Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0147CT-1 for Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS)

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	**10**	**2**

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS) indicates that it will restructure educational services provided in 17 diploma-granting technical high schools in the state of Connecticut.

(1)(a) Although the applicant indicates that the proposed plan, the *Blueprint for Transforming the Connecticut Technical High School System*, integrates the four core educational assurance areas identified in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) and the 15 Critical Components for Career Clusters Implementation as defined in the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, the applicant provides no evidence of a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in the four core educational areas (standards; data systems; strong teachers; and school improvement).

(1)(b) The applicant did not describe an 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 interests.

(1)(c) The applicant indicates that the CTHSS dual curriculum program (academic and career technical education programming) has embedded blended learning opportunities that take the CTHSS learner out of the classroom and into a variety of educational experiences including the following: job shadowing with Connecticut business/industry leaders; fee-based educational production work for Connecticut residents and businesses; work-based learning placements with Connecticut business/industry employers; enrollment in a college pathway at in-state or out-of-state institution of higher education; and participation in the national student leadership organization, SkillsUSA. The applicant did not describe what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning.

The applicant did not articulate a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. This criterion is scored in the low range of points because the applicant did not give examples of what is currently being done or build on its work in the four core educational assurance areas: adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy; building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction; recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and turning around the lowest achieving schools. The applicant did not articulate an 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 interests. The applicant did not describe what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	**10**	**5**

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(2)(a) The applicant did not describe an approach to implementation describing how their reform proposal, targeting 17 diploma-granting technical high schools, will support high-quality LEA-level implementation of the proposal. The applicant indicates that the Connecticut State Department of Education, as a condition of their No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver from the U.S. Department of Education, is required to develop a new accountability system with metrics and school classification. The applicant indicates that the new accountability system classifies districts and schools as Excelling, Progressing, Transition, Focus and Review, or Turnaround. The applicant indicates that three of the 17 Connecticut Technical High Schools were classified as Focus and Review schools, which require district-led interventions to address achievement gaps in overall student and specific subgroups. The applicant did not provide information on how all 17 Connecticut Technical High Schools were selected to participate in this grant proposal, when only three were classified as Focus and Review schools. The applicant did not provide a description of the process that the applicant used to select the schools to participate.

(2)(b) The applicant indicates that all 17 of the Connecticut Technical High Schools and one technical education center, serving approximately 10,821 full-time high school learners, will participate in the grant activities. The applicant indicates that the following technical high schools will

participate in the proposed grant activities: Abbott Technical High School, Bullard-Havens Technical High School, Cheney Technical High School, Ellis Technical High School, Goodwin Technical High School, Grasso Technical High School, Kaynor Technical High School, Norwich Technical High School, O'Brien Technical High School, Platt Technical High School, Prince Technical High School, Vinal Technical High School, Whitney Technical High School, Wilcox Technical High School, Windham Technical High School, Wolcott Technical High School, and Wright Technical High School.

(2)(c) The applicant effectively demonstrates that the total number of participating students will be 10,821; the number of students from low-income families is 4,483, the number of high-need students is 4,548 students, and the number of participating educators is 1,240.

This criterion is scored in the medium range of points because the applicant did not describe an approach to implementation describing how their reform proposal, targeting 17 Connecticut technical high schools, will support high-quality LEA-level implementation of the proposal. The applicant did not describe the process that was used to select the schools that will participate. The applicant names the 17 technical high schools that will participate in the grant activities. The applicant effectively demonstrates that the total number of participating students will be 10,821; the number of students from low-income families is 4,483, the number of high-need students is 4,548 students, and the number of participating educators is 1,240.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Connecticut Technical High School System describes a few of the qualities of a high-quality plan, (the overarching goals or core principles, the activities to be undertaken, and the overall credibility of the plan) on how the reform proposal will help the applicant reach its outcome goals for the participating technical high schools. The applicant did not provide a timeline, the rationale for the activities, or the parties responsible for implementing the activities, or the overall credibility of the plan, which are required in a high-quality plan. Although the applicant describes a plan for meaningful reform to reach its outcome goals, the applicant did not describe LEA-wide reform and change to be able to reach its outcome goal of district-wide reform and change. The applicant indicates that through the CTHSS Project Achieving Competitive Excellence (CTHSS Project ACE), the reform and change model will combine the research-based practices in blended learning models, personalized learning environments and continuous improvement in technologies, such as personalized and self-paced instruction, national norm-referenced and standards-based assessments, and enhanced technology resources. The applicant did not describe how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support LEA-wide change beyond the participating schools.

This criterion is scored in the lower part of the medium range because the applicant did not provide all of the components of a high-quality plan, describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful LEA-wide or district-wide change beyond the participating schools to help the applicant reach its outcome goals. The applicant did not provide a timeline, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, the rationale for the activities, or the deliverables, which are required in a high-quality plan.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates goals that are likely to result in improved student learning and performance as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals. The applicant disaggregated data, overall, for each participating technical high school, but not by student subgroup, in the following area:

(4)(a) Performance on summative assessments (proficiency status and growth): The Connecticut Technical High School System students will achieve proficiency on the ESEA assessment in the architecture and construction cluster; arts, a/v technology and communications cluster; health science cluster; hospital and tourism cluster; human services cluster; information technology cluster; manufacturing cluster; marketing, sales, and service cluster; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and transportation, distribution, and logistics cluster.

The applicant disaggregated data, overall, by student subgroup, but not for each participating technical high school, in the following area:

(4)(b) Decreasing achievement gaps: The Connecticut Technical High School System will decrease achievement gaps, in mathematics, reading, writing, and science.

(4)(c) Graduation rates: 100% of Connecticut Technical High School System students, overall, and by subgroup, will graduate from high school by the year SY2016-2017.

(4)(d) College enrollment: The Connecticut Technical High School System will plan to significantly increase the number of students who enroll in postsecondary educational programs.

This criterion is scored in the middle range of points because the applicant demonstrates a vision that will result in improved student learning and

performance. It is unclear if the annual goals are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the Connecticut Technical High School System, overall and for each participating technical high school. The applicant disaggregated data, overall, for each participating technical high school, but not by student subgroups for performance on summative assessments in the various technical clusters. The applicant disaggregated data, overall, by student subgroups, but not for each participating technical high school, in the following areas: decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

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**	**3**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(1)(a) The Connecticut Technical High School System did not demonstrate evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement, and increasing equity in learning and teaching in closing achievement gaps, raising student achievement, increasing high school graduation rates, and increasing college enrollment rates. The percentage of CTHSS learners reaching at/above proficient in math from 2010 to 2013 decreased from 80.5% to 76.4%. The percentage of CTHSS learners reaching at/above proficient in science from 2010 to 2013 decreased from 84.4% to 82.7%. The percentage of CTHSS learners reaching at/above proficient in reading from 2010 to 2013 decreased from 82.4% to 75.4%. The percentage of CTHSS learners reaching at/above proficient in writing from 2010 to 2013 decreased from 90.3% to 90%, or an increase of 10.4%. Since 2010, the CTHSS has experienced a decrease in the percentage of students with disabilities in the tested Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) assessments at the percent at/above proficient levels in math (65.2% to 48.5%); science (71% to 57.3%); reading (65.1% to 53.7%); and writing (71% to 60%). Since 2010, the CTHSS has experienced a decrease in the percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) in the tested Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) assessments at the percent at/above proficient levels in math (67.3% to 43%); science (57.7% to 48.1%); reading (80.9% to 59.2%); and writing (83.9% to 72.1%). The applicant did not provide data for the past four years for each ethnic group; the applicant only provides data from 2012 and 2013.

(1)(b) The applicant did not provide any data indicating evidence of the applicant's ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools. The applicant did effectively demonstrate that a disaggregation of the CAPT result by school in the District, compared with the LEA in which the CTHSS school resides, shows that 14 of 16 CTHSS schools outperform their LEA counterparts in mathematics and science, but this data was from one year only, 2013. The applicant also indicates that 13 of 16 CTHSS schools outperform their LEAs in reading and writing, but this data was for 2013 only.

