with Turnaround Schools, where data and analysis are aligned with project goals through activities that include data analysis and preparation, the quarterly review meeting, and follow-up using the district's project management tool.</li> <li>2. <b>External Evaluator</b> who will be hired to assess the efficacy of the project and its primary tenets, and who will provide a neutral perspective to ascertain the faithfulness of the implementation, through data gathered from surveys, document analysis, onsite visits, and interviews with various stakeholders.</li> <li>3. <b>School walk through</b> by central office staff for monitoring and following up observations with personnel at the school and classroom levels, and to determine the appropriate use of technology tools for in-depth observation and analysis.</li> <li>4. <b>Monitoring portal usage</b> to determine if students extend learning time by using systems after school and over weekends.</li> <li>5. <b>Technology Uses and Perceptions Survey</b> to gain insight into how teachers integrate technology into their teaching practices for personalized learning and to identify professional development needs at the teacher, school, and aggregate levels.</li> </ol> <p>A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes. Also, investments in professional development (a major component of the overall project) were not specifically addressed in evaluating project effectiveness.</p> <p>*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Applicant clearly identifies all funds that will support the project over four years, including funds from the RTT-D grant, general budget of the district, and school budgets. In addition, applicant brings attention to three externally funded initiatives in the district that drive toward the same goal of personalizing and extending learning: Title I funds, i3 Investing in Innovation Grant, and School Improvement Grants.</p> <p>A total overall budget by category is neatly provided along with separate budgets by category for each of the six action areas as well as project implementation.</p>		

The project budget of slightly less than \$20M for project development and implementation, if it serves approximately 5,200 students across 20 schools, would seem to be reasonable when considering the incremental average cost per student would be approximately \$1,000 when fully operational in Years 3 and 4.

A budget with explanatory rationale is provided for each of the six action areas and project implementation along with strategies for the long-term sustainability of personalized learning environments.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not identify or explain: (a) how the reduced number of participating students during Years 1 and 2 would affect budget request or requirements; and (b) one-time investments versus ongoing operational costs.

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

**10**

**7**

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

Applicant provides budget information for continuing the project beyond the term of the grant (4 years). The budget details focus on the largest expenditures (professional development, technological tools, and staffing) for an estimated budget with two scenarios (one at a larger scale for about \$3.6M annually and the other at a reduced scale for about \$2.5M per year).

Applicant convincingly argues that the project's goals are sustainable, within either of the budget scenarios, beyond the grant period for three main reasons:

- The project will build capacity in students, schools, and district offices that will carry momentum forward for continuous improvement and ongoing reform.
- Resource allocation will be optimized because the project will be integrated into and connected with other existing initiatives and reform strategies.
- Because of its accomplishments and cost-effectiveness, the project will function as a pilot program to inform and attract future resource allocation such as the Gates Foundation and ConnectED.

The applicant also notes that it would explore a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) program to alleviate technology costs after the funding period and once the instructional and learning capacity, support structures, and personalized learning ecosystem are established in the district.

A high moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses all other related criteria, it does not include timelines and deliverables in the full implementation plan.\* It is not clear in the proposal information how the omission of timelines and deliverables in the applicant's implementation plan would affect its ability to achieve the project's intended outcomes.

\*Applicant notes that a detailed implementation plan, with deliverables and deadlines, would be completed within 100 days following the project award.

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

	Available	Score

<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

As of 2012-13, the applicant partnered with nearly 200 external organizations that offer support in the following areas related to the proposed project: mentoring; tutoring; on-site mental health services; adult education; referral of families to community agencies; before- and after-school programs; and school-based health clinic. The district also has university partnerships and staff with specific responsibilities for coordinating partnerships. The district targets partnerships that structure programs which engage the whole child and strive to give every child the best education possible.

Tailored to this grant, the district will choose participating partner organizations during the first year of the project. The partnerships will address social, cultural, emotional, physical, and academic issues that can create barriers to success for students and their families. The partnerships will be supported with RTT-D funds (as seed money) and school discretionary budgets during years 2-4.

Applicant clearly describes how the partnerships will work with participating schools and the capacity of schools to integrate and benefit from a “whole child perspective” involving community groups, agencies, and parents.

The following population-level desired results, aligned with project goals and targeted outcomes, are specified by the applicant for the partnerships to be formed:

- On track to college/career readiness.
- Student academic indicators (English language arts, math, social studies, and science).
- Student academic leading indicators (enthusiasm for learning, identification with and perceptions of school, digital literacy proficiency, average daily attendance, and out-of-school suspension rate).
- Teacher academic learning indicators (teacher perceptions of influence over classroom decision-making, collegial working environment, and self-efficacy—collectively and for instructional strategies and classroom management).
- School leadership academic leading indicators (teacher , student, and parent perceptions of principal effectiveness).
- Family and community engagement.

For each measure (also found in overall project performance measures), its appropriateness for being ambitious yet achievement is supported by evidence of a significant improvement in student academic achievement, student attitude, or other aspects of student proficiency or performance assessed for students overall and by student subgroups.

The student subgroups shown by the applicant for measures of student outcomes include “boys of color,” students with disabilities, and English learners. In comparison, student subgroups by ESEA definition include economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. An explanation is not provided for “ boys of color” as a special student subgroup.

A moderate score is awarded for this section because, while it effectively addresses part of the criteria, it does not provide sufficient clarification of how the partnerships will use data to improve results, how partnerships will build the capacity of staff in participating schools, or the full range of required student subgroups in measures of desired results.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve the literacy of all middle-school students and prepare them for college

and career success by expanding efforts to personalize and extend learning through the use of digital learning tools. With project funding, the applicant intends to reach over 5,200 primarily low-income students in grades 6-8 in approximately 20 schools with about 300 educators.

