



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0182TX-1 for Bryan ISD

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a comprehensive and coherent reform vision.

- The Collaborative provides a description of the four core educational assurance areas, and the progress the applicant has made toward standards and assessment and begins with the requirements of the Texas Education Agency, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STARR), and the Texas Legislature. This comprehensive legislation requires five (5) end of course (EOC) assessments for grades 3-8 and five (5) EOC exams to meet graduation requirements. The new test implementation dates began in the 2011-12 school year. The TEKS, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, are the academic standards for Texas and were to be phased in at the school level beginning in in 2013-2014 school year. English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) and College and Career Ready Standards are also required and embedded into each of the school's curriculum. The applicant provides a comprehensive description of the specifics of the Texas legislation but does not describe the progress the Consortium schools are making toward implementation of the standards.
- The applicant indicates that each district has an electronic student information system that provides real-time access to information such as enrollment, demographic information, attendance, discipline, lesson planning, grades, student schedules, individualized education plans, college and career readiness, curriculum management, professional development management system, and an assessment system that organizes and analyzes benchmark assessment data when applicable. The schools have access to a massive amount of data and more impressively the system can match student scores with teachers. Linking data is often a challenge in many States and difficult to overcome. District Improvement Plans and Campus Improvement Plans are also generated from the system. The districts expect that all teachers use the data system to analyze student achievement and data. The current proposal will build on this work since one of its major areas of focus is identifying the strengths and weaknesses of teachers and principals so that intentional and purposeful efforts can be established.
- Evidence of some practices already implemented to build on to recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals include enhanced evaluation tools and processes that strengthen the leadership skills of principals, along with providing specific and timely feedback to teachers. Two of the most innovative processes is one which allows development of career pathways that include compensation and allows effective teachers to gain career advancement without leaving the classroom for administrative positions; the second is a process that allows effective teachers to be placed in assignments where they are most needed. The collaborative will build on to this progress by developing and implementing a meaningful, multidimensional evaluation measure of teacher effectiveness to guide decisions on teacher retention and placement. This is a critical area supported by research indicating the most effective teachers are not in the highest need schools, particularly in rural communities.
- Evidence of turning around lowest-achieving schools includes work with three campuses that were considered low performing last year and increased their academic achievement, student growth, sufficiently closed achievement gaps and met college and career readiness standards to be removed from the list for the 2013-14 school year. The collaborative will continue this work by implementing bold transformation activities throughout each district.
- In articulating a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interest, the applicant will adopt three core capacities cited as needs for high-performing, high-poverty schools including, the readiness to learn, the readiness to teach, and the readiness to act. Each component is comprehensive and described through both narrative and a Reform Plan Chart.
- The classroom experience is clearly described throughout the narrative and Reform Plan Chart. Examples include various components of the readiness to learn core capacity such as flipped classrooms, project based learning, 21st century technology integrated into the curriculum, and hands-on experiential learning. These components are cutting edge and innovative approaches to engaging students and allowing teachers to be creative in their approach to

designing the instructional environment.

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

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal is comprehensive and adequately addresses required components.

- The Collaborative uses a needs assessment that includes student achievement, demographic statistics, and the current status of capacity for transformation within the schools of the district to select participating schools. Additional evidence includes district-wide school climate surveys, surveys from students, online surveys from stakeholders, input from members of the advisory committee and indication that the participating schools collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements. The applicant demonstrates an extensive source of input from all stakeholders in the selection process.
- A list of schools from each district in the collaborative is provided, along with their National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) number and grade level.
- The total number of participating students is 17, 230 enrolled during the 2012-13 school year, which is 100% of the district's population. All schools across each of the districts are participating, a total of 31 campuses. The total number of educators is 1,193. Participating students from low-income families is 75.7% and students and student classified as high-need is 46.7%. The applicant uses the Texas Education Code (Sec. 29.081) as definition of high need. Participating student data are provided in both narrative and chart form.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The Collaborative will include all 31 schools and all grades across each participating district and considers its program as the scale up model. The applicant cites FAQ E1, which indicates that an LEA that proposes to serve all schools and students in the LEA will not be penalized. The expected outcomes are clearly aligned with the three concepts of readiness delineated in the reform proposal including ready to learn, ready to teach and ready to act. The goals of the reform proposal are clearly aligned with the three concepts and include implementing student centered and student driven personalized educational environments to close achievement gaps among subgroups; recruiting, developing and retaining highly effective teachers and principals; and increasing the ability of districts to implement research based turnaround models for low performing schools. The applicant intends to use the Texas State Assessment STAAR or TAKS and EOC exams to measure academic proficiency to plan individualized interventions for students.

The applicant's theory of change has numerous components that emanate from the three concepts of readiness and comprehensively describes how its plan will improve student learning outcomes for all students who would be served by the Collaborative. One component is a positive youth development program that includes family involvement, staff training and support, academic support, and asset building. A second component is innovative instruction, leading toward personalized learning environments. The applicant connects these two components as ASAP's theory of personalized learning environments being characterized by the principles of the Raising Healthy Children Program where students and adults in the school have the ability to develop meaningful, sustained relationships with one another. The applicant goes on to discuss what personalized learning environments look like and offer a range of options, including developing safe, trusting, self-managing classrooms; improved classroom attendance, decreasing delinquent behaviors reinforcing the role of emotional intelligence and developing students' empathy for diverse cultures and backgrounds.. A third component described is the recruitment, development and retention of highly effective teachers and principals, which will include a Leadership Academy, recruitment incentives and professional growth plans.

A Logic Model/Theory of Change is provided and includes Hypotheses, Inputs, Program Implementation, Short Term Outcomes, Intermediate Outcomes, and Long Term Outcomes. The Logic Model is centered around the Consortium's overarching goal to increase the numbers of highly effective teachers and principals to implement high quality, data driven, evidenced based interventions using personalized learning environments integrated with the 21st Century Technology and innovative, engaging instruction to ensure low performing school can successfully achieve high results and students graduate college and career ready. The Logic Model provides much needed clarity and pulls together the many components of the applicant's reform plan provides connectivity.

The strategies provided in this section are supporting all students in all schools. Since all schools and all students will

participate, there is no scale up plan and no high-quality plan that delineates key goals, activities to be undertaken and rationale for activities, timeline, deliverables, and parties responsible for implementing activities for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The Collaborative's vision to improve learning and performance and increased equity is evidenced by ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the participating districts overall and by student subgroups.

- Evidence of performance on summative assessments to determine proficiency status and growth includes use of the TAKS/STAAR/EOC Testing results. Performance for grades 3-12 is captured on the charts provided. An increase of 20% of students who demonstrate mastery on the state assessment and to increase the number of students who receive a Commended score of 25% is indicated, but it is unclear what exactly is meant by intermediary as related to annual goals and therefore difficult to determine if the goal is ambitious yet achievable, however, the charts provide evidence of ambitious yet achievable annual goals annually for each grade level broken down by subgroups and overall.
- Decreasing achievement gaps by 10% per year between various subgroups is indicated and the goal is ambitious yet achievable.
- The applicant intends to increase graduation rates by 10%. The charts provide additional detail regarding annual goals and the goals are ambitious yet achievable.
- College enrollment rates and postsecondary degree attainment are both list at increases of 10%, however charts provide more detail on annual goals and the the goals are ambitious yet achievable.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Collaborative's record of success in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching over the last four years is clearly delineated.

- Evidence in the narrative provides 2011-2012 graduation rates by subgroups and shows increases in all subgroups with some more significant than others. For example Limited English Proficiency increased 15.2% from 2011-12 school year to 2012-13 school year demonstrating the collaborative made significant strides. Additional evidence indicates the Collaborative outperformed the state in two subgroups, white and African American in graduation rates. The applicant clearly outlines the successful interventions used to increase graduation rates in the past two years. Four year data is not provided.
- The applicant provides evidence of achieving ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving and in its low-performing schools based on a summary of the number of students taking advanced courses. Subgroup data is not provided for for advanced courses which included small increases from 2011-12 to 2012-13. Other significant reforms include new courses in career and technical education programs, a collegiate high school for students who are academically focused, and dual language summer programs.
- The collaborative has seven schools that moved from low performing to meeting standards over the last four years. This achievement it credited to strengthening school leadership, teacher performance, continual progress monitoring and data driven decisions.
- The applicant provides student performance data through multiple outlets to students, parents and educators. Evidence includes electronic information systems in all participating school districts, 24/7 access to class assignments, grades, assessment data, transcripts, attendance records and discipline records. Students in 8th grade and up also have access to student interest evaluation for college and career mapping,integrated personal graduation planning and is interactive with mobile platform app compatibility. This system ensures data is available to students, parents and educators.

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

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence of a high level of transparency in the Collaborative's processes, practices, and investments including the following:

- The districts in the collaborative are required to manage their financial operation in conformity with the regulations and requirements of the Texas Education Agency Financial Accountability system Resource Guide and to report data to the Public Education Information Management System. Districts are rated on Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) and each district recently received a rating of Superior Achievement which clearly supports a process of a high level of transparency.
- Additional evidence of transparency is provided in the chart included in this section and delineates a list of Annual Audit Reports, along with notice of Parental Right under the Family Educational, Rights and Privacy Act.
- The applicant indicates that Appendix D includes actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level and support staff, actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only, teachers only and non-personnel expenditures at the school level. This evidence was not found in Appendix D. There was one budget summary report for one of the districts in the collaborative but the required information was not provided.
- The Finance Office staff keeps the public informed by posting public notices in the local newspaper for meetings related the the state financial accountability ratings. The districts also make information publicly available through including budgets and expenditure reports on their website.

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

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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments proposed is supported by the following:

- Evidence of autonomy enabling school districts to implement the personalized learning environment includes the opportunity to participate in virtual school on a full time basis and in individual online courses on a part-time basis. Texas schools have tremendous flexibility for digital education and awards credits to students based on completion of competency as opposed to seat time, which contributes to student moving at their own pace and the flexibility to offer more options for implementing personalized learning environments.
- Another example of evidence of successful conditions is multi-location instructors, which allows teachers to be a teacher of record in multiple schools while supporting the need for effective and highly effective teachers to be where they are most needed.
- Regulatory requirements for state assessments and state standards are evidence of successful conditions in the school districts.

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

15

12

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides comprehensive evidence of stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal.

- Seven focus group meetings for teachers, staff, parents, students, and the community were held with the focus on students and a dialog about proposal development and RTT-D. Specific dates for meetings were provided and evidence of how stake-holders were invited to attend. Stake-holders included teachers, staff, administrators, parents, students, and community members. The number of meeting and multiple methods of reaching participants ensures extra measures were taken to hear the voices of the stake-holders. Data from focus groups was analyzed and the Executive Planning Committee decided which elements were most prevalent and therefore included in the reform proposal ensuring engagement beyond attending the meeting was valued and used to prepare the final proposal. The membership of the Executive Planning Committee was not clear and it could not be determined if all stakeholder groups are represented in the final decisions.
- Evidence of teacher support is provided by signatures of support forms included in the Appendices for Crockett Independent School District only, however the LEAs do have a collective bargaining representative and evidence is provided that the teacher representatives were supportive as indicted by the signatures on the document in Appendix A. Therefore, teacher signatures were not required and the proposal meets the requirement of the proposal.
- Support letters from key community stakeholders are provided and include a comprehensive cross-section of the community.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Collaborative's plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college-and career-ready, includes the following evidence:

- The applicant provides evidence of engaging and empowering all learners through increasing the ability of students to take ownership of their learning, become active participants and co-designers of their own learning, discovering their own learning styles and goal setting for independent learning. The applicant intends to address these areas through professional development for teachers, parent workshops and the positive youth development work that is one of the areas of focus in this proposal. Students will develop individualized graduation plans and have access to them by web portal, which enables them to identify pursue learning and development goals linked to college-and career readiness standards and graduation requirements.
- High quality instructional approaches include a student centered approach with teachers and students co-designing individualized programs that include student choices and encourages students to create their own projects designed to help them reach mastery of their skill choices. The applicant goes further with evidence of ensuring students have access to high quality instructional approaches by offering a late bus initiative to make sure students who want to stay for afterschool activities, including tutoring, have a opportunity to do so.
- Evidence of students being involved in deep learning experiences includes the Project based learning approach which is clearly and comprehensively described in the reform proposal. The approach provides students with choices based on their interests and facilitates student engagement. Evidence that implementation of project-based learning includes strategies to master critical content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem solving includes students exploring real-world problems and challenges, and simultaneously developing cross-curriculum skills through team work in small collaborative groups. Students are inspired to persevere and think critically in order to obtain a deeper knowledge of subjects and problem solve, which often times has direct impact on a community or environmental problem, providing an opportunity to see a direct impact. Project-based learning is also inquiry based requiring students to communicate, exhibit creativity and problem solving. The applicant indicates and it is supported by research that students develop confidence and self-direction as they move through both team-based and independent work.
- The applicant indicates that students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning through ensuring the school makes a conscious effort to guarantee that the curriculum and social atmosphere of the schools recognize and celebrate the diversity of the community as much as possible. Students will be able to draw upon their life experiences and topics that are relevant to their families and cultures. The Abydos writing and project based learning will contribute to this effort. The Abydos writing project encourages students to use personal experiences and cultural and family traditions as writing topics which is an excellent method to get students to write about authentic experiences. The applicant proposed to use such programs as "First in the Family" to address cultural issues surrounding the importance of education in families that have never had a member to graduate from high school or college and provides guidance throughout the process of graduation.
- Project based learning is also evidence of students having the opportunity to master critical content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem solving.
- High quantity content, including digital content will first be addressed through access to the internet and access to technological devices. The applicant will investigate availability of a portable wireless access cards for students to use after school. Each district in the collaborative will allow students to Bring Your Own Technology device (BYOT) to school, but schools have challenges with inadequate bandwidth and will need to be addressed. Increasing bandwidth is not addressed in this section. Other evidence includes the hiring of additional staff to assist with the integration of technology as a tool in the educational process. Additional evidence includes staff training and students training to facilitate use of iPads to inspire learning and creativity.; using apps that allow for interactive learning; project based learning; search and retrieve information among others. Project based learning is central to high quality content and will provided opportunities for students to use cross curriculum skills, while working in small collaborative groups and creating high levels of student engagement.
- Ongoing and regular feedback is evidenced by the availability of web portals, family nights, and frequent meeting with teachers. The web portal allows parents and students to monitor progress toward goals in preparation for the next transition whether it is elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, or high school to college or a career.
- Personalized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills, college and career-

ready standards or graduation requirements, and available content, instructional approaches, and supports are evidenced by accommodations for students with special needs, new rigorous graduation requirements with the option for endorsements students wish to pursue such as STEM areas, Business and Industry, Public Services, Arts and Humanities, and Multidisciplinary Studies. Other evidence includes student being able to move on after demonstrating mastery of content creating opportunities for dual enrollment and other options to keep student challenged and engaged.

- Accommodations and high quality strategies are provided and include strategies such as the late bus, multiple training opportunities, video of training, technology assistance, tutorial or alternative methods to demonstrate mastery which provide evidence that the proposal includes accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation.
- Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that ensure they understand how to use tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. Evidence includes multiple training opportunities, video training, technology assistance, and tutoring after school.
- The applicant provides a high quality plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities for increasing the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principal.

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

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16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes an approach to teaching and leading that will help educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress.