(1)(c) The applicant indicates that CTHSS operates as a centrally managed statewide system of technical high schools under the direction of the Commissioner of the State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBOE). The applicant clearly indicates that during the 2010 session of the Connecticut State General Assembly, Public Act 10-76 was adopted. Section 8 (b) of this legislative act requires the Connecticut Technical High School System to post individual budget information online, but the applicant did not provide evidence that demonstrates the applicant's ability to make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

This criterion is scored in the lower range of points because The Connecticut Technical High School System, over the past four years, did not provide data indicating a clear record of success in the past four years in improving student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps, including raising student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates. The applicant did not provide specific data indicating evidence of the applicant's ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools. The applicant did not provide evidence that demonstrates the applicant's ability to make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. The applicant did effectively demonstrate that a disaggregation of the CAPT result by school in the District, compared with the LEA in which the CTHSS school resides, shows that 14 of 16 CTHSS schools outperform their LEA counterparts in mathematics and science, but this data was from one year only, 2013. The applicant also indicates that 13 of 16 CTHSS schools outperform their LEAs in reading and writing, but this data was for 2013 only.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Connecticut Technical High School System demonstrates a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, by making public actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration. However, the

applicant indicates that data from the 2011-12 survey will not be available until 2014.

(2)(a) CTHSS provides the actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's classification used in the F-33 survey of local government finances. The State of Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and the Bureau of Human Resources are responsible for overseeing the state's public website. The purpose of this website is to ensure transparency in all fiscal matters of the state by government employees. The webpage has direct links to all state employee contracts, employee benefits, professional development, manuals, policies, and worker's compensation information.

(2)(b) CTHSS publishes actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff at the school level.

(2)(c) CTHSS publishes actual salaries at the school level for teachers at the school level.

(2)(d) CTHSS provides actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level.

Overall, this indicates that the Connecticut Technical High School System budget information is available to the public.

This criterion is scored in the high range because the applicant demonstrates evidence of transparency in CTHSS processes and practices in making the following expenditures available to the public: actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff; actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only; actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level. However, the applicant indicates that data from the 2011-12 survey will not be available until 2014.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	**10**	**4**

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides evidence of their prior record of success and conditions for reform, but the applicant did not provide any State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments.

The Connecticut Technical High School System demonstrates evidence that the State of Connecticut has made a commitment of secondary school reform dating back to 2001. In 2006, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE) made high school reform a top priority for the students of Connecticut. In 2010, the CTHSS implemented Connecticut's Framework for Response to Intervention (RtI), using Scientific Research-Based Interventions: Improving Education for all Students (SRBI). The applicant indicates that the SRBI is a model of strong core instruction and early intervention strategies for success in a tiered structure that describes the academic, career technical education and behavioral interventions appropriate for all CTHSS learners. The applicant indicates that the secondary high school reform steps were readdressed by the enactment of Connecticut Public Act No. 12-40, *An Act Concerning College Readiness and Completion* that became effective on July 1, 2012. The applicant did not provide evidence as to the requirements of Connecticut Public Act No. 12-40.

This criterion is scored in the lower end of the medium range of points because the applicant indicates that each of the primary components of this project fits within the current state legislation. The applicant did not describe the actual State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the proposal.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	**15**	**5**

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that teachers, school leaders, and staff completed surveys, with input on school climate goals. The applicant indicates that the superintendent, with technical assistance from the Connecticut State Department of Education's School Climate education consultant, developed the CTHSS School Climate Survey in 2008. This Survey examined the CTHSS teachers, school leaders, clerical staff, building maintenance staff, and school security personnel. This School Climate Survey was completed by CTHSS learners and school-based staff about their perceptions of school climate and safety. The results from this initial Survey were used to formulate District and school climate goals reflected in the CTHSS District Improvement Plan and as a required goal for all CTHSS School Improvement Plans. Beginning in 2011, the CTHSS School Climate Surveys also surveyed CTHSS parents/guardians to gain their responses about their perceptions of their child's CTHSS school experience. The applicant indicates that in 2012-2013, the information aggregated from the CTHSS School Climate Survey was merged into the CTHSS Parent Connectedness Surveys, which has an 85 percent response rate for CTHSS learners, a 12 percent response rate for CTHSS parents/guardians; and an 83 percent response rate from CTHSS school-based staff. Although the applicant indicates that they provided these surveys to teachers, school leaders, staff members, the applicant did not provide information about community members being surveyed. The applicant did not provide data on the results of the surveys or how the results informed this proposal. The applicant did not detail, other than information gained from their input on these surveys, how students, families, teachers, and principals in the technical schools were engaged in the development of this proposal.

(a)(i) The applicant provides evidence that CTHSS teachers are members of the American Federal of Teachers Local 4200A, State Vocational Federation of Teachers (SVFT). The applicant provided the required signature, of the President of the Local Teacher Union, on the Application

Assurances form in this proposal. The applicant did not provide information, other than from this signature, that teachers are in support of this proposal.

(b) The applicant indicates that members of the SVET, CTHSS superintendent, members of the CTHSS Central Office staff, and representatives from the Bureau of Human Resources, as members of the Labor Management team, meet monthly to discuss issues surrounding the delivery of instruction for CTHSS learners, or contract or workplace concerns, but the applicant did not describe how these individuals were engaged in the development of the proposal, or how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback. Although the applicant provides letters of support from numerous key stakeholders in the Appendix of the proposal, the applicant failed to indicate how all of these stakeholders were involved in the decision-making process of the development of the proposal.

This criterion is scored in the lower end of the medium range because the applicant did not detail, other than the information gained from their input on these surveys, how students, families, teachers, and principals in the technical schools were engaged in the development of this proposal. The applicant did not provide information, other than from the signature of the teacher's union president, that teachers are in support of this proposal. Although the applicant provides letters of support from numerous key stakeholders in the Appendix of the proposal, the applicant failed to indicate how all of these stakeholders were involved in the decision-making process of the development of the proposal.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	**20**	**8**

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant, Connecticut Technical High School System, did not provide a high-quality plan (key goals, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the 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.

(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v) The applicant describes the purpose of the CTHSS proposed program is to develop each learner's understanding of the features of the work culture and environment; to expand and enhance the learning of CTHSS learners in a real-world job setting; to provide potential career placement opportunities with partnering Connecticut business and industry employers; and to promote a positive image of CTHSS learners through their involvement in Connecticut's business and industry. However, the applicant did not provide the details or the clarity on how the students will gain this understanding of what they are learning is key to their accomplishment of their own goals. The applicant indicates, in Core Principle 1, that the CTHSS Project ACE will provide personalized learning with interventions for learners identified as at-risk, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged through a standards-based academic and career education system in which student will participate in learning-driven plans, that are reflective of their interest, talents, skills, strengths, and differentiated to meet their learning needs. The applicant indicates that the proposed approach will involve ongoing monitoring of all CTHSS academic and career technical education programs to provide feedback to the learners and their parents/guardians toward their standards acquisition. The applicant did not describe how students will learn to structure their own learning and measure their own progress toward their goals.

(b)(i)(ii)(iii) The applicant clearly demonstrates that in 2011, The Connecticut State Department of Education and Perkins Federal legislation required that all students in grades 6-12 have a Student Success Plan (SSP) to help students explore their interests to develop college and career plans after graduation. In order to expand the district's career cluster programs of study, CTHSS purchased an interactive web-based career planning software tool for the implementation of the SSP for all students and their parents/guardians in and out of school. *Career Cruising* is the online career guidance and planning system that is accessible in and out of school. The applicant did not describe high-quality instructional approaches and environments. The applicant indicates that digital learning and content tools will be developed through the implementation of Connecticut's Framework for Response to Intervention (RtI), using *Scientific Research-Based Interventions: Improving Education for all Students (SRBI).* The applicant indicates that this model provides strong instruction and early intervention strategies for success in a structure that provides the academic, career technical education, and behavioral interventions that are appropriate for all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

(b)(iv)(A) The applicant, in Core Principle 2, *Measure What Matters*, indicates that the CTHSS Project ACE will use technology to measure each learners competence and achievement in meeting college- and career-readiness standard, but did not provide a clear plan for this to occur. The applicant indicates that it will expand the CTHSS accountability system to monitor student progress as the move through their programs of student in meeting college- and career-readiness standards, but did not provide a clear plan for this to occur.