The applicant's proposed project would focus on six areas of action that provide support for personalizing learning as a school transformation strategy: learning blended with technology; extended learning opportunities; inclusive environments; engagement of families and communities; collaborative spaces for learning; and assessments that inform instruction and demonstrate learning.

A personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development would be implemented through means such as online assessments, individualized pacing, differentiated instruction, and content or themes selected to match student interests. Aligned with the Common Core and related curriculum materials, instructional strategies would include but not be limited to project-based learning, online learning modules, collaborative learning teams, and individually-guided activities

Help for students in understanding how what they are doing and learning is linked to standards and skills for college and career readiness would occur through means such as daily learning objectives, graduation and skill trackers, literacy learning targets, extended learning opportunities (e.g., apprenticeships or workshops), review of existing digital tools and resources, and frequent assessments and demonstrations of learning.

To accelerate student progress, schools would administer two interim assessments (one in English language arts and one in math) aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC Model Content Frameworks in order to pinpoint student progress and to help determine where differentiated instruction is needed. The district's online formative assessment system would provide student results organized by standards and sub-skills to help inform instructional practice in real time.

The district evaluation system would support both the growth of all educators and their accountability for meeting student needs within a five-step process that involves the educator and an evaluator: self-assessment; analysis, goal-setting, and plan development; implementation of the plan; formative evaluation; and summative evaluation. Feedback would be embedded in both formative and summative assessments

All participating teachers would be engaged in ongoing professional development (focused on topics such as rigorous content, assessment, cultural competence, culturally diverse learning, and using data for student subgroups such as students with disabilities, English learners, and Black and Latino boys) through blended means such as: online professional learning; professional learning teams that test strategies in the classroom and then convene in workshops and meetings to share, reflect, and refine their practices; online discussion forums; and online resources and examples of technology used for personalized learning.

School-based professional learning teams, linked to a district-wide professional learning network, would meet during common planning time and online to analyze student progress, reflect on practice, develop strategies to personalize learning, and collaborate for professional learning. Professional development for teachers would focus on rigorous content, assessment, cultural competence, culturally diverse learning, and using data for student subgroups.

All participating principals would be engaged in year-long professional development (focused on managing change in practice and culture in their schools) through: an online program focused on leading schools in a Web 2.0 world; online communication support (for principals to share challenges and solutions, support each other in their own digital literacy development, and document instructional strategies in their schools); and monthly superintendent and principal learning sessions (for reflection, planning, and networking within the existing district structures for leadership development); and professional learning networks organized by principals by academic level and instructional topic.

Total	210	154
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

#### Application #0063MA-3 for Boston Public Schools

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

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

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

Strengths:

Boston Public Schools coherently and comprehensively addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student, increase effectiveness of educators, expand access to effective educators, decrease achievement gaps and increase graduation rates and college attendance. Boston Public Schools' proposal, "Boston 365", aims to promote personalized learning at the 6-8th grade levels in approximately 20 schools, via a coherent, customized instructional plan that extends the learning environment beyond the hours spent in school 365 days a year. Its focus is literacy and writing across content areas, The key component of the plan is equitable access to innovative uses of technology and blended learning opportunities that integrate rich, interactive and culturally relevant content to support personalized learning, prepare students for advancement, and engage them collaboratively in developing learning profiles guided by assessments and implemented at their own learning pace.

The applicant builds upon the Boston Public Schools existing transformation efforts and infrastructure and supports comprehensive reform in the four core assurance areas as defined by the proposal:

- **Adopting Standards and Assessments** : Boston 365 will increase proficiency with technology enabling students to be ready for and more successful in college and career.
- **Building Data Systems:** Boston Public Schools has made investments in its data systems and will continue to do so by linking data systems to learning and instructional systems.
- **Effective Teachers and Principals:** Extensive professional development and coaching focused on leveraging digital learning tools will increase educator effectiveness and personalize instruction through differentiation, inclusion, pacing, and diverse digital content.
- **School Turnaround:** Boston's High Support Schools will be given preference in the project's selection process and be provided with additional support systems.

In order to articulate a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support, the proposal identifies and describes in great detail six elements of personalized learning that will be addressed by Boston 365:

- Blend Learning with Technology
- Extend Learning Opportunities
- Foster Inclusive Environments
- Engage Families and Communities
- Create Collaborative Spaces for Learning
- Use Assessments to Inform Instruction and Demonstrate Learning

The applicant identifies the following Anticipated Outcomes:

- improved performance on summative assessments (MCAS) as measured both by proficiency and growth;
- a decrease in the achievement gap within the school’s 6-8th grade students;
- an increase in grade-level performance and the percentage of students “on track” to graduate and enter college at 9th grade entry; and
- fundraising to sustain and expand the program beyond this four year period.

The proposal describes the support that all 20 project schools will receive. This support includes: Student Information System (SIS) portal for student/family engagement; a district-wide email and collaboration platform, Google Apps, which facilitates the sharing of resources, digital content, and collaborative work spaces; a personal tablet, with access to digital content; a repository of digital resources aligned to common core for blended learning; staff training for inclusive settings and blended learning models; a district online formative assessment system for assessment and demonstration of learning; and access to online systems and blended learning tools outside of school.

Weaknesses: None noted.

