



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0110LA-1 for District Cooperative of Louisiana/Vermilion Parish Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

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

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

For A1a, the applicant partially meets this criterion by articulating, for each of the four core educational assurance areas, the state-level systems which have been put into place, and how this consortium grant would allow participating schools to build upon such efforts.

For the first area of college- and career-ready standards, they describe the work of the state's RTTT grant which has helped raise the standards to ensure that every student graduates from high school, on-time, with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and professional careers. They profile recent work to map out the career needs of various regions in the state, and the revamping of the state's high school diploma to better support career pathways (via the Louisiana Diploma Career Pathway). Grant funds would be used to help participating districts complete the regional planning process needed to participate in jump start programs through dual enrollment within regionally-relevant career pathways.

For the second area of assessment, the applicant describes the state's recent implementation of annual grade-level and high school end-of-course assessments in ELA and math that are fully aligned with the common core standards, and which also includes access to diagnostic assessments, mid-year assessments, performance-based assessments, and a speaking and listening assessment component. By participating in this grant, districts are committed to using personalized education and blended learning to better support equity and to eliminate achievement disparities among higher risk subgroup populations.

For the third area of effective teachers and principals, the applicant profiles the state's new teacher and leader evaluation system, and how the grant would build upon this by offering an on-line platform to support professional development growth, and ongoing collaborative planning.

For the fourth area of turnarounds, the applicant notes how the state's RTTT efforts are overall improving schools, and that the grant would be used to further support such reforms, local decision-making, and empowered autonomy by providing rich tools, resources, and professional supports to strengthen professional abilities in creating personalized learning environments that assure all students are college- and career-ready.

For A1b and c, the applicant partially meets these criteria by describing how to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase equity through personalized student support based on student academic interest. Their descriptions of personalized blended learning are rich with theory on what it can be, but offered limited detail on how the grant was going to ensure that such ideas become a reality. They also provide some information as to what the classroom experiences will be like for students and teachers; however, it is again written as what could be, without adequate detail as to how the grant will ensure that this will happen.

The applicant scores in the middle range, for generally offering a reform vision rich with ideas, but more limited on revealing within its vision how this could be accomplished in all schools for thousands of students across 14 school districts.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

For A2a, the applicant only partially meets this criterion in that it does not offer a strong justification for the decision that was made to include all of the schools and students in 14 districts within their consortium, and how that decision will result in high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of the proposal. The applicant noted that the consortium was originally created as a way to leverage resources and to offer districts a forum for collaboration, and that now at least 43 districts have joined (out of the 71 districts in the state). Of these districts, the applicant notes that 14 of these districts had

agreed to participate in the grant program (and got all of their paperwork turned in on time), and that others were interested but were still securing appropriate signatures. The applicant notes that they would ensure that their grant application is revised within 100 days of receiving the grant to potentially include other districts. While this is evidence of a very inclusive process, it does not detail the rationale to include all grade levels in every school in every district who wanted to participate, and could get their approval paperwork completed in time.

In reference to the required data for A2a, b, and c, a list of all schools within these 14 districts is included, as well as all needed educator and student data (overall, low-income and high needs). Data is also provided to illustrate that the minimum % of low-income student participating in the grant meets the 40% minimum. No overall percentage was offered for all districts, but the percentage within each of the 14 districts far exceeds the minimum number.

Overall the applicant scores in the middle range.

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

**10**

**2**

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

For A3, the applicant only partially meets this criterion. They indicate that their cooperative was formed as a way to collaboratively support parishes in the implementation of state and local reforms, with blended learning, personalized learning environments, and dual enrollment as significant foci. They then offer a detailed list of activities that would be accomplished the first year (under the broad categories of planning, training and professional development, program implementation, financial and program reporting, and sustainability activities), along with the responsible parties and the month during which this is to be worked on. While the applicant does detail aspects of a high quality plan for year one of the proposed grant, there is no information for years two and beyond, nor adequate detail as to how all of the activities listed for year one would actually be implemented to serve all students within 14 districts.

Also, the applicant does not offer any information on how their reforms will be scaled up beyond the participating schools (other than mentioning that additional districts might join the grant), nor offer adequate detail to demonstrate that their theory of change will actually improve student learning outcomes for ALL students served by this applicant.

The applicant scores in the low range.

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

**10**

**4**

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

For A4a, the applicant partially this criterion by detailing 21 goals for enhanced student achievement:

- K-3 DIBELS. They offer goals that depict increases of 20% per year, going from the mid-30s% in most districts to 100% in four years (note: the data for these goals were offered only for each district as a whole, not broken down by subgroups; these measures also only represent proficiency, not growth measures, and no rationale was provided that would allow one to ascertain if such goals are really achievable or not);

- Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 Reading, Math and Science Scoring at Basic Proficiency and Above. They offer goals that depict increases of 5% for students in each tested grade and subject per year within each district. For example, for 3rd grade reading, the baseline for most districts starts in the mid-60s%, and would grow to the low 80s% in four years (note: the data for these goals were offered only for each district as a whole, not broken down by subgroups; these measures also only represent proficiency, not growth measures, and no rationale was provided that would allow one to ascertain if such goals are really achievable or not);

- End of Course Tests for Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, English II, and U.S. History. They offer goals that depict increases of 5% each tested subject per year within each district. For example, for English II, the baseline for most districts starts in the mid-70s%, and would grow to the mid-90s% in four years (note: the data for these goals were offered only for each district as a whole, not broken down by subgroups; these measures also only represent proficiency, not growth measures, and no rationale was provided that would allow one to ascertain if such goals are really achievable or not).

For A4d, the applicant partially meets this criterion by offering 18 goals showing a 50% reduction each year for the state's reading and math exam for each grade tested (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, H.S., and overall grades 3-8), for each of the following combined subgroups (combining data for all 14 districts together): African American, Latino, and Asian, LEP, and free/reduced lunch. These goals are clearly ambitious, but no rationale was provided that would allow one to ascertain if actually achievable.

For A4c, the applicant partially meets this criterion by offering graduation goals for each of the 14 districts, depicting an annual increase of 5% per year for 5 years, or 25% overall. The baseline for most districts starts in the high 60s%, and would increase by 25%. The data for these goals were offered only for each district as a whole, not broken down by

subgroups. Also, these goals are clearly ambitious, but no rationale was provided that would allow one to ascertain if actually achievable.

For A4d, the applicant partially meets this criterion by offering a postsecondary enrollment and/or dual enrollment with industry-recognized credentials completion, for each individual high school within the 14 districts, proposing to go from a baseline overall of 58.83% to 95.83% in five years. The data for these goals were offered only for each high school as a whole, not broken down by subgroups. Also, these goals are clearly ambitious, but no rationale was provided that would allow one to ascertain if actually achievable.

For the optional A4e, the applicant does not meet this criterion, since they did not offer any baseline data from the districts in the grant, but instead offered national data from the Chronicle of Higher Education, and then indicated the amount the districts in the grant would increase from this amount each year. The goals noted are clearly ambitious (e.g., increasing by 30% per year the number overall graduating from a 4-year college or university, and 50% per year for African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians), but no rationale was provided that would allow one to ascertain if actually achievable. Note, since this was an optional criteria, no points were deducted for this item.

Overall the applicant scores in the lower range of the middle level. While they do provide some very ambitious goals, they are missing subgroup data for a number of the indicators, and most importantly, there was no rationale provided that would allow one to ascertain