(b)(iv)(B) The applicant, in Core Principle 3, *Competency-Based Instruction in Personalized Learning Environments*, indicates that CTHSS teachers

and school leaders will collaborate to promote professional practices that create personalized learning environments, utilizing the program of study career clusters that integrates 21st Century learning skills/employability skills and technology resources that will support learning in a blended learning mode. through: the expansion of the number of articulation agreements wit institutions of higher education and business/industry partners; and digitizing academic and career technical education standards-based content for teachers to deliver academic and career technical education programs.

(b)(v) The applicant describes a plan to provide accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements. The applicant briefly describes the instruction that will be provided to all of the special needs students and ELL students.

(c) The applicant indicates that mechanisms are in place, within each career cluster, to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. Teachers will be given the training and professional development to be able to use the tools and resources to train students. Although the applicant generally describes the teacher training, the applicant does not describe how the mechanisms will be in place so that students will understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.

Overall, the applicant describes strategies and activities, but not a high-quality 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. This criterion is scored in the lower medium range because the applicant provides the Core principles in the narrative, but the activities, strategies, have not been described to improve teaching and learning in a personalized learning environment. It is not clear how the RTT-D funds will be used to provide an approach to implementing instructional strategies for a blended learning flex model that is different that the strategies that are already in place in the CTHSS technical high schools. It is unclear if these strategies and activities will improve learning and teaching or how CTHSS will personalize the learning environment will provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	**20**	**8**

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (key goals, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the 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.

(a)(i)(ii) The applicant describes the CTHSS District Improvement Process that includes the Connecticut System for Education Evaluation and Development (SEED), a model support system that is aligned to the *Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation Core.* Although the applicant indicates that SEED provides CTHSS with structures to ensure accountability and promote the professional growth among CTHSS teachers and school leaders, the applicant did not describe the training, or the professional teams or communities, that support the ability to implement personalized learning environments and strategies to meet the needs of students so that they can graduate on time and college- and career-ready. The applicant indicates that training will be developed for teachers to understand how to provide opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs. The applicant did not describe the strategies or the approach for this training.

(a)(iii) The applicant indicates that CTHSS has developed district Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in literacy mathematics, and career technical education aligned to the CTHSS District Improvement Plan, that will help teachers and schools to set strategic goals aligned to student achievement data. The applicant did not describe the plan for the training that educators need to measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

(a)(iv) The applicant indicates that training will be developed to improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the CTHSS teacher and principal evaluation systems. The applicant indicates that beginning teachers are required to complete up to five professional growth modules focused on the classroom environment, planning, instruction, assessment, and professional responsibility, and leadership. The applicant indicates that the TEAM Coordinating Committee (TCC) provides oversight to activities, including teacher's progress in applying new learning and measuring the impact of learning on student achievement. It is not clear if experienced teachers are required to provide learning and growth on the five professional growth modules.

(b)(i)(ii)(iii) The applicant did not describe a plan on how the participating educators will have access to, and know how to use tools, data, and resources that will help them identify optimal learning approaches that will respond to individual student academic needs and interests. The applicant did not describe high-quality learning resources, including digital resources that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards. The applicant did not describe specific processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches.

(c)(i)(ii) The applicant indicates that the online *Focus* system incorporates trainings and assessments from Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching.* CTHSS requires each administrator and District evaluator to become certified in the teacher proficiency *Focus* system. The applicant indicates that the teachers are rated against the *SEED Framework for Teaching* rubric in which the standards of practice are aligned with Danielson's

framework and the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching.

(d) The applicant did not describe a plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, such as mathematics and science, and specialty areas, such as special education.

This criterion is scored in the low medium range because the applicant repeated the selection criterion without providing a high-quality plan, describing the details on how this applicant will work with the participating LEAs to provide the necessary training and professional development for educators to be able to improve learning and teaching by personalizing learning environments. The applicant indicates that training will be developed to improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the CTHSS teacher and principal evaluation systems. The applicant did not provide an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that enable participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	**15**	**6**

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

CTHSS describes practices, policies, and infrastructure that support the establishment of the Connecticut Technical High School System, but the applicant did not provide a high-quality plan to support and facilitate personalized learning.

(a) The applicant describes the practices, policies, and rules that support the establishment of the consortium governance structure, but not those practices, policies, and rules that will facilitate personalized learning, to provide support and services to all participating schools. The applicant indicates that the CTHSSS has an organizational structure that describes the roles and the responsibilities of District (Central Office) administration, education consultants, and staff in providing targeted support to all schools within the District. The applicant indicates that the District superintendent and assistant superintendents create the conditions; implement the needed supports; set expectations and accountability for District Improvement Plan Goals; and provide academic, career technical education, and student support services to school leaders and teachers.

(b) The applicant describes the establishment of a culture of distributed leadership through Central Office Council meetings, Leadership Council meetings, and CTHSS school-level leadership teams. The applicant also describes the roles of the District-Wide Data Team, Standards-Based Grading Committee, District-Wide Literacy Initiative(s) Council, and the new District-Wide Strategic Planning Committee. The applicant indicates that CTHSS scheduling mandates are annually reviewed and revised by Central Office consultant staff, CTHSS school leaders, and CTHSS teachers. The applicant indicates that each of the CTHSS schools in the District is able to set their school calendars to reflect their home District calendars.

(c) The applicant describes a plan to address credit recovery and providing alternative education plans for CTHSS learners, but the applicant did not provide information on giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic.

(d) The applicant did not provide a plan to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.

(e) The applicant generally indicates that CTHSS utilizes differentiated instructional coaches, Data Driven Decision Making (DDDM) trainers, and common formative assessment (CFA) trainers to provide targeted professional development for school leaders and teachers to respond to the needs of all CTHSS learners.

This criterion is scored in the lower medium range because the applicant describes the establishment of the consortium, but the applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (key goals, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the plan) to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	**10**	**5**

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant provides information describing the school infrastructure that supports personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant indicates that all CTHSS students, parents, teachers, school leaders and central office staff will have access in and out of school to technologies that include access to student data through PowerSchool. The applicant indicates that CTHSS families are able to use school technology resources to access information if they do not have a computer or Internet access at home.

(b) The applicant demonstrates that CTHSS Family Engagement Centers (FECs) are located in each school, complete with technology and other resources so families/guardians can address the academic, social, and emotional development of their children. The applicant did not describe how students, parents, and educators will be given appropropriate levels of technical support.

(c) The applicant did not provide information on how CTHSS supports personalized learning by using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems.

(d) The applicant demonstrates that the District uses an interoperable data system to manage District operation. The CoreCT system is overseen by the Bureau of Enterprise Systems and Technology (BEST), the statewide agency that coordinates all state technological and communication structures in a systematic manner.

This criterion is scored in the medium range of points because the applicant provides information describing the school infrastructure that supports personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant indicates that all CTHSS students, parents, teachers, school leaders and central office staff will have access in and out of school to technologies that include access to student data through PowerSchool. The applicant provides very minimal details on the policies that will support personalized learning, and did not provide the components of a high-quality plan (key goals, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the plan). The applicant demonstrates that CTHSS Family Engagement Centers (FECs) are located in each school, complete with technology and other resources so families/guardians can address the academic, social, and emotional development of their children. The applicant did not provide information on how CTHSS supports personalized learning by using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems. The applicant did not describe how students, parents, and educators will be given appropropriate levels of technical support.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	**15**	**5**

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant, Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS), did not describe a high-quality plan (key goals, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the plan) for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process for the proposed project.

The applicant provides minimal information on the type of meetings that will be held to monitor data and to make strategic decisions, but did not demonstrate a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides for timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals or opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. The meetings that will be held include the following: monthly central office council meetings, weekly grant budget meetings, monthly central office educational consultant unit meetings; monthly school leadership council meetings, bi-annual school improvement plan reviews, school improvement teams meetings, school budget meetings, scheduling meetings, and District steering committee meetings. The applicant did not clearly describe the data collection measures that will be used, or a clear process for analyzing this data, and for publicly sharing information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top - District, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff.

Although the applicant provides a few activities and meeting to discuss continuous improvement, the applicant did not specifically address how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top - District, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff. The applicant addresses various meetings that will be held to address continuous improvement, but the applicant did not describe the clear purpose or a high-quality plan (key goals, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the plan) for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. Therefore, this criterion is scored in the lower emd of the medium range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides minimal information on a plan for continuous improvement through ongoing communication and engagement, indicating that the CTHSS Board of Education works closely with the CTHSS superintendent who reports on all District programs and projects outlined in the District's school improvement plan. The applicant indicates that education consultants are responsible for preparing reports detailing accounting, and evaluations of District and school improvement activities and provide these communications to the District leadership team, and to the public at large.