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

**10**

**7**

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

Strengths:

Based on cited research that points to the fact that the middle grades, grades 6-8, serve as a critical point between elementary school preparation and high school success, the applicant has chosen to focus this project specifically on those grade levels, 6-8. To select schools to participate in Boston 365, the district will send out a competitive request for proposals to develop personalized learning environments to all Boston public and charter schools serving grades 6-8. Boston Public Schools currently serves approximately 11,283 students in grades 6-8, who attend 42 middle and K-8 schools staffed by approximately 300 educators.

Through the RFP process, each school will have the opportunity to develop a customized plan to leverage the six elements of Boston 365 to transform its learning environment. BPS will prioritize the middle schools, to those serving grades 6-8 for participation, as well as those schools serving the highest concentrations of high-needs, low-income students, students with disabilities, and English learners. Extensive criteria have been identified for selection purposes.

The Boston 365 Selection Committee will review RFPs and make final recommendations to the Superintendent within 100 days after grant award. Participating schools will sign a performance agreement with the Boston 365 Steering Committee, who will also play an advisory role in ensuring successful implementation and achievement of the project’s four year student and school outcomes. A cohort of up to 20 schools will be selected.

Weaknesses:

Since school selection will be based on successful Requests for Proposal (RFPs), the applicant is unable to accurately determine total numbers of participating students, participating students from low income families, high needs students and participating educators. The applicant approximates that the total numbers of students to be served by the project will be 5,200 (Selection Criterion: Budget). However, this projected number of students is not broken down by percentages of students according to socio-economic status nor need.

Success or failure of being awarded a Request for Proposal (or grant application) is most often based on the applicant’s ability to write a compelling proposal rather than on actual need or meeting certain criteria developed by the “requester”. Selecting participating schools solely through the RFP process may eliminate truly “needy” schools who are unable or unwilling to write a winning proposal.

The RFP criteria does not include a requirement for a demonstration (signatures) of support from a majority of the school’s stakeholders. Stakeholders’ signatures might improve the rate of success of the project.

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

**10**

**4**

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

**Strengths:**

In response to this Selection Criteria, the applicant proposes that the project will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools, by seeking technical assistance from consulting and higher education partners and researchers to ensure that structures and systems are in place which would enable the project to expand after the grant period. The Boston Public Schools works with numerous private and higher education partners to support strategic efforts of scaling of initiatives. These partners include: the District Management Council, The Parthenon Group, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Boston College and others. The applicant states that the district will evaluate resource allocations in areas such as professional development, textbooks, instructional materials, and current technology expenditures to determine what existing funding could be reallocated to support this learning model. Fundraising to support this initiative is mentioned as one of the Project Outcomes. Additionally, the district will engage in a strategic planning process to determine how to align and integrate projects and other initiatives to better support this project's framework of learning.

Using a process called quadrant analysis, a tool that plots schools based on student proficiency and growth, BPS will prioritize schools in the lower left quadrant as the Boston 365 expansion schools. In addition, the Boston 365 project will support schools in scaling up/or deepening their own additional elements of personalized learning strategies including support for specifically chosen tools, professional development or family engagement strategies.

**Weaknesses:**

The application requests that the applicant include a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. The applicant talks about the means by which the project will build a base of students who are poised and ready to engage in personalized learning when they get to high school. It discusses seeking technical assistance and influential partnerships. It states that the district will review available funds. But, the applicant provides no high-quality, concrete plan and makes no commitment to scaling this project. The applicant simply articulates a process by which the district *would consider* expansion pending the availability of resources.

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

**10**

**6**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant's vision is likely to result in improved learning and performance and in increased equity because the project, Boston 365, aims to directly impact two district-wide academic targets for all students including English learners and students with disabilities:

1. Skillful, analytical writing in grades 4-12 and
2. On track to graduate by the end of Grade 10

By giving High Support Schools priority in the RFP process, BPS aims to achieve the State mandated performance targets in each of the core curriculum areas (and for each population group) by using Race to the Top-District grant funds to extend learning opportunities, to advance project-based learning, to personalize education through multiple approaches and to differentiate instruction for the district's High Support Schools.. Reducing the achievement gap by prioritizing the needs of the high support schools should improve overall district results.

The district recognizes that there is a gap between the achievement levels between children from different demographics, family backgrounds,, and type of schools, etc. The impact of the project will be to improve the Composite Performance Index (based on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) of students in high need schools which will result in the overall growth of performance indicators of the entire district. Extensive charts identifying Goals Areas, Student Subgroups, Baseline and SY targets were submitted to support this proposal.

Extensive charts identifying Goals Areas, Student Subgroups, Baseline and SY targets were submitted to support the Graduation Rate requirements of the Criterion Selection for the targeted grades 6-8.

Charts identifying Goals Areas, Student Subgroups, Baseline and SY targets were submitted to support the College Enrollment requirements of the Criterion Selection.

**Weaknesses:**

Extensive charts identifying Goal Areas, Student Subgroups, Baseline and SY targets were submitted to support the summative assessment requirements of the Criterion Selection, but the information submitted reported grades only 6-7-8. The applicant is required to set achievement goals for all subgroups and all grades for which there is a State assessment.

The chart depicting College Enrollment Rates do not include statistics for SY 2012-2013. A footnote to the College Enrollment Rates chart states that percentages reported follow the 2010 graduating cohort until January 2011 and that statistics for Students with Disabilities, English Learners, and Low-Income Students are not available. This statement is confusing, in that statistics for all subgroups include 2011-2012 data, but none include data for SY 2012-2013.

There are no corresponding narratives to explain information charted for Graduation Rates or College Enrollment Rates.