- All participating educators will be engaged in training that prepares them to support the effective implementation of personalized learning. Evidence includes the Collaborative's plan to train teachers on cooperative learning structures, student engagement, motivation, student involved formative assessments, classroom rules and procedures, defusing disruptive behavior and social emotional learning. The professional development will be offered on a continuous and incremental basis. The applicant intends to allow each district the range to determine how professional development will be delivered but indicates that most schools will use common planning periods; protected time for professional learning communities; and academic coaches. These models of delivery of professional development allow for embedded professional development and has been demonstrated to be more effective than the traditional "sit and get" model.
- The applicant does not clearly address how all participating educators will be able to adapt content and instruction, providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches. Though in previous sections, the applicant discusses the significance of making accommodations for students as needed, this section is lacking in how adaptations and modification will be addressed for educators.
- Evidence of the applicant providing educators with training on frequently measuring student progress and use of data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of education is evidenced by using formative assessment data to inform instruction and provide differentiated support when and where it is needed.
- The applicant intends to develop and implement a teacher and principal evaluation system that will be comprehensive and emphasize professional growth, support, and improved student learning, along with fundamental aspects of personalized learning environments and within the grant period according to the timeline provided in the high quality plan for implementation. Evidence includes the applicant's plan to hire outside consultants, but the applicant does not address the need to include teachers and other stakeholders in the process, only that a committee will be formed to work with the consultants. There is no evidence of support or lack of support from teachers or principals for the new evaluation system. The applicant indicates that teacher observations will occur a minimum of twice a year for veteran teachers and three times for new teachers. Feedback will be used to guide the support and development of teachers in general will contribute to improvements for individual teachers and collectively for all teachers. Principal and superintendent evaluations are also appropriately addressed.
- Teachers will also develop a professional learning plan which will include major objectives and milestones. This will enable teachers to address challenges early on before problems occur and should be considered preventative and not a method of viewing teachers as weak in identified areas.
- Evidence of having access to and knowing how to use tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress includes a continuous improvement model that will include decisions made based on teacher evaluations, surveys, student data, professional learning communities and academic coaches. Further evidence includes online electronic platforms that supports the flow of information to teachers. The ease of information flow also provides actionable information that will help educators better support student who are experiences academic challenges and respond to

individual student academic needs and interests.

- The applicant provides evidence of high quality learning resources, including digital resources and includes web portals and online electronic platforms available to educators.
- Process and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches to provide continuously improving feedback about effectiveness of resources in meeting student needs is adequately addressed in prior sections and evidenced by a list of tools including such things as tables instead of desks to facilitate creativity and teamwork, online tutorials, iPads, internet access cards among other tools.
- Evidence of training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable school leaders and leadership teams to structure an effective learning environment include development of new teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluation tools that will be accessible for use to determine steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate and contribute to continuous school improvement. The applicant clearly describes how the evaluation tool will be updated and how information from the tool and required observations will be used for school improvement. Also discussed is the individualized professional development plan that each teacher will develop based on their perceived needs. Teacher professional growth plans are embraced by teachers if they are not perceived as evaluative and used for the purpose of meeting their self-identified needs.
- Training systems and practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps are evident by the school level embedded professional development model, the evaluation tool, professional learning communities and professional growth plans. Strategies to be used for educators to receive training on frequently measuring student progress and use of data to inform instruction include feedback and conferencing with academic coaches and frequent teacher observation from administrators. Professional learning communities can also serve as a strategy to provide training through reciprocal mentoring where educators help each other to address areas of weakness.
- The applicant intends to increase the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers is evident by the preparation of principals to be effective leaders through the Leadership Academy proposed by the collaborative. This process is critical because in most school districts, principals and leadership teams hire teachers and it is no longer a central office activity. The applicant indicates in an earlier section the effort to partner with local universities to support the recruitment effort to find effective and highly effective teachers who want to work in a high need rural school districts. Retention is generally a challenge once teachers have been recruited. Some rural school districts are currently growing their own teachers through Teacher Residency Models and other initiatives designed to develop effective and highly effective teachers. The applicant does indicate that they will offer monetary incentives for specialty areas and STEM fields.
- The applicant provides a high quality plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities for increasing the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principal.

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 applicant provides significant evidence of practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning.

- All schools included in the proposal are governed by a seven-member elected Board of Trustees who serve three year staggered terms. The Collaborative will work with each Board in providing support and services to all participating schools.
- Each campus in the Collaborative has a localized school team and a campus advisory committee with the flexibility and autonomy in areas such as personnel and staffing models, roles and responsibilities and budgets.
- Evidence of the applicant's ability to give students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery and move on when ready includes credit for coursework based on demonstration of mastery, virtual school, online courses and credit by examination. Students also have dual enrollment options available to them, which is a feasible option when students are progressing at a fast pace and have supports available to them such as tutoring.
- The applicant will give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. Evidence includes project based learning and student portfolios. Many other methods for providing mastery of standards at multiple times in multiple ways are options not mentioned in this section.
- Adaptable and fully accessible learning resources and instructional practices are evidenced by the use of a variety of accommodations designed to support academically challenged students. The applicant provides a comprehensive

lists of accommodations throughout the application that will be offered and some examples include bus service after school, tutoring, enrolling in online courses, face to face instruction to develop English proficiency, and the use of hand-held devices such as iPads.

- The applicant provides a high quality plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities for increasing the number of highly effective teachers and principals to implement high quality, data driven, evidenced based interventions using personalized learning environments integrated with 21st century technology and innovative, engaging instruction to ensure low performing schools can successfully achieve high results and students graduate college and career ready.

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

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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's central office and school infrastructure supports personalized learning as evidenced by the following:

- A needs assessment to determine the availability of technology and internet access in the home. The Collaborative intends to establish a technology lending library, providing students and families the ability to check out devices such as laptops, iPad, and notebooks. This is a much needed effort for the applicant to undertake and will contribute to student accessibility to appropriate learning resources for extended educational opportunities after school. The use of internet cards were also mentioned as a possibility in an earlier section of the plan and would ensure online access which will be significantly impactful.
- Training is appropriately addressed and will be provided to parents in community sites accessible to them. The applicant goes further with the service of child care and transportation, which are often barriers in many communities, especially rural communities. Educators will also have training provided through the professional development component. The applicant does not clearly delineate how students, and other stakeholders will receive the technical support they need through a range of strategies.
- The applicant currently has a system that allows parents and student to export their information in an open data format and to use data in other electronic learning systems. The system is adequately described and easily accessible..
- The applicant has provided evidence of ensuring the Collaborative districts currently use interoperable data systems and components of the systems are clearly and comprehensively described.
- The applicant provides a high-quality plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities to increase the number of high effective teachers and principals to implement high quality, data driven, evidenced based interventions using personalized learning environments integrated with 21st century technology and innovative, engaging instruction to ensure low performing schools can successfully achieve high results and students graduate college and career ready.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	13

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a plan for providing a continuous improvement process that includes the following evidence:

- The applicant's plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals includes ongoing, just in time training to make sure teachers get the knowledge they need when they need it and explicit time for collaboration with peers to share best practices so that students are taught by highly effective teachers. The applicant will use a modified model of the Kaizen framework to measure performance improvements with cultural change. This framework is based on continuous improvements involving everyone in the organization from the top administrators and superintendent, to campus principals, teachers, staff, parents, and students. Clearly communicated methods for providing feedback will include written logs and action reports.
- The applicant indicates they will monitor project goals for fidelity and accuracy through providing protected time on the campus level for adequate analysis of data on a regular basis. Progress and data analysis at the district, campus, teacher, and student level will be completed at least once per week for the first nine months of the project, ensuring periodic monitoring and measuring data on the reform proposal in its early stages. District coordinators will

be responsible for taking custody of and maintaining data. The relationship between district coordinators and principals is not described.

- The executive management team will use the GREEN, RED, YELLOW adaptation guidelines which is based on implementing program interventions and components with fidelity and is a modified version of the Center of Disease Control's Adaptation Guidance. Both the executive management team and the school leadership team will be thoroughly trained on this adaptation guidelines before program implementation. The Collaborative will make recommendations for adjustments and revisions which will then be implemented at the school leadership team level. However, some adjustments will require input from both the school leadership team and the executive management team which is appropriate based on the Kaizen framework previously described, specifically including everyone in the organization in the continuous improvement cycle.
- Project data will be published on district websites and the Project Director will make a quarterly update at school board meetings and include published reports in each district 's newsletter.
- An experienced external evaluator will be hired to complete a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed project and will utilize the continuous feedback and improvement framework described in the application.
- The applicant provides a high-quality plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken, the timeline and the parties responsible for implementing the activities. The plan is a multi-layered approach to data review and continuous improvement. All elements were addressed in the narrative section of the proposal, however, the rationale for activities and deliverables were not provided in the chart.

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

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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders is evidenced by the following:

- Publication of ongoing progress toward completion of goals and objectives will be provided in addition to the quarterly updates to the school board by the Project Director.
- The applicant will further define who the stakeholders are and solicit questions they have in order to determine how each district in the collaborative can shape the appropriate communication strategies. This is an excellent step to include and indicates the applicant is planning proactively to ensure appropriate communication strategies are in place. Evidence of ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders is further evidenced by using campus principals and academic coaches as the primary communicators for internal stakeholders at the campus level and will be done through teacher/family conferences and open houses along with email hotlines, electronic newsletters and local media. District level communication with external stakeholders will be the responsibility of the Project Director and Superintendent of Schools and will be presented at Board meetings well as, email hotlines, electronic newsletters and local media.
- A link on each district's website will be provided and is also an appropriate mechanism to share progress and engage with internal and external stakeholders. Electronic newsletters and local media will provide other outlets for ongoing communication with stakeholders. Inclusion of the faith-based community have been proven to be effective strategies of communication with African American and Hispanic families.
- The applicant will provide communication in English and Spanish. This is a critical need considering the large number of Spanish speaking students and families served by the three districts in the Collaborative. Another major innovation is the use of translators to provide text to speech, live translators, or dual iPad communication that enables each individual to type in their own language in real time and have the other individual receive a text in the language that initiated the message and their native language. These communication options are strong evidence that the Collaborative wants to ensure there is ongoing communication and engagement of its Spanish speaking stakeholders and an excellent strategy to build trust.
- The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities in this selection criteria.

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

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3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup.

- The rationale for selecting the measures for grades PK-3 is based on the need to increase proficiency levels in reading and grade retention, while decreasing disciplinary referrals. The rationale is reasonable and appropriate for early grades and will have a major impact on academic success across all disciplines as student matriculate through the next transition points throughout their academic career. The rationale for selecting grade 4-8 measures is

based on the collaborative's needs to increase enrollment in advanced mathematics, statewide mathematics assessments, decrease suspensions and expulsions and increase reading proficiency. The rationale for grades 9-12 is based on the collaborative's need to increase the number of students who meet the requirements for admission to a post-secondary institutions, increase enrollment in advanced placement, international baccalaureate or dual credit courses during senior year, decrease in suspensions, teen pregnancy and increase the number of students graduating with a minimum of 3 college course credits. The is reasonable and will be challenging consider the current high school graduation rates. One positive aspect is the graduation rates are on an upward trend according to data provided for all subgroups except White students, who currently have the highest graduation rates and basically maintained this rate over one year , and Special Education Students.

- Evidence of how measures will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action is evidenced by the Collaborative's chart in this section that includes goals, short-term objectives, performance measures, deliverables, and activities/strategies.
- it is unclear how measures will be reviewed over time, beyond annually, to determine and gage implementation progress. Considering that the goals are ambitious, more periodic assessment benchmarks would ensure timely adaptations and modifications to support student academic success.
- The applicant provides charts that delineate required and applicant-proposed performance measures based on the student population. The charts provide the required information.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a comprehensive evaluation component and intends to monitor, measure, analyze, evaluate and publically share information on the quality of investments funded by RTT-D. Evidence includes:

- Use of multiple technologies and an external evaluator which will include data entered into an electronic format and analyzed throughout the grant period, along with an electronic model to be designed that will determine the relative program impact compared to the financial and resource allocations committed in obtaining outcomes. Use of these technologies is cutting edge and will provide analysis of results that can contribute to public confidence in the outcomes of the proposed project.
- Five Stages of the evaluation plan are clearly delineated and fully described. All stages are critical to the evaluation plan but the two that stand out are evaluation of the impact of the activities of the project on the participants and evaluations of the cost benefits of the program. The applicant will use a wide range of assessment tools including qualitative data through use of surveys and questionnaires and quantitative data from student achievement. This will provide opportunities for triangulation of data and viewing data from a number of perspectives.
- Monthly meetings with the evaluator are critical and will ensure consistent and periodic feedback in order to make sure the project goals are on target, sustainable and replicable. An annual project report will also be provided and is significant considering the length of time required to see change in student academic achievement during implementation of new reform initiatives.
- The applicant provides a high quality plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for activities, the timeline, the deliverable, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's budget and budget narrative include allocation of funds sufficient to support the proposal.

- The applicant list \$0 funds from other sources.
- Evidence to determine if funds are reasonable to support the proposal includes a chart with funds delineated for each reform goal included in the proposal, along with the total grant funds requested and offers a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. The applicant also provided a comprehensive description of each reform goal followed by the funding requested further ensuring that each reform goal has sufficient funding allocated.
- Additional evidence of a detailed description of funds in provided in Appendix F, along with a summary provided in the budget section.
- The applicant addresses one time cost versus ongoing operational costs in each of the detailed descriptions for each reform goal and include such cost as technology equipment.

- The applicant provides a comprehensive list of strategies the will ensure long-term sustainability and includes mobilizing businesses, universities, and non-profits as central to sustainability efforts. The Collaborative will consider how current general funds are used and how they might be reallocated to sustain successful components of the application. Sustainability of the professional development model will be ensured by the use of the train-the-trainer model and embedding professional development. General funds, Title III funds, and discretionary funds will be used to sustain the student data system, technology maintenance, educator evaluations, parent engagement activities and peer coaching.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Collaborative provides a comprehensive plan to sustain the grant reform initiatives and include the evidence listed below:

- Mobilizing businesses, universities, and non-profits to come together in a coordinated way to address sustainability. This approach is critical and supports the collaborative's effort to maintain support beyond initial input and letters of support.
- Support letters from State and local government leaders are included but do not address what their role will be in sustainability. A clear commitment would suggest additional support beyond the life of the RTT-D grant.
- Use of general funds will facilitate sustaining reform goals once they are fully implemented. It is important for districts to review how funds are currently used and make adjustments to ensure that successful initiatives receive ongoing funding support beyond the life of the grant.
- A train the trainer model will be used for professional development for educators and will build capacity. Train the trainer models, if supported by the districts will help to build capacity and ensure there is a continued focus on teacher development.
- Once the data system has been expanded and upgraded, the applicant indicates the district's current allocation of funds for technology will be adequate to support the system. Maintaining data systems can sometimes be costly and there is evidence that these districts view this as a priority.
- Many of the costs, such as equipment and enhancing the evaluation system are front loaded and will be maintained by use of general funds and deemed a priority for the districts.
- The applicant indicates that hiring incentives will no longer be needed based on the district's efforts to focus on retention of effective and highly effective teachers, use of Title III funds for bilingual teachers, and additional discretionary grants. This approach supports using critical analysis of how funds are currently used to support recruitment and how they may be used in a different way to support initiatives that have proven to be successful. Some of the efforts previously described have been demonstrated to have significant impact on teacher retention, such as Professional Learning Communities, Individual Growth Plans and feedback from frequent observations.
- The applicant does not address how they will evaluate improvement in productivity and outcomes to inform post-grant budget.
- An estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant including assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds is not included.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The Collaborative will focus on augmenting the school's resources by providing additional family and student supports through specific interventions.

- The Collaborative provides strong evidence of the coherent and sustainable partnership through the positive youth development framework: Raising Health Children/Capturing Kids Hearts. Public and private organizations including The University of Washington and Aledor Services will partner with the districts to build capacity within each district to effectively meet the needs of all students, provide continuous communication and feedback among stakeholders to enhance the improvement processes, provide strong grant administration and track performance measures. Evidence that the Collaborative has established a partnership with the University of Washington is further clarified through the letter of support in Appendix B and indicates an ongoing partnership. Considering the number of support letters provided to the applicant, it is unclear why the number of community partners in this youth development

partnership is not more extensive.