CTHSS uses the following method to provide parents, staff, and the community with information regarding district programs and activities: a CTHSS Project ACE webpage on the District's Internet and Intranet websites.

This criterion is scored in the low range because the applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (key goals, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the plan) for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes performance measures, overall, but no subgroups, and no annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures.

The assessments that will measure progress toward required and applicant-proposed performance measures include the following assessments: Reading (Connecticut Academic Performance Test - CAPT); mathematics (Connecticut Academic Performance Test - CAPT); career technical education program (Core Indicator Data Technical Skill Attainment); Connecticut physical fitness assessment (Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment - CPEA).

For each applicant-proposed measure, the applicant did not describe:

(a) Its rationale for selecting that measure;

(b) How the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant’s implementation success or areas of concern; and

(c) How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

All Population (Required Performance Measures): The applicant did not provide the annual targets for the following measures because the applicant provides data that the baseline is 100% for:

a. The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup whose teacher of record and principal are a highly effective teacher and a highly effective principal); and
b. The number and percentage of participating students, by subgroup, whose teacher of record and principal are an effective teacher and an effective principal.

The applicant provides performance measures (9-12 a.b.c.d.e.), overall, but did not provide required subgroups, or annual targets for the required and applicant-proposed performance measures. It cannot be determined if performance measures are ambitious or achievable because the baseline, the subgroups, and the annual targets are not identified for all performance measures.

Although the applicant has developed performance measures, the applicant did not identify all of the required subgroups, the baseline, or the annual targets. The applicant did not answer the three (3) questions describing the applicant-proposed measures. The applicant did not provide approximately 10-12 performance measures. Therefore, this criterion is scored in the low range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not address or provide information on evaluating the effectiveness of investments. Therefore, this criterion is scored a 0.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The funds requested for the application include $25,000,000 from RTT-D for funds to support the project and $80,000 from district professional development funds. The applicant indicates that the following sources will also provide support for the proposed project: general operating funds; Federal grants Title I Part A, Title IIA, Title III, IDEA, Perkins; and State bond funds.

(b) The proposed budget describes the breakdown for personnel ($1,744,000), fringe benefits ($1,100,000), travel ($60,000), equipment ($11,823,527), supplies ($5,141,188), contractual ($4,939,000), training stipends ($191,000), and indirect costs ($00). The salaries associated with the additional hiring of employees and personnel to implement the grant are justified and appropriate. The equipment and the supplies equal approximately $17,000,000, which do not seem reasonable and do not show the itemized cost of individual items. It is unclear why the indirect costs equal zero ($00).

(c)(i) The applicant provides a description of all of the funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal, including total revenue from these sources. The applicant provides the following rationale for the broad budget expenditures: provide funding for professional development services to support teachers, administrators, and students associated with this project; provide teacher stipends for attending training outside of contracted hours; purchase web-based learning management systems, subscription resources and software licensing fees used to support the implementation of personalized learning environments; purchase technology hardware; and provide funding for professional conferences and annual meetings.

(c)(ii) The applicant did not identify costs for one-time investments or those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period. The applicant did not describe plans to absorb or to ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments.

The applicant provides a description of all of the funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal, but did not identify the total revenue from each of these sources. The applicant provides line items for equipment and supplies that equal approximately $17,000,000, which do not seem reasonable and do not show the itemized cost of individual items. The applicant did not identify costs for one-time investments or those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period. The applicant did not describe plans to absorb or to ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments. Therefore, this criterion is scored in the low range of points.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	**10**	**3**

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that the overall goal of CTHSS Project ACE is to change learning in the District, leading to increased achievement for all students, with decreased achieved gaps across groups of CTHSS learners, and increased graduation and post-secondary enrollment rates. The applicant indicates that sustainability will be achieved through the four (4) Core Principles that will change learning in the District. The applicant indicates that the following factors will create programmatic changes that will become a part of the CTHSS core practices: quality CTHSS Academic and career technical education programs; highly effective staff committed District and school leadership; and strategic partnerships with families, community organizations, business and industry leaders, and local and State officials. The applicant indicates that the project will be sustained through the following Core Principles: Alignment (engaging and empowering competency-based learning experiences); Accountability (measure what maters); Collaboration (competency-based instruction in personalized learning environments); and Innovation (redesign and transform).

The applicant describes the goals of a high-quality plan, the activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, but did not provide the timeline, the deliverables, the parties responsible for implementing the activities, and the overall credibility of the plan for the sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The applicant did not include the specific support from State and local government leaders, financial support, and a description of how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments. Therefore, this criterion is scored in the lower end of the medium range of points.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	**10**	**0**

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not address the Competitive Preference Priority. Therefore, this criterion is scored a 0.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		**Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant addresses Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments, by describing how it will create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

The applicant indicates that through the CTHSS Project Achieving Competitive Excellence (CTHSS Project ACE), the reform and change model will combine the research-based practices in blended learning models, personalized learning environments and continuous improvement in technologies, such as personalized and self-paced instruction, national norm-referenced and standards-based assessments, and enhanced technology resources.

The applicant indicates, in Core Principle 1, that the CTHSS Project ACE will provide personalized learning with interventions for learners identified as at-risk, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged through a standards-based academic and career education system in which student will participate in learning-driven plans, that are reflective of their interest, talents, skills, strengths, and differentiated to meet their learning needs. The applicant, in Core Principle 3, *Competency-Based Instruction in Personalized Learning Environments*, indicates that CTHSS teachers and school leaders will collaborate to promote professional practices that create personalized learning environments, utilizing the program of study career clusters that integrates 21st Century learning skills/employability skills and technology resources that will support learning in a blended learning mode. through: the expansion of the number of articulation agreements wit institutions of higher education and business/industry partners; and digitizing academic and career technical education standards-based content for teachers to deliver academic and career technical education programs.

The applicant provides information describing the school infrastructure that supports personalized learning by ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal. The applicant indicates that all CTHSS students, parents, teachers, school leaders and central office staff will have access in and out of school to technologies that include access to student data through PowerSchool. The applicant indicates that CTHSS families are able to use school technology resources to access information if they do not have a computer or Internet access at home.

The applicant describes how the proposed project will accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. Therefore, the applicant adequately addressed Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments.

Total	**210**	**71**

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0147CT-2 for Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS)

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	**10**	**3**

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal states that this work builds upon the four core educational assurance areas which is evidenced by those assurance areas being integrated into the strategic plan that guides this work. This strategic plan is referred to as the Blueprint for Transforming the Connecticut Technical High School System and is inspired by the national blueprint for transforming career and technical education.The proposal seeks to accelerate and enhance a blended learning to learning that the program has already embarked on.

However, in articulating the vision of the reform, the proposal does not specifically make clear what the program's approach to blended learning is nor does the proposal make clear what the classroom experience will be like for teachers and students engaged in the personalized learning environment.

In addition, the proposal does not provide concrete examples to describe the ways that the work has already built upon the four core educational assurance areas.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	**10**	**4**

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal presents some elements that suggest that implementation will be of high quality. For example, the proposal mentions that the state-developed school performance index has identified 3 lower performing schools (called focus and review) and these three schools will initially be involved as well as another school that had previously been closed because of low enrollment. The schools are listed by name and for three of them, the school performance index score is provided.

However, it is not apparent within the proposal how many students will be impacted by this program implementation nor how many students will be impacted based on specific sub-groups.

Moreover, it is not entirely clear what the criteria were to select the initial cohort of schools. It is apparent that the three of the first four schools were chosen based upon their school performance index score, but the fourth school's selection has not been supported by a rationale.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	**10**	**2**

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not provide evidence of a high quality plan to describe how the program of work described in the proposal will be translated into meaningful reform beyond the district. The proposal does state that the reform program is influenced by Michael Fullan's change theory that emphasizes aspects such as the importance of the implementers' motivation and building capacity.

Significantly, the proposal does not make evident most of the elements of a high quality plan. While some of the activities are generally described such as those that are part of the district improvement process such as strategically using data and building partnerships with the school district. However, it is not clear who the personnel are who would be responsible for those activities, the timeline for when those activities will take place and the deliverables that will come from those activities.