## 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>15</b>

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

**Strengths:**

Boston Public Schools has demonstrated a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching. Because of sought after legislative waivers which provided authority to extend the school day, financial resources and flexibilities around hiring and scheduling, the district is allowed to aggressively intervene in struggling schools. As a result, five of an original eleven Turnaround Schools have successfully exited Turnaround status. The district's Acceleration Agenda and an Achievement Gap Policy have also resulted in dramatic successes in raising student achievement, high school graduation rates and college enrollment.

Documented evidence includes: The district's graduation rates have jumped by 14% since 2007 (57.9%), and are currently at 65.9%. Graduation rate for low-income students increased from 59.1% to 64% in that time. ELL students increased from 45% to 59.3% and African American students from 59.6% to 64.5%. Additional data for Hispanics, students with disabilities, and Asian students have been noted.

The district has cut the dropout rate by 36% since 2007.

The applicant reported data for college enrollment (Class of 2007 at 77.8%) and compared this rate to those of the Classes of 2000, 2001, and 2002 which further demonstrates significant increases in college enrollment within that timeframe. Increases in college enrollment was also reported for African Americans, Hispanics, women and men.

BPS students saw broad academic growth across all demographic groups in English Language Arts (ELA). Since 2008, BPS 10th grade students have seen a 21 point increase (58% to 79%) in ELA proficiency rates. Proficiency rates for African American and Hispanic 10th grade students have demonstrated dramatic increases.

The applicant provided numerous examples of increases in academic proficiency by subject, grade level and special population, and in graduation rates and college enrollment rates, which provides further evidence for success in advancing student learning.

District accomplishments include structural changes, district-wide reform initiatives, and programs that support the strengths of, and address the gaps of, individual school communities. These include (partial list): Turning around struggling schools; providing arts instruction for an additional 14,000 students over three years; increasing the number of inclusion schools from 5 (2010) to 24 (2013); expanding Algebra 1 in grade 8 to all middle schools between 2009-2012; and increasing access to new technologies in 65 schools since 2011.

The district's current data system environment consists of 60 unique systems to collect, store, and report data. By upgrading core systems and retiring legacy systems, designing useful, thorough reporting and analytic tools, automating operational processes, and increasing application security these unique systems are connected and user-friendly. The Student Information System (SIS) whose implementation began in 2011, lets schools collect and manage data while making that data accessible to students and families. The Family Portal, launched in 2012, allows access to daily attendance records, class attendance records, report card grades, academic progress measured by test, quiz and assignment grades, student schedules, school announcements, and email notifications of changes in attendance and grades. Nearly 6000 families have established portal accounts. By SY 2013-2014, the portal will facilitate on file and media

storage for the district's students allowing families to access and monitor academic work.

**Weaknesses:**

Although reported in responses to a different Selection Criterion, the narrative to this Selection Criteria, (B)(1), fails to discuss the means by which the district provides training to staff, students, and especially parents in accessing data through the district's portals, and interpreting the data which they access.

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

**5**

**5**

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

**Strengths:**

BPS demonstrates a high level of transparency in processes, practices, and investments. This process includes making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. The process also includes disclosure of salaries at the school level (instructional and non-instructional) and other personnel and non-personnel expenditures at the school level. The information includes both real/actual dollar expenditures and FTE's, weighted student funding formulas by school and school-by-school allocations based on the weighted student funding model. Information is posted on the district's website and posted on the website of The Boston Globe and The Boston Herald as a result of an annual Freedom of Information Act request.

Weaknesses: None noted..

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

**10**

**8**

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

**Strengths:**

As a response to this Selection Criterion, the applicant identifies legislation, a federal waiver, and a successful application submitted by the State of Massachusetts in the Race to the Top competition as evidence of favorable conditions affording the district sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments described in this proposal. Legislation : An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2010, granted LEAs freedom to create "Innovation schools" with increased flexibilities on instruction, staff, resource allocation and labor contracts. Specifically in their Turnaround schools, Boston Public Schools was able to offer schools greater autonomy over curriculum, budget, school schedule and calendar, staffing policies and procedures, including waivers from modifications to, contracts or collective bargaining agreements; school district policies and procedures; and professional development.

In 2012 Massachusetts was given a waiver from NCLB which gave the State flexibility to unify accountability and assistance systems, offer incentives for improved student achievement in all schools, identify and support high need schools through multiple models, focus on proficiency gaps, and incorporate growth into accountability determinations. Most recently, legislation expanded online educational opportunities and the ability for districts to offer virtual schools.

Massachusetts is among the winning states for the Race to the Top competition, and thus the Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education is very supportive of reform initiatives which obviously impacts the success of the implementation of this project.

**Weaknesses:**

Whereas the application identified recent state legislation that would provide successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement reform initiatives, it failed to address this proposal's personalized learning elements and the impact that specific legislative changes would have on these elements.

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

**15**

**7**

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

**Strengths:**

The application contains 21 letters of support for this proposal. Included are letters of support from the Boston Public Schools K8 Middle School Principals Association, Boston Teachers Union, The Mayor of Boston, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Boston School Committee among fifteen others.

**Weaknesses:**

The Boston 365 project evolved from similar initiatives developed by BPS, including an unfunded submission to the 2012 Race to the Top District competition. Much of the engagement activities presented in this Selection Criterion occurred prior to other initiative attempts. There are forty-three schools who serve students in grades 6-8 within the Boston Public School System. Support statements and surveys for the 2013 Race to the Top District competition represent only the Middle School principals and the Middle School Principals Association which represent a small portion of those administrators who potentially will be involved in this proposal. Of the approximately 300 teachers who serve students in grades 6-8, the narrative references only a focus group conducted in June 2012 where 25 teachers attended. There is no evidence that parents played a role in the 2013 RTTD competition's development. Student input emanating from a focus group with the Boston Student Advisory Council on digital literacy and technology needs for students was incorporated into this proposal, but there is no evidence of student involvement specifically for this grant application.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant's proposal contains a well-defined, high quality plan for improving learning and teaching in a personalized learning environment. In an attachment, XVI: Implementation Plan: Student Centric, Educator-Centric Timeline, Student Centric Implementation Plan, the applicant provides a multi-page document which identifies Goals, Activities required for accomplishing these goals and Responsible Parties for achieving these goals. The timelines extend from the initiation of the project through its conclusion.