- The applicant identifies major goals and objectives for participating youth including performance measures, outcomes, deliverables and core educational assurance areas. which are closely aligned with the applicant's broader proposal. Activities and strategies are delineated for each of the four years of requested funding.
- Desired results for each population group is delineated in a chart provided and includes type of results and desired results.
- The partnership will track the selected indicators with the assistance of the external evaluator hired to evaluate the overall proposal.
- The applicant intends to use the evaluation results to disseminate information on practices, expand what works, and discontinue programs and practices deemed ineffective and inefficient.
- The applicant indicates the desire to scale up processes to identify promising practices, evaluate the practices effectiveness, and disseminate lessons learned but does not provide a straggly, which is appropriate considering all schools in the district will participate.
- The applicant indicates the partnership will use the observational protocols found within Appendix G, H, and I to tract indicators over time. Upon review, the protocols are appropriate to provide the information required.
- The partnership project integrates both educational aspects with those of community support services further strengthening the the Collaborative's effort to positively impact youth, families, and communities.
- Through the youth project, supplemental services will be available and encouraged through the parent workshops that are a component of the partnership. The use of the parents workshops for multiple purposes is an approach that will likely result in parents becoming more aware of available services in their community.
- Specific tools for teachers and parents are a component of the larger reform proposal and is previously described sufficiently to include, tools for assessment of students.
- The applicant previously describes a method for collecting data on needs and assets of the school and community and have aligned them to the goals for improving the education and family and community supports.
- The decision making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address individual needs of participating students and support improved results is not clearly delineated.
- Engaging parents and families at every juncture is evident by the applicant's effort to ensure that communications are made in multiple languages, face-to-face and technology programs are available for Spanish speaking families, frequent meetings at multiple sites and online access if it is not available in the home.
- Through the combined use of the external evaluator and the assessment systems available to the applicant, the Collaborative ensures that they will routinely assess progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.
- The annual performance measures are ambitious yet achievable for the proposed population-level and clearly describes desire results for all students.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Absolute Priority 1 is adequately addressed for all components.

- The Collaborative has successfully aligned the reform initiatives of the proposal including Administration, Grant Management, and Evaluation; Ready to Teach, Ready to Learn, and Ready to Act with the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness and End of Course Exams, English Language Proficiency Standards and College and Career Readiness Standards.
- The collaborative districts and schools have a data system that measures student growth and success. The data system is expansive and includes an electronic student information system, Professional Development and Appraisal System, and electronic human resource and financial system.
- The Collaborative will recruit much needed and difficult to attract effective and highly effective teachers to their rural districts through incentive programs. They will also retain their best teachers through providing professional growth plans and professional development to address areas of need. Evaluations systems for teachers and leaders will be refined to better provide feedback to ensure support is provided to improve skills in areas of need. Teachers will have local Professional Learning Communities available to support their professional learning needs.
- Educators will be allowed the flexibility to move to the school they are most needed based on their area of expertise ensuring that students who are the most academically challenged will receive instruction for effective and highly effective teachers.

- The Collaborative provides evidence of its ability to turn around low-achieving schools and closing the achievement gaps. The collaborative districts have demonstrated significant improvements on academic assessments as compared to State and National data.

Total	210	173
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0182TX-2 for Bryan ISD

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response. The Applicant has/has not presented a comprehensive coherent reform vision.

(a) The Applicant's Vision is built on substantial work by the Applicant on the four core assurance areas.

Standards: The State has adopted an assessment system, STAAR, which is aligned and consistent with college and career readiness. The State requires all students to pass five tests to graduate which are part of the STAAR system. The State has adopted a more rigorous set of curricular standards than those previously in place, TEK, and these apparently are more aligned with college and career readiness than those previously in use. The Applicant is complying with the directions of the State. The Superintendent, the School Board President, and the president of the teachers' union of the lead LEA have each signed assurances indicating that this LEA is in a state which adopted standards and assessments aligned with college and career readiness. The other participating LEA's have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which documents their agreement with the assurances.

Data System: The Applicant asserts that each LEA currently uses an electronic student information system with real time access to a variety of data regarding students which can match "student scores" with teachers. The Applicant notes that "data driven decision making" is required by District and Campus Improvement Plans and District Level Strategic Plans. The Applicant describes the support which each LEA gives to its educators in the form of professional development, coaching, causing teachers to work in professional learning communities—i.e. teams (PLC's), and common planning time. The Applicant also notes that the current focus of data driven decisions is goals and objectives, curriculum planning and student placement rather than on improving instruction by using data. The Applicant indicates that its ASAP plan, its Vision, will focus on further developing the latter capacity among its educators. A concern is that the Applicant does not indicate that data regarding student achievement and growth on the STAAR assessments is available through its current data system. Otherwise, the Applicant has described a coherent approach to using data to improve instruction including how its Vision will enhance the skills of its educators.

Effective Educators: The Applicant's Vision builds on current work or work in progress on the this area. The Applicant intends to enhance its evaluations system and its leaders have signed an assurance that it will implement evaluations systems meeting the requirements in the RTTT-D Application by the 2014 school year. The Applicant asserts that it is also working on additional strategies consistent with developing effective educators as the term is used in the Application. Each of the LEA's recruits candidates including those who might earn alternative certification through the universities closest to them, and seek candidates through media outlets targeted to minority populations. The Applicant indicates that its LEA's provide individualized professional development and is or will adopt other strategies consistent with those described in Race to the Top to increase the numers of effective educators. The Applicant notes that it has a high turnover among its lesser experienced teachers and has identified some causes. The Applicant does not, however, describe current efforts or future strategies specifically designed to address this problem. The Applicant does not specifically discuss its efforts now or in the future to place the its more effective teachers into high needs situations. These latter omissions weaken the response.

Turning Low Performing Schools Around: The Applicant provides a coherent and compelling Vision for future school reform and improvement through its detailed outline of its ASAP/Ready to Learn/Ready to Teach/Ready to Act approach. The Applicant indicates that it is preparing its schools for implementation of the Vision by its LEA's completing "extensive campus inspections" and by having class room observations reviewed apparently based on indicators of what effective classrooms look like. The Applicant provides an example in Appendix C of the "Snapshot" inspection completed by one school. It is not clear, however, if all schools completed this survey or that others were used. The Applicant indicates that 10 of the 31 participating schools are "in a low performing category." It does not, however, provide any substantive description of what other than the anticipatory surveys has been done or is currently being done to turn around its currently low performing schools. This weakens its response.

(b) Applicant's Approach to Goals: The Applicant cites research which has been done on successfully improving schools like its participating schools and makes this the foundation of its approach. The Applicant describes a series of conditions within schools which are precedent to schools being able to accelerate achievement, deepen learning and increase equity (Readiness to Learn). The Applicant describes a series of preconditions for teachers being successful with students like its participating students (Readiness to Teach), and it describes skills, qualities, and commitments which its leaders must undertake for its schools to be successfully reformed (Readiness to Act). The Applicant describes a series of goals or objectives to be achieved under each of the "Readiness" rubrics which describe either activities, results, or conditions which taken together will result in the realization of its Vision. This approach to meeting the goals under this sub-criterion is clear and credible

(c) Classroom Experience: Although the Applicant does not focus narrowly on what the classroom experience will be like as a result of the realization of its Vision, its generalized description of what will characterize all of its schools, classes, person-to-person interactions, and the philosophical and professional commitments of its staff create a clear and compelling picture of what schooling will be in its participating schools. The schools and classrooms will be safe, calm, and orderly. Students and staff will have a clear understand of the expectations which they are to meet, and there will be a system consisting of a variety of supports to enable both students and educators to meet the expectations which apply to them. Teachers will collaborate, will have flexibility to created personalized learning environments, will share mutual responsibility for students' success, and will be provided with the data and other resources to facilitate their and their students success. Leaders will be trained and have the resources to facilitate these successes. Parents and families will be offered on-going and significant opportunities to participate in their children's development and opportunities to enhance their skills to do so.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a middle range response.

(a) Selection process: The Applicant gathered considerable quantitative and qualitative data using a variety of means to assist it in selecting its participating schools. The Applicant noted that it determined the levels of need for each school using a three tier system and that it did the same to determine the level of readiness for reform each school presented. It does not share the results of these two approaches. The Applicant also notes that 10 of its 31 schools are low performing. It decided that all 31 schools and each student (17,230) in each of the three participating LEA's in the consortium should participate in its reform. The Applicant does not explain how or why it deceded as it did. Engaging this number of students of students in 31 schools and three separate school districts presents a substantial number of significant challenges to implementation. The Applicant does not describe or address any these challenges. It does not discuss why, despite having data which might have been used to focus its approach and/or set priorities for implementation and thereby mitigate such challenges, it chose to include all schools, students, and educators. This weakens the response.

(b) Schools list: The Applicant provides a table listing the participating schools.

(c) Participating students: The Applicant has chosen to include every student enrolled in the participating LEA's, a total of 17,230. The number of participating educators is 1,193. It can be extrapolated from the percentages of high needs (46.7%), and low income (75.7%students what the respective number of each (13,043) 8,046) the Applicant has chosen to participate.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

The Applicant presents its Theory of Change in a schematic at the end of its narrative which sketches a reasonable and logical model. The Applicant identifies three program components the implementation of which will result in the achievement of its primary reform goals. The Applicant describes a number of approaches, objectives, and activities all designed to translate its proposal into meaningful reform and facilitate the achievement of its outcome goals. Some of these approaches contain descriptions in sufficient detail to meet the definition of high quality plans and

others do so to a lesser degree. The three program components and Applicant's approach to each is discussed below.

Youth Development: The Youth Development program, including both "Raising Healthy Children" and "Capturing Kids' Hearts," is based on the research, theory, and strategies of Drs. Hawkins and Catalano regarding students and schools like those participating in the Applicant's reform. The goals of the program are clear—producing caring, trusted staff members who can increase student support and decrease pertinent risk factors. The activities to accomplish these goals are delineated, some of the responsible parties are identified, and the years during which the activities (primarily training) will occur are indicated. The Applicant notes a desire to extend the model beyond the template to which it has committed but does not attempt to present a high quality approach to implementation

Innovative Instruction/Personalized Learning Environments: The Applicant presents an extended discussion of what such environments could consist of and how they would affect the interactions among teachers and students. Within the context of these descriptions, the responsible parties are the teachers and students, the activities which constitute personalized approaches to teaching and engagement are described at length by the Applicant, the time line is on-going in the sense that the properly trained and motivated teachers continuously engage students with strategies which personalize learning and support based on student needs, and the outcomes are accelerated achievement and deep learning experiences. Whether some approaches are more or less age appropriate and/or lend themselves to certain curricula and not others so that some should be implemented at different grade levels or in some classes/subjects but not others is not discussed.

The Applicant indicates that it will use the Schlechty Center "to shift teachers confidence and competence" regarding implementation of the personalized learning environments it describes, but it does not describe in this narrative under (A) (3) the kinds of activities or training anticipated to be required or offer a time line for when this training will occur during the grant years. The Applicant does provide more information addressing these issues in its budget under (F). By piecing together what is sketched here and the somewhat more amplified descriptions of professional development in the Applicant's budget, a sufficient outline of Applicant's planning can be said to have been presented, but it does not meet all the requirements of a HQP.

Development of Highly Effective Professional Staff: Enabling teachers to conduct the techniques and strategies associated with personalized learning environments will presumably require considerable amounts of time devoted to professional development. The Applicant acknowledges this by including in its "ASAP Logic Model/Theory of Change" the statement that to implement its program it will have to "Provide targeted training for PD, common planning time, participation in PLC, [and] objective evaluation procedures." It does not, however, describe activities which would meet these descriptors, sets no time lines for their occurrence, and does not identify parties responsible for delivering them except for general references to the Schlechty Center.

The Applicant indicates that a Leadership Academy is needed to enable its principals to carry out its reform program and to increase the number of candidates for principalships among the participation LEA's. The Applicant indicates that the activities and workshops associated with the Center will be determined by needs assessments, benchmarking best practices, and/or skills identified by the Schlecty Center. Other responsible parties are not identified. Beyond indicating that there will be an annual week long capstone summer colloquium for all Leadership Center participants, time lines for other activities to enhance the skills of candidates and principals are not described.

The Applicant does provide more information addressing these issues in its budget under (F). By piecing together what is sketched here and the more amplified descriptions of professional development in the Applicant's budget, a sufficient but not high quality outline of Applicant's planning can be said to have been presented.

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

10

6

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

(a) Summative Assessments: The Applicant provides projections for very required sub-group and for each of the applicable summative assessments. The projections for each sub-group are differentiated. The projected rates of improvement are

achievable in the context of each sub-group's baseline performance. The rates of improvement among the lower performing groups show the greatest annual and end-of-grant improvement. This is consistent with the Applicant's Vision which is designed to enable lower performing groups to improve at a faster rate than the higher performing ones. The projected growth rates, especially those for the lower performing sub-criterion are substantial and, therefore, ambitious. A concern is that Applicant has almost universally projected that improvement among each of its subgroups and overall will drop at the end of the grant below the improvement projected for the first year and frequently below the 4th year improvement. The absence of a discussion or explanation of this weakens the response to a minor degree.

(b) Closing Achievement Gaps: The Applicant provides projections for very required sub-group and for each of the applicable summative assessments. The projections for each sub-group are differentiated. The Applicant does not explain how or why, in the first year's of the grant and presumably before all aspects of its reform are fully implemented, the gaps will close by 10 percent in each of those years. It does not explain why the gaps will or should close by a flat 10 percent per year for each year of the grant. The lack of such explanations call to question the credibility and achievability of the annual targets. This weakens the response. The amounts which each gap is projected to close are ambitious.

(c) Graduation Rates: The Applicant provides projections for each required sub-group. The projections for each sub-group are differentiated. The projected rates of improvement are realistic and achievable in the context of each sub-group's baseline performance. The total amount each sub-group's rate is to increase is ambitious.

(d) College Enrollment: The only projection provided is for "Overall." Projections for the various sub-group's are not provided. Given that college enrollment fell between the first and second baseline year, and given that nothing in the Applicant's proposal is directed specifically at bolstering college enrollment in the short term, the projections of a total increase in enrollment of 35 percent in four years including ten percent increases in the second and third year of the grant are not realistic or likely to be achieved. This weakens the response.

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	7

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

(a) Four years of raising student achievement, high school graduation rates and college enrollment:

The Applicant provides much information regarding its interventions designed to improve performance in the areas under (a). The Applicant notes hopeful snippets of data such as the increase in graduation rates among several of its student sub-groups between the 2011 and 2012 school years. It also cites positive outcomes in the area of student achievement by offering that several schools in the consortium have earned school level awards for reasons which include collective student achievement in the recent past. The Applicant cites mixed data regarding student enrollment in courses which could earn them advanced credit in college and cites hopeful data regarding student enrollment in post-graduate, certification programs.

The Applicant does not systematically provide four years of data regarding the closing of achievement gaps as they are defined in the Scoring Tool. The Applicant does not systematically provide four years of data regarding high school graduation rates as they are defined in the Scoring Tool. The Applicant does not systematically provide four years of data regarding college enrollment as it is defined in the Scoring Tool. Although as indicated in its response to (A), the Applicant is in possession of past year's data generated by the State's summative assessment system, the Applicant does not systematically provide four years of data regarding student achievement as presented in the State's summative assessment data. Not providing such data does not meet the requirements under (a) and substantially weakens this response.

(b) Ambitious and significant reforms in low performing schools:

The Applicant identifies seven low performing schools and indicates that four of them have moved to meeting standards. The Applicant does not say whether this movement occurred within the past four years; so it is presumed that it did. The Applicant says that these improvements occurred because of improved leadership and teacher performance, continuous monitoring, data driven decision making, "support for initiatives," "honest conversations," all of which resulted in continuous improvement. These efforts must be regarded as what is commonly expected of competent schools run by competent and diligent staff. Therefore, they do not fully rise to the level of being "significant and ambitious" as required.

(c) Performance data available to students, educators, and parents:

The Applicant describes a data system which provides constant access to real time data regarding student performance. It adds that aggregated school and district level data is also available to students, parents, and educators. Additional information including interest evaluations, graduation planning college/career mapping, availability of scholarships, and NCAA eligibility requirements are available. All of what is available can inform and improve instruction, participation, and services for members of each of the stakeholder groups identified.

The response is weakened by the following: The Applicant reports that its data is accessible "where ever there is Internet

connectivity.” Elsewhere in its responses, the Applicant indicates that substantial numbers of its participating students and their parents are low income, high needs, and/or live in rural settings. Each of these groups are commonly regarded as lacking access to the Internet. The Applicant does not raise this as an issue in its response and does not suggest ways in which it is working to address a problem which is common knowledge.

