



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0141CT-2 for Bridgeport City School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools' (BPS) response to (A)(1) details that they are Connecticut's 2nd largest district comprised of 21,000+ students and 1,700 staff. In its RTT-D application an executive summary is presented which gives a clear, comprehensive picture of what the proposed project seeks to accomplish. Among its focuses will be an infusion of technology at multiple levels to aid in preparing students for graduation and college readiness. BPS embeds five principles into their theory of action for school improvement with the technology serving as the central influence of the project. The applicant reports a plan to provide anytime, anywhere access to a comprehensive, aligned core curriculum that utilizes core instructional guides, video strategies, and core assessments.

BPS is under relatively new administrative leadership having undergone a change at its helm within the last two years. As such, their work in the area of reform is limited to the prior two years. They have a vision and goals but a limited amount of documentable accomplishments. BPS addresses the **4 core assurance areas** in the following ways: **(a) Area 1 (Standards)**- BPS reports the adoption of Common Core Standards, implementation of comprehensive as among it core principles. PK-12 curricula. Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiatives, Next Generation Science Standards and National Standards for Arts Educations are all presented as evidence of higher standards in place in the District.

Area 2 (Data systems) - A data system that collects, aggregates, and shares individual and collective school data is reported. BPS also reports a process for instruction and intervention (universal screening and Aimsweb). Instruction that will utilize technology such as whiteboards, computers and other digital devices plus the use software such as Lexia (for reading improvement Symphony Math, ARC's Action 100 reading program and instructional materials such as Harcourt's leveled reading program are all described as being included in the data systems.

Area 3 (Recruiting developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals) - Developing highly effective teachers and principals is addressed in BPS' plan to enhance professional development and to use enhanced systems of personnel evaluation linked to HCMS, SEED, and TEAM, all acronyms for evaluation and/or mentoring systems. There is no inclusion of information regarding rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals.

Area 4 (Turning around lowest achieving schools) - Limited information is presented regarding what has been done to turn around lowest achieving schools other than BPS' information about its efforts to overhaul and decentralize central office which "brought new commitment from the entire school community" and the change that has occurred at Dunbar School (which will be renamed Jumoke Academy Honors at Dunbar School). This is where BPS has formed a partnership with Connecticut-based Family Urban Schools of Excellence to address high rates of in-and out-of school suspension and issues related to student behavior in a more positive way.

(b) Articulating a clear and credible approach to goals

The intended approach is to create an interactive collaborative learning environment while also expanding its technology based instructional learning platform to reach students in all grade spans. BPS makes the case for how it is moving into the 21st Century by including that they are placing an emphasis on strengthening and expanding its professional development offerings to ensure they have highly effective educators, addressing college and career readiness through the use of rigorous, structured curricula, and providing for the involvement of parents in their children's education and when needed, the advancement of their own education as aspects of a clear and credible approach to overall district improvement.

(c) Describing what the classroom experience will be like

Classroom experiences, as a result of grant implementation, are to be a combination of the current use of layered tiers of instruction accompanied by assessments, universally and individually administered, to reflect content mastery and the need

to modify instruction to meet the personalized needs of students. Each student will have a personalized success plan according to the response. Interventions will follow whenever mastery is not gained from initial instruction. A variety of scenarios is presented to show that instruction will not just occur through traditional methods but according to what meets students' needs and interests. BPS presents that evidence of content mastery will outweigh seat time requirements and that access to curriculum at the school, through parent portals and student portals from anywhere will be available. Learning of curricula may occur through projects, through work-based learning and a myriad of other instructional configurations.

BPS's vision/ plan is clear and builds on the preliminary work they have done in the prior two years. The plan appears credible given the advances to personalization in instruction that technology can bring. The varied classroom experience options they present are directly tied to the presented vision.

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

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

a) Process used or will use to select schools to participate - There is no specific process outlined for how they arrived at school selections. BPS details that because the district as a whole is in its 10th year of Need for Improvement , each of the 37 schools in the district will be a participant in this RTT-D project.

Information provided yields that BPS has been designated as a "Need for Improvement" district for a decade. This includes that in 2010-11 BPS had 23 schools that failed to meet the federal Adequate Yearly Progress requirement. The district was graduating only 50.3% of its students compared to a state average of 81.8%, and on state benchmark mastery tests in grades 3, 8,10 large majorities of the students were scoring basic or below.

(b) A list of the schools that will participate - All 37 schools are listed by name, grade span, number of students, number of high needs students. and number of educators in a table placed at the end of the response for (A) (2).

(c) The total number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, participating students, who are high-need students, and participating educators - BPS reports that nearly 99% of its students are economically disadvantaged; minorities represent 91% of the populations, and nearly 55% of children come from families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. This information and the table mentioned in (A)(2) above is sufficient to meet the requirements of (A) 2) (c).

From the data presented, it is obvious that BPS have an immediate need to improve. The unaddressed question is "are there some schools within the district in greater and more immediate need than others where a more streamlined approach to effecting change could be implemented, focused on, replicated and then expanded?". The case for an "all schools" approach versus a "selected schools" approach (i.e. the 23 that filed to meet AYP) is not definitively made within the response. This calls into question whether high quality implementation will be a likely result.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

BPS presents a plan to reform the district by implementing its proposed RTTD project in every school with every student and by involving every teacher. They have selected changes that are aimed at making the curriculum more rigorous, the instruction more personal to students' needs, and the training for teachers and administrators more intensive. The key goals identified in earlier sections of the application also apply to (A) (3). Specific activities that will be involved in LEA reform and the rationale for those activities are mentioned in prior sections as well and are included in the tables.

The applicant details its theory of change as the intent to pattern its reform plans after school districts in Chicago, Philadelphia, and New Orleans---each of whom have faced some of the same challenges as BPS. BPS needs to transform struggling and/or failing schools using turnaround models. Aligned learning and teaching components, increased rigor(based on the adoption of higher standards), financial support for internal and external stakeholders, and embedded professional development with intense training and a subsequent move to a "train the trainers: model are all included as aspects of Bridgeport's LEA-wide reform and change plan.

To evidence a high quality plan an applicant must include: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. Not included in the BPS response are the deliverables. Other than representing that the "scaling up" will result from the building of capacity for a Train the Trainers model, no process and plan for scaling up the project is detailed because BPS

intends to include every school in the project from the outset of implementation. Of concern is that they will be attempting to tackle numerous challenges all at the same time and involving every student and staff member Making the issue of manageability and whether there should have been a more prioritized focus as lingering issues.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) BPS outlines how the state of Connecticut's requirements for achievement outcomes that are both measurable and focused on increasing the number of students who are proficient on state assessments fit into its RTT-D proposal. BPS' growth targets meet or exceed the state of Connecticut's annual goals. Improved student learning is, therefore a reasonable expectation linked to the attainment of the outcomes.

(b) The applicant presents that ESEA targets established by their state department of education sets annual measurable objectives (AMOs) at reducing by half the percentage of students in the "all students" group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years using as the starting point rates based on 2010-2011 assessments. BPS established yearly targets for increases with an intent to reach the primary target, the state's requirement, by Year 5. Methods for ensuring equity are not specifically addressed as part of the response.

(c) The statewide objective to achieve a 94% high school graduation rate within four years will be an extremely difficult goal to reach given that BPS' current overall graduation rate is on 64%. Despite BPS striving for this ambitious goal will require a 30% gain which does not appear achievable or statistically possible despite the vision and genuine efforts to achieve improved student learning and performance.

(d) One of the tables presented in (A)(4) references a six year goal of moving the overall college enrollment rate from 62% to 78% with increments of 3 - 4% over the six year period.

(e) This "optional" area was not addressed in the response.

Discrepancies among the subgroups are very broad. Insufficient information is provided about how increased equity will be addressed. The established goals are clear, ambitious, yet with insufficient detail regarding the actual logistics for reaching needed increases between the subgroups and overall .

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport presents a record of success that does not include 4 years of clear successes. In its response to this section, BPS addresses how the district's Board of Education was reconstituted 2 years prior with a new superintendent coming in to serve. They address an external evaluator's reports that pointed to BPS' inconsistency in providing students quality instruction along with a lack of differentiation and lack of personalization--a scenario where even teachers were not provided the support and training necessary to effectively educate the children in their charge.

BPS presented ambitious and significant reforms they hope to make district-wide. The applicant was able to provide charts reflecting some baseline data and a year or so of increases in addition to a bulleted list of one year to two year accomplishments that they believe point to reforms that are making a difference and progressing them toward their goals. These reforms include, but are not limited to , implementing a new teacher-designed comprehensive PK-12 curricula, standardizing and implementing a district-wide scientifically research based instructional model, developing new partnerships with local colleges and universities and expanding the number of interns within the district and adding four new high school options.

For the final requirement of (B)(1) BPS reports that it has two portions of its data management system in place already through its website portals. Parents can already access data as can teachers/administrators. All SRBI assessments, benchmark assessments for the 6 week periods, state mastery test information and National Assessment of Education Progress and mechanisms to provide direct, prompt feedback is already available. The piece that is in progress but not completely in place at this time is the availability of similar information and access for students through a student portal.

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

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The new superintendent for BPS is reported to have brought much positive change in his short tenure. Among the efforts to increase transparency was the creation of the "Good Schools Bridgeport Plan" which is a blueprint for academic and organizational reform. Specific to financial transparency, the district has made certain that its website, www.bridgeportedu.net, contains "all budgetary information including detailed financial reports". These reports, according to the response, are updated three times each year and are accessible to all internal and external stakeholders at anytime. One current report mentioned in the BPS response called the End of Year Financial Condition Report for June 30, 2013 is specified to contain actual personnel salaries at the school level for all instructional and support staff, actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only, actual salaries at the school level for teachers only and actual non-personnel expenditure at the school level. However no example of the report is supplied in section (B)(1) or in the appendices and no totals for the specified areas are reported which makes the extent of availability undocumented and open to question.