The applicant puts forth the argument that as technological innovations advance, teachers and schools must as well. New technologies necessitate new literacies and understandings to effectively make use of their potential. Boston 365 focuses on developing rich literacy practices across content areas and leverages digital learning resources to do so. The applicant argues that through interactive e-resources (such as e-books and e-resources) students can scaffold their decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension. Literacy encompasses not only reading, but also writing. Mastery of academic content is achieved through writing as much as reading. The implications and benefits of teaching that explicitly connect reading and writing processes are particularly relevant to those students struggling to learn in a content area. The applicant continues that through this project, students will be able to demonstrate these skills across content areas through their writing and class projects, as well as through their engagement with online learning modules or online collaboration. Coursework will be personalized so that the content or theme can be selected to match the student's interests. Curriculum content and accommodations through technology will enable the highest needs students to engage and progress academically. To ensure that curriculum and instruction in all subjects are culturally relevant and responsive to backgrounds, interests, languages, abilities and learning styles of all of their students, extensive professional development will be afforded teachers.

To further demonstrate the district's commitment to its support of students in their quest to be career and college ready, the applicant states that all curricula are aligned, or being aligned to the Career Ready Common Core across all grade levels and subject areas. The evidences to prove this statement include revised curriculum maps, lessons and additional resources available on the BPS Curriculum and Instruction website. The applicant describes the means by which schools are communicating College and Career Readiness to students. Examples include: posted learning objectives, and a "Graduation Tracker" website for students to see their progress toward meeting graduation requirements etc.

The applicant continues that the Boston Public Schools supports an assessment process that uses multiple tools to gather information and that this assessment process occurs in iterative cycles that time integrally into teaching and learning. The assessment process creates a foundation for schools to implement a tiered system of instruction and intervention known as Response to Intervention. This tiered system aims to provide high-quality, differentiated, and engaging learning experiences

for all students and targeted interventions for students who face difficulties. Through its Academic Achievement Framework the district calls on two research-based models: Response to Intervention (RTI), which addresses the academic shortfalls, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support which directly addresses the socio-economic and behavioral development of children.

The proposal states that opportunities for students to receive training in understanding and learning how to use the tools and resources will be embedded into their classroom instruction and school engagement through teachers, counselors and literacy coaches. The SIS student portal has also been implemented for student access to their own academic information which enables students to keep track of their learning.

**Weaknesses:**

There is no discussion of student goal setting within the narratives. The applicant alludes to the idea that all students “understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals; identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college and career ready standards, and understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals” (C) (1) ( a ) (i) (ii), but the prompt is not satisfactorily answered as it relates to the target middle grade students of this project.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

**Strengths:**

The applicant presents additional evidence of a thorough, purposeful, high-quality plan built to improve student learning through enhanced teaching and administrative support. In an attachment, XVI.: Implementation Plan: Student Centric, Educator-Centric Timeline, Student Centric Implementation Plan, the applicant provides a multi-page document which identifies project Goals, Activities required for accomplishing these goals and Responsible Parties for achieving these goals. The timelines extend from the initiation of the project through its conclusion. Additionally, the applicant outlines an approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increases their capacity to support student progress which focuses on the need for extensive professional development and support for project teachers and school leaders. This is a three-pronged process. The professional development focus will be aligned to the district's educator and administrator's evaluation system which, on its own, builds in an additional layer of accountability. Additionally, all Boston 365 schools will conduct an assessment of the teaching faculty, of the school's support teams and leadership teams with regard to their proficiency and readiness across the six components of the Boston 365 program:

- Blend Learning with Technology
- Extend Learning Opportunities
- Foster Inclusive Environments
- Engage Families and Communities
- Create Collaborative Spaces for Learning
- Use Assessments to Inform Instruction and Demonstrate Learning

The results of this assessment will be used as a guide to personalize the professional learning and coaching support based on the learning needs of the school's teachers and principals. Third, self-assessments will also help to identify strengths and weaknesses and allow for goal setting related to the components of the program.

The Boston 365 program will provide educators with 80 additional hours of professional development a year, with an emphasis on creating inclusive and differentiated learning environments for all students through the use of new technologies and blended learning approaches. Educators will engage in professional learning primarily online with support being provided by Literacy Specialists, and various PD providers. Educators will have the opportunity to come together to reflect on learning and practice, and to apply new learning at their school sites. Instructional coaches will work with school-based teacher leaders to help build capacity within the school to sustain and advance practice. All specialists, educators, and school leaders in the Boston 365 schools will form a school-based professional learning network. School-based professional learning teams will meet during common planning time and online to collaborate, to analyze student progress, to reflect on practice, and to develop strategies to personalize learning.

As a part of the evaluation process, classroom observations will be mapped to the six components of Boston 365 (listed above) and become a part of the formative portion of the educator evaluation system. Both formative and summative assessments and evaluations are directly determined by evidence gathered from the educator and

evaluator, including submitted artifacts and at least two classroom observations. The evidence collected is used to determine the educator's level of proficiency in each of the four Standards of Effective Teaching., as well as their progress in achieving their professional practice goals. Educator evaluations will include student performance as a factor for their rating system. Evaluations will include whether an educator is effectively reaching students of all levels of ability and whether or not the educator is engaging families through a cycle of student and parent feedback.