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

5

1

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a low range response.

Apparently the Applicant is obligated under state law to respond to a request from a member of the public for a specific school employee’s “compensation information,” and the Applicant indicates that a news organization, the Texas Tribune, puts a “listing of school personnel salaries” on its website.

The Applicant does not indicate that it can or will make available to the public generally as required under (B) (2): (a) the actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school level instructional and support staff; (b) actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only; or (c) actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only. Because it reports (d) actual non personnel expenditures at the school level in its monthly reports, the Applicant can be said to make this information generally available.

Aggregated data in all these areas is available to school site personnel at the component districts and is reported at public meetings of each school board copies of which can be requested by members of the public. The documents the Applicant includes in its Appendix D confirm this—i.e. that it is only the aggregated data which Applicant describes in its response which is published without special request to the public. Because making public generally each of the items (a)--(d) were minimum requirements under (B) (2), the Applicant’s response is very weak.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

This is a high range response.

The Applicant envisions creating personalized learning environments and realizing its reform goals by implementing three program components—Youth Development in the form of “Raising Healthy Children” and “Capturing Kids’ Hearts,” Innovative Instruction, and Development of Highly Effective Professional Staff. It plans to spend grant funds, according to its proposed budget, to implement several projects—Grant Management and Evaluation, “Ready to Teach,” “Ready to Learn,” and “Ready to Act.” The primary activities and/or expenditures under the latter include salaries for grant specific staff, extra duty pay for teachers to undertake professional development on non-contractual days, travel to grant-related events and conferences, payment of contractual fees for professional development of varying kinds all grant-related. The Applicant does not identify any legal, statutory, or regulatory impediments to any of them, and in the context of activities and expenditures in the realm of public education, neither the categories of expenditures nor the categories of activities proposed is unusual or extraordinary.

The Applicant makes an extended and convincing case that some of the personalized learning environments will involve digital technology, students engaging full or part-time in on line course some of which might be offered by on line schools, and students earning credit without regard to instructional time. It demonstrates that the State does not prohibit or impeded any of this. It notes that teachers delivering instruction digitally must meet the same standards as face to face teachers including their certification, course content, and quality of instruction. It notes that all students must meet State graduation requirements regardless of the modes of instruction they are involved in. In short, the State does not appear to have created any barriers of the kind described to the Applicant’s implementing its Vision.

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

15

10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

(a) The Applicant indicates that students, families, teachers, and principals could engage in the initial stage of the development of this proposal as volunteer attendees at one or more of the seven public focus groups and that they were notified of the opportunity by Internet (email and electronic newsletter) and through public service announcements--the nature and number of which were not described. The Applicant does not indicate how many or how often members of these stakeholder groups participated in the focus groups. The attention of the focus groups was directed by the needs identified in the campus and district improvement plans. It appears that the use of these plans represents another way that input from the identified stakeholders could be given because each is constructed in part based on input from the same stakeholders regarding their needs. An Executive Planning Committee, the composition of which was not described, vetted the focus groups’ input and developed a summary document outlining the reform projects the Committee could be implemented and sustained. The Applicant then solicited input from the identified stakeholders (except, apparently, students who were not mentioned) at “various group presentations.” The Committee used the input in preparing its final

proposal.

(a) (i) This Application is made by a consortium of three LEA's with Bryan Independent School District as the lead LEA. Each LEA's teachers are represented by a union. Under such a circumstance, teacher engagement and support can be indicated by the signature of the president of the union representing the teachers of the lead LEA. Such a signature is presented in the Application in "I. Application Assurances."

Because much of the Applicant's clientele presumably does not have access to the Internet, the Applicant's reliance on it as a prime means for soliciting participation weakens the response. The response is also weakened because it is not clear to what degree the stakeholders were made aware by the use of public service announcements. The apparent absence of students from the second round of input also weakens the response to a minor degree.

Given the logistical challenges of engaging and gathering input from the identified stakeholders, the Applicant's efforts and its processes are reasonable and credible but do not reflect extraordinarily efforts to do so.

(b) Letters of Support: A total of 14 letters of support were found in two Appendices—B and L. Support letters were included from three Mayors, two judges, and the safety planner for the Brazos/Trinity Valley Council of Governments. It is not clear whether any of the latter three are elected or appointed officials. This speaks to the extent of their constituencies and their potential for leading public opinion. Two individual business owners and the Polk County Chamber of Commerce sent letters of support. Two non-governmental agencies, one providing mental health services and one an educational foundation, provided support letters. A school boosters club provided a letter, and a staff member from the University of Washington program providing technical support and the youth development program sent support letters. The letter from the Groves Educational Foundation was notable because it offered future support in the form of "time, resources, volunteers—any way we can."

There were no letters from parent or student groups. There were no letters from those such as state or national elected officials with broad based constituencies. Despite substantial representation among the participating students (and families) of minority sub-groups, English Language Learners, special education students, students living in rural settings and/or impoverished circumstances, there were no support letters from advocates, community organizations, or legal services organizations serving any of these populations. These latter factors weakens the overall response.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	11

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response. The Applicant's proposal contains many approaches to personalizing learning which are likely to improve learning and teaching. The Applicant's plans to accomplish the personalization do not uniformly contain all the elements required to constitute a High Quality Plan (HQP) as the term is defined, and some questions are raised about details of the Applicant's proposal are not satisfactorily answered.

The Applicant states that be successful and, by implication to substantially benefit from the proposed personalized learning environments (PLE's), students must have certain skills and manifest certain characteristics. The Applicant states that significant numbers of its participating students lack them. To address this, the Applicant proposes to foster their development by implementing positive youth development strategies through its "Ready to Learn" initiative. The Applicant describes a strong plan for this implementation under its response to B in this Application. The Applicant provides a sketch for implementing the professional development supporting the initiative in its "Personalized Educational Environment" table in (C) (1) and provides a more detailed approach including pertinent professional development plan in its table, "Development of Highly Effective Professional Staff," in its response to (C) (2). In its response to (B), the Applicant provides a competent outline for the training of students and families so that they can support and reinforce the youth development skills and characteristics at home.

If the positive youth development strategies are institutionalized as proposed in all participating schools among all students and educators, the Applicant's students will be far more likely than they would be without this grant to see school based learning as attainable, to be motivated to try and persist, to see school based learning as a key to their success, to be more skilled at pursuing college and career goals, and to master critical content. For this reason, this initiative is a major strength of the proposal.

The Applicant says that its educators are not currently confident or skilled at personalizing learning environments as envisioned and are not properly trained to do so. To address these conditions, the Applicant prescribes extensive training for its educators coupled with support, reinforcement, and on-going monitoring. Under its response to (C) (1), the Applicant sketches four years of pertinent activities, and supplements its more detailed professional development plan under (C) (2) in the "Development of Highly Effective Professional Staff" table. Because it has provided that each educator, each school, and each component district can choose which PLE's to implement when, the Applicant cannot fully meet the requirement for a HQP that specific activities be linked to specific participants and that both be linked to specific time lines. For the

same reasons, the Applicant cannot indicate who among its participating students and educators will benefit when from the implementation of the various PLE's which the Applicant is encouraging its educators to provide. At least on a global level —i.e. from the perspective of overseeing the the entire grant-- these factors will make difficult monitoring and measuring progress in implementation and in judging the effectiveness of the PLE's in terms of student achievement and the other requirements under (C) (1) (a). These challenges substantially weaken this approach which otherwise contains a number of highly promising and apparently sound individual personalization initiatives.

Here under (C) (1) and elsewhere in its Application, the Applicant makes a compelling case for the need of its students, families, and educators to have much greater access to digital devices, the Internet, and for greater school-level bandwidth. Under (C) (2) in its "Development" table, the Applicant provides a general plan for providing related professional development to participating educators in each of the four years of the grant, and under (C) (1) in its "PLE" table, it sketches an approach to making devices and bandwidth available. The proposal is weakened by the following:

- Neither the narrative nor the (C) (1) PLE table indicate if/when increased bandwidth will actually be made available;
- The Applicant's "BYOD" (Bring Your Own Device) initiative to provide digital devices to students appears to involve just four of the Applicant's 31 schools during the four year life of the grant. (See the (C) (1) PLE table.) Moreover, any district's participation in BYOD is optional.
- In the narrative, the Applicant qualifies the extent to which its component districts will make any digital devices available to any of its students by noting that such devices "may" be available from the respective districts and "may" be available for students to check out.

The Applicant indicates that all participating educators will need to change their "mental models" regarding PLE's and how their implementation will improve teaching and learning. To address this, the Applicant will provide "leadership PD," and it presents a four year calendar of activities conducted by the Schlechty Center for this purpose. Because Applicant specifies that a "cohort of teacher leaders" will participate, it does not appear that all participating educators will undergo this training, and the Applicant does not indicate why this is so.

The Applicant identifies approximately 11 approaches to personalizing learning environments which it wants its teachers to be able to implement (presuming age appropriateness). The Applicant emphasizes that project based learning is "one of the most complete methods" for personalizing learning, and in abbreviated fashion provides sufficient rationales to support their inclusion in this proposal on the ground that each can enable students to pursue college and career goals, accelerate achievement, deepen learning, learn and master critical content.

The Applicant indicates that it will use the first two grant years to "guide" all its teachers toward "student-centered practices" and the last two years to "further advance" in these practices. The Applicant indicates that it will "encourage" its teachers to implement any of its 11 personalization approaches in any of the four grant years (See the (C) (1) PLE table.), and it will provide the professional development for any of them in each grant year. (See the "Development" table in (C) (2).) For the reasons stated in the second paragraph, this extraordinarily flexible approach leaves unspecified when any group of educators will undertake any particular training and which of the participating students will get the benefit of any particular PLE unclear. This also prevents the Applicant from describing the personalized sequence of instructional content and skill developments which participating students will experience as required. As stated, this lack of specificity and structure detracts from the quality of Applicant's plan.

The Applicant states that it will extend the school day, but indicates that participating as a provider or as a participant is optional among districts, schools, educators, and students. Where the day is extended, the Applicant intends that students can be involved in the full range of school sponsored activities from extracurricular to academic support. The Applicant sees this as increasing access to personalization and increasing equity. Because the initiative is voluntary on the part of any and all who might be involved, and because the Applicant sets no goals for participation, time lines or guide lines for implementation, it is not possible to gauge what if any positive effect on teaching and learning will result.

The Applicant proposes to create a college/career portal in each district's data system and make it available to students and parents "anywhere they connect to the Internet" The Applicant indicates all students and teachers will be trained to use the portal and that parents will be trained for its access and use at school sponsored family events. The Applicant says that additional training will be accessible on the respective websites of the participating districts. The portal will give students and parents access to tools for planning and tracking each student's progress toward college and career goals and will allow students to apply to in-state colleges. These enhancements can reinforce the concept that learning is a key to success, encourage students to pursue college and career goals, and encourage goal setting. As the Applicant makes clear, lack of access to technology is a serious and widespread problem among its participating students, and access is necessary for them to participate in and/or gain the benefits of many of the proposed PLE's. As noted, however, the Applicant's approach to expanding access to technology as presented does not show promise of significantly changing the current situation. This reduces the caliber of this response.

As the Applicant explains, new state graduation requirements and the strengthening of the standards embedded in the state's mandated curricula and assessments will cause all students to pursue college and career-ready goals and to master critical content. It is possible that the state's approach to recognizing diploma enhancements and student completion of advanced placement and dual credit courses will encourage more of Applicant's students to participate in them. Successful implementation of the Applicant's plan for PLE's can facilitate all of these.

The Applicant does not provide strong support to its individual graduation plan initiative. The Applicant indicates that many if not most of its participant students and families are not acquainted with the process of systematically preparing for college or career success. The Applicant indicates that many of its participating students are from families where English is a second language, many are ethnic or racial "minorities," and many live in poverty. Under these conditions, requiring just one staff/student/parent meeting during a student's college/career preparation years and adding a simple signature requirement to change the student's plan for his/her school career is to rely on understandings and skills which Applicant has said very many of its families do not possess. This weakness could be mitigated over time by two aspects of the Applicant's proposal. They are: that some number of families will gain the ability to support its students through the First in the Family program, and over considerable time, Applicant's positive youth development efforts can enhance the support capacity of other and more families.

The Applicant notes that accommodations for special education students are developed in cooperation with specialized site based teams. Making available all of the PLE approaches as described in an age appropriate way can expand participating teachers capacities to make accommodations for participating students including high needs students. This would substantially increase their chances of graduating college or career ready. Because this response is built on Applicant's other responses as commented upon above, it contains the same strengths and weaknesses as noted above.

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

20

13

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

As a foundation for successful instruction and the implementation of personalized learning environments, the Applicant will train its educators in positive youth development principles and practices. As stated elsewhere in these Comments, the program itself is highly promising. The training for Applicant's educators is described in the "Development" table under (C) (2). Each year's training is described in identical terms. This approach means that it is not clear what the participants will know and be able to do year to year as a result of the training. In short, the plan does not appear to include annual deliverables. It is likely that this approach is the product of the Applicant wishing to enable its educators, schools, and districts to build training on the specific wants and needs of the individual teachers and buildings. That this is so does not negate the difficulties it creates for knowing what results to expect year to year, for monitoring and measuring progress, and for determining what benefits will accrue to students. For these reasons, the absence of annual deliverables lowers the quality of the plan.

The Applicant proposes training for educators to work in professional learning communities. The responsible parties are site based principals and department head teachers. There does not seem to be a provision for their training as an antecedent to their delivering PLC training to their colleagues. The Applicant does not describe the substance of the training. Each year's training is described in identical terms, and annual deliverables are not described. As noted above, this creates difficulties in knowing what results to expect year to year, for monitoring and measuring progress, and for determining what benefits will accrue to students.

The Applicant proposes training to support the effective implementation of the 11 personalization approaches it describes in (C) (1). As noted above, the Applicant makes a convincing argument that each of the approaches have significant promise for providing personalized learning environments (PLE's) for the students who participate. The training is outlined in the second row of the table for "Personalized Educational Environment" under (C) (1). That description is supplemented by the information in the second row of the "Development" table under (C) (2) labeled "Schlechty Center." The Applicant adds additional detail in its narrative. Putting all of this together, it appears that those who are trained through the Schlechty Center could be able to lead and support their peers in implementing PLE's. With one exception in the first year however, each year's training is described in identical terms, and annual deliverables are not described. Participant's are described in general terms as "a cohort of teacher leaders." Therefore, who will participate in what aspect of the training when cannot be determined, what the specific outcomes of the training year by year cannot be determined, and these will make determining the effectiveness of the training year to year difficult.

The Applicant's plan under (C) (2) calls for extending its educators capacities to use the data systems in place. This will be accomplished by making additional student-centered data available during the first year of the grant and by providing for training and access for parents and students. This can cause discussions among educators, students, and parents to be better informed by data. It will also enhance the educators' current ability to gauge the effectiveness of their instruction and tailor it and supports to the needs of their students.

Based on the narrative, it appears that before implementation of the grant the participating educators can access data aligned with college and career success standards, can identify optimal learning approaches for their students, and after successful implementation of the training envisioned by the Applicant, will be able to continuously improve feedback to students including matching resources and tools to students needs. The weakness in Applicant's professional development plan, the absence of annual deliverables, is mitigated in this instance by the fact that educators already have access to sufficient data and already have the skills to judge the effect of their instruction and tailor supports.