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

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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

BPS' new superintendent was given broad authority, support and flexibility to make systemic changes aimed at raising BPS from its low achievement status. Among other examples of successful conditions existing in BPS are the state's request and approval of a No Child Left Behind Flexibility waiver. Further reported is Connecticut's Education Reform Legislation (Public Act 12-116) that established new standards for the state's schools and its educators. Embedded in Public Law 12-116 was the establishment of an Alliance District consisting of the 30 districts with the lowest performance index scores statewide. Bridgeport's inclusion as one of the 30 districts demonstrates that the state is granting attention and autonomy to craft innovative programs aimed at raising student performance and to close achievement gaps. Connecticut also has within its state department of education a Commissioner's Network of which Bridgeport is a member. This network provides new resources and flexibilities to improve student achievement in the state's lowest performing schools. Scientifically research-based interventions (SRBI), Student Success Plans Educator Success Plans, use of the Naviance software platform to track and disaggregate data and various other measures are all convincing examples of conditions for success and autonomy being present in BPS.

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

15

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

BPS presents compelling evidence of extensive stakeholder involvement related to the development of the proposal. They detail a series of forums and meetings of educators, parents, teachers, students, and community members to gauge support and solicit input and suggestions for how the RTT-D proposal should be crafted. Parent and student meetings were facilitated by a 3rd party who had knowledge of the RTT-D outside of the presence of school personnel. The report that the collective bargaining unit was represented, actively involved and supportive of BPS' efforts. Students wanted more up to date technology and the opportunity to work at their own pace and also indicated that they liked the double dosing of instruction in difficult to learn classes, dual enrollment opportunities, and credit recovery offerings. Parents were desirous of a more standardized curriculum, uniform instruction and assessment, more educators of color, better training for educators. Unique partnerships with a large number of colleges and universities represented another layer of stakeholder engagement evidence. It was not possible to determine from the information provided the frequency, duration, or total number of meetings held that ultimately resulted the development of the BPS RTT-D proposal. Based upon the information presented, it appears that BPS used the input garnered from the forums and meetings to craft the proposal rather than beginning with a tentative plan and using the feedback and input gather to revise the plan. There is no information provided regarding subsequent meetings to review and tweak the proposal to ensure it had the full support of stakeholders.

A wide variety of letters of support are a part of the appendices. They include letters from Connecticut's State Commissioner of Education, from the Mayor of Bridgeport, from United States Congressman James Himes, from Sacred Heart University, Fairfield University, Housatonic Community College, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, the Bridgeport Public Education Fund, Inc., and from the Bridgeport Public Schools Superintendent of Education on behalf of himself. A closer review of the letters of support revealed vast similarities in their structure. They all included statements ranging from "strong support" to "support" of the effort but none included details of explicit plans for or intended levels of involvement by the entities or individuals in the funded project. This makes the existence of meaningful stakeholder support questionable.

Not included in the support letters is any letter of support from parents, parent organizations, student organizations, tribes, the business community, civil rights organizations, or advocacy groups.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>BPS evidences in its response a long term vision for achieving the types of student learning increases and the gains in district performance outcomes that will propel the district to achieve RTTD goals. The district appears to be in its infancy in making the significant changes that are needed. Yet the effort seems sincere, deliberate, and well thought out. The emphasis on broadened use of technology to make education available any time, any location supports the emphasis of personalized and deepened learning opportunities. BPS recognizes that parental support is critical to ensure an education system that functions well. The applicant outlines the efforts it has taken to foster dialogue with parents, achieve and retain their ongoing involvement. BPS reports outcomes of sessions where parent comments and requests for organizational and instructional changes were heard. This parental input was included in the formation of the RTTD plan.</p> <p>Historic performance and demographic data validate that much has to change in BPS to reach the identified goals of producing students who are college and career ready. According to the notice, a high quality (HQ) plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. As a result of these requirements an assessment of the existence and extent of the components is made below:</p> <p>(1) BPS incorporates 4 broad areas of change and improvement intended to impact learning. Those areas are: (1) early development pre-birth - grade 1, (2) mastery of reading by grade 3; improvement in reading comprehension by grade 5, (3) rigorous project-based learning, grades 6-12, and (4) "leaving to learn" authentic career experiences with intern and apprenticeship offered. BPS presents a patchwork of learning scenarios, goals, plans for parent engagement and involvement, etc. yet they are not convincing in how and when it all comes together or about how they will put in place the changes needed to shore up the areas that do not work as planned. The large number of students and staff who are to be involved throughout the project also give rise to concerns about manageability.</p> <p>The BPS plan, according to the response, includes expanding educational offerings from the cradle to the classroom, improving reading proficiency through the use of technology based independent reading in grades 1-5, making independent reading activities available through technology, providing, project-based learning matched to students' areas of interest, an intense program of professional development for teachers that will provide a focus on Common Core Standards and New Generation Science Standards, a Leaving to Learn program that will expose students to jobs and careers through first hand visits to companies/businesses, the use of scientifically research-based interventions for struggling learners, the use of PK-12th grade Personalized Student Success Plans that will identify what students know, deficits, plans to reaching goals to ensure college/career readiness, a comprehensive guidance and counseling program, virtual and global learning environments at the high school level, apprenticeships and work study, dropout prevention, a 9th grade academy and a PK-8th grade holistic learning environment through a partnership with vendor Houghton Mifflin. Though this is an expansive list of items, these are still not the only components of the BPS plan. Some listed items are already implemented and at various stages of development while others are part of the long term plan.</p> <p>BPS reports an existing data system that contains the necessary management applications to determine mastery of standards and the levels of college and career readiness. While a large list of learning options is presented, little attention is given to explaining the mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students to ensure there is an understanding of how to use the many tools and resources that will be provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.</p> <p>Since every student in the district will be a participating student, BPS cannot make the case that it has selected only high needs students as participants though it is obvious that there are some high needs students within the participant group. It is admirable that BPS desires every student to have improved learning and improved outcomes. However, it appears the selection of every school and every student will impact the district's ability to give focused attention to the high needs groups where the wide achievement gaps exist. This lack of of attention on the segments of the student population that need it most could have an opposite effect and could even widen existing gaps. Despite the expansive amount of information about offerings, currently implemented and planned, the response fails to include key elements of a high quality plan including complete rationales for the activities, the timeline(s), the deliverables, and parties responsible for implementing the activities.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

According to BPS' plan, every teacher and leader will be provided opportunities to grow professionally. The funded RTTD project will result in the full implementation of this plan. Among the areas educators will receive training in are Data Driven Decision Making, Common Formative Assessments, and other dimensions of the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI).

Every student will be touched by the funding of this proposal. There can be advantages to addressing every student. However, there could be disadvantages as well. New rigorous courses of study resulting from the adoption of higher standards point to BPS' being in the position to positively impact the levels of readiness for college and careers for all students. Yet the approach does nothing to clearly address closing the existing academic achievement gaps.

Every staff member's involvement in professional development that will address the new rigors is laudable. A looming question, however, is what of the teachers and leaders who are more deficient than others? If everyone gets the same training, without strict personalization, how do you really reach the deficient ones to effect overall improvement? BPS reports that "all PK - 12 educators will be provided ongoing, job-embedded professional development". That teachers will receive and whether it supports effective implementation of personalized learning environments. Teachers will be trained in how to adapt instruction and how to differentiate instruction to implement Common Core as well as how to use data to be ready for the next generation of assessments.

Teachers, according to the response, will use formative and summative assessments to measure student progress (including the Connecticut Mastery Test and Connecticut Academic Performance Test) eventually adding the upcoming Smarter Balanced Assessments. The use of a four-tier process will allow teachers to adapt instruction as needed by moving the students between the tiers as needed. Teachers have access to and know how to use the resources to create personalized learning environments as a result of them undergoing a four-tiered process similar to the scientifically researched based interventions that students undergo.

The technology intensive project proposed by BPS seems feasible to offer opportunities for students to learn in ways that are more personalized to their needs and interests. Technology will also play a pervasive role in the training that educators receive as part of this project. The gains reported over the most recent two years are validation that there are some positive things already going on in the district that could benefit them if they expand.

The technology infusion and broad access to newly acquired technology by all stakeholders signals a step beyond the status quo. An impressive amount of high quality instructional materials and equipment items are identified in the grant narrative and within the budget pages. This is an indication that BPS is doing its homework regarding what is working in other locales and within educational research.

No mention is made in the application about the strategies to be employed to staff hard to staff schools and hard to staff subjects. These were necessary points to address. The ongoing training in the focus areas points to methods to foster continuous improvement.

A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. For item (d) of this section, there is no evidence that there is a high quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals except with regard to the professional growth that all teachers will receive as a result of more extensive professional development. One can identify the goals, some activities/rationales, and some deliverables and parties from the narrative. Identifying the planned timeline for the activities was not possible. A timeline could not be identified in the narrative or appendices.

There is also little detail about how the district will ensure that the parental requests for more teachers of color who are also highly effective will be approached. There is a great deal of language addressing how the new superintendent will be involved in leading this reform effort. The new superintendent has obviously been faced with a number of challenges yet he appears undaunted by what he faces. Overcoming years of inconsistent student attainment, inheriting a professional staff that ranges from very skilled and effective to employees with content knowledge and instructional delivery deficiencies as well as some teachers who are ineffective are among the areas he has to address. BPS must also address the issues caused by lack of cultural and ethnic diversity. Parents are reported to have pointed out that they want more teachers of color.