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

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal somewhat presents a plan that is likely to result in improved student learning. For example, the proposal

presents a program that anticipates and predicts increased student learning and performance. This is evidenced by a provided list of summative assessments related to certain occupational clusters, such as manufacturing and distribution and logistics. This is clearly the focus of the program. In addition, the proposal sets performance goals for reading, mathematics and career and technical education. The proposal states that student performance will be measured by the Connecticut Academic Performance test.

The proposal provides historical student performance data on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test based on subgroups for the previous seven years, which suggests that the proposed work and goals are based on an awareness of previous performance. The proposal also states offers clear performance goals for graduation rates, which the proposal breaks up by subgroup. Moreover, the proposal lists the expected college enrollment rate gains that the program anticipates to see annually as well as other post secondary opportunities such as the military and joining the workforce.

With respect to the math and reading scores, it is not clear how the program anticipates student performance increasing annually beyond 2012-2013. These projections are not evident in the proposal. This includes the expected performance gains for their subgroup populations. Because of this, it is not clear how the program of work expects to reduce the achievement gap that may exist among subgroups.

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**	**5**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal demonstrates some evidence of prior success within the school system. For example, the proposal provides a table of content area performance on the state achievement test shows many gains over the past seven years. For example, for students receiving free or reduced lunch, they showed gains over time in their performance for all of the content areas listed except for reading. Similar success could be shown for other sub-groups except for English Language Learners, who demonstrated less success. The proposal points out that each ethnic subgroup that the LEA is serving has shown increases in one or more academic areas since 2012. And the achievement gap has decreased in three of four assessed content areas for African American and Latino students.

At the school level, the proposal also demonstrates that the schools within the proposal have been achieving some level of success. For example, it states that 14 of the technical schools outperformed their LEAs in math and science performance and 13 of those schools outperformed their LEAs in reading and writing.

While the proposal shows previous success that the LEA has achieved on many groups of students' achievement tests, it is not clear what the LEAs track record is with respect to other indicators, such as high school graduations rates and college enrollment. Also, the proposal does not make clear the extent to which significant reforms have been achieved or are in the process of being achieved in the LEA's lowest achieving schools.

The proposal also does not make clear how the LEA will make student performance data available to stakeholders in order to improve participation and performance. The proposal does describe how the state web site will make a great deal of teacher related and human resource related information available, but it was not evident that student performance data would be assessable to the necessary constituents.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal demonstrates some evidence that the LEA is working toward a high level of transparency. In fact, the proposal states that the actual personnel salaries at the school level for all school-level instructional and support staff, the actual personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff only, the actual personnel salaries at the school level for teachers only; and the actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level are all made available in a Civil Rights Data Collection Report. This report is available online.

However, it is not clear how the LEA will publicize the availability of the data online or how stakeholders can access the data without online access.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	**10**	**4**

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal communicates that there are some elements of a supportive state context for implementation. The proposal conveys that this program of work is taking place within a policy environment in Connecticut where high school reform is a priority. This is evidenced by the states coordinated evidence and definition of what constitutes school health and the state's legislation supporting college and career readiness in 2012. It is important to note that policies in the state have also revised the RTI framework in order to more broadly articulate what constitutes meeting the needs of every learner. This suggests that the policy environment generally is in favor of personalized learning as an approach to improving student learning.

However, the proposal does not make clear that based on this policy context that CTHSS will have sufficient autonomy under state policy to carry out the work.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	**15**	**7**

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal describes several examples of meaningful stakeholder engagement that the LEA has engaged in. For example, the school has administered a school climate survey to school-based staff, students and an additional survey for parents and guardians. The goal is to understand the perceptions of learner relationships with staff members and engaging learning experiences available to learners. The proposal mentions that these data are analyzed and interpreted through a three tiered framework for intervening which considers the urgency of response to the findings.

In addition, as evidence of stakeholder engagement, the proposal includes several letters of support from a variety of key stakeholders from different organizational spheres.

Despite the descriptions of stakeholder engagement in this proposal, it is not clear how the feedback and judgments of various stakeholders were used for the development and refinement of this proposal. Moreover, while the proposal states that there is a labor union in place to protect the rights of the teachers, the proposal does not make evident the percentages of teachers from participating schools that support the proposal or the ways in which the proposed work has directly engaged the teachers.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	**20**	**8**

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides a description of the program's approach to learning. For example, the curricular choices and sequences are aligned with the standards relevant to the domains, e.g. Common Core State Standards or the Next Generation Science Standards. In addition, the proposal describes real-world learning experiences such as job shadowing. This suggests the program is designing for deeper learning experiences that provide in class and out of class experiences. These experiences are also driven by the need to prepare students for post-secondary success by developing social competencies the program feels are important for that success.

The students within the program will have a Student Success Plan to help guide students toward certain careers and ensure that they are academically prepared for those careers or post-secondary opportunities. Implicit in this plan is the notion that students will see that what they are learning is connected to a pathway of some post-secondary opportunity.

The proposal states that the program will utilize Moodle for teachers to create online courses and a variety of formative and summative assessments. The proposal also notes that district is piloting a learning management system that serves to support credit recovery programs for students. These examples, as well as mention of a one to one tablet program and digitizing curricula, are examples of how the program of work will seek to facilitate digital learning opportunities.

The proposal also mentions strategies that the program will employ to ensure that they are reaching out to students with various needs. The program will be guided by the RTI approach to guide the ways that the schools will intervene on behalf of the students. In addition, the special education departments are equipped with digital equipment to support students who have been identified with special needs.

There are some aspects of the proposal's approach to learning that could be given more clarity. It is not completely clear how parents will be engaged and / or supporting the learning activities that students will be engaged in. Moreover, even

though students with special needs will be provided with support based on the current infrastructure of the schools, it is not clear how that infrastructure or the current supports will be integrated with this plan of work to ensure that all students are college and career ready.

While a guiding principal of this work is to measure what matters, it is not sure how student data will be collected, updated and monitored to ensure that they are college and career ready. Moreover, it is not clear how the personalize learning environment will be guided by what students currently know and / or can demonstrate and use that information to provide new content and / or instructional strategies to guide their learning appropriately.

Finally, the proposal's approach to the learning environment does not contain the elements of a high quality plan, such as a timeline, activities that will take place along the timeline, who will be responsible for the activities and the deliverables that will come from the activities.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	**20**	**8**

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal addresses some aspects of how they intend to improve teaching and leading to support student success. For example, the proposal states that all of the teachers will need to align their instructional practice with the state's system of education and evaluation development. This system ensures accountability and promotes professional growth of teachers.

Moreover, the district has developed student learning outcomes that are content-specific goals for student learning that are related to standards.

The proposal states that Connecticut has piloted a teacher evaluation system that will be utilized for the teachers in this project. The system provided feedback on a teacher's instruction based on elements such as classroom environment, planning, instruction, assessment and professional responsibility. The inclusion of this system suggests that effective instructional practice will be promoted and feedback will be provided based on important elements of instructional practice. The feedback from the system will be incorporated into a data system, called reflect, which will be used to guide teachers' professional learning by establishing learning goals, providing supporting evidence and identifying individualized learning pathways for teachers. A parallel system to the teacher evaluation system will be in place for school leaders to assess their leadership practices and provide feedback on them. It is worth noting that a specific program will be put in place to support new teachers' instructional practice and support them through professional learning modules.

There are some aspects that are not clear about how the program of work will support teaching and leading. It is not clear what professional learning opportunities are in place to ensure that the teachers will be able to productively implement the student learning outcome model or learner indicators for academic growth and development model that the program hopes to utilize. Furthermore, the proposal does not make evident the social supports, like professional learning communities, that will be in place to support professional learning for teachers and school leaders.

In addition, the proposal does not make clear how all teachers will have access to and competency in the tools and data that will aid in accelerating student learning.

Finally, the proposal's approach to teaching and leading does not contain the elements of a high quality plan, such as a timeline, activities that will take place along the timeline, who will be responsible for the activities and the deliverables that will come from the activities.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	**15**	**8**

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal states the policies and infrastructure that are in place to support program implementation. For example, the proposal describes how the LEA is structured to provide specific support to each school. Through the superintendent's theory of action that was developed in January 2013, leadership is distributed through partnering schools together. Leadership is built through capacity creating efforts and leadership committees are established to support implementation of specific initiatives, such as their focus on literacy. Some autonomy is suggested in the proposal for school leadership teams to adjust school schedules and calendars, also.