The Applicant provides sufficient information in sufficient detail regarding its development of modified and enhanced evaluation systems for its teachers and principals to qualify as a HQP for creating evaluation systems meeting the

requirements under (C) (2) (c) (i). Participants in the design committees for each district are designated by category. The categories assure that principals and teachers will be represented by peers. Deliverables are identified in terms of the domains in the evaluations which are to be modified. The data and emphases which are to be incorporated in the enhanced systems include professional growth, support, student achievement and growth, and personalized learning implementation. There is a deadline for implementation so that the modified systems will be in use during the 2015 school year. The Applicant intends to require all educators to develop annual learning plans which will complement the enhanced systems. They will be in use by August 2015. Thus, by 2015 the Applicant will have the required evaluation systems in place for educators to use the feedback from the systems to improve the practices and support for its educators. It appears that the Applicant has a two-phase approach to increasing the number of its students served by effective/highly effective educators. One phase is to increase the effectiveness of its principals and train promising candidates in its Leadership Academies. Presumably, these are the “academies” to be run by the Schlechty Center. Participants are to gain or enhance their skills for budgeting, staffing, building management, creating a positive climate and collaborative working environments, and role modeling. A goal of this training is to create “a learner-centered personalized educational environment for teachers.” The first emphasis of the training in 2014 is to be on “hiring teachers that have potential and are willing to be guided and mentored into becoming highly effective teachers... .” Principals on staff and the “cohort of teacher leaders” will participate. Given the nature of the training which is to take place during duration of the grant, the plan could increase the number of effective principals on staff by the end of the grant. The weaknesses of the plan are that the Applicant does not describe annual deliverables, does not provide baseline data for the number of effective principals currently on staff, and does not set targets.

The plan to increase the number of effective teachers is vague. Although principals are identified as the primary recruiters and developers of teachers, the Applicant does not have a specific plan for how its principals will identify strong potential in existing staff or overcome the apparently inherent handicaps of a rural district with an apparently small pool of candidates. It does not explain how “building community collaboration” will mitigate language and cultural barriers between educators and those they serve. It does not describe what its “conscious efforts” regarding placement in hard to staff positions will be, and it does not amplify on its reference to “monetary incentives” as recruiting and retention devices. The Applicant does not provide baseline data regarding the number of effective teachers now on staff and does not set any targets for increasing the number.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This is a high range response.

(a) Organization: The participating district's created a “Collaborative Management Team (CMT) ,” and placed representatives from each LEA on it. The CMT will provide the primary governance and oversight for the efforts of the LEA's to personalize learning environments. Because it was created by the districts solely for this purpose, by definition, it is organized to facilitate the creation of the proposed PLE's. In addition, the Applicant's budget shows that it intends to hire an Program Executive Director, the District Coordinators, an Administrative Assistant and a Data Tech for this office. Details of their duties and responsibilities appear in Table 4-1, Project 1. They are intended to serve for the duration of the grant. Bryant ISD will be the lead LEA for the consortium and provide services including procurement and act as a fiscal agent for the duration of the grant. There is a Memo of Understanding among the three districts addressing how they will interact and how decisions of governance and operation will be made. It will be in force for the duration of the grant. The goals of the CMT and the Project Director's office staff is the successful administration of the grant and the success of the proposed reforms. The deliverables are the carrying out of the tasks and responsibilities in the job description and the Memorandum of Understanding. They remain constant for the life of the grant. This approach constitutes a HQP for “organization” under this sub(a). Moreover, the Applicant also indicates that district, CMT, and school policies, rules, and practices will be scanned on an ongoing basis during the grant years to identify and attempt to address those which impeded its implementation of its proposal. This response meets the requirements under (a).

(b) SLT autonomy: Each participating school has a school leadership team (SLT) as defined in the Scoring Tool. The Applicant asserts that its SLT's are “allowed” “flexibility and much autonomy” in “personnel and staffing models, roles and responsibilities, and budgets.” The Applicant does not discuss schedules and school calendars in this response, but under (C) (1), the Applicant suggests that some schools might elect to extend their school day with activities and late bus service for participating students. A HQP is not required for what is already in place.

As noted in (a), the CMT will constantly scan policies, practices, and rules to identify and address those which impede implementation of this proposal. With what is in place and this scanning operation planned to go on throughout the life of the grant, together they constitute a HQP to meet the requirements under (b).

(c) Credit: The state allows students to earn credit without regard to time in three instances--"virtual school," on line courses, and credit by examination. Apparently, neither the Consortium (the Applicant) nor any of its constituent LEA's can do more. No other form of HQP appears to be required under these circumstances. This response meets the applicable requirements.

(d) Mastery: The Applicant indicates that its English Language Learner students (ELL) and its special education students already demonstrate mastery of standards in a variety of ways and at different times. The implementation of many of the PLE's proposed by the Applicant will enable the same thing to occur for these students and general education students. The latter availability is more prospective than currently existing because most of the PLE's have not yet been implemented. The Applicant does not otherwise propose a time specific plan to ensure that all its participating students have the same opportunities. This response substantially but not entirely meets the applicable requirements.

(e) Accessible/Adaptable Resources: It appears that the Applicant and its constituent district's are in compliance with applicable requirements regarding providing accessible and adaptable resources to its ELL and special education students. Full implementation of the Applicant's proposal will help it make more resources more available and more adaptable to all participating students. There are two caveats: the Applicant has not fully addressed the lack of student access to digital devices and the Internet it has described, and its implementation plans do not make clear when the various PLE's will be available to whom among its participating students. The Applicant partially meets the requirements under (e).

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

(a) Access to tools, etc.: Generally, the Applicant's proposal assumes all students will have access to the tools, content, and other learning resources which complement the implementation of the proposed PLE's, and the Applicant does not describe any impediments. The exception is regarding student and family access to the Internet and digital devices. As noted, the Applicant describes substantial impediments to both and notes that such access is critical to student and family access to a number of the proposed PLE's and to the data systems which are intended to enable students and families to monitor progress, use learning resources, and engage in college preparation.

Elsewhere, the Applicant has indicated a plan for just four of its 31 schools to implement what is apparently its primary digital device distribution approach—the "BYOD." More generally, it has linked distributing digital devices with uncertainty by using the conditional word, "may," to describe if and when students would gain access to digital devices. Elsewhere as well, the Applicant has described the participation by its districts in such plans as "voluntary." As noted above, the Applicant's plan for expanding bandwidth is incomplete.

In indicating its intent to create "a technology lending library for its students and families," the Applicant does not describe any activities to make this so and attaches no time lines. The same is true regarding its initiatives to increase the number of WiFi hot spots, increase server space, and increase "other technology" in the classroom. This response is substantially weakened by these factors.

(b) Technical Support: The Applicant's budget does include funds to increase technical support in the first year of the grant. It also describes in several parts of its narrative credible ways that it will provide training and support family engagement to facilitate families using the technology and systems it can gain access to. The access issue weakens this response; otherwise, the requirements are met.

(c) Open Format: Without saying so directly, the Applicant appears to say that students and parents can export their information to open data formats by citing specific examples of how this can be done by them. Save the access issue described above which is raised again by the Applicant, the requirements are met.

(d) Interoperability: The Applicant says three of its systems are interoperable as required—student information, human resources, and "financial." It does not discuss its "instructional improvement" systems. The requirements are partially but not entirely met.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This is a high mid range response.

The Applicant describes a high quality multi-level approach to continuous improvement. The approach includes the timely gathering of information leading to regular feedback on progress toward program goals as required.

The Applicant's approach to continuous improvement begins with its outline a five step approach. The approach includes identified goals, related activities assessing both implementation and results, time for review and reflection, and a systematic process for

adjustment. The Applicant promises clear, convenient lines of communication for all stakeholders and provision for anonymity if thought necessary. If this approach and these communication lines are implemented as intended, it is likely that the Applicant will get quality feedback and process it competently

The parties responsible for gathering and disseminating information and data are identified for all levels and for each of the major initiatives. Primary responsibility falls on the grant coordinators attached to each of the three participating districts. There are time lines stipulated for data gathering and analysis. During the first nine months of grant implementation, pertinent project, campus, teacher, and student data is to be gathered and analyzed weekly. That time line can be modified after the nine months with changes to be made following the protocol for plan modification below. By providing this level of specificity and these initially short time lines, the Applicant's approach makes it likely that the feedback loops will become quickly established and that the Applicant will be able to work out "bugs" in the system early in the life of the grant. These activities will continue for the duration of the grant on the time lines stated with the same parties responsible for the tasks outline.

The Applicant describes a detailed, multi-level approach to plan modification of which will cause each proposed modification to receive greater scrutiny by increasingly senior officials depending on how substantial the proposed change will be. To assure that there is an on-going and accurate record of modifications, the Applicant has stipulated that a "fidelity log" will be maintained by the grant program director. This approach will enable internal and external evaluators and monitors to keep track of if, how, and why modifications were made. This will be to the benefit of all concerned with Applicant's reform efforts. It is a reasonable presumption that this approach to modifying strategic initiatives such as this one will become institutionalized during the grant years, and, will continue to be used thereafter as required by the Scoring Tool. Depending on the level of the proposed modification, the responsible parties are the building leader, the program leader, the district leader, or the CMT. This process will continue for the duration of the grant on an ongoing basis with the same parties responsible.

The Applicant further describes specific continuous improvement processes for the major initiatives or components of its reform proposal. Individually each can provide regular feedback on progress toward reform objectives and goals create opportunities for ongoing modification of the approach following the modification protocol summarized above. Thus they meet the pertinent requirements in the Scoring Tool.

- For students and teachers, the Applicant will require teachers, educator teams, and professional learning communities to implement a cycle of assessments, review, adjustments to supports and instruction, reporting to student/families, and targeted professional development for the professionals. Principals, coaches, and district program directors will be the primary responsible parties.
- Principals and school leadership teams will follow a similar cycle regarding data and feedback relevant to their school improvement work.
- The continuous improvement process for professional development uses qualitative data from participants and classroom observation data to assess its effectiveness based on how well educators use the skills, techniques, and personalized learning approaches in which they have been trained. The training for teachers working in professional learning communities will also be assessed based on observations of the "PLC's" at work. It appears from the descriptions of the Schlechty Center that it evaluates its programs and will support the continuous improvement efforts of the Applicant.
- Technology implementation and the pertinent professional development will be assessed and improved using data regarding the number of digital devices installed or disseminated, actual student use of software in and out of school, and user surveys.
- Implementation of the positive youth development program will be assessed based on surveys, program-specific data collection, program specific evaluation tools, peer coaching, and observations.

For each of these processes, the Applicant designates responsible parties in this response or elsewhere in its descriptions of the initiatives. Time lines are stated here or can be competently inferred from the descriptions of the initiatives elsewhere in the narrative. The Applicant also provides for overall evaluation of its reform initiative and its component parts through an "independent evaluator." This person will collaborate with the project oversight management team and the evaluator assigned by Race to the Top. The Applicant identifies additional responsible parties and describes nine sets of data points and/or processes which the independent evaluator will use to assess progress and assure continuous improvement.

The Applicant also describes under (E) (4) a method for verifying the quality and validity of the data it will use to evaluate its processes and activities. The Applicant includes a brief description of how it will apply cost-benefit analysis to the activities of its plan and what the results will mean.

Regarding "staffing choices" and, apparently, the placement and/or increasing its supply of effective teachers, the Applicant cites data demonstrating why this is important and indicates that a "feedback loop" needs to be established. It does not, however, indicate who will do so, when, what indicia will be used to determine effectiveness, or set any targets (i.e. deliverables) either for placement or for this improvement process. Therefore the approach is not high quality.

The Applicant describes a high quality approach to sharing information regarding grant implementation. Each participating school (presumably all 31 of those designated in this grant Application) is expected to publish information regarding goals, activities, and results of both its efforts to implement the grant and the results in terms of student learning on each website. It will also provide budget information regarding spending (i.e. "investments) on professional development, technology, and staff. The grant project director will be responsible for providing a period overview of progress in all areas and processes relevant to progress on Applicant's reform in quarterly reports to the participating school boards.

A report summary will be published in each district's newsletter and on each district's website. The project director will be required to

include information on the feedback being given and to describe what is being done to ensure continuous improvement. Presuming the reports are of high quality, such reports will enable stakeholders and all levels of grant-involved decision makers to have a thorough view of what is occurring and to what the effects are. Two matters weaken this approach: (1) a substantial portion of the students/parent community suffers from limited or no access because they live in rural areas and/or have no Internet access; (2) providing information to the media on “request” is not a proactive approach to potentially wide-spread dissemination. The primary weakness to this process is that the reform implementation plan is extraordinarily flexible. The structure described here is going to have to reach to each teacher, each class, each school, and each of three districts. Data and reports will have to be gathered from each with frequency. Modifications must be recorded and/or requested and if requested responded to up and down the line of communication all while each of the districts schools are conducting all of their normal activities. The logistical challenge created by this and the challenges to control are very substantial. These challenges mean that one cannot place full confidence in the belief that continuous improvement will occur as readily and as completely as is intended.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

In addition to the communication approach commented upon above, the Applicant notes that it reminds that it attempted to engage internal and external stakeholders in the design of its reform approach through focus groups including one exclusively for students. It does not, however, present any information about whom or how many participated in the focus groups.

The Applicant has designated its campus principals and academic coaches as its primary communicators at the school level arguing that they are trusted voices in their school communities. The Applicant does not, however, describe school level activities which it expects will be the vehicles for the principals' and coaches' communications, it does not set time lines, and it does not identify specific means of communication to be use (i.e. deliverables).

The Applicant designates the project director and the district superintendents as primary communicators to external stakeholders. Beyond communications described in (E) (1) regarding communications intended to cause improvement of the reform plan, the Applicant describes an extensive approach to communication. Although not uniformly the case, to a significant extent specific activities, time lines, and deliverables are either described or can be inferred.

The Applicant also presents what it regards as “other strategies.” One is an email account which Applicant intends both internal and external stakeholders will be able to access apparently if the stakeholder applies for access one of the participating districts. Applicant does not make clear what purpose the email account/contact list is to serve. It does not indicate who among its staff will be accessible. It implies that the responsible parties for controlling access and maintain the operation are the three District Coordinators. The Applicant does not describe the criteria a stakeholder must meet to be given access. Presuming the participating districts currently have the capacity to process the emails, there is not a need for time line for creation. The concerns regarding reliance on electronic communications have been noted where pertinent above and need not be repeated.

The Applicant says that each district's website will have a place for the posting of grant-related information and describes the kinds of content expected to be posted. Applicant suggests that a community blog will be part of each website.

Presumably, the District Coordinators will be responsible for maintaining the website and the blog. No specific time line is set for implementation but, again, an inference would be that the website in particular would be expected to be up and running “ASAP” after a grant was made to Applicant.

Applicant designates the Project Director as the person responsible for an electronic newsletter, communication and liaison with the local media regarding the grant. Each duty is to start with the inception of the grant.

The Applicant intends that the Project Director and District Coordinators will develop a proactive communication calendar. As envisioned it would be the foundation for personnel at various levels to engage their communities and inform them of both the nature of initiatives and regarding the rationale and benefits which are anticipated to accrue. Given the substantial changes which could occur, seeking out the media outlets on a proactive basis is could as intended result in greater understanding and support internally and externally. It can be inferred that the work on the calendar will start immediately on the rewarding of the grant.

The Applicant has the capacity through contracted services to translate any and all of this information into Spanish—important to the success of its communication effort because of the large portion of its stakeholders who are Spanish speaking. Given the stress placed on communications in this response, it appears likely that these capabilities will be used in a variety of ways increases.

The Applicant also uses this response to discuss the communication of lesson goals and objective. It says that its teachers will inform students on a class by class basis what they are expected to learn and be able to do in each class, each day. This is sound practice which, presumably, will be monitored and evaluated by the systems for those purposes established under this grant.

The Applicant provides a reminder in this response of its approaches to sharing student performance data and its anticipated expansion of the data system to include a portal for college/career preparation and college application. Overall,

what Applicant provides here coupled what is in the response to (E) (1) constitutes a credible plan for communication and engagement the concerns and weaknesses notwithstanding.

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

This is a low, mid range response. The Applicant chooses has a total of at least 14 measures as required.