The recently implemented evaluation systems are evidence of higher expectations and higher standards being the new norm in BPS. The changes the new superintendent has made at central office show innovation, creativity, and an eye for the future. The changes he has made and those planned to be made as a result of RTTD are supported by multiple areas of educational research that cite the planned approaches as effective practices. The new superintendent's aggressiveness to seek out RTTD funding, to work with staff, students, parents, the general public, and collaborating entities to generate the start of the discussion of what needs to change in BPS is commendable and quite forward thinking.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	7
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>BPS' response includes some but not all portions of a high quality plan. The key goals presented at the outset and throughout the plan are considered as in evidence. Organizational changes that have occurred from the superintendent's selection to the realignment and decentralization of central office speak to the focus on governance and changes in practice. Both added support and flexibility are intended to be accomplished as a result of these changes. Policies of the LEA that are mentioned as in need of change are not spelled out with specificity. Neither is a timetable for getting policy changes done.</p> <p>(c-d) BPS provides evidence that their implemented project will focus on content mastery and earning credit based on mastery and not only on time spent on a topic. There are no logistics provided detailing how this mastery will be assessed but a statement regarding the intent to award credit is present.</p> <p>(e) ELL students and their exposure to a new literacy curriculum are mentioned in the applicant's intent to address the challenges such students face. How students with disabilities will be handled is not specifically addressed with the applicant's response. These responses are insufficient to be deemed a high quality plan for addressing these categories of students.</p> <p>Activities are sporadically included throughout the application and this section and some rationales for the activities are provided.</p> <p>With regard to the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities there are some items addressed.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A high quality plan, by necessity, must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. Key goals with respect to technology to support project implementation are listed within a technology plan; no goals related to comprehensive policy development are addressed. The technology plan includes that access to all technology-based platforms will be available with approved funding from RTT-D. BPS further offers that they will ensure that participants (including students, educators, parents/guardians, and external stakeholders) will have the needed access to all content, tools and resources no matter their location to support project implementation. Interoperability of data systems is not specifically addressed nor is the ability to export information in an open data format. They further detail that the necessary levels of technical support will be provided. The particular methodologies/strategies to ensure each of the above-mentioned items occurs is not addressed. No timeline, deliverables or parties responsible are provided.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. BPS begins to address continuous improvement by discussing how it will use evaluation as the method to determine the merit and worth of programmatic efforts. The intent to use an external evaluator employed after the completion of a competitive bidding process is listed as a first step. Utilizing a mixed methodology approach involving formative and summative evaluation, BPS intends to use the data elicited to assess project development, progress monitoring toward goals, and project impact. The listed goals actually incorporate rationales for the inquiry.</p> <p>BPS presents that it will use an internal and an external advisory board to participate in examining the program, findings,</p>		

and formative results on a quarterly basis; no other timelines are addressed.

The advisory boards will work directly with the project evaluator. While there is a plan and a list of other parties (District Central office, Board of Education, Project Coordinators, Public and media, Bridgeport Higher Education Association, External Advisory Board, and Bridgeport Administrative Cabinet) with whom the data will be shared, no definitive plan that overarches to the methodology, timeline, or deliverable for public sharing is included in the response. A list of evaluative questions are specified in the included Evaluation Plan along with the project goals and data & collection instruments. Though not spelled out in an easy to follow table or chart, the applicant's response is sufficient to determine that the components of a high quality plan exist, with the exception of the areas noted as missing.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. Other than the information presented in (E) (1) there is no other information provided regarding ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. No mention of the use of a district website or media outlets at specific time intervals is addressed as would be expected. The prior reference to using the mixed methodology to attain understanding of the merit and worth of the strategic intervention, overarching model, and projected activities alludes to an ongoing effort but is not necessarily clear evidence of a high quality approach to continuously improve plans. It should be noted that no reference is made to how external feedback or internal feedback, for that matter, will be used or how the feedback may be a facilitator of change to foster improvement.

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

BPS presents Table XIII which contains Performance Measures with Annual Goals. Fourteen performance measures are contained in the table meeting the expectation for the number of performance measures. No baseline data is presented within the tables but goals for incremental increases for each measure are presented for Years 1-4 of the project. Performance measures 6,7 , and 13 have no specified measures. The table has question marks for each year for two measures--- #5 - Age 4 children enrolled in BPS preschool and #6 the percentage of students who have 97% attendance record and has not applicable indicated across years for #13 the number of Grade 12 students who are enrolled in internet-based project based courses. An additional, untitled table contains more performance measures that address grade spans and measures is also presented in this section . The level of rigor for the areas that include measures have adequate rigor and results will be available within a timeframe that will allow instruction to be informed and adjusted.

The performance measure tool is presented but not the rationale for selecting the measures. No information is presented to address how the measures will be improved over time if one or more measures prove insufficient to gauge implementation progress. Primarily, overall performance measures are included and not measures by subgroup. The goals are ambitious and many appear achievable. However, the omissions of critical information impact the assigned rating.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. The response for (E) (4) could not be located as a separate entry within the proposal. All that can be identified as being remotely connected to evaluating the effectiveness of investments is the reference to the use of the external evaluator and the use of the internal and external advisory boards. As such, there is no identifiable high quality approach that is clear for continuously improving the applicants plans.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	5

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant reports that the project will be supported by RTT-D funds, LEA support, funding from the Connecticut Department of Education, funds from the federal Magnet Application School Program and funds from the Good School Bridgeport Fund. No specific breakdowns from each sources other than the \$29,430,4880 in RTT-D funding is provided. The total budget, including all funds, is described as \$35,132,428. Greater clarity here would not have necessitated the reviewer to surmise that slightly less than \$6,000,000 would come from the other sources.

The presented rationale for investments is rather vague consisting only of a prioritized list inclusive of 4 areas/items. There is no detail explaining that the four areas and how they are to be treated as separate projects that will have their own budget pages. A continuing review of the budget revealed a total of 6 projects with Project 5 being titled Project Management and Project 6 titled as Instruction and Project Based Learning.

Font size impacted the ease of review of the budget pages. Additionally, there were some pages related to the budget that contained only one column with the remainder of the page being blank making clarity and understanding very difficult. No indirect cost rate or amount is included and there is no indication that the applicant contacted the business office of its State Agency to secure a rate. Also omitted is information pertinent to ensuring there is a focus on strategies that will ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments.

A sizable outlay of funds, \$11,326,630, is allocated for Year 1 equipment expenditures. The budget narrative does not delineate one-time investments. However the budget pages (line items) do have entries where an amount is listed for an equipment item for Year 1 with an associated entry saying "no costs in future". Personnel costs and benefits appear to be projected to remain constant throughout the grant cycle seemingly not taking into account increases that generally occur when personnel acquire additional years of experience and not factoring in the increasing costs of benefits such as insurance, retirement, social security, etc..

The size of the student population, in light of the requested amount, fits into the acceptable range according to the notice and appears reasonable to implement t the project. The amount to be expended for equipment does not takes into account replacement costs and upkeep when needed to have been addressed.

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

10

1

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan must contain the following components: (1) key goals, (2) activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, (3) the timeline, (4) the deliverables, and (5) the parties responsible for implementing the activities. No (F)(2) section could be located in the proposal or in the appendices. Therefore, there is a lack of a high quality plan. There is a letter of support from the mayor of Bridgeport which is evidence of local government leader support. In none of the other reviewed sections was there information regarding how the applicant would evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use the data to inform future investments.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

This proposal specifies that the human resources of both public and private organizations will be integrated but there is insufficient detail given about the extent of these collaborations other than the agencies pledging support to the LEA's efforts. Evidence is lacking to show how a pledge of support translates to a meaningful, coherent and sustainable partnership. There is no mention of the existence of memorandums of agreement/understanding, no schedule of partner meetings, webinars, etc and no mention of the integration of public and private financial resources except in one instance (to be addressed later in the comments) There is no defined plan for ensuring the sustainability of the partnerships.

(1) The partnerships between the district and institutions of higher learning appear to be limited to professional development and training grounds for the collegiate students. It can be gleaned that enhanced student achievement and educator performance can be end results from such collaborations. The Cradle to Classroom initiative speaks to how the LEA and community, through United Way, will work together to reach the parents of young children and provide the supports and services necessary for children to be kindergarten-ready by the age of five yet no other detail is provided regarding how this work will unfold.

(2) Seven population level resources all of which are clearly measurable are identified in the response.

(3) The response details a plan that will involve the use of historical data to track the selected indicators. BPS uses as an example of the areas such things as the number of serious incidents students are involved in, the number of in-and out-of school suspensions, survey results, measures of student progress, etc. Because the strategy employed will involve all schools and all students from the outset, there is no indication of how other high needs students will become involved over time. The project seeks continuous improvement.

(4) As noted in prior comments, every school will be a participant from the project's outset. Academic and social emotional areas are to receive equal and simultaneous attention.

(5) There is no comprehensive list of prioritized needs. However a review of the narrative does yield some identified needs. One need addressed in the response is children entering school developmentally ready to learn age appropriate material which is not the current situation. Much information is shared about positive behavior intervention supports and the other levels of intervention now in use in BPS. The applicant reports that it was a grant to United Way that aided the district with the implementation of PBIS. However, the grant was provided in 2002 according to the response and the data provided on student outcomes and academic growth does not support that sufficient, positive impact resulted. No description of the decision making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports is specified. Neither is there any information presented about a process to routinely assess BPS' progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges/problems.