The proposal states that the students will have opportunities to earn credit and demonstrate mastery for several occupational skills through programs like the Work based learning program. Moreover, the College and Career Pathway

program provides students with the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school.

The proposal states that students identified with certain disabilities and English Language Learners will provide differentiated learning opportunities. For example, these were described for the Literacy and the Numeracy Labs that will be offered to students. Moreover, the LEA provides development English language courses to support English language competency for English Language Learners.

In general, it is not clear how the students can earn credit based on their mastery of skills for classes like math, science, language arts or social sciences. Moreover, it is not evident from the proposal how the students might be able to demonstrate competency in a variety of ways.

While the proposal describes the ways in which leadership activities are decentralized from the superintendent's office, it is not clear to what extent the leadership teams have autonomy for such decisions as school personnel decisions, staffing models, roles and responsibilities for building staff and the school level budget.

Finally, the proposal's approach to the LEA policy and infrastructure does not contain the elements of a high quality plan, such as a timeline, activities that will take place along the timeline, who will be responsible for the activities and the deliverables that will come from the activities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	**10**	**4**

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal states several ways that the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning through technology. The proposal acknowledges that access to technological tools and the internet can be a barrier, especially for specific communities. The program of work will establish Family Engagement Centers at each school that will provide access to students' curricula as well as computer workstations for family members to use.

Each school will form a technology committee. One of the roles of the technology committees will be to facilitate technology-related professional development for teachers.

The proposal mentions that the LEA uses an interoperable data system to carry out data-related work. This tracks personnel and human resources related data within one system.

Despite the fact that the proposal acknowledges the challenges that exist for technology access for certain populations, the proposal does not make evident the extensive or varied strategies to meet the access needs of their stakeholders. Moreover, it is unclear in the proposal how the strategies in place to ensure that all stakeholders will receive the necessary training and support to adequately use the new technologies.

While the proposal does describe that the data system in use has interoperability for some kinds of data, it is not clear if this interoperability works for other kinds of data, namely student performance data. Additionally, it is not evident if parents and students will be able to export their data in an open format for their own use and application.

Finally, the proposal's approach to the LEA policy and infrastructure does not contain the elements of a high quality plan, such as a timeline, activities that will take place along the timeline, who will be responsible for the activities and the deliverables that will come from the activities.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	**15**	**6**

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal describes the program of work's approach to continuous improvement. This is generally conveyed through the various meeting structures that will be created. For example, the proposal states that monthly central office meetings will take place where a variety of data, such as academic and fiscal, will be discussed to ascertain to what extent the project is reaching its improvement goals. Similarly, there will be weekly grant budget meetings, monthly central office educational consultant meetings, monthly school leadership meetings, district steering committees and bi-annual school improvement reviews. All of these meetings, the proposal states, are intended to monitor the work of the project.

In addition, the proposal states that there will be a needs assessments and district semester assessments to monitor activities and investments such as professional development, technological equipment and family engagement.

However, the proposal does not provide many of the elements of a high quality plan with respect to the continuous improvement plan. For instance, the proposal does not include a specific timely for when the activities will take place, who will be responsible for the activities and what deliverables will come from the activities. Moreover, the proposal does not specifically describe the way that the program of work will measure the work being carried out nor does the proposal specifically state how the findings of the reviews and monitoring will be shared publically.

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

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal states the program's approach to communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. For example, the proposal states that the superintendent reports about the progress of the district's programs to the school board, which consists of educators as well as members of the community.

In addition, the proposal mentions that the project will develop a web site intended to communicate the progress of the project.

Yet, the proposal does not provide examples of how a variety of educators within the district, specifically the teachers implementing the work, will receive communications about the project. And the proposal does not provide examples for multiple ways to communicate and engage with external stakeholders, for instance, those who do not have access to the internet.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	**5**	**1**

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does list some indicators that the program of work will rely on for performance measures. These include the number of participating students by school and by district and academic performance on state assessments. The proposal also provides some baseline data related to the performance measures such as the number of students that are currently enrolled at each school.

However, the proposal does not make evident the rationale for selecting each of the measures. Also, the proposal does not make clear how these measures will provide formative information that can lead to improvements in the proposed work. Finally, the proposal does not make clear how the measures will be reviewed and improved over time in case the measures are insufficient to the program's designs and goals.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	**5**	**0**

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not make evident its strategy to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of their project. Moreover, the proposal's approach to evaluating the effectiveness of investments does not contain the elements of a high quality plan, such as a timeline, activities that will take place along the timeline, who will be responsible for the activities and the deliverables that will come from the activities.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In presenting the budget, the proposal identifies the amount of money that is being requested for the Race to the Top project and what additional funds will be integrated. This includes some general operating funds, state grant programs and state bond funding. The list of expenditures and investments suggest that the program will be able to development and successfully be implemented,

Yet, the rationale is not completely transparent in the descriptions to ascertain the nature of the expenditures in some cases. For example, the number of digital tablets or digital resources purchased is not listed. In addition, it is not clear from the budget rationale what purchases will be one time investments, for example, in equipment or infrastructure.

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

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal addresses the sustainability of the project in one particular way. The proposal notes that the project aligns with the broader policy environment and strategic plan for transforming Connecticut Technical High Schools. However, the proposal does not make clear where the project might seek funding in the future to continue to meet the project's goals. In addition, the project does not make apparent the elements of a high quality plan necessary to ensure the fiscal sustainability of this project. This includes the specific activities to ensure the sustainability of the project, the personnel responsible for the activities, the timeline in which the work activities will take place and the deliverables that will come from the project.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	**10**	**0**

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not include plans for this competitive preference priority.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		**Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The proposal meets the absolute priority for personalized learning environments. This is evident throughout the proposal. Namely, the proposed program of work aligns itself with the strategic plan in the state providing a blueprint for technical high schools. This supports the use of a blended learning approach to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities. Moreover, this strategic plan ensures that the curriculum and learning experiences are aligned to common core state standards and career and technical education standards. The proposal states that student success plans will be implemented to enable students to explore their interests and plan learning activities related to the students' interests in and out of school. Moreover, the proposal is planning to implement learning opportunities facilitated by digital experiences to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities. One example of this is the online platform Career Cruiser.

In order to target instructional improvement and expand effective educators by utilizing the Focus system, an online teacher evaluation system that will incorporate trainings and assessments related to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Total	**210**	**75**

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0147CT-3 for Connecticut Technical High School System (CTHSS)

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score

(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Connecticut Technical High Schools System (CTHSS) indicates that the superintendent has constructed *the Blueprint for Transforming the Connecticut Technical High School System* and says that this plan incorporates the four educational assurance areas. The applicant further indicates that the purpose of the blueprint is to articulate a strategic plan of action for the district. However, the applicant fails to provide any details about this plan that would support these claims. CTHSS then addresses the *CTHSS Project Achieving Competitive Excellence (CTHSS Project ACE)* and provides a very brief outline of the plan, but it does not sufficiently articulate the district's vision of implementation for purposes of this grant. Furthermore, the applicant does not describe what the classroom experience will look like be students and teachers.

(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

All CTHSS schools will be included in the grant and it has included a list of these schools, but it is unclear to what extent they will be included. The narrative for (A)(2) refers to four schools that are identified as Focus and Review schools as part of the State’s ESEA flexibility waiver. The applicant has not clearly defined if the plan for these schools will differ from the other schools. With the exception of mentioning the four focus and review schools, the applicant has not provided any explanation as to why the selected participating schools were chosen or why it chose to include all schools.

In chart (A)(2), the applicant identifies a different number of participating students than the chart at the beginning of the application (10,821 students vs. 10,747) but has not provided an explanation for the difference. CTHSS is barely meeting the requirement that 40% of participating students be from low-income families. Only 41.4% are identified as low-income.

The applicant does provide the other information requested in (c) including the number of high-need students and participating educators.

It is unclear the extent to which the applicant's approach will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of the proposal. All schools appear to be participating in some capacity but the extent of the participation is not made clear.