1. PreK-3: Proficient in reading at Gr. 3: The Applicant's rationale that this indicates future academic success is reasonable. That the Applicant describes flat rates of growth for all sub-groups for all grant years calls to question the positive effects of the grant and weakens the response. The overall growth rates appear achievable and acceptably ambitious.
2. PreK-3: Percentage of Gr. 3 students receiving a referral: Because there is great discretion and variability in the giving of referrals by staff members, the validity of this as a measure is problematic. This weakens the response. Although not said by Applicant, were the data to be valid, it might provide a modicum of helpful information regarding the success of the Applicant's youth development initiative. That the Applicant describes flat rates of growth for all sub-groups for all grant years calls to question the positive effects of the grant and weakens the response. The reduction over the life of the grant in the referrals of African American and special education students is ambitious, the others are not.
3. PreK-3: Percentage of students retained in Kindergarten: Applicant's reason for choosing this is that it wishes to identify students needing support. It is not a sound reason because the information that a student has been retained will come too late for proactive supports which could prevent the retention, and there are other ways to ascertain who needs support before a student suffers being retained. That the Applicant describes flat rates of growth for all sub-groups for all grant years calls to question the positive effects of the grant and weakens the response. The proposed reductions over the life of the grant are acceptably ambitious.
4. PreK-3: Percentage of students retained in Gr. 1: Applicant's reason for choosing this is that it will identify students needing support. It is not a sound reason because the information that a student has been retained will come too late for proactive supports which could prevent the retention, and there are other ways to ascertain who needs support before a student suffers being retained. That the Applicant describes flat rates of growth for all sub-groups for all grant years calls to question the positive effects of the grant and weakens the response. The proposed reductions over the life of the grant are acceptably ambitious.
5. PreK-3: Percentage of students retained in Gr. 2: Applicant's reason for choosing this is that it will identify students needing support. It is not a sound reason because the information that a student has been retained will come too late for proactive supports which could prevent the retention, and there are other ways to ascertain who needs support before a student suffers being retained. That the Applicant describes flat rates of growth for all sub-groups for all grant years calls to question the positive effects of the grant and weakens the response. The proposed reductions over the life of the grant are acceptably ambitious.
6. Grades 4-8: Percentage of 8th Grade students enrolled in Algebra I or a Pre-AP math class: The Applicant says that tracking this data will enable it to open a dialog with these students to encourage them to pursue other rigorous and/or advanced classes. To meet requirements under the Scoring Tool, the Applicant is to be focusing on measures giving it formative data on its plan or areas of concern as indicated by the plan. Encouraging the discussions described is not a primary focus under Applicant's plan. This weakens the response. The goals stated are highly ambitious, but there is not sufficient description of relevant interventions in the Applicant's plan to make it appear that the goals are achievable
7. Grades 4-8: Percentage of students in Grades 4-8 testing "proficient" on state wide math assessments: This is a reasonable global measure of whether Applicant is improving learning and instruction. The targets for improvement by the end of the grant appear achievable and reasonably ambitious although the flat rates of projected annual improvement for each sub-groups each years calls to question the effects of the grant. This weakens the response.
8. Grades 4-8: Percentage of students in Grades 4-8 with one or more suspensions or expulsion: Applicant says it is measuring this because responding to suspensions and expulsions requires "great coordination" of resources. Coordinating resources to support disciplined students is not an area of concern under the Applicant's grant proposal, but creating better environments in which to learn and helping teachers be more skilled in dealing with the many students in the district whose cultures and other demographics do not match the majority of the students the teachers work with is. In that context then, this a competent measure of the Applicant's being able to improve what is available to its students in the areas mentioned. That the Applicant describes flat rates of growth for all sub-groups for all grant years calls to question the positive effects of the grant and weakens the response. The goals appear achievable and reasonably ambitious.
9. Grades 4-8: Percentage of students in Grades 4-8 testing "proficient" in state wide reading assessments: Applicant chooses this measure because reading is crucial to future academic success. This is consistent with its prime reform goal of improving learning and instruction. That the Applicant describes flat rates of growth for all sub-groups for all

grant years calls to question the positive effects of the grant and weakens the response. The goals appear achievable and ambitious.

10. Grades 9-12: The number and percentage of students completing and submitting a Free Application for Federal Students Aid (FAFSA): Applicant provides this table but does not list it in its narrative as one of its measures. The data is incomplete. This creates confusion.
11. Grades 9-12: Percentage of student who meet requirements to apply for admission at a state college or university: The rationale in the narrative is convoluted, but this measure is pertinent to Applicant's goal of preparing all of its students to be college/career ready. The Applicant does not provide data for all of the sub-groups required by the Scoring Tool. Its goals for the sub-groups for which it provides data appear achievable and acceptably ambitious.
12. Grades 9-12: Percentage of students who compete a Career Profile of a Personalized Graduation Plan: Applicant provides a table but does not discuss this measure in its narrative. The data in the table is incomplete and contains no data regarding sub-groups This adds confusion to Applicant's response.
13. Grades 9-12: Percentage of 12th grades students enrolled in an AP, IB, or dual credit course: Applicant's rationale for this measure is that it helps to identify the students who should be encouraged to go to college. Doing so for AP/IB/Dual Credit students in their last year of school appears redundant if not irrelevant. The goals stated are highly ambitious, but there is not sufficient description of relevant interventions in the Applicant's plan to make it appear that the goals are achievable
14. Grades 9-12: Percentage of students in all four grades suspended or expelled: As measure of whether Applicant's reforms have equipped students to be successful and to avoid behaviors which put them at risk of suspension/expulsion there is some merit to the measure. The goals for the various sub-groups appear achievable and ambitious.
15. Grades 9-12: Reducing the number of students needing pregnancy/parenting services: Applicant's reason for this measure is that it wishes to track and reduce pregnancy/parenting as a "risk factor." The baseline data shows that 38 students were in need in the baseline year. That is less than 1 percent of the approximately 4000 students in Applicant's Grade 9-12 population. Given the number and percentage of students involved, this measure is at best marginally related to Applicant's theory of action and/or primary areas of concern as required by the Scoring Tool. The response is weak.
16. Grades 9-12: The number of students graduating having earned three college credits: This is a narrow but credible measure of whether Applicant is increasing its capacity to prepare students who are likely to enroll and graduate from college. The goals are ambitious and arguably achievable.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

For the reasons stated above, the Applicant's plan for continuous improvement is on the whole highly credible and of high quality. In its response under (E) (4), Applicant adds more information and details regarding the nature and timing of reports and evaluations which add additional strength to its plan. Among the added details is a description of a method for verifying the quality and validity of the data it will use to evaluate its processes and activities. The Applicant includes a brief description of how it will apply cost-benefit analysis to the activities of its plan and what the results will mean. The Applicant does not discuss specifically how this approach will be applied directly to its investments in technology, staff, and professional development. This weakens the response.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

For the reasons detailed below, this is a low, middle range response. The lack of explanation regarding the specific uses of the proposed expenditures and the lack of detail regarding how the expenditures were calculated weaken the appealing nature of the Applicant's Vision. The Applicant organizes its program budget under its four primary programs. This lends itself to applying the criteria in the Scoring Tool under F(F) (1) in the same way.

Administration, Grant Management, Evaluation:

- ASAP Program Executive: Grant funds are the sole source of funding. The position terminates with the end of the grant so sustaining funding is not an issue. The salary, in the \$100,000 ranged on annual basis, is commensurate with the demands of the position and the skill necessary. The salary is reasonable and sufficient.
- Three ASAP District Coordinators: Grant funds are the sole source of funding. The position terminates with the end

of the grant so sustaining funding is not an issue. The annual salary for one Coordinators is in the range of \$77,000 annually. It is reasonable to have one person at each district whose sole function is facilitating the implementation of the grant. This is a district level administrative position. The duties are similar to an assistant superintendent; so the salary is reasonable and sufficient.

- Administrative Assistant: Given the duties for this position, it is apparent that this person will support and supplement the work of the Program Executive. This is not a secretarial position. Given the range of tasks which must be performed, providing such support is reasonable. The annual salary in the \$30,000 appears low. The position terminates with the end of the grant so sustaining funding is not an issue.
- Data Tech: Data regarding student performance and results from grant implementation will be received from the three districts. Given the amount of data which could be generated by tracking 17,000+ students and almost 1200 educators, having such person is reasonable. The \$50,000 annual salary is reasonable and sufficient. The position terminates with the end of the grant so sustaining funding is not an issue.
- Grantee Meetings and Conferences: Apparently, this allocation is for travel outside the three districts. It is explained as "being for professional development and to present findings when appropriate There is not sufficient detail to explain the necessity for or nature of the item, and there is no more information in Appendix F which is the supplement to this response. Without more explanation, this proposed expenditure does not appear reasonable.
- The proposal for supplies and office equipment for the six persons listed under this program is reasonable and sufficient.
- Program Evaluation: The plan for continuous improvement makes this position sound as though it would be demanding and require full time attention. The Applicant does not explain why it chooses to contract for this service. It is not clear how the annual expenditure of \$100,000 is arrived at, and there is no additional detail in Appendix F. It is not clear whether this expenditure is reasonable or sufficient.
- The development and implementation of the additional components of the evaluation systems for teachers and principal will be a collaborative effort among employees of the three collaborating districts and contractors. It is reasonable to engage contractors who have familiarity with similar systems already in place elsewhere in the country. An expenditure of \$50,000 over the two years allotted for development and implementation is not unreasonable and is likely to be sufficient.
- Consultants and Trainers for Professional Development to Increase the Numbers of Highly Effective Teachers: As noted elsewhere, the Applicant does not have a high quality plan for this effort. Without such a plan, it cannot be determined whether the expenditure of \$100,000 per year in the first three grant years and \$50,000 in the last year is either reasonable or sufficient.

The Ready to Teach Project:

- Substitutes for teachers out of the classroom to attend professional development: Extrapolating from the information provided, it appears that this allocation could purchase the time of between 72 and 180 teacher days per district if each district was allocated an equal proportion of the \$27,000 annualized expenditure. Given that professional development will be on-going throughout the school year and that there are almost 1200 educators the vast majority of whom are teachers, it cannot be said that this is an unreasonable expenditure. As noted elsewhere, however, the plans for which educators are going to do what when (because of the flexibility and individualization Applicant's professional development plans provide for), it cannot fully be determined that the amount is reasonable or sufficient. This causes a level of weakness in the response.
- Hard to Place Financial Incentives: As noted, Applicant's plans regarding placement of effective teachers in hard to place assignments is quite weak. This means that the reasonableness and sufficiency of this proposed allocation cannot be determined.
- Extra Duty Pay for Teachers to Participate in Professional Development during Non-Contract Days: Over half of this proposed allocation is to be used in the two summers encompassed in the Applicant's first grant year which runs 20 months, and another 20+ percent is to be spent in the third summer. It is sensible and reasonable to "front-load" such expenditures to accelerate the pace of implementation of the various personalized learning initiatives the Applicant has identified. This will enable the participating educators to modify and refine the initiatives during the latter two years of the grant. As noted, however, the plans for how many educators are going to do what are not clear or of high quality. This means it cannot fully be determined whether this allocation is reasonable or sufficient. This constitutes a level of weakness in the response.
- Travel: The great flexibility given each district and its educators regarding what they are to do, including traveling to conferences at a total cost of over \$563,000 means that the reasonableness and the sufficiency of this proposed expenditure cannot be fully determined.
- Professional Development To Increase Leadership Capabilities: As noted elsewhere and summarized again in the narrative accompanying this expenditure request, the Applicant proposes to spend \$565,900 on "professional development ... based on data driven decisions from needs assessments geared toward district, campus, and individual teacher needs." There is nothing significant added in Appendix F. This is not sufficient information to determine the reasonableness and sufficiency of this request.

- Schlechty Center Professional Development: This a request for \$800,000 over the four years of the grant with \$420,000 to be spent in the first year. Based on the several descriptions of the Schlechty programs, the Center has fixed approaches to training educators how to make students work meaningful and engaging, to design personalized learning environments, and to train teacher leaders how to train and support colleagues in such efforts. This additional detail provides some mitigation for the otherwise missing detail regarding which and how many educators will participate. It remains somewhat unclear how reasonable this proposed expenditure is.
- Professional Development/Training To Address Cultural, Linguistic, Or Personalized Learning Needs: \$375,000 is to be spent over four years. This descriptor differentiates this professional development from the others in this Project but falls short of the detail required to fully determine whether the cost is reasonable and sufficient.
- Positive Youth Development Professional Development: This initiative, the training, implementation, and monitoring is detailed sufficiently in the various places where it is discussed in Applicant's narrative to convince that it is sound and will be subject to on-going evaluation and continuous improvement. How this cost estimate is reached is not explained however; so there is less than a full showing that the cost of \$825,000 is reasonable.
- Literacy and Writing Professional Development: This proposal to spend \$140,000 does not contain sufficient information to determine its reasonableness or sufficiency.

Ready to Learn:

- Extra Duty Pay: It is reasonable to pay teachers on non contract days to train rather than take them out of class. The number of teachers involved is not indicated and prevents the reasonableness and sufficiency of the proposal from being determined.
- Computers and tablets/Smart board/Smart Tables and Projectors (mounted): These proposed expenditure will be for more than \$6,000,000. About half of the computers and tablets are to be purchased in the first and half in the last year of the grant. The purchase of "Smart" equipment is front-loaded which coincides with the intent to have classrooms equipped as soon as possible during the grant years. Each computer is estimated to cost \$1000 and each "Smart" installation at \$4000. The descriptions of their use is cryptic and does not provide sufficient information to fully determine the reasonableness of the expense. These are one time expenditures.
- Supplies: Over \$600,000 is proposed to be spent for a variety of supplies including some equipment. Those for the parenting workshops are tied to the well-explained youth development initiative and appear reasonable. The others, generally spread over the life of the grant and representing comparatively modest expenditures cannot be said to be unreasonable.
- Contractual: The youth development program as a whole is sufficiently explained to create a presumption that the costs for the training proposed here (\$987,800) is sufficient and the expenditure itself reasonable. The costs for a technology integration consultant (Total: \$300,000) and professional development integrating personalize learning throughout the curriculum (Total: \$ 160,000) are not clearly different from the other professional development which is proposed and are not sufficiently explained to fully determine their reasonableness How the cost of the College and Career program licenses was determined (\$185,000 each year) is not clear. This appears to be an expense which continues beyond the grant years.

Ready to Act:

- Four Tech Assistants: It is sensible to have such persons available to the various school staffs. It is not clear why there are four. The annualized salaries of \$45,000 are not unreasonable.
- Five Instructional Coaches: This position and its functions are commonly understood. The positions are helpful to teachers especially when they are mastering new skills. The annualized salaries of about \$50,000 per coach are not unreasonable. It is not clear how it was determined that five were needed. These positions appear to be ones which will continue after the grant expires.
- Three Parenting Coordinators: The duties for this position are reasonably clear as is the reason for the position within the context of the youth development initiative One per district is sensible. The salaries of just under \$50,000 on an annualized basis are reasonable. It appears that these positions would continue after the grant ends.
- Travel for Principals to Leaders Conferences: The purpose of these expenditures is not sufficiently explained. It is not clear how these conferences fit with the other leadership training expenditures appearing in the other Projects. (Total: \$75,000)
- Contracts:
 - First in the Family and Lead4Ward: It is not clear how many will participate and how these cost estimates were reached. As part of the youth development initiative, the overall rationale and approach are sound and linked to a presumption of reasonableness for the expenditures. (Total: \$347,750) It is not clear if this expenditure needs to continue beyond the grant.
 - Leadership Academies for transforming low performing schools and to increase the numbers of highly effective teachers; recognize and recruit highly effective staff: The plans for transforming the schools are not differentiated sufficiently from the other efforts to personalize learning environments to determine whether this

training is duplicative of the other leadership professional development described elsewhere. The plans for increasing the number of highly effective teachers including their recruiting are weak. The \$425,000 total expenditures for these purposes is not clearly reasonable or sufficient.

- o Partners and Vendors identified through assessments and student/teacher needs: There is not sufficient justification or explanation of this proposal to determine whether it is reasonable or sufficient. (Total: \$400,000)

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

10

7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This is a mid range response.

The Applicant indicates that its primary strategy for sustainability is to develop its in-house capacity to carry on training and professional support using employees who will remain after the grant years are completed. This is an historically sound approach which appears to take into account the limitations of the three district's resources once the grant terminates. The Applicant's intended institution of professional learning communities will facilitate this work as well as the on-going efforts to continuously improve on the personalization initiatives the Applicant has chosen to implement. The Applicant's promising approach to the continuous improvement process will also help. Most of the proposed expenditures in Applicant's budget are not anticipated to continue beyond the grant years. As noted in the Comments above, the Applicant described a credible approach to evaluating its grant funded efforts. This process creates optimism that it could and would competently evaluate the effectiveness of its investments during the grant years so that it could make wise decisions regarding how it proceeded in the future. All of this supports and is consistent with Applicant's expressed intention not go beyond the funding sources it had before the grant to sustain the grant initiatives after the grant expires.