Through online professional development offerings, Boston 365 teachers will have access to digital media, lesson plans and planning tools, online curriculum maps, instructional strategies and online learning tools. The narrative states that support will be provided through a community of users as well as the district's technology and curriculum departments. To shore up their new learning garnered through the professional development sessions, school leaders and administration will also have access to training, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress toward goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps through personalized learning environments. Leadership Institutes and 21st Century Leadership Cadres will be adapted to engage year long professional development that builds a core cadre of leaders whose responsibility is to embed 21st century skills and blended learning into classroom and school environments.

Weaknesses: None noted.

#### 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:**

Strengths,

In order to demonstrate that the applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure, the applicant provides a thorough description of the LEA Infrastructure which will be implemented to support the Boston 365 project. The project will be supported by the Office of Information and Instructional Technology (OIIT) in conjunction with central office teams who currently are assigned to oversee all improvement plans, monitoring, and implementation. Additional staff will be hired to oversee the Boston 365 project. These include: 1 FTE Project Director, .5 FTE Project Manager; three Literacy Specialists to provide coaching and implementation support; four Technology Support Specialists to provide IT support and a School Based Teacher Leader (per school) to coordinate the school's efforts to build capacity among faculty at each site. School transformation teams will represent the existing Leadership Teams, along with student representation, and will lead the design and implementation of the program at school level.

The applicant outlines autonomy available to different types of schools within the district: Traditional, Charter Pilot, and Innovation; as to authorization, budget, central services, oversight, policies, curriculum, assessment, facilities, enrollment/recruitment, and staffing. Through the state's No Child Left Behind waiver, the district has flexibility to provide incentives for improved student achievement; identify and aggregate schools that need the most assistance; deliberately focus on proficiency gaps; and incorporate growth in accountability determinations.

The narrative states that the design of Boston 365 will enable participating schools to design personalized learning, including the ability to earn course credit based on mastery instead of seat time. The basic idea of this design is flexible ability grouping; that is, grouping on-line lessons for students at similar levels of achievement.

Mastery of Standards will be demonstrated through district formative assessments administered three times yearly. The schools participating in the Boston 365 project will also be expected to incorporate an alternate assessment option, such as end- of- unit quarter projects, formative assessments on a 6-8 week instructional cycle, and/or presenting work to peers through online publications.

The narrative insists that the district will ensure equitable access to learning resources as well as professional development practices through the use of Universal Designs for Learning and differentiation that are adaptable and accessible to sub-groups and which can be available through e-books, text-to-speech for all students, and Bookshare for blind students.

Weaknesses:

In order to fulfill the requirements of a high-quality plan, the applicant must have identified goals, activities, timelines deliverables and person's responsible to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure with the omission of these components, it is difficult to determine if the plan will achieve its intended outcomes. .

The applicant provides a district overview of autonomy available to different types of schools currently in the district, but does not provide specific autonomy that will be afforded the Boston 365 schools.

Credit recovery, and credits earned based on mastery instead of seat time, was addressed as an opportunity available to all district students. However, since this project will be geared specifically to 6-8th grade students, the applicant failed to demonstrate how credit recovery will be addressed specifically to grades 6-8, or not applicable, since students in grades 6-8 are not typically affected by credits per se .

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Strengths:

The applicant provides demonstrated inclusive evidence of the technical support it will provide to the plan's primary stakeholders: students, teachers and parents, to enable them access to the content tools and other resources necessary for the successful implementation of this project.

The applicant demonstrates that technical support will be made available to *all students* through the availability of wireless-ready mobile devices that enable access to Common Core aligned, personalized and leveled digital content, 24/7. The district will seek partnerships to provide 4G access via mobile devices so that students can access this information regardless of availability of internet access at home. The City of Boston's Community of Learning Initiative currently provides students access to all of their web-based digital content and tools from any computer or personal device.

*Teachers* will receive extensive training through self-paced, on-line and school-based professional development. Topics will include using technology, and differentiated instruction, which will aid in the development of lesson planning and provide strategies which will enable personalize learning in and beyond classrooms. Personal laptops are provided to educators for instructional use in the classroom.

*Parents* will have access to their children's performance data in a downloadable format using the family and community engagement portal. Additionally, the Tech Goes Home program, provides a cost-effective model to help under-served families to gain access to skills involving digital literacy as well as broadband access. The City of Boston has collaborated with Comcast and its Internet Essentials program for families to take advantage of low-cost Internet broadband at home. Parent University is available to parents and caregivers to provide information regarding child development, advocacy, leadership, and parenting skills.

The narrative purports that the district employs four strategies for ensuring that students, parents, educators and partners have access to technical support necessary to support student learning through Boston 365. This include:

- Technology Goes Home - A program in which participants receive 15 hours of hands-on classroom training, a new netbook or mobile device, and access to low-cost home Internet.
- Parent University – A program which provides strategies to engage families in support of student achievement. Three full-day Saturday learning sessions are offered throughout the year to provide technical support on blended learning and the use of the tools of Boston 365.
- School Based Family and Community Outreach Coordinators – This program provides parent engagement activities meant to increase parental participation in school related activities and provides communication avenues from the district/schools to home.
- Student Run Technology Support Programs – These school-based programs establish apprenticeships for students surrounding technology competences.