(6) The performance measures are specified in the listing of population desired results and include 90% of children entering kindergarten prepared to succeed, a 50% decrease in the number of serious behavior incident occurring each year, 50% reduction in yearly out of school suspensions, improvements in school climate as reported on the Schoolwide Evaluation Survey (SET) and Benchmarks of Quality (BOQ), students reading at grade level by 3rd grade, 91% of high school students graduating college and career ready by year four, and finally an increase in the percent of students who enroll in college or vocational/educational training though no baseline measure is already noted.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Within its application, BPS addresses the **4 core assurance areas** in the following ways: **(a)** Area 1 (Standards)- BPS reports the adoption of Common Core Standards, implementation of comprehensive as among it core principles. PK-12 curricula. Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiatives, Next Generation Science Standards and National Standards for Arts Educations are all presented as evidence of higher standards in place in the District.

Area 2 (Data systems) - A data system that collects, aggregates, and shares individual and collective school data is reported. BPS also reports a process for instruction and intervention (universal screening and Aimsweb) is outlined by BPS. Instruction that will utilize technology such as whiteboards, computers and other digital devices plus the use software such as Lexia (for reading improvement Symphony Math, ARC's Action 100 reading program and instructional materials such as Harcourt's leveled reading program are all described as being included in the data systems.

Area 3 (Recruiting developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals) - Developing highly effective teachers and principals is addressed in BPS' plan to enhance professional development and to use enhanced systems of personnel evaluation linked to HCMS, SEED, and TEAM, all acronyms for evaluation and/or mentoring systems. There is no inclusion of information regarding rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals.

Area 4 (Turning around lowest achieving schools) - Limited information is presented regarding what has been done to turn around lowest achieving schools other than BPS' information about its efforts overhaul and decentralize central office which "brought new commitment from the entire school community" and the change that has occurred at Dunbar School (which will be renamed Jumoke Academy Honors at Dunbar School) where BPS has formed a partnership with Connecticut-based Family Urban Schools of Excellence to address high rates of in-and out-of school suspension and issues related to student behavior in a more positive way.

Providing improved professional development and support for teachers, offering learning options that will allow students to learn in the ways they feel they learn best, brining in new technology, and making sure that there is access to a broader, more standardized curriculum are among the ways this project seeks to deepen learning. Tapping into the human resources available at area and nearby institutions of higher learning are also ways that student learning opportunities and

educator professional development can impact higher graduation rates and decreases in achievement gaps.

Total	210	124
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0141CT-3 for Bridgeport City School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) articulated a comprehensive and clear vision that can serve as the foundation for the four assurance areas of accelerating student learning, deepening student learning, and increasing equity. This vision builds upon the four assurance areas, and the Applicant coherently addressed each area. The district's vision to provide a technology-based instructional platform, and to have a system that will allow every PK-12 educator authentic, anytime, anywhere access to the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (S.E.E.D.) initial and completed goal-setting, review, self-assessment processes, as well as the necessary data for students and their parents, is a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. The needs of students in various subgroups were considered in the vision. The Applicant describes what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers. For example, the application includes a detailed description of how data systems will be used to guide learning and teaching.</p> <p>A limitation of the application is that the vision inadequately described how personalized student support will be grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests for all grade levels. Overall, this places BPS in the middle of the high range.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Bridgeport Public Schools' (BPS) reform proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation. The Applicant's proposal includes all 37 of the district's schools. The Applicant adequately describes the characteristics of its low-income and high needs students. According to the application, almost 99% of the district's students are economically disadvantaged and "nearly 55% of Bridgeport children live in families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level, the income considered necessary to meet a family's basic needs." More than 91% of the students in the district are from racial/ethnic minorities, and almost half of the students are from families where English is not the primary home language.</p> <p>The application includes an appropriate list of schools that will participate in grant activities, as well as the number of participating students, including the number of high-needs students.</p> <p>Overall this places BPS at the high end of the high range.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) plan describes some components (school-wide instructional supports, positive behavior support, etc.) of a high-quality plan. The plan has the potential for the described efforts to bring about meaningful reform, but it was ambiguous how all of the pieces will fit together into a coherent plan.</p>		

The proposed plan is based on 6 District Core Principles that have the potential to serve as a solid foundation for the plan: (1) Superior standardized curriculum and Instruction; (2) A series of comprehensive interventions;(3) Site-based teacher training and mentoring; (4) School systems to be reorganized around functional areas; (5) Effectively collect, aggregate and share student performance and school data; and (6) A foundation of literacy and school readiness. However, the headings for the subsections describing the principles (as well as the text under the subheadings) do not match the list of the principles—and, as a result, it is ambiguous how some of the principles will be incorporated into the plan.

It is unclear how the activities described in this application will lead to the desired outcomes. It is also difficult to follow the theory of action/logic model for BPS—and it would have been easier to follow if the district had included a schematic showing the theory of action/logic model.

Bridgeport Public Schools includes all schools in grant-related activities so there will be a limited need for scale up—but the district plans to build capacity by using a “Train the Trainers” model.

Overall, this places BPS at the middle of the mid-range.

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

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) vision is likely to result in improved student learning and increased equity as demonstrated by the ambitious goals. The projected data indicates that gaps will decrease across subgroups. The projected goals also indicate ambitious goals for graduation rates and college enrollment by subgroup. The goals are realistic—and as described in the vision should be achievable.

BPS has the foresight to recognize that some goals may need to be adjusted as the district (and the state of Connecticut) shifts from the Connecticut Mastery Test to the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Overall this places BPS at the high end of the high range.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) was reconstituted in 2011 by the Connecticut education commissioner. Prior to that time the district had a poor track record. The information in the application suggests that the district has made many positive changes since being reconstituted—and that the recent track record is much better. Numerous positive changes since 2011 are listed (e.g., adding 130 additional early childhood seats, serving as a pilot district for the Connecticut State Dept. of Education new teacher and administrator evaluation system, etc.) which have the potential to serve as a solid foundation for improving student outcomes.

BPS provides historic student achievement data for two years (2009, 2011) for the district. There are also a comparison between 2009 and 2012 for reading gains, and well as a school level comparison for 2 schools on gains between 2009 and 2012; and the change between 2009 and 2009 and 2012 for two other schools. However, annual data are not provided for all four years—and much of the data are for years prior to the district being reconstituted. The limited data (especially for the years since the district was reconstituted), make it difficult to evaluate whether the district has a clear track record of success.

Students do not currently have access to data through the district’s website portal, but the application states that “the next phase, which is in progress, is making the data available to the students.” The Applicant indicates that BPS will continue to streamline the data management system, and is “ensuring there is accessibility to all internal and external stakeholders, as appropriate through the district’s website portals.”

Overall, this places BPS towards the middle of the mid-range.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Since the reconstitution of the Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) in 2011, the district has made huge strides in increasing transparency. The End-of-the-Year Financial Condition Report – June 30, 2013 is posted on the district’s website. The

Applicant states that It includes actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only, actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only, and actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level. However, insufficient documentation to support the statement was provided in the application and appendices.

Overall, this places BPS at the low end of the high range.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) provided strong evidence that the district has successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments. For example, Connecticut's flexibility waiver application from some of the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was approved by the federal government. The district is also an Alliance District which is comprised of the 30 districts with the lowest performance index scores in Connecticut. Alliance District status is designed to help districts raise student scores and close performance gaps by encouraging them to pursue bold and innovative reform strategies.

Another strength is that BPS is a member of the Connecticut State Department of Education's Commissioner's Network which provides new resources and flexibilities to improve student achievement in the state's lowest performing schools.

Overall, this places BPS at the high end of the high range.

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

15

12

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) provides convincing evidence that it has had meaningful stakeholder engagement in the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal. The applicant described how meetings were held in communities throughout the district prior to the development of the proposal. Also, BPS administrator and teacher collective bargaining units were "instrumental in the development of evaluation plans," and focus groups were held with students and parents that were facilitated by a third-party leader who was familiar with the RTT-D grant proposal.

The application includes strong letters of support from stakeholders including letters from the mayor, institutions of higher education, and United Way.

Overall, this places BPS at the high end of the high range.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	9

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) has a plan that has some elements of a high quality plan, but the components of the plan were not organized coherently. The Applicant presented a plan that lacks focus due to the many activities described—and it is ambiguous how all of the activities will be pulled together into a coherent plan for improved learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment. The plan builds upon curriculum and instruction that have been in place for the past two years (i.e., curriculum and instruction that were put in place after the district was reconstituted). RTT-D funded activities would expand and extend current personalized learning environments.

The plan includes more than 20 activities organized under four broad areas: (1) Early development: pre-birth-grade 1 (2) Mastery of reading by grade 3; improvement in reading comprehension by grade 5 (3) Rigorous project-based learning (grades 6 – 12); (4) "Leaving to Learn" authentic career experience with intern and apprenticeships offered.

Under each broad area several activities are listed. Some of the described activities involve the use of personalized learning environments—for other activities the connection to personalized learning environments is less clear. For example, under Early Development the district plans to build upon a currently funded Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Visiting grant to fund additional home visits and counseling for young children. Also under Early Development the district plans to expand Family Solutions Bridgeport so it can work with families and children of any age upon referral from BPS. In grades 1-3 the district plans to establish MyOn Digital reading environments at 8 of the lowest performing elementary schools so that students will be able to read books of their choice independently using digital technology.