Contrary to its assertion that the support letters signal on-going support for the initiatives from outside sources, there were no letters indicating future financial support and no letters connoting "businesses, universities, and not for profits [coming] together in a coordinated way" to sustain the initiative. The Applicant did not produce an estimated three-year, post-grant budget. These weaken the response.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

This is a high range response.

The Applicant describes in this response and elsewhere in its Application a coherent sustainable partnership to support its plan and Vision of safe, orderly, supportive schools with the University of Washington Social Development Research Group and the Aledor Group. This partnership will augment the resources of the schools in Applicant's consortium to provide student and family supports. The program is labeled by the Applicant as "Raising Healthy Children/Capturing Kids' Hearts" and will be labeled "RHC" in these Comments.

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The Applicant describes five "Objectives" for the program. Within the outline for each objective, the Applicant identifies a number of results which it will track. The results include a number of educational results and outcomes as described in the Soring Tool. The results also include a number of family and community supports as defined in the Scoring Tool.

The partnership will use a variety of means to track the selected indicators. They include teacher reports, truancy records, grades, grade books, attendance records, sign in logs for parent/family events and workshops, parent/family surveys, third-party classroom observations. This data and that generated from other sources to track student behavior and achievement will be used to target resources and improve results.

As noted above in these Comments, the Applicant has rigorous and thorough processes for evaluation and continuous improvement. Because RHC is one of the foundational components of the Applicant's approach to reform, it will be subject to on-going and comprehensive scrutiny to the end that it be successfully implemented and methodically improved. The Applicant has a competent approach to scaling up RHC. The program will be implemented and institutionalized in all participating schools over a three year period following a time-proved implementation plan developed over the years by Applicant's partners. High needs students will be included because the initiative will reach all participating students.

RHC integrates educational services and other services by integrating behavioral support and social skills for students in the context of their everyday classrooms. The content to be taught and the skills to be learned will enable students to focus and function efficiently in classrooms as students and members of learning collaboratives. Teachers are to be taught and supported to interact in productive ways with students both as teachers and as effective and supportive leaders of classrooms as communities. The parent/family events and workshops will enable parent and families to understand and support what is being taught and to reinforce the social skills being cultivated in the classroom.

In collaboration with its partners, the Applicant has developed and presented a professional development plan to train all participating educators in RHC as it applies to students, staff, and families in their respective schools. The training has been developed over many years and appears to be circular so that trainees can learn, implement, reflect, and return for additional training using their implementation experiences as background for additional learning. Part of RHC is training is expected to equip staff members to assess the needs of students in the context of Applicant's Vision for safe and orderly classroom which are supportive and contain personalized learning environments.

Under the five Objectives, there are a variety of activities which will enable staff in collaboration with students, families, and trainers to identify and inventory the needs and the assets of each school and the communities each serves so that what goes on in the school better meets the needs and capitalizes on the strength of the community each serves. It appears that the training under RHC and under the other components of Applicant's personalized learning reforms include decision making processes and infrastructure for developing appropriate supports at the classroom and school levels. In addition and as already stated, the reform Consortium has a robust continuous improvement process for evaluation and improving its support initiatives.

Through RHC and through additional parent/family engagement activities, the Applicant can be said to have a credible approach to engaging parents and families in helping to decide how educators at all levels of the Consortium will address student, family, and school needs.

As commented upon above, the Applicant has a robust process for assessing its progress toward implementing its reform plan and for improving implementation of the plan.

The Applicant presents six population level performance measures. They are written in a format so that they can be read to apply to and be the same for each year—hence in that sense they are annual measures. Excepting the goal for closing each applicable achievement gap by 10 percent each year, the goals are achievable. The achievement gap goal without being more specifically targeted by this reform seems not-achievable. The goals are acceptably ambitious.

The Applicant there are several phases to scale RHC. Initially, the Project Director will capture data on the effects of the RHC activities and have them evaluated by an external evaluator. Presumably this will be an ongoing process lasting at least the duration of the grant. The evaluations will be used internally as part of continuous improvement with the results being reported to the the participating superintendents.

RHC will be introduced grade by grade at each participating school. Therefore, the second phase is what Applicant literally refers to in its response as “scaling.” It describes “scaling” as follows: “Scaling the program is completed through the phase in nature of administering the program [grade by grade] in all schools.” Then, “as more and more parents attend family events [at the schools], the parenting workshops will spread from one segment of the community to others” Last, according to the Applicant, staff competence in implementing RHC scales as they engage in the trainers training trainers process.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The Applicant has done substantial work on the core educational assurance areas. The state in which it is located has very recently increased the rigor of its required curricula, assessments, and graduation requirements and aligned each with college and career readiness. The data systems of each of the district's composing Applicant's consortium have data systems which meet core assurance standards, and Applicant's plan anticipates enhancing them to better serve students and families in the area of college and career readiness. Under this plan, the Applicant will be using systems to evaluate its educators which meet RTTT-D standards by the 2014 school year. The Applicant is handicapped in addressing the identification and development of effective educators as defined in the Scoring Tool by the fact that its governing state has not required or supported that as a goal for its component districts. At one point in its narrative, the Applicant indicates that several of its 10 lower performing schools are now meeting standards. The “Ready to Learn,” “Ready to Teach,” and “Ready to Act” components of the Applicant's approach although not specifically directed toward school turnaround, hold promise for substantial improvement to all schools, and this can be said to be complemented by Applicant's allowing schools and district's to tailor the reform activities to meet the specific needs of each school. That is, should the district and school level decision makers competently target and rigorously implement the most appropriate initiatives and activities

provided for in Applicant's reform plan, there is a significant likelihood that its lower performing schools will indeed turn around.

The Applicant identifies 11 approaches to the implementation of personalized learning environments which its plan can enable its educators to meet. If properly implemented and supported, as envisioned by Applicant, each in and of itself could improve learning and teaching. In combinations at individual schools as determined by those working and being served by the schools, they hold significant promise to substantially improve learning and teaching at Applicant's schools. Given that the state has aligned its curricula, assessments, and graduation requirements as described above, each of the 11 personalized learning environments will be aligned with college and career ready standards.

It is important to recognize that the Applicant also intends all schools to implement age appropriate versions of a positive youth development program. This will be done in partnership with two partners. The program to be implemented is the product of decades of research and development and has a track record of producing safe, supportive, and productive school environments. The program includes components which have proved successful in engaging students and families presenting demographics similar to those of Applicant's student and facilitating bonding between the families and their schools. Such a foundation will greatly enhance the chances that learning and teaching will improve under Applicant's plan. The Applicant also describes a rigorous and thorough approach to monitoring, evaluating and improving both its efforts to implement its reform plan to doing the same regarding its reform initiatives. This process will enable the Applicant to make the productive use of the resources which it gains from the grant and to make appropriate and productive modifications as its experience dictates.

There appear to be weaknesses in aspects of the Applicant's approach, and they are noted in the Comments. Overall, however, Applicant's approach is a coherent and comprehensive effort to address all of the goals described in the Scoring Tool under Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	132
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0182TX-3 for Bryan ISD

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has set forth a reform vision that uses many cliched phrases, but without describing these ideas in enough detail to give confidence that the LEA has a coherent plan for how to actually implement the ideas.

(Core Assurance 1) The applicant addresses the four educational assurance areas, but without many details in all areas. For example:

- The LEA does do a good job of planning to use multiple and varied data points to assess students' progress, including end of course assessments, school-level evaluations, state assessments, and rates of AP and international baccalaureate courses and graduation rates.

- However, the discussion of the plan says there was a "shift to increase the rigor" of the items in the standardized assessments, but it doesn't explain what this shift actually was other than to say one test is now used over another. We are not told HOW this shift actually increased rigor.

- In addition, the LEA explains that campuses may earn distinctions such as being in the top 25% among comparison schools for student performance, but also for "Academic Achievement" in various subjects, but what this academic achievement means is not explained.

(Core Assurance 2) The applicant explains a goal of providing multiple layers of support to teachers to help them work with and understand data, including ongoing support from colleagues and instructional coaches and common planning periods and professional learning communities.

However, many aspects of this plan are not explained, including who will have real-time access to electronic student information (it says the district has access, but who in the district?). Also, the LEA describes its system as having the "ability" to match student scores with teachers, but doesn't explain whether this actually happens and how. It also states that districts in the LEA require data-driven decision making practices, but not how specifically they do this. In summary, much of what the LEA describes is vague and sounds like what every school district already does.

(Core assurance 3) - In order to develop and retain effective teachers, the LEA describes giving teachers protected time for PLCs and common planning with mentored coaching. This is good, and these plans should yield good outcomes. However, we are again not given specific details, For example:

- The LEA describes the difference between students with good teachers and poor teachers, citing evidence from research literature, but does not describe what they will actually do to change this imbalance in their own LEA. In fact, much of this plan read like a well-written literature review, citing evidence from research, but not describing the LEA's actual plans.
- The LEA explains its vision as implementing meaningful, multidimensional evaluation measures without describing these at all.
- The LEA says it is committed to bringing leadership and instructional staff together for enhancing evaluation, but without saying what they will do.
- The LEA provides a list of strategies that are very vague and not given with specific details, such as "the creation of enhanced evaluation tools" without describing these tools. This is common throughout the application.
- The LEA describes a challenge they face where recent college grads work for a year and then leave the area, but the application does not explain how the LEA will address this challenge.

(Core assurance area 4) - The LEA describes on p. 12 that 10 current participating schools, out of 30, that are "low performing" and explains that three of these increased their performance. This does not give confidence in the ability of the LEA to turn around ALL of its schools. Also, it is confusing whether this data is even accurate, which again decreases confidence, because later on p. 72 the applicant states that it has had 7 schools identified as low performing over the last four years, with four of these moving on to meeting standards. This data is confusing, but in any case seems to indicate that the LEA has had some success helping turnaround some schools, but not all or even most of those who need it.

(b) In trying to argue for its vision for accelerating student achievement, the LEA lists many popular buzzwords, such as "personalized education environment", "blended learning" and "flipped classrooms" but without explaining at all how these will actually be implemented. In particular, there are few discussions about what the actual classroom experience will look like. The only description available is of the potential experience of a student struggling with the English language, and how the plan would personalize learning for this student. This was helpful, but more examples like this would be helpful.

Overall, the applicant articulated a sound vision based on ideas and research literature, and the score reflects credit for these ideas, although the applicant also did not describe these ideas in enough detail to give confidence that this vision will be able to be sustained at the actual school and classroom-level.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant has effectively prepared for reform by conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, analyzing data for participating schools, including student performance data, online surveys and focus groups, and input from teachers, parents, students, and the community. The LEA has also defined the term "high need student" to reflect RTT criteria as well as their own goals and needs within the district and state, based on objective and solid criteria, such as performance, social/family situations, language proficiency, and other issues. The LEA has selected all of the schools within the three districts to participate.

(b) All of the schools are listed

(c) The numbers of participating students and high-need students are listed.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a plan to include all 31 schools within the collaborative, and mentions scaling the program to another school (Navasota) within the same region, and thus is given credit for proposing LEA-wide reform. However, the plan is not a high quality one, as specific details are not included, per the RTT definition of a high quality plan. For example:

- It is not clear how the data from the assessments, as well as the district curriculum-based assessments, will be used to plan individualized interventions.
- It is not explained how the plan will achieve the claims that students "will achieve incremental growth at an accelerated level."
- It is not explained how the Raising Healthy Children approach "increases the likelihood of healthy development in students and decreases problem behaviors" although having a program that will focus specifically on this area is important and good. The specifics of this program, however, were missing.
- Research literature is quoted as stating successful programs must have various kinds of interventions at both the institutional and individual level, but it is not explained how the LEA will actually implement these interventions.
- It is not explained HOW the teachers and administrators will develop the skills listed, such as class management, reinforcing emotional intelligence, and developing student empathy.
- The LEA does not explain HOW teachers will use technology and strategies such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, and project-based learning. These are just mentioned, not described.
- It is also not explained how the teachers will create environments that allow for risk-taking, new ideas, and innovative problem solving and artistic expression, nor how the "deep personal connection" between students and teachers will be developed.
- Looping is mentioned as a pedagogical strategy, but not explained.
- Some strategies that are explained in specific detail are not activities that inspire confidence in the program. For example, the LEA describes a book distribution program, which research has shown to not be effective, and an educational toy library without evidence of this being effective either.

A good aspect of the LEA's plan is a strong emphasis on involving parents and training parents to support their students. The plan also includes a well-detailed timeline for training teachers and parents, and implementing the Raising Healthy Children program. However, this timeline is explained in a vague way, articulating the broad goals to be accomplished, but not the specific activities, parties responsible, and deliverables.

Another positive aspect of the plan is the use of academic coaches to train the program and mentor teachers, although it is not explained how they will use the data discussed to help teachers implement strategies, nor what the "fidelity monitoring instrument" is that they will use.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has identified goals relative to summative assessments, decreasing gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment, and is given credit for having these identified. However, there are many questions that remain about these goals, which is why the score is reduced. For example:

- The goal to increase college enrollment rates by only 10% over 5 years does not seem very ambitious. This data is mentioned on p. 44. However, on p. 83 it is estimated that college enrollment will improve by 35% over 5 years, which would seem ambitious, but perhaps not achievable. This data is contradictory and confusing.
- Meanwhile, the current scores for special education and LEP children are exceptionally low (sometimes less than 10% meeting proficiency) and yet the LEA has set the goal of having very high achievement for this group at the end of five years (e.g. 75%). This does not seem achievable. The goal for making drastic improvement with the students who need it the most is important, and it is good that the districts have calculated goals separately for each subgroup, but it does seem that this much improvement might not be achievable.
- Some goals go down, and this is not explained. For example, Grade 7 reading proficiency is listed as 68% of the students meeting proficiency last year, and yet their goal for year one is actually lower (67%). This occurs often throughout the tables of performance goals. This might be expected in the course of making substantial changes and reforms within a district for scores to go down at first, but this should still be discussed.

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	7
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(a and b) The LEA demonstrates some evidence of previous success advancing student learning. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited English Proficiency students increased performance 15.2% in one year - African American graduation rates increased, as did economically disadvantaged graduation rates, but only by a little bit (3-5%). - The movement of three, or four (this was unclear) schools from low performing to meeting standards now. <p>However, many questions remain and not all of the data is convincing that the LEA has had a clear record of success. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The LEA's success with Hispanic students shows comparable performance to other schools in Texas. - Most of the improvement in various demographics is very slight. - The actual raw data is not provided for the four years as requested, only summaries that discuss the previous year, but not the last 4 years. Crockett's data is in the appendix, but the other schools are not provided at all. - In one year the school improved by only 8 the number of students in AP classes. - Some schools have been recognized as best practice and successful schools by the state of Texas, but not very many. <p>(c) The LEA has done a good job of making student information available continuously over the internet, along with student interest surveys for college and career mapping. However, it appears the only way this data is used is in choosing courses for the student. Otherwise it is not clear how this data is used for personalized learning.</p> <p>The score overall indicates mostly strong evidence for criteria c, and weaker evidence for criteria a and b</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application describes good transparency at the district and school level, with audit reports, salary data at the school level, and financial management reports published annually and distributed via the district's website, meetings at the Central Office, and public meetings of the Board of Trustees, and available by request.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Overall, it appears the state has provided a solid context for implementation of the reforms in the proposal.</p> <p>Much of the information in the application about the state context for implementation is about how Texas offers high school and junior high students online learning opportunities, which the LEA participates in. This is not a full "personalized learning environment" as it involves choice only at the course level, and only in whether to take a course online or not, but it is still important. The application also discusses autonomy at the school level for staffing and other decisions, but without specific information or examples.</p> <p>The LEA also states that state law allows students to earn credits based on completion or competency through testing out of credits, and schools are given autonomy in selecting the appropriate assessments for granting credit. Students thus do not have a required amount of instructional time they need to complete in order to progress. In addition, it is mentioned that there are alternative routes for teacher certification, and a "move toward implementing an evaluation system" where student test scores would play a "significant" role, but these things are not explained with specific details. In addition, the LEA claims sufficient autonomy to implement activities such as flipped classrooms, blended learning, etc., but these activities are not well described, nor the kinds of autonomy granted to implement them.</p>		

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	12
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA did a good job of soliciting stakeholder support in the development of the proposal through seven public focus groups (teachers, staff, parents, students, and community members), including one meeting solely for students. Many letters of support are provided. Wisely, part of these discussions were about sustainability of the reform practices. While there are signatures from teacher representatives indicating their support for the proposal, it is not clear how meaningfully their perspectives were integrated in the development of the proposal.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant states that students will take ownership of their learning and no longer be "sponges" in a classroom but instead co-designers of their own learning, but it is not explained how they will do this other than to say that they will meet with a member of the school staff at least once to develop their individualized plans, and that they must then sign off on any change to this plan that occurs.