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

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has not provided a sufficient response to this selection criterion. In response, CTHSS indicates that CTHSS Project Ace’s development team utilized Fullan’s Change Theory as the framework for its plan. However, the applicant does not describe how its plan will be scaled up. It appears that all schools will be participating in some capacity in the grant, but it is not clear if all schools will be participating at the same level and if they are not participating at the same level, the applicant does not describe how successful elements of the grant will be scaled and spread to other schools. The applicant has not included any elements of a high quality plan in its response.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

CTHSS indicates that some of its achievement goals are based on the Connecticut State Department of Education’s Academic Performance Test (CAPT). The remaining district goals are based upon the required performance measures identified in the Perkins Career and Technical Improvement Grant. There are several concerns with the performance measures proposed by the applicant:

(A)(4)(a): performance on summative assessments

1) the performance targets are not broken down by subgroup (as required) but rather by school. Given the number of students at each school, it is assumed that data could be provided for some subgroups while respecting student privacy

2) For many of the assessments identified in this portion of the selection criterion, the district saw a decline between SY 11-12 and 12-13 but no explanation is provided to explain this decline. Additionally, growth by year varies by school and by subject area without explanation.

3) The applicant has described what is required to pass each assessment but not how it has determined the growth targets for each year. In most cases, the growth is incremental so the targets are likely achievable but the applicant has failed to provide any justification as well as any subgroup data.

4) The applicant has established targets for subject specific assessments but did not set any targets for CAPT.

(A)(4)(b)

The applicant has provided historic data on achievement gaps but has not provided targets for future years.

(A)(4)(c)

CTHSS provides baseline data for SY 11-12 which indicates that the district has an impressive graduation rate, 95.9% overall. The applicant has provided little explanation to describe its successful graduation rate. It's goal is 100% in all future years.

(A)(4)(d)

Based solely on the information provided in the chart, the targets seem ambitious and achievable. However, the applicant has provided no explanation as to why these targets were chosen so there is no way to make an accurate judgment on the ambitious and achievable nature of these targets.

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**	**4**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides data on its CAPT scores since 2007. Since that time, CTHSS has generally seen growth in math, science, and writing, but this growth has been inconsistent. For example, the mathematics scores increased from 74.8 to 76.4 but over the course of the 7 years, the district saw a high of 82.4% at or above proficient. Similar trends were seen in science. Writing was a bit more consistent with a significant increase of 79.6% proficient or better to 90% between 2007 and 2008. By 2013 the results were the same. During this time frame, the reading growth was inconsistent and ended up decreasing from 77.3% to 75.4%. In 2013, the districts scores were higher in math and writing than the state average. When looking at trends over a four year period, the increases were generally smaller and in come cases there was a decrease.

CTHSS provides an achievement gap analysis for subgroups from the 2012 to 2013 school year. During this time, the gap was reduced between African American students in math, science, and writing but there was a significant increase (12%) in the reading gap. Similar decreases in the achievement gap was seen for white and Hispanic students but again, there was an increase in the achievement gap in reading.

The graduation data provided in (E)(2) indicates that the applicant has a history of high graduation rates (above 96% for the past 4 years).

In the application, CTHSS addresses its four schools identified as low performing under ESEA flex. However, it does not provide any historical data to demonstrate how it has provided support and improved student achievement in these schools.

The applicant does not address how it makes student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. The information provided in this section discussed making financial data publicly available.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In compliance with state law, CTHSS posts individual school budgets to their respective internet sites. Additional data on compensation is available via the State's website. Information is published as part of CTHSS's Civil Rights Data Collection report. It appears that the data required by this selection criterion is made available.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	**10**	**4**

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

CTHSS outlines CT's commitment to education reform and highlights that in 2007, the Connecticut State Board of Education published guidelines underscoring the necessity to build learning environments in which students were

physically, socially, and emotionally connected to their schools. In 2010, CTHSS implemented Connecticut's Framework for Response to Intervention. This information helps demonstrate evidence of successful condition for reform, but the applicant does not address whether or not it has sufficient authority to implement its proposed plan.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	**15**	**7**

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative discusses CTHSS's climate survey, but this does not provided any information on how the applicant solicited feedback for the application. The applicant did include several letters of support from government representatives, community partners, business representatives, and principals. The applicant did not discuss how feedback was solicited from parents or students. The application does include a union president signature but does not describe how feedback was solicited from educators.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a)

CTHSS offers dual enrollment academic and career technical education program for Connecticut students. Its curriculum incorporates CCSS as well as Common Career Technical Core, Next Generation Science Standards, and ISTE Standards. This combination of curriculum and standards is designed to prepare students to be ready for college and career and to allow students multiple choices within the system. This is the beginning of the path to ownership and personalization for students. Under this system, students are exposed to a wide variety of academic content. It is not clear that they are exposed to different cultures but the career, college, high school combination begins to expose students to contexts and perspectives that help deepen their learning. IN addition, they are provided with exposure to 21st century skills.

Career and technical education already contains elements of personalization but the applicant has not fully connected the dots on how its services are personalized and leaves a great deal up to the assumptions of the reviewers.

(b)

The applicant is exposed a a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments as the student has the opportunity to take college courses, traditional high school courses, and technical courses which provide students with a variety of instructional approaches and environments. Additionally, CTHSS has been using Moodle which allows CTHSS teachers to produce internet courses and websites. However, it is unclear what types of courses are being developed, how students are being engaged, and the extent to which students are actively using this system. The applicant does have online content available for credit recovery but little information is provided about the content.

Other than a very brief mention of using formative and summative data to inform instruction, it is not clear how students are receiving ongoing and regular feedback that is used to support students and determine progress of mastery of college and career ready standards or personalized learning recommendations based data.

The applicant does not provide a sufficient explanation of mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them.

The districts plan is very weak. It provides goals such as "engaging and empowering competency-based learning experience" but does not adequately explain how this goal will be met. It provides very broad ideas such as "a cohesive, standards-based academic and career technical education system in which CTHSS teacher and school leaders ensure digital personalized, CTHSS learner-driven education plans..." but does not explain how any of this will happen of be supported. The implementation plan is weak and does not include key elements of a high quality plan such as responsible parties, activities, and timelines.

Through CTHSS Project ACE, the district seeks to expand the number of blended learning experiences for CTHSS learners and provide ongoing standards-based assessments to determine readiness for participation in these blended learning opportunities; strengthen existing district benchmark assessments for academic and career technical education programs; and expand the number of career credentials with which CTHSS learners gradate.

The district says that the implementation of its plan will ensure implementation of a competency-based program that will provide all CTHSS students personalized learning. The narrative states that it will ensure CTHSS learner-driven education plans that are reflective of student interests and talents as well as integrating state of the art technology.

The district says that it will expand its accountability system which tracks assessments to include a data warehouse with a bank of assessment questions. Additionally, the project plan will ensure that CTHSS teachers and school leaders collaborate to promote professional practices that create personalized learning environments.

The district will digitize academic and CTE content for teachers to deliver to students.

CTHSS says it will provide additional professional development to teachers on creating a personalized learning environment.

The district also says that the focus will be on the four schools identified as focus and review schools but that the other schools will receive professional development.

In its narrative, CTHSS has made many broad commitments but has provided no plan or detail to describe how its plan will actually be implemented. The narrative contains no elements of a high quality plan and it is extremely difficult to follow how the applicant plans to meet all of the commitments it has made. Furthermore, the applicant fails to address many of the elements in this selection criterion. The narrative does not describe how students will understand that what they are learning is key to their success. Setting college and career ready goals is briefly addressed but not how students will own the goal setting. Through the internships and other “real world” experience, students are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interests and this may also support expose to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives. Assumptions can be made about the additional skills and traits such as goal setting and creativity that students are learning but this is not adequately addressed in the narrative.

The applicant does not describe how students will have access to a personalized sequence of instructional content designed to allow the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals. The narrative mentions digital content but little about what is included. Little is mentioned about strategies for engaging and including high-need students.

Finally, the narrative does not adequately address how students will be trained to use the tools and resources provided to them.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	**20**	**4**

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant’s response to this selection criterion is focused almost wholly on its new evaluation system and does little to explain the professional development provided to educators to support them in developing a personalized learning environment for students. Nothing is explained about how educators will be trained on how to use data to personalize instruction. Section (C)(1) alludes to professional development that will be provided but does not provide sufficient detail on the content of this professional development. This response contains no elements of a high quality plan.