At higher grades a plethora of activities are also described. There will be project-based learning which will utilize personalized learning environments to create projects that will be “carefully planned, highly structured, and intended to provide life-changing experiences in which students will become engaged and committed while they recognize their own capabilities.” At the high school level district has been using the Twilight/Apex Learning Program for several years—and if funded, RTT-D funds will be used to “help purchase additional licenses for Apex Learning Programs.” Another example of an activity at the high school level is a Grade 11 S.A.T. Prep that has already been in place for two years as part of the GEAR UP partnership. RTT-D funds would be used to target students in the graduating classes of 2014 and 2017 for GEAR UP and will “follow those students from seventh grade through their freshman year in college.”

The Applicant does not describe how accommodations will be utilized to help ensure that students with disabilities, English learners, and other high needs students will be able to meaningfully access the curriculum and assessments.

It was not clear whether the plan had mechanisms in place for providing training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use all of the plethora of tools and resources described in the application.

Overall, this places BPS toward the middle of the mid-range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools(BPS) presents a broad-based plan that will support improved teaching and learning. The plan includes some elements and components of a high-quality plan but it also has limitations. A key part of the plan is that PK-12 educators will participate in ongoing job-embedded professional development which includes whole-group and personalized approaches. This will include training on data-driven decision-making and common formative assessments. There also will be training on implementing Project-based learning and other programs which are funded as part of RTT-D.

The plan describes how formative assessments will be used to measure student progress, and describes how the data from these assessments will be used to provide actionable information that educators will be able to use to identify optimal learning approaches. However, it is not clear how high-quality digital learning resources aligned to college- and career-ready standards will be used, and what tools will be used to create and share new resources. There also was insufficient information about how data about the effectiveness of the resources would be gathered and used to for continuously improving feedback.

A strength of the plan is that each school will have Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) that will analyze student quantitative and qualitative data, and will evaluate instructional strategies in relationship to the data so that instructional strategies can be better implemented that will engage students. This has the potential to support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments.

BPS adequately describes a teacher evaluation system that will support school leaders and school leadership teams as they assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate for the purpose of continuous school improvement. BPS participates in the Connecticut State Department of Education’s System for Educator Evaluation and Development (S.E.E.D.). There is also a similar administrator evaluation process used by the district.

The Applicant indicates that it utilizes “a diverse and expansive program of strategies” to recruit “high-quality educators, especially those who have chosen urban education as a career path. Details are sparse about how the district’s recruitment activities will increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, and what this will be entail beyond indicating that the district will recruit at colleges and universities.

Overall, this places BPS toward the high end of the mid-range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan described by Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) has many components of a high-quality plan in regards to LEA practices, policies, and rules that will support project implementation, but it also has some limitations. The Applicant has

practices, policies, and rules in place that will help facilitate personalized learning. BPS reorganized its central office two years ago into two teams: one that focuses on academics and one that focuses on financial operational management. Each school has a School Governance Council (SGC) that consists of students, educators, parents/guardians, and community leaders. The Applicant described how the SCGs will work together, but it was not clear that these councils would have sufficient autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school-level budgets to facilitate personalized learning. For example, the Applicant states that the SCG serves in an advisory capacity, assisting the school principal with "interviews of candidates for teaching and staff positions within the confines of the district personnel protocols" and with "scheduling within the confines of the district's bussing schedule."

Students earn credit based on mastery rather than time spent in class. Based on results of formative and summative assessments students, are moved between tiers for accurate placement based on their demonstration of mastery in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

A strength of BPS is that it has lots of resources for English learners (ELs)—and a history of utilizing instructional practices that make curriculum and instruction more accessible for ELs. For example, the district offer a continuum of options including transitional bilingual classes, English as a second language classes, pull-out and push-in (inclusion) classes, and native language instruction/language transition services. The Applicant also provides learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible for students with disabilities.

Overall, this places BPS towards the low end of the high range.

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

10

3

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan described by Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) has many limitations, and lacks many elements of a high-quality plan. BPS does not currently have all of the LEA and school infrastructure in place to support personalized learning, and the presented plan is unrealistic. BPS plans to use some of the RTT-D funds to further develop—and fill in gaps in-- the technology infrastructure that will support the instructional improvement technology-based platform, but given the huge amount that the district needs to accomplish to get the infrastructure in place it improvable that district will be able to accomplish it. For example a PK-12 parent portal needs to be developed that will give parents/guardians access to their children's grades, benchmark and standardized assessment results, attendance, discipline incidents, report cards, etc. BPS also plans to provide access to the district's technology-based learning platform, as appropriate, from multiple locations including community and youth centers, libraries, and Housing Authority recreation centers but few details are provided about how this will be accomplished.

The Applicant provides no evidence that parents and students can export their information in an open data format or that the LEA and schools use interoperable data systems.

Overall, this places BPS at the low end of the mid-range, since the district does not currently have many pieces of the infrastructure in place to support personalized learning environments.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) describes the continuous improvement process that it plans to use, but provides little detail about how feedback will be used for ongoing corrections and improvements. The plan lists project goals, evaluation questions, and data/collection instruments. BPS will contract with an external project evaluator (Center of Public Policy and Social Research at Central Connecticut State University) who will oversee the answering of evaluation questions as well as the analysis and interpretation of data.

BPS will identify, recruit, and utilize an external advisory panel of stakeholders that will meet quarterly to advice on attainment of goals, data collection, evaluation findings, program development, and sustainability, but it is not clear how this will be used for ongoing corrections and improvements. The plan does not does not describe how information will be publicly shared on the quality of its investments funded by RTT-D.

Overall, this places BPS at the middle of the mid-range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) plan describes how three evaluation reports will be prepared annually for use in informing the Project Director about progress toward meeting goals/objectives, completing curriculum/artifacts, and monitoring impact. An annual oral presentation will be given to project staff and the superintendent. The external advisory board will provide feedback on “achievement of outcomes, the rigor of the strategies, and the overall impact of RTT.” Upon completion of the project, a summative evaluation study will be conducted, and a report prepared.</p> <p>The plan has several limitations. It does not describe what ongoing communication and engagement there will be for teachers and other school staff. The plan also does not describe ongoing communication and engagement with external stakeholders (parents, community members, etc.) other than the members the external advisory committee.</p> <p>Overall, this places BPS at the low end of the medium range.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) has an appropriate number (14) of performance measures. The measures include the required measures, and they should provide some rigorous, timely, and formative information that the Applicant will be able to use as part of its continuous improvement progress. However, the application did not include rationales for the measures, and did not describe how it will review and improve the measures over time. For example, an Applicant-proposed performance measure was a "reduction in Grade 8 referrals for serious disciplinary incidents," but it was not clear why this was an appropriate measure that could be used to guide continuous improvement of grant-related activities. Overall this places BPS at the upper end of the mid-range.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) will collect a variety of quantitative and quantitative data that will be analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities, but provided inadequate information about how lots of very specific details described in the application will be pulled together to create a high-quality plan. The Applicant included specific annual targets for several variables (performance measures). For example, the PreK performance measure is “students will demonstrate ability to understand stories” as measured by the Preschool Assessment Framework and Brigance. The baseline was listed as 22%--and the target is an annual increase of 10% (i.e., 32% in SY2013-14, 42% in SY2014-15, and so on). However, it is unclear why the performance measures were selected, how the targets were set, or whether they are realistic.</p> <p>Overall, this places BPS at the low end of the mid-range.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget provided by Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) is appropriate, and the budget items are reasonable and sufficient to support development and implementation of the proposal and the Applicant includes a thoughtful rationale. It identifies all funds that will support the project and includes a narrative and assumptions/description (rationale) for costs. For example, costs are broken down by personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, etc.; and there are detailed cost descriptions and assumptions for each category. The budget identifies funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs. The detailed information and narrative places BPS at the high end of the high range.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

Bridgeport Public Schools did not include a high-quality plan for sustainability of project goals after the term of the grant, and only provided minimal information about summative evaluation activities. It did not include information about support from State and local government leaders. The plan also did not include a post-grant estimated budget. Overall this placed BPS at the middle of the low range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) has proposed a coherent and sustainable partnership that will support their plan. The Applicant proposes to integrate public and private resources in partnerships that will provide additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of participating students. Highest priority is given to high needs students and their families.

BPS has an impressive history of working with several other organizations and agencies, and plans to continue and expand the partnerships and services. For example, the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children Community Messengers program is a grassroots communications program that trains volunteers to help their neighbors find services and supports, and provides a forum for communications and problem-solving throughout the city. BPS also plan to work with the Connecticut Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, and a Parents as Teachers program being piloted by the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Several agencies (Early Head Start Program, a network of Family Resource Centers, Nurturing Families Program of Child and Family Guidance Center, Child FIRST program of Bridgeport Hospital, Housing Authority's Social Services Program) are also willing to partner with BPS on a Cradle to Classroom initiative. BPS works with the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS).

BPS describes how it will use data to target resources and identifies 7 appropriate population-level desired results that align with and support the larger RTT-D application.

Described partnerships with GE Corporation, the Consultation Center, and others will build capacity in schools, and help families and neighborhoods support healthy development, academic success, and the well-being of children and youth.

The Applicant briefly described a decision-making process that included parents, providers, philanthropy, the mayor's office, and BPS. This process may support improved results; however, inadequate detail was provided about the process to fully evaluate it.

Four performance measures were identified. The measures and targets are disaggregated by subgroup. The measures are ambitious, but they are reasonable and should be achievable.

Overall, this places BPS at the middle of the high range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Bridgeport Public Schools addressed how it will build on the four core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to improve learning and teaching. Each of the core educational assurance areas are addressed at some point in the application.