In addition, a program aptly titled the "Cumulus" will be a cloud- based platform, aggregating data from multiple sources into individualized student "cubbies". To stock these cubbies, information will be integrated into databases. Parents will dictate what data can be entered and extracted from this database.

Through this grant, the Boston Public Schools will develop a centralized portal to act as a launching pad for all data

access/requests and communication within the district. The portal will pull data from a variety of sources such as the Student Information System, Cloud –based E-mail, Special Education Information Managements etc. The portal will be managed as modules through which a user will be able to search.

**Weaknesses:**

In response to a high-quality plan, the applicant must include key goals, activities to be undertaken, rationale for said activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible, in this case as they relate to project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. The omission of these key components makes it difficult to determine if the plan will achieve its intended outcome.

The applicant is proud of the district’s rich ethnic and cultural diversity, yet no mention is made of the means by which the availability of the programs identified in this Selection Criteria are communicated to parents and what provisions are being made for parents whose primary language is other than English. This concern is addressed in the Selection Criterion (E2), but would benefit from being repeated in this section.

**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:**

**Strengths:**

The applicant demonstrates that they have a clear approach to continuously improve Boston 365 proposal by providing detailed charts which outline the means by which the district will implement a rigorous continuous improvement process. The charts include strategies for Monitoring, Measuring and Sharing contents of this project. The district will engage an external evaluator to monitor program implementation to conduct formative research and to describe implementation so that the process is able to be replicated, scaled-up or tested in other settings. The evaluator will collect implementation data via teacher survey, administered one per year, site visits, conducted twice per year and a document review.

**Weaknesses:**

In response to a high-quality plan, the applicant must include key goals, activities to be undertaken, a rationale for said activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible. The omission of these key components makes it difficult to determine if the plan will achieve its intended outcome.

The narrative does not describe the membership of the evaluation and implementation teams, Additionally, the narrative does not identify the person whose responsibility will include the development of the bi-annual report.

There does not appear to be any parent input into the evaluation component.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

**Strengths:**

The applicant outlines a convincing plan to ensure communication and engagement between the district and internal and external stakeholders. Regular communication occurs through the district’s vehicles such as the district website, presentations, committee meetings and minutes, newsletters, email, and Twitter,

The district’s theory of parental and community engagement is based on the work of Anthony Bryck, Don Davies and Karen

Mapp who purport that engagement strategies focused heavily on academics and school improvement will reap greater results than focusing engagement on school participation per se. As an example of this theory, the applicant featured accounts of significant parental participation at performance-based or academic venues in which their child was featured as opposed to school business events where parental participation was meager. Communication regarding this program will be made through the program’s website, through district communication vehicles such as weekly, monthly and quarterly email newsletters, through public presentations, videos, webinars, online, and through the district’s a Twitter account

In order to make the online communication vehicles more user friendly, how-to pages are included in the Parent Portal help pages, and a Google Translate tool, located on the SIS Parent Portal, allow parents access to the Portal in their own home language. Training regarding use of the district’s online tools was provided to 50 family and student engagement staff. Training sessions in English, Spanish, and Portuguese were provided during Parent University. A citywide Parent Portal outreach campaign, which will be delivered in several languages, is being planned, which aims to reach parents in their communities and community based organizations.

**Weaknesses:**

In response to a high-quality plan, the applicant must include key goals, activities to be undertaken, a rationale for said activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible. The omission of these key components makes it difficult to determine if the plan will achieve its intended outcome.

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

**Strengths:** The applicant submitted ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets. The applicant’s performance measures center on academic indicators, such as state assessment scores, attendance, as well as social and emotional indicators such as suspensions, enthusiasm and feelings of acceptance which are gathered annually through an administered student school climate survey.

The district administers two district-wide predictive assessments that are mapped to the state’s summative assessments in ELA and math. The district generates A Leading and Lagging Indicators Report which includes data related to student enrollment, demographic status, daily attendance, suspensions, and periodic academic grades, as well as lagging indicators based on student academic profiles from the prior school year. Teachers and administrators query their class lists to retrieve this information regarding their students and are able to generate success or risk predictors for individual students at a grade level.

The Office of Research and Evaluation will have bi-annual meetings with the Boston 365 Advisory Committee and the external evaluator to determine if the leading and lagging indicators are supporting the project and offering sufficient information on progress. New measures may be added, or weights adjusted for indicators if necessary.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant failed to set performance measure for all subgroups, in grades 4-8. Although the narrative points out the fact that African American students have a higher rate of suspension, putting them at risk, the applicant does not clarify why the performance measures submitted identify all students, boys of color, SWD (student with disabilities?), and ELL (English language learners), to the exclusion of other demographic categories.

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

**Strengths:**

A Quarterly Review process will incorporate data analysis and preparation, walk-throughs, monitoring technology usage, and an annual staff perception survey to review the information gathered to track the Boston 365 implementation process. These elements, which are conducted by an external evaluator, identified district staff, school leadership (transformation teams) and the Academic Superintendent will be an integral part of the evaluation process. Adjustments will be made to program elements that are not meeting expected outcomes.

**Weaknesses:**

There was no evidence provided that demonstrates parental participation in the community partner portion of this evaluation process.

In response to a high-quality plan, the applicant must include key goals, activities to be undertaken, a rationale for said activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible. The omission of these key components makes it difficult to determine if the plan will achieve its intended outcome.

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

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

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant identifies all funds that will support the project including existing funding such as i3, Title 1, and various School Improvement Grants. The proposed budget of \$19,981,831 is more than adequate to provide an extensive personalized environment for approximately 5,200 middle grade students, through mobile devices, assessments, families community and partner engagement, an online portal, personnel to support the project and professional development to support the personnel. The applicant provides a thoughtful rationale for most investments and priorities.