Other than describing broadly that professional development will be offered, the applicant does little to explain its plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	**15**	**7**

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) organization of the LEA central office

To better support schools, the district developed the Superintendents’s Leadership Theory of Action for Continuous District Improvement and Student Achievement. Through this theory of action, the district sought to distribute leadership. A Central Office Council meets monthly facilitated by the superintendent. During these meetings, school and district issues are addressed. Leadership council meetings are also help for principals to convene with each other. External resources are sought to support schools and internal capacity is built.

(b) providing school leadership teams with sufficient flexibility and autonomy

The district provides the scope and sequence of instruction for students. Schools have an advisory committee that discusses course selections but all schools must adhere to the provisions of the CTHEE program of studies. A uniform district calendar is followed across all demographic regions.

It appears as it there are sufficient supports in place at the district level to support schools but the applicant has provided little evidence to demonstrate that schools are given flexibility and autonomy.

(c) giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery

The district mentions the implementation of initiatives such as Data Driven Decision Making (DDDM) and Common Formative Assessments(CFA) and that these initiatives helped in the district's efforts to integrate standards-based educational and leadership practices. However, this does not address whether or not students are allowed to progress and earn credit based on mastery rather than seat time.

The applicant discusses the requirements for promotion which include academic and career technical education progress, social maturity, age, and emotional, psychological, and physical needs. However, this does not address whether or not students can progress to different grades or different topics based on mastery or whether the amount of time spent on a topic is a driving factor.

(d)Giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways

Students can participate in online learning, extended learning opportunities, remediation/acceleration, individualized instruction, and alternative education programs. However, these different methods of schooling do not address how students are able to demonstrate mastery of a standard. The district offers opportunities for dual enrollment.

(e) providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible

In response to this section of the selection criterion, the applicant says that it employs a blended learning model and it using CT's framework for response to intervention. CTHSS also discussed its Literacy and Numeracy Labs that provide additional support. The district also have programs in place to support ELL.

The applicant describes the systems it already has in place but does not provide a high quality plan to address this selection criterion.

The applicant appears to have a system in place to support schools but falls short of providing autonomy and flexibility to schools (or at least this is not described). The applicant does not appear to have in place or have a plan to address alternatives to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways or a substantive plan to allow students to progress based on mastery rather than seat time.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	**10**	**4**

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Access to resources outside of school

The applicant stresses the importance of access to resources and says that it has a plan in place to support this but the plan it describes is limited. CTHSS says that critical district documents are housed on the website but does not say what these documents are or how they are relevant to stakeholders. The narrative says that all CTHSS learners, parents, teachers, school leaders, and central office staff have access in and out of schools to technology that promote communicate but again, little detail is provided except a mention of PowerSchool. One relevant point of discussion is that of a software called Career Cruising that allows school counselors and parents to track student progress and assist them in making informed college and career decisions. The applicant also mentions CTHSS Family Engagement Centers (FEC) that are located in each school and outfitted with technology and a variety of instructional and family resources. Additional supports for students include Moodle and the online credit recovery program but as previously mentioned, there is little information provided on the content of these systems. With the exception of the FECs, it is unclear how other stakeholders would access these online systems outside of the school.

(b) ensuring that students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have appropriate and relevant levels of technical support

The district says that it provides professional development and technical support to students and educators but does not discuss services for parents and other stakeholders.

(c) using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format

The district does not address this section of the selection criterion.

(d) ensuring that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems

The district indicates that its systems are interoperable and discusses the systems that house different information such as HR data, budget data, etc but does not describe how these systems work together other than to say that they do.

The applicant has not provided a high quality plan to expand upon its existing work in this area.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	**15**	**5**

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has provided sufficient evidence demonstrating its avenues for feedback. Examples include district steering committee, monthly school leadership council meetings, school improvement teams, and weekly grant budget meetings. This is a critical step in the process. However, the applicant does not provide sufficient information on how this feedback is taken and then used for continuous improvement. Many elements of a high quality plan are missing including deliverables, activities, and timelines. The applicant does address how frequently these groups meet but this does not provide a solid timeline for the grant's continuous improvement cycle.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	**5**	**1**

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plans include the development of a website for communication purposes but this alone may not be sufficient. Reports are generated and these are shared but it is unclear how frequent this is or the avenue for sharing. The applicant does not address how stakeholders who do not have access to the website will be kept informed. This narrative does not include elements of a high quality plan including timeline, activities, deliverables, and responsible parties.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	**5**	**0**

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

In its opening narrative, the applicant explains that the district has moved to a new teacher evaluation and accountability system. The previous system had no teachers in need of assistance and there was no way to disaggregate highly effective and effective teachers. The new system will provide for this. It will be implemented in SY 13-14.

The applicant has not provided any data for future years related to the number of effective and highly effective teachers. It is understood that the system is new this year but it is possible that the applicant could have set projected targets. Additionally, the data provided is disaggregated by school rather than the requirement of disaggregating by subgroup.

The applicant also says that due to privacy issues, CTHSS does not have information regarding the number and percentage of participating students who complete and submit the FAFSA form. However, it is not clear how providing this information would be a violation of a student's privacy as the data is provided in an aggregate format.

For performance measures b and c, the applicant does not explain its proposed performance measures or provide targets for future years.

The remaining information provided is for previous years. No targets for future years have been provided.

The applicant has failed to set performance measures as required by the request for proposal. No points are earned for this selection criterion.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	**5**	**0**

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not respond to this selection criterion.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's budget is poorly developed and is not adequately justified. The applicant has provided a cost justification for few if any of its projects. It is unclear what some budgeted items are referring to such as "5 instructional support for virtual learning presence" and how this relates back to any of the projects discussed in the narrative. As discussed above, the applicant's plan is not adequately outlined in the rest of the application so it is extremely difficult to know how the projects proposed in the budget can/should be mapped back to projects discussed in the application. A significant portion of the funds will be used for professional development, but it is unclear what purpose it will serve. Much of the PD appears to be focused on blended learning but because little explanation is provided, it is difficult to understand how this does not become redundant if done every year for four years and provided through so many contractors.

The applicant mentions that funds from other sources such as Title I, Title II, General Operating Funds, and State Bond Funds will be used to support this work.

The applicant has not clearly identified whether funds are one time costs of ongoing operational costs.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	**10**	**1**

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In its response, the applicant fails to address sustainability after the grant period as it relates to funding or continuation of ideas. There are no elements of a high quality plan. This narrative is simply a restatement of the applicants grant proposal discussed previously in the application. The one strength is that the applicant is aligning this plan to existing work and the "Blueprint for Transforming the Connecticut Technical High School System." This plan is clearly larger than the grant so some aspects of sustainability can be assumed but this is not clearly explained.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	**10**	**0**

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not address the competitive preference priority

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		**Not Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has failed to meet the Absolute Priority for this competition. CTHSS has not provided a coherent and comprehensive plan to address how it will develop a personalized learning environment that will improve student achievement. In addition, the applicant has failed to fully articulate what it actually hopes to accomplish. In (C)(1), the applicant says "Through CTHSS Project ACE, the district seeks to expand the number of blended learning experiences for CTHSS learners and provide ongoing standards-based assessments to determine readiness for participation in these blended learning opportunities; strengthen existing district benchmark assessments for academic and career technical education programs; and expand the number of career credentials with which CTHSS learners graduate." Beyond this statement, the applicant does little to articulate its vision for creating a personalized learning environment. It discusses elements already in place but does not adequately describe how this work is personalized. In response to most selection criterion, CTHSS mentions work it is already doing but not how that work will be built upon to meet the selection criterion or says that work will be done to meet the requirements of the selection criterion but little detail is included to describe how the applicant plans to accomplish this. Additionally, it is unclear based on the information provided how and which schools will be served. One portion of the application mentions that all schools will be served while another says that the plan will

be focused on those identified as lowest performing.

For almost every performance measure in (E)(3), the applicant has failed to set performance targets for future years. The same is true for CAPT targets in (A)(4).

In (F)(2), the applicant does not provide a quality plan for sustainability.

Based on the information provided, the reviewer does not believe that CTHSShas a coherent and comprehensive plan to address how it will develop a personalized learning environment that will improve student achievement. As such, the applicant fails to meet the absolute priority.

Total	**210**	**65**