The Applicant articulated a vision which guided the development of a comprehensive and coherent plan. The proposed plan has some limitations as described in this review, but overall it is a high-quality plan.

Total	210	142
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0141CT-5 for Bridgeport City School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents an extensive description of its on-going reform plan which addresses each of the four core assurance areas. The applicant's vision is based on five core principles and reflects a comprehensive approach to improving its self-described stagnate and failing system. The relationship between the District's on-going reform plan and RTT-D's core educational assurance areas is described across the different initiatives. The applicant's curriculum and assessments are aligned with the common core college- and career-ready standards and it intends to use the Smarter Balanced Assessments which are also aligned with the standards. Improvements in the data systems and its supporting technology is the focus of the RTT-D project with proposed activities focused on an instructional learning platform for students, teachers, and administrators. The applicant presents a thorough description of its plans to recruit and retain effective educators. The turn-around plan is embedded in the core assurance areas with a brief discussion of some of the structural changes the District has implemented over the past two years. The vision includes many initiatives that may lack cohesion at the school and classroom level.</p> <p>The applicant describes many approaches it intends to use to meet the goals of accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning. The approaches are varied and reflect students' academic interests to some extent but appear to be driven more at the teacher and administrator level. For example, the applicant focuses on the core curriculum which will be standardized across the District which may reflect the needs at the District level but may not encourage an appropriate level of personalization at the school and classroom level. The focus on using supporting materials for personalization may not be sufficient to meet the goal of supporting student academic interests. While the applicant intends to use RTT-D to expand and extend personalized learning, it is not clear in the application how the learning areas will actually be supported by RTT-D beyond the technology-based instructional learning platform.</p> <p>The applicant presents a series of vignettes describing teacher and student experiences throughout the day. It is unclear how the results of each of these "encounters" actually provides the student with a personalized learning environment that represents a comprehensive and cohesive approach. Each of the experiences appear to be related to a specific learning need but it is difficult to determine what the experience means as part of a student's continuing advancement.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant intends to involve all schools in the District in some aspect of the grant-funded programs with some indication that the capacity of the District will be built through a train-the-trainers model. It is unclear in the application what the District means by some aspect of the Project as well as how decisions will be made concerning which aspect of the project a specific school, grade levels, or students will have access to different aspects of the RTT-D project.</p> <p>A complete list of all the schools in the District is provided in the application. However, there is no indication of which activities a school may or may not participate in over the life of the RTT-D project.</p> <p>The applicant provides all the required data elements for all the schools in the district. The school level data clearly indicate the need for the project. The applicant also provides additional data at the community level to further indicate the high-level of need.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	7

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plan for LEA-wide reform and change is based on the work currently underway as well as the anticipated opportunities presented by the RTT-D proposal. The applicant does articulate that reforms are underway in all schools and that the RTT-D work will impact the whole District therefore a scale up plan is unnecessary. However, the applicant also states that all schools will be participating to some extent in the grant funded programs but does not delineate the level of service by school nor provide a rationale for different participation levels. The applicant appears to contradict itself in terms of serving all schools and also discussing how it will scale-up the reforms beyond the participating schools.

The applicant does articulate a list of strategies that will be implemented at different times but does not provide a thorough explanation of how this process will work nor any theoretical underpinnings for its work beyond a superficial explanation.

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

The applicant presents ambitious and achievable annual goals that are equal to the State ESEA targets overall and by subgroup. The applicant also acknowledges that the measure will change based on the new Smarter Balanced Assessments. There is a concern, however, that the pattern of anticipated improvements may be difficult to achieve for all subgroups. The pattern of improvements varies across years and by subgroup with a limited explanation for this variable performance.

The applicant's vision, however, is persuasive and if implemented well will result in improved performance and increased equity.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents the results from its two year extensive reform effort with many initiatives under new leadership. Given the number of initiatives across the 37 schools in the District with varying levels of involvement in the reforms, a clear track record is difficult to determine. The improvements appear to vary across schools and subgroups. It also should be noted that the majority of outcomes are presented only at two points in time rather than the past four years which would have provided a clearer record of success.

a) The specific school examples of student learning outcomes indicate improvements in both reading and math at 20 and 15 schools respectively. It appears as if both reading and math improved in 11 of the District's 37 schools. The applicant also presents a chart indicating growth across the District in both reading and math on the state assessments. It is difficult to determine if achievement gaps are decreasing but the chart indicates some improvements in that area. Taken as a whole the limited data presented in the application indicates that the District is making progress in improving student outcomes but that the progress is uneven. The applicant does not present enough performance data to make a generalizable clear case for steady improvement.

b) The applicant presents data for two of its lowest performing schools and two high schools indicating improvements from 2009 and 2012 in reading and math as well as science and writing at the high school level. Given the data included in the application, it is difficult to determine if this is an exceptional example of success or if the pattern follows the District's upward trend. Without additional data and a description of the reforms underway, the achievement is important but its significance is difficult to measure.

c) The applicant currently makes extensive data available to parents and educators through the District's web portal. A major part of the RTT-D project is to extend the availability of data to students and to improve the current system. It is difficult to determine if the current or proposed system will include the range of data that will improve participation, instruction, and services.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that it makes extensive data available on its website including the required areas of expenditures at the appropriate level for specified staff. The applicant posts all budgetary information on its website and it is accessible to

both internal and external audiences at all times. The applicant also states that it make a wealth of news, information, and resources available but does not provide evidence of the extent of information it provides such as a screen shot of its website. In addition, the applicant does not describe how it notifies the public or any extra effort it makes to notify stakeholders of the availability of these data and how it might be accessed. While it does claim that all the data elements are present, the District also appears to have a rather passive approach.

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

The applicant presents extensive evidence of the alignment of its plan with state legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements as well as state mandates that support the implementation of the RTT-D personalized learning environments. The applicant presents extensive examples of state initiatives it is participating in at the District and school level to support personalized learning environments.

It is unclear in the application if the District has the autonomy to vary its plan or to pursue a approach that is not part of the state mandate or within its requirements. The applicant does indicate that some "flexibilities" are available as part of the Commissioner's Network but does not provide a specific example or evidence of the flexibilities or autonomy available at the District or school level.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	10
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

a) The applicant describes the involvement of parents, students, teachers, and educators throughout the development of the RTT-D application. The applicant presents a rich discussion of the findings from focus groups with parents and students that demonstrates many of the needs addressed in the application as well as changes made in the application. For example, improved technology at the high school level in response to student needs and curriculum continuity in the schools in response to parental concerns.

While the applicant states that it held "Community Forums, school faculty meetings and many other opportunities for engagement," no direct evidence was included in the application of the number of meetings it held to discuss the application, number of attendees and the representation from various stakeholders. Without direct evidence of the extent of these meeting, including the participants, it is difficult to determine the meaningfulness and extent of stakeholder participation.

In addition, the applicant describes the involvement of educators and their representatives in the development of the teacher evaluation system which is part of the RTT-D application but does not provide direct evidence of their involvement in the RTT-D application itself.

The applicant does discuss its extensive relationships with the higher education community and its involvement in the reform effort and the on-going partnerships. It is difficult to determine the importance of these partnerships to the community as a whole or to more direct internal and external stakeholders. The applicant lists a number of organizations and individuals that it has supportive relationships with but does not provide letters in the application as evidence of their support for the RTT-D application.

b) The applicant presents very few letters of support from a community the size of Bridgeport and its involvement in the reform efforts. There are only 8 letters and many of those are from the higher education institutions described previously. The larger community is represented by the Hartford Education Network and United Way. There are no letters from parent groups or parent organizations.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	12

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents an inconsistent plan for improving learning and teaching through personalized environments that support all students to graduate college- and career-ready. The applicant articulates clear goals anchored in student

achievement but the activities and strategies are less well-defined. While the instructional strategies articulated by the applicant are aligned to the standards, it is unclear if there is an internal consistency across and among these approaches. For example, the level of rigor of the instructional strategies varies as does the level of support provided to students. The timeline is general and spans the whole four years of the project without a clear implementation process. The deliverables are characterized as student outcomes without a description of the supports the RTT-D project will provide beyond monitoring the project as one of the responsible parties.

The applicant describes four main areas that it will pursue to expand and extend the personalized learning environment and provide students with greater opportunities to succeed. The projects include all grade levels and span skill development to career exploration with a diverse blend of early development, reading fluency and comprehension, project-based learning, and authentic career experiences for high school students. Each of these areas will probably be an important part of a personalized learning environment but the plan presented in the application does not effectively tie them together into an exemplary approach based on a high quality plan.

a) The applicant provided little discussion of how students would gain the skills and understandings to relate what they are learning to success in accomplishing their goals. While that might be part of some of the high school projects included in the application, particularly the internship project, the link between what students are learning and future success was not clearly addressed. The early development and reading and comprehension programs did not include the linkages to later success although they might contribute to academic improvements which are critical to later success.

The project-based learning project might have the highest potential for helping students structure their learning, understand the relationship between learning goals and later success as well as deep learning in areas of academic interest. The description provided in the application, however, indicates teacher directed content with students selecting topics within established parameters rather than based on their interests. In addition, the description in the application indicates two projects a year which may not be sufficient to meet the goal of deep learning experiences. The strategy also includes a clear set of teacher developed guidelines which may assist students early in the process to understand project-based learning but may not support students to build their own understanding of how to structure their learning in the long-term.