**Weaknesses:**

The Department has defined Award Ranges based on the number of participating students in the first year of this grant. For applications serving 2,000 – 5,000, the range of the award is \$4-10 million. For applications serving 5,001-10,000 students, the award range is \$10-20 million. The applicant estimates that 5,200 students will participate during the first year. This number of student participants is only an estimate since actual school and student participation will be based on successful RFP submissions, and these have not been scored nor awarded. The applicant is requesting a total budget of \$19,981, 831, which appears to be excessive to support a project for 5,200 students.

In Table 3-1: Project –Level Budget Summary Table: Evidence for (F)(1); Project Name: Blended Learning Through Technology, in the category of Supplies, the applicant is requesting a total of \$7,843,500 over the period of 4 years. The applicant is requesting \$472,500 for Project Year 1 and \$2,457,000 for *each* subsequent year. Supplies refer to personal tablets, including both hardware and content. Estimated cost of hardware is \$390/year with an estimated cost of licensed software \$60/year. (\$450/yr.). According to the applicant's narrative, 1050 devices will be purchased during Project Yr. 1(Budget Project Year 1 = \$472,500). 5,200 devices are budgeted for purchase during *each* of Project Yrs. 2-3 and 4. Unless each Boston 365 project student receives a new device each year, or unless the applicant plans on supplying each of the district's 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students (beyond the 5,200 students who are identified as the original cadre for the Boston 365 project) a mobile device sometime within the four year timeline of this budget, (neither scenario of which are specified within this proposal), there is no reason to purchase 5,200 new mobile devices annually. A replacement figure for damaged, or stolen devices, and an original purchase of mobile devices to support new students entering the project schools over the course of the grant would be a more reasonable budget request.

The applicant failed to address Selection Criterion Budget: (c) (ii): "Identification of the funds that will be used for one-time investment versus those that will be used of ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period."

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<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Strengths:</p> <p>The applicant argues that Boston 365 is sustainable beyond the years covered by this grant in that it will focus on building capacity in schools and district offices, integrate into and connect existing initiatives and reform strategies and will function as a pilot program to inform future resource allocation. Much of the total budget comes from the Boston Public Schools general fund. This funding, for resources, family and community engagement, extended learning programs such as Tech Goes Home, and online portals may persist past the end of the funding period for the Race to the Top-District funds. Hardware and digital content will most likely come from the general fund as well. Technology staff will build capacity to support and advance program goals and will assume responsibility for managing and supporting the program. Funds that would be traditionally spent on tools such as textbooks, consumables and paper products can be channeled to support digital resources. The applicant provides a projection of future, post grant expenditures which would be necessary to sustain this project.</p> <p>Weaknesses: In response to a high-quality plan, the applicant must include key goals, activities to be undertaken rationale for said activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible. The omission of these key components makes it difficult to determine if the plan will achieve its intended outcome.</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>Strengths:</p> <p>Boston Public Schools currently maintains partnerships with nearly 200 external organizations providing Health and Wellness Support, Expanded Learning Opportunities, and Family Engagement in the key areas of mentoring, tutoring, on-site mental health services, adult education, referral of families to community agencies, before/after school programs, school-based health clinics, and university partners. 81% of schools offer partnerships that provide students with supports in at least five of the key need areas. Turnaround schools have high levels of mentoring, tutoring, on-site health services and referral to family community services.</p> <p>The Boston 365 project will extend and deepen existing partnerships to support middle grade students across the district, personalizing not only their academic environment but also their social, emotional, and community environments. The exact nature of these partnerships is to be determined, because the project allows schools flexibility to personalize partnerships which fit the needs of their students. As a condition of participation in Boston 365, during Project Year 1, schools will be expected to engage with a partner to further and deepen their efforts to personalize and extend learning. The district will choose participating partners based on a rubric of a variety of elements and criteria, including cultural and linguistic competency, the proportion of students affected, and high-impact effects. The district is preparing a list of partners from which the participant schools may select. As a part of the RFP process, the project will provide \$160,000 per year as seed money to schools that do not have existing partners in place.</p> <p>The applicant satisfactorily completed the Population –Level Desired Results charts where Population Groups, Results and Desired Results were identified for each group.</p> <p>Performance Measure charts for competitive priority mirror the performance measure charts for the Boston 365 proposal.</p> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>The applicant does not clarify why the performance measures identify all students, boys of color, SWD (student with disabilities), and ELL (English language learners), to the exclusion of other demographic categories.</p> <p>Perhaps because partnerships with the Boston 365 schools have yet to be determined and selection of these partners is</p>		
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based on a rubric as part of the RFP selection process for the school participation itself, the applicant failed to successfully address sections 4 and 5 of this Selection Criteria.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Throughout this application, Boston Public Schools coherently and comprehensively addressed how it will build on the core educational assurance areas and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student, increase effectiveness of educators, expand access to effective educators, decrease achievement gaps and increase graduation rates and college attendance. Boston Public Schools' proposal, "Boston 365", aims to promote personalized learning at the 6-8th grade levels via a coherent, customized instructional plan that extends the learning environment beyond the hours spent in school 365 days a year. Its focus is literacy and writing across content areas, The key component of the plan is equitable access to innovative uses of technology. Through blended learning opportunities that integrate rich, interactive and culturally relevant content to support personalized learning, students are prepared for advancement, and collaboratively engaged in developing learning profiles guided by assessments and implemented at their own learning pace.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>159</b>
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