The applicant states that each school will collaborate with the Schlechty Center to create these personalized learning environments. It is not explained well what this center is or what exactly this center will do other than provide professional development. However, it appears like a strong partner with experience in providing professional development, but without specific details we have to make some assumptions in this area.

Students can earn performance acknowledgements for outstanding performance in career and college courses, which is good for helping to motivate students.

A big concern for this particular criteria is that much of the application shows a misunderstanding from the applicant about personalized learning environments as it appears the applicant believes simply providing technology, without fine-grained understanding of how pedagogy will be reformed as well, will create personalized learning—at least, this is how it appears from the application as there isn't much discussion of actual pedagogical reforms and what exactly will occur in professional development to make changes in how teachers teach and how schools are organized. Also, the applicant makes many claims such as "creativity and problem solving are natural components of personalized educational environments and especially of project-based learning." These claims, however, are not always true. These CAN be outcomes of these kinds of environments, but there can be bad project-based learning just like there can be good project-based learning. The difference is in the pedagogical strategies and implementation specifics, which are not given in great detail.

(b) Data is available continuously online for students and parents, which is excellent. However, it is not clear how frequently this data will be updated and how it may be used to create personalized learning recommendations, other than the interest inventories that students can complete and the opportunity to seek endorsements in various careers through interesting and discipline-specific courses. The career academies are a strength of the proposal, as they offer specific courses in many different career areas to allow students to have applicable skills upon graduation.

Digital learning content will be provided, but it is not explained what this will be exactly and whether it will be high quality other than to say that it will pass the same evaluation processes as regular classroom curriculum.

The application does not make it clear what specifically will be done for high-needs students, or any students, to personalize their learning and help them attain their goals. For example, the applicant provides a fictional case study of a teacher personalizing the teaching of a male 7th grader, but it is not clear HOW the teacher studies and learns from the data file, HOW she redesigned assignments to focus support, and so forth. In short the ideas are discussed broadly without specifics. The applicant does discuss using an extended learning day, but it is not clear if this is for all students or just those who need it. A college and career portal is available to students and parents on the web with interest inventories. An ARD committee is named as providing accommodations to students, but it is not explained what this committee is.

(c) Family nights will teach parents, and assumedly students, what information is on the portal. An additional video of the

training will be available online.

Overall, there are goals and clear timelines as a part of the plan, and deliverables are mentioned as part of the personalized educational environment plan, but these are vague. For example, a climate survey, student technology survey, communities that care survey, infrastructure reports, and so forth, are mentioned, but it is not clear what these things are. A strength of the proposal, though is that parties are identified who are responsible for accomplishing these activities, including instructional leaders, coaches, specialists, and directors.

The logic behind many of the activities is not clear and often faulty. For example, it is not clear how the technologies (e.g. Khan Academy, blended learning, etc.) will be used as a personalized learning environment. This shows a misunderstanding of personalized learning environments, as the technology does not create the environment, but is just a tool with thoughtful strategies and leadership to create environments that support personalized learning.

Overall, the score reflects how the application articulated a plan with good theoretical foundations and ideas, but without specific details to give confidence in implementation.

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

20

9

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant discusses leadership PD being "customized" to the the needs of individual school districts, but this is not explained in detail. In addition, the applicant claims to have done a "thorough" examination of teachers and schools within the collaborative, but the information provided, including the information in the appendix, does not explain clearly how the teachers were studied, using what methods, and what findings were derived based on data. The applicant claims to help teachers move to student-centered practices within the first two years of the grant, but it doesn't define or explain what it means by student-centered learning and what this actually means in actual practice.

The applicant will train teachers on specific technologies, but it is not explained HOW they will use the tools to improve teaching strategy and student learning. For example, they state they will use iPads to "inspire creativity and hands-on learning" but without discussing how this will be done. Similar statements are made about using the iPads for interactive learning, searching and retrieving information, blended learning, project-based learning, etc. In short, the applicant uses a lot of buzzwords but does not explain actual pedagogical strategies for using the technologies, which is important because research has consistently shown that integrating technologies without strong pedagogical reform results in no significant learning improvements. Another example of this faulty logic is how the applicant claims that by using blended learning students will take responsibility for their learning, which is not true because students can just as easily be unregulated about their learning online as they can in regular classrooms.

Another example of insufficient logic and planning in the area of teacher development is that the deliverables for teacher development are things such as professional learning plans, sign-in logs from training, etc. Simply attending a training, and even completing a plan, however, does not mean the teacher will be effective, and this shows a lack of reflection on what kinds of meaningful deliverables might be expected instead.

The applicant mentions using a class profile to help coaches quickly figure out how to personalize teaching, which is an excellent idea, but this profile is not explained to any level necessary to understand the intervention.

The applicant does not discuss improving teachers/principals' effectiveness through evaluation feedback.

A strength of the plan is an emphasis on common planning periods, protected time for PLCs, and academic coaches using standardized rubrics (which are provided in the appendix) for classroom observations and feedback. These ideas are good, and should yield good benefits, although more details here are important as well to understand what they will do during this protected and collaborative time specifically.

A strength of the application is the collaboration with outside professional development centers, such as the Schlechty Center, who can bring expertise and experience to professional development.

(b) As discussed above, increased support staff will be hired to train the educators, but we do not have specific information about how much access the teachers will have to various tools, and whether they will be taught specific and effective strategies for using the tools to affect student learning. When specific strategies are mentioned, such as Flocabulary, they are interesting, but minor interventions not likely to have major impact. One example however that is effective is the discussion of TexasSuccess.org, which has been effective at increasing student scores significantly through helping teachers review student progress reports and by providing students supplemental online math and reading support.

The applicant does describe dual-credit opportunities for students to achieve college credit while in high school.

One challenge throughout this application is that the applicant frequently talks about ideas in the general sense, referring to literature and theory. It is often not clear when the applicant makes statements whether those statements are referring to general theory, or the specific district's practices. For example, the applicant says, "campuses with academic coaches and frequent teacher observations are able to assist with timely feedback on instructional skills." This is true, but it is not clear if the applicant is saying this is good generally, whether they already do this, or whether they plan to do this, and if so in what specific ways.

(c) The applicant plans to use the budget to increase support staff on each campus to assist with the integration of technology, which is a wise use of budget funds to support teachers. Information is not provided about how the district's teacher evaluation system will inform school leaders and teachers, and two of the school districts will be implementing a new teacher evaluation system in the future that will be provided by the state. The school districts seem to be relying on the state to provide this, and they give no discussion in the application about what this evaluation system will be like, how it will be used, and what kinds of data will be collected and analyzed.

(d) The applicant does not directly address this with a high quality plan for increasing the rate of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders. The LEA does have a good idea in forming committees within each district to work with outside consultants in enhancing the teacher/leader evaluation systems. This is good, but more is needed to create a high quality plan. A problem is that the district discusses past evaluation systems (and these only broadly) but not the actual evaluation system they will be using for this grant since it is still in development.

The applicant does state that they will use observation data to help place effective teachers with students with the greatest need, which is a good idea for supporting reform. The applicant also has a good idea in requiring teachers to develop a professional learning plan with their supervisor with major objectives and milestones.

Several things that the applicant has written in regards to hiring, developing, and retaining effective and highly effective teachers is confusing. For example, the applicant states that many families in the LEA struggle with self sufficiency and that they will be "cognizant of them during the hiring process." It is confusing that family self-sufficiency would be something the LEA would base hiring decisions on, as this is not related to actual teacher behavior. In addition, the LEA acknowledges that it is difficult to hire and retain teachers in their rural area, and only states that they will try hard to find good teachers. This does not give confidence that they have a solid plan for improving what has been a challenge for them in the past.

The score reflects a good emphasis on providing time, training, and resources to improving teaching and leading, but with insufficient details to merit being a high quality plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	9

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant describes central district offices that seem to be organized very typical to most. Because this LEA is a consortium of three districts, more information is needed on how the LEA will be organized specifically to support this RTT project.

(b) The school leadership teams are said in the application to have flexibility over personnel and staffing, roles and responsibilities, and budgets, but it would be good to have more discussion on this flexibility and how it is/will be specifically applied.

(c and d) The applicant describes good options afforded by the state for giving students opportunities to progress via mastery, including testing out of classes (including school-determined assessments), and taking online courses that do not require "seat time." However, there is no discussion about how at the school and class level, students may be able to show their proficiency in non-standardized test ways, nor is there discussion about how this can be done in multiple ways, although students can choose to test out at any time, which provides them with flexibility.

(e) The applicant shares a good case study of how to use the tools to help a student with specific needs, in this case, language-learning needs, but beyond simply having some classes online and some not, it is not clear how the resources and instructional practices themselves will be adapted to all students' unique needs.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a reasonable approach to ensuring access to all students and parents to the tools and training needed for the proposal, including timelines and staff assigned to carrying this part of the plan out.</p> <p>(a) The LEA has a wise plan for maximizing funds by asking students who have their own mobile devices to bring those, with those who do not have devices able to check them out of a lending library. However, the LEA doesn't describe what types of home devices will be sufficient for the work being asked of the students, and when a student who has an old device might still qualify for the lending library. In addition, mobile devices are most powerful as change agents when they are personal devices, which is not possible when the devices are only available on temporary checkout. The LEA has wisely considered technological needs beyond just the devices, however, and has provided a plan for checking out mobile access cards to students who need them, and for upgrading the schools' wireless and server capabilities.</p> <p>(b) In order to ensure all parents, staff, and students have appropriate levels of technical support, the LEA proposes training opportunities, including parental workshops in community locations with child care and other services provided to make it possible for parents to be able to attend. It is not clear how the staff will be trained and supported, since their needs are likely the greatest, other than to say there will be training and increased support staff.</p> <p>(c and d) The LEA states that the student information can be transferred between systems used by the LEA, but makes no mention of the data being in a format that can be transferred to other systems outside of the district, nor to what open data format the data is in when it is downloaded.</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>The applicant has a reasonably good plan for continuous improvement in this project, as they have articulated a good overarching strategy for improvement that empowers teachers and school leaders to make incremental improvements to their implementation strategies when they are not changing core principles of the Plan, and mechanisms for communicating with LEA leaders about more intensive adjustments. Some aspects of the plan are not clear, however, including exactly how the lines of communication will work to communicate challenges, and what specific protocols, instruments, and so forth will be used to collect data for continuous improvement, and specific details on how the information will be compiled for the whole LEA. In addition, mention is made of the need for personalized teacher evaluation and support, but without details.</p> <p>Despite this, the LEA has several good strategies including the keeping of fidelity and other logs to document implementation successes and challenges, reports presented to the school board and published in the district newsletter and on the district website, data feedback loops, and specific timelines and responsible parties for carrying out improvement strategies.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a strong plan for ongoing communication with stakeholders through electronic newsletters, portions of the website dedicated to the project updates, and the use of local leaders for communicating with specific communities with translation services so all can participate. There are also plans for opportunities to receive feedback through an email hotline and community blog, but the mechanisms for receiving feedback are more passive, waiting for the feedback to come through these mediums instead of having a regular plan for consistently engaging with stakeholders, particularly community partners.</p> <p>The applicant did not have as strong of a plan for specifically engaging with internal stakeholders, although many of the same communication avenues will be used for the internal stakeholders as well for providing feedback.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant has identified good performance measures, with good rationale for those measures, but many of the goals seem too ambitious to actually be achievable. For example:

- For 3rd graders, special education students going from 10% receiving disciplinary referrals to only 4%
- Special education students being retained in second grade from 12% to 2%
- 4% of at-risk students being on track for college and career readiness to 47%
- 0% LEP students taking AP classes to 45%
- 38 students needing pregnancy services down to 5

In addition, the applicant addresses broadly how the measures will provide timely and formative information for improving implementation, and persons responsible for annually evaluating the effectiveness of these performance measures and making adjustments, even though the application is not specific on how these annual reviews will be conducted.

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

5

4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to hire an external evaluator using "acceptable procurement policies", but these are not explained. Regardless, the applicant has put together a solid evaluation plan involving multiple stages, evaluation questions, and research methods. In addition, the applicant will conduct regular operational and cost-benefit analyses to improve the project, and has set out timelines for annual reports. More information on the specific data collection instruments would be informative.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies all funds, but many of the budget items are surprising, as they were not fully discussed in the application, and the attached price tag to many items in the budget is excessive and even exorbitant. For example,

- A lot of money for travel without discussion of why teachers and staff need to be attending conferences. Plus the travel rates seem excessive, including \$250/night for hotels.
 - a lot of money for equipment purchases --- how will this be sustained? And what is the reason for purchases like desks and file cabinets? These purchases are not explained and are excessive at \$6,000 per employee. The purposes of the RTT grant is not to provide for regular equipment not aligned with RTT goals. \$200/month per employee for office supplies is also excessive. Laptops do not often cost \$2,500 each as outlined in this budget, and tablets certainly do not.
 - \$400,000 is very high for an external evaluator.
 - Smartboards are very expensive, and are not typically considered a technology for personalized learning, although they can be effective for other kinds of learning. In addition, smartboards require effective pedagogical training and objectives, which were not discussed in the application.
- Similarly, document cameras are not a personalized teaching device, they are a classroom presentation device, and their purpose was also not discussed in the application.
- \$54,000 for printers seems high

The applicant does not do a good job of planning for sustainability of the project, as most of the sustainability plan is to make drastic improvements towards program goals and thus eliminate the need for the interventions. However, this is probably not entirely achievable, and preparations should be made for absorbing costs for continuing the reforms done the road.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Mostly the applicant plans to eliminate costs through accomplishing all program objectives, thus relieving themselves of the costs moving forward. However, this is not likely to be possible with all goals. For example, for an LEA that has struggled mightily by its own admission to retain teachers for longer than a couple of years, it is unlikely that even with these reforms that money will not be needed in the future to continue attracting good teacher candidates. The high expense of technology purchases will require ongoing expenses if not planned for. Using the train the trainer model for professional development is likely to be insufficient unless there is much more oversight and scaffolding than is indicated here in the application. In summary, there does not appear to be a good plan for sustaining the project goals post-granting period.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes many community organizations assisting with this project, and has placed a strong emphasis on children's social, emotional, and familial well being as a way to help improve their learning through the Raising Healthy Children and Capturing Children's Hearts programs. Partners such as the University of Washington are solid stakeholders. An emphasis on parent workshops and youth services should be effective.

However, the applicant in discussing these programs does not always describe a very coherent plan to meet the competitive preference priority. Community partners are mentioned, but it is not discussed what role they will play or what the nature of the collaboration will be. Assumptions can be made, but without specific information it is hard to know for sure how these partners will be involved. It is not described how the partnership would track the data and use it to improve results over time. The applicant does describe, in general ways, how education would be integrated with these services, and the plans to engage parents more through workshops and targeted parental education are good ones. There is a strong emphasis on building staff capacity in these areas through training from the Schlechty Center and others, but the specifics of this training are often missing. The ideas in this proposal for addressing the competitive preference priority come from a strong inventory of the needs of the communities and schools for helping the social/familial structures that would support student learning.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has described a plan for personalizing some aspects of student learning in support of progression towards career and college goals. This plan is not strong, as articulated in this application, mostly because it is not described with very specific details. However, it should improve student achievement and learning, and instructor effectiveness.

Total	210	119
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