Exposure to a range of cultures and viewpoints is limited in the applicant's plan to improve teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment. The applicant did not provide specific strategies in this area or describe a set of activities that might lead students to a more diverse set of contexts and cultures. The high school internship program might have new perspectives as one of its outcomes but the applicant did not appear to structure the program to have that as a direct goal.

While the applicant did not sufficiently address mastering critical academic content, the two high school and middle school strategies have some non-cognitive goals embedded in their approach. The planned exhibitions of the projects as well as the career experiences may build goal-setting, perseverance, communication and other team-building skills. The reading fluency and comprehension project in the early grades is designed to build key academic skills but the content of all the proposed RTT-D projects is not sufficiently addressed other than its alignment with college- and career-ready standards.

b) The applicant proposes to implement Student Success Plans at every grade level throughout the district to establish personalized goals that reflect college- and career- skills and provide a personalized sequence for every student. While the applicant provides few details on the plans themselves it does intend to involve parents, students and educators in their development. Based on a State mandate for grades 6-12, the applicant will have the plans at every level (PK-12) with the presumed goal of students taking more responsibility for the plans as they advance through the grades. The technology to implement these plans with fidelity and track their progress is a major strategy of the RTT-D project and appears to be at the core of the personalized learning environment. The applicant provides few details on the content of these plans, the level of involvement by students and parents, and how they will actually provide a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development.

The applicant does provide some discussion of instructional approaches and content, for example Singapore Math, which is a high-quality program. The applicant also references its curriculum and pacing guides aligned to standards but does not provide details on the underlying instructional framework for the implementation of the standards-based curriculum. The use of e-readers in the early grades may also support students in developing reading fluency and comprehension as well as a personalized approach by providing students with a range of recreational reading choices. The applicant provides a limited discussion of how teachers will track student progress and check for increased fluency and comprehension.

The major focus of this application is the development of the technology based platform which will provide on-going and regular feedback to students on their progress toward meeting standards as well as personalized learning recommendations based on the Student Success Plans. The links to assessment data proposed by the applicant includes the annual state assessments, the six week cycle of interim assessments, and course grades which will provide students, teachers, and parents with a view of progress toward meeting standards. The applicant proposes to track progress through its guidance and counseling program which may or may not provide the level of personalized learning recommendations

that will lead to improvements in content and instructional approaches. The applicant does intend to use RTT-D funds to increase the number of counselors which may provide improved recommendations in meeting personal goals and supports for high school students. However, the relationship to academic improvements is not fully articulated beyond the PK-12 Advisor-Advisee program which has multiple goals including academic foundations and tiered supports.

The applicant provides a thorough discussion and schemata for its Response to Intervention approach for high need students. The supports within that program are extensive and provide a clear process for ensuring that high need students are on track toward meeting standards and graduation requirements. It was unclear, however, if high need students will have opportunities to move between Tiers and that teachers will group and regroup students at appropriate times. The applicant clearly articulates the need for differentiated instruction but does not describe the process it will use to ensure individual student progress.

c) It is not clear in the application how students will actually be prepared to use the Student Success Plans and its supporting technology based platform. It is assumed that students will have varying levels of support from teachers, counselors, and Advisors but the applicant does not provide a specific plan to train students to develop their Success Plans and use them to monitor their learning. Given that these plans are moving into the elementary grades, extensive levels of support and training will be even more critical to successful implementation.

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

20

13

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a limited plan to provide educators with the help necessary to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support students to meet college- and career-ready standards. The applicant proposes one overarching goal with activities that are based on its current embedded professional development approach. The plan does not provide a range of specific activities beyond a list of the areas that teachers will be trained in which are aligned with the RTT-D plan. The timeline is broad and provides no dates beyond the start and end date of the RTT-D project. Responsible parties are the District Leadership. The plan is a broad overview of supports for the personalization strategies offered to students rather than a specific high-quality plan. Given the importance of the technology platform to improving teaching and learning, specific dates on when it will be fully functional is important to judge the quality of the plan.

a) The applicant describes the training required by the state which will be supported by the RTT-D grant funds but does not describe how that training might be provided. The focus of the training does support some aspects of personalized learning in terms of understanding assessments, data-driven decision making and implementing differentiated instruction. The core of the professional development provided to educators appears to be anchored at the site level with cluster meetings based on professional learning communities which is a known effective strategy. The other approach is personalized professional development whereby teachers have access to specific courses in topics related to improving instruction, including personalized learning, project based learning, and assessment implementation which is also an effective strategy.

As part of the applicant's description of available professional development opportunities, it includes District training in summative and formative assessments with a set of clear expectations for educators to use those data to improve instructional practices. The applicant also articulates the educator's responsibility to inform students and parents in appropriate ways to support academic improvement. As noted previously, the applicant provides a description of the expected outcomes but without describing how those outcomes will be achieved.

The applicant does provide an adequate description of how it will use the feedback from the teacher evaluation system to improve instructional practice. These data will become part of the RTT-D supported technology platform to provide better access and use of these results to improve supports and interventions to improve practice.

b) The RTT-D proposal focuses on providing educators with improved access to tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress. The description of the proposed technology platform includes all the key data that will be available to improve student achievement and educator practice in a highly usable format. The applicant does not provide a thorough description of how the various data elements will be reported and displayed nor the level of educator involvement in the development and eventual roll-out of this system which will be critical to its usability and usefulness at the site level.

It is unclear at this time the exact dimensions of this technology platform and whether or not it will include all of the important data elements to personalize the learning environment. The applicant does provide some information on the assessment data, professional learning opportunities, and resources for students but it is unclear how these different streams will be turned into actionable information. The applicant does not provide a sufficient explanation of or if the technology platform will link to student work or quality resources to assist students or educators improve the learning environment.

c) The applicant states that it will provide educators with the necessary training, policies, tools, data, and resources to

structure environment but it provides few details on what will be included and how it will be used to meet the goals of improved instruction and teacher practice.

The evaluation system process and goals are described in great detail and appear to have a personalized approach to improve instructional practice. The process of evaluating teachers is adequate and based on well-trained peer observers. The applicant states that supports are provided and that many resources are available but does not provide an adequate description of what those supports are or evidence of the the resources available to teachers.

There is limited non-specific information on the training, systems, and practices available to continuously improve student progress and close achievement gaps. The applicant implies that those areas will be included in the technology platform and are part of the District's improvement plan but the application lacks direct examples of how it intends to implement and provide those resources.

d) The applicant does provide an extensive description of the educator evaluation plan and the definitions it uses to measure the effectiveness of educators. The applicant does address how it will improve the number of effective and highly effective teachers as well as an aggressive plan to recruit and train effective educators. The applicant describes its current efforts, including a federal grant to improve mathematics teachers and recruit a more diverse teaching force. The applicant has partnerships with local higher education institutions that are well-described in the application to meet this goal.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	13
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant describes its current District structure as well as its plan to support the implementation of the RTT-D project through comprehensive policies, practices, rules, and infrastructure improvements. The current organizational framework at the district and school level will continue to support the RTT-D project over the four years of the project and into the future.</p> <p>The applicant has completely reorganized the central office to better support schools and streamlined its functions to decrease the budget at the central office and moved those funds to the site level. All participating schools are served by the central office which has established lines of authority and responsibility to better support school functions. The academic work is headed by the Chief Academic Officer who is responsible for turn-arounds, instruction, and professional development which will provide an integrated level of support for the RTT-D project.</p> <p>The level of autonomy at the site level is unclear in the application. Each school site has a school leadership team with broad membership including parents, educators, students and community members to provide recommendations, endorsements, and assistance to support continuous improvement and accelerate student learning. It is unclear if these School Governance Councils or the building Principals has the autonomy within the responsibilities granted to them to establish budgets, hiring, or setting the school schedule. The applicant does provide a list of areas that the Governance Councils provide advice and recommendations on, including fiscal objectives and scheduling, but the decision-making appears to rest with the District and school board.</p> <p>The applicant presents its policies and practices that allow student's to earn credit based on mastery rather than on time spent as well as offering multiple ways to demonstrate mastery of standards at different times and in varying ways. This process is set by the State's 2012 reform plan. The District's Student Success Plans will also support demonstrating mastery at different times and in different ways. The opportunity to progress was clear and supported by the applicant's description within the application. The applicant's description of its Twilight program for credit recovery and for credit advancement demonstrates how students at both ends of the achievement spectrum are able to progress at their own pace and in the most appropriate fashion.</p> <p>The applicant provides a thorough description of the supports it provides to all students including students with disabilities and English language learners. The applicant has a well-developed Response to Intervention system with tiered levels of support as well as an identification process and specialized curriculum for English language learners. The learning resources and practices are adaptable and accessible.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		

The applicant's plan to provide infrastructure support for personalized learning is the major focus of its RTT-D project. The application provides a list of the proposed features of the technology platform, the hardware and software necessary to support the features and the current teacher and parent portals. The applicant provides goals and strategies to support the plan but it does not provide a detailed timeline beyond "as soon as possible." Given that this technology platform will support all aspects of the RTT-D project and is a first year expenditure, a specific timeline is necessary to judge the quality of the plan.

The applicant has provided a definitive list of the tools and resources it intends to purchase to upgrade classrooms and instructional approaches to support students, parents, educators, and stakeholders. The list includes both hardware, e.g. Smartboards for every classroom, and supporting software packages to ensure that everyone in the District has access to the necessary content, tools, and resources. The applicant's list is extensive and includes a one-to-one laptops for every student in grades 7-12. It is not clear if these laptops will be available outside of the school and resources rooms especially at the high school level. This was a clear need identified during the student focus groups that might be very important to many students given the demographics of the community.

The applicant articulates a clear level of support for student, parents, and educators to ensure that they all have the necessary technical support when and where they need it. The applicant proposes a series of trainings that are scheduled at varying times to accommodate different schedules and needs. It was not clear who will provide the training and if it will be geared at both the use level, i.e. the platform, and the usability of the technology itself. The applicant did not provide a clear description of the current technology use in its community as a base for the implementation of this new platform.

The applicant did not address either the open data format or the interoperable data system. These are both critical to having a fully functional system that can support all the planned elements of the technology platform.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a plan that combines appears to combine its continuous improvement process and evaluation to provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for on-going correction and improvements. The applicant's plan includes goal statements focused on key elements of the project, evaluative questions, and formative and summative review instruments. The plan includes hiring an external evaluator as the responsible party, providing for quarterly reports to both internal and external advisory boards. In general, the applicant's plan is a reasonable approach to continuous improvement but there are a number of missing elements in terms of the focus of the goals, more details on the reporting process, and interim performance measures to better focus mid-course corrections and improvements.

The six goals for the continuous improvement process included in the application vary in their direct relationship to the strategies included in the RTT-D project. For example, Goal Two is critical to program implementation but the evaluation questions are at a level of generality that might not present project management with important information on the integration of technology at the school and classroom level. In addition, it was unclear which of the goal areas included looking at the effectiveness of specific strategies such as personalized learning approaches, Student Success Plans, project-based learning. It is also unclear why the applicant included Goal One in the evaluation plan for the RTT-D project which is focused on the implementation of the goals for another federal program. The principal's academy may be related to RTT-D but the linkage is not explained.

The applicant does present an appropriate quarterly reporting schedule for the findings from the continuous improvement process which will allow for on-going improvements to the RTT-D project. The applicant proposes a set of questions to be answered as part of this quarterly review which will also help guide the review process. It is not clear, however, who will serve on the internal advisory board mentioned in this section.

The applicant provides an appropriate overview of formative and summative data and examples of the collection instruments it intends to use to guide its continuous improvement. The applicant acknowledges that there are more in-depth instruments that might need to be developed to provide a more robust understanding of the progress being made in implementing the project. The applicant provides further information on the data analysis methods the evaluator will use to

ensure the validity of the results matching methods and analytical approaches.

The applicant provides an extensive list of the audiences for the reports that includes key stakeholders as well as the public. An external advisory board is included in this list but the internal board is not.

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

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a limited plan for on-going communication and engagement with internal and external audiences. The main communication channel will be the evaluation reports and an external advisory board. The applicant implies that three of the evaluation reports will be for the project director without a description of how the reports might be shared across the District to inform and engage stakeholders. It is unclear if these are the quarterly reports described previously as part of the continuous improvement process. In addition, the applicant proposes one annual oral report to project staff and the Superintendent which is a very small audience for such a large project and investment.

The external advisory board might be a valuable engagement strategy but the applicant does not provide a sufficient description beyond a list of representative stakeholders. The list is extensive but not sufficiently focused to provide reasonable feedback on the progress of the RTT-D project. It is difficult to determine the extent of the applicant's commitment to communicating and engaging with its stakeholders.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a mixed group of performance measures. Many of the measures are directly related to the goals of the project and provide all the data elements and are set at an ambitious and achievable level. A few of the measures lack some essential information that is included as part of Competitive Preference section of the application or lack internal consistency and completeness.

Specifically:

- The performance measures for highly effective and effective teachers and principals are confusing. The percentages should be increasing and decreasing respectively rather than both increasing to a total above 100% when combined. In addition, subgroups are not included.
- The performance measures for preK - 3rd are adequate and include both academic and non-cognitive indicators and are set at an ambitious and achievable level.
- The performance measure for grades 4-8 is for combined content areas and lacks sub-group delineation. The non-cognitive measures lack clear definition.
- The performance measures for grades 9-12 for college and career readiness are adequate as are the academic indicators. They are set at an ambitious and achievable level. The social-emotional indicator appears to be at the 8th grade level.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's evaluation plan is limited to its approach to continuous improvement. It does not present a separate high quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the RTT-D funded activities. The applicant does intend to monitor the performance measures as its key effectiveness measure.

The applicant does present a list of areas that it will collect quantitative and qualitative data about but presents no plan to do so including specific strategies, deliverables, timelines or responsible parties. While the list included here includes many affective items measuring feelings and attitudes, there is one key area on technology infrastructure that needs to have a rigorous evaluation. This lack of an inclusive evaluation plan will make it difficult to know which areas of the RTT-D project made an impact on student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's budget adequately identifies all other funds that will be used to support the RTT-D project including specific federal grants, state and local sources as well as local philanthropic support. These additional funds represent approximately 10% of total budget which is a positive indicator of District- wide alignment of funding.</p> <p>The RTT-D request itself is both reasonable and sufficient to support the range of activities that will be implemented across the 37 schools. Given the size of the District, the number of students to be served, and the needs identified throughout the application, the RTT-D funds will support the project activities at an appropriate level to fully develop and implement the different initiatives across the grade spans.</p> <p>The applicant's rationale is based on the level of priority with the technology plan which is the bulk of the request in the first year. The next three priorities include support for the Educator and Student Success plans and on-going management support for the project itself. The development and implementation of the technology platform which is the major strategy of the RTT-D project is a one time expenditure of \$11M out of almost \$15M during the first year of the project. While building the technology platform is critical during the first year of the project, it is unclear how the applicant will actually integrate all the additional equipment into the schools during the first year.</p> <p>The one area that might not be funded at a sufficient level is professional development for teachers to not only integrate the new technology into their day-to-day practices but also to implement project-based learning and Student Success Plans. The applicant has provided sufficient funds for the technology but may not have provided enough support for teachers' professional development. Teacher training and support is critical to the long-term sustainability of the project and the early support and training of teachers may determine the project's success at institutionalizing personalized learning environments.</p> <p>The applicant does not directly address the one-time investments although the technology and equipment purchases are considered only a first year cost.</p>		

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant fails to provide a plan to sustain the project's goals after the term of the grant. While it mentions sustainability as a goal of the continuous improvement process it does not provide a specific strategy to inform future investments or measure the productivity of its investments. The applicant does not provide budget assumptions for three years after the term of the grant.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes a partnership project, Cradle to Classroom, to focus on building positive behaviors as well as providing additional support to families and the District's neediest children. The coherent partnership proposed in the Competitive Preference Priority will extend the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children, to develop a network of parent advocates to educate and assist every parent in the community. This is a very ambitious program which has already shown some success in helping families and young children enter school ready to learn. The proposed communications and training program will provide a very large increase in the the number of parent messengers from 30 currently to as many as 360 over 4 years. This will result in eventually serving approximately 75% of the target population which will have a positive impact on meeting the eventual goal of the RTT-D project for students to exit the District college- and career-ready.</p> <p>The applicant proposes seven population desired results that focus on both pre-academic indicators such as entering kindergarten ready-to-learn as well as a decrease in disciplinary referrals that last through high school. The selected indicators reflect important outcomes for children and families that will support the school level academic goals. An indicator for family and community supports is not included in the application, however, the decrease in disciplinary referrals will reflect community and family support.</p>		

The applicant intends to track the population level desired results using the performance measures for the RTT-D project as a whole. The school climate surveys and other data points will be used to better target students in need of support who will be identified throughout the year and provided additional supports through the Response to Intervention process included in the RTT-D project. This consistent approach to identifying and serving the highest need children should result in better services.

The applicant intends to bring the project to scale within the district and to share the model across the state and country. The applicant may have difficulty disseminating the model prior to developing a clear set of key elements in its approach which may assist in developing a transportable model.

The applicant proposes to integrate this project with the other support services it provides to families and high need students by co-locating the project in the schools. As mentioned previously, the Response to Intervention system will be key to the success of this effort at the academic level. The applicant proposes a shared data platform which should help integrate the project into the schools' support systems.

The applicant describes the process it used to identify needs across the District to target specific areas for the types of interventions proposed by this Partnership which should provide more effective service delivery. The applicant, however, does not provide a convincing description of the role schools will have in implementing the model. Additional professional development and coaching may be necessary to support the model.

The decision-making framework articulated in the application appears to be more retrospective. It was part of developing a Promise Neighborhood planning grant that the applicant does not expand upon in terms of its on-going efforts. Parent engagement also appears to be part of other efforts within the District and lacks specific on-going plans.

The performance measures are adequate and aligned with the goals of the project. The focus is on progress toward ready to learn and discipline referrals. The measures are ambitious yet achievable.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a partial plan aligned with the four core educational assurance areas to create learning environments designed to significantly improve teaching and learning through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports. The major emphasis in this application is on up-grading its technology hardware and infrastructure to support personalized learning and specific instructional methodologies. The applicant does not provide either a sufficient explanation or justification of how the technology and data systems will be used at the school and classroom level to support personalization. The applicant does, however, document its high need status throughout the application as well as the progress it is starting to make in improving the academic achievement of its students.

The applicant fails to describe a system of robust personalized instructional strategies that address the needs of its students across the preK-12 curriculum. While there are some areas that do appear to reflect effective models, i.e. SBIR and early reading strategies, there are others, i.e. project-based learning, that are not convincing models of personalization.

Taken as a whole the plan it is not cohesive. There are many initiatives that do not appear related or follow a similar logic or implementation model. Without a more coordinated and cohesive approach to personalized learning initiatives it is difficult to determine how the RTT-D project will add to the District's improvement plans beyond adding a technology platform.

Total	210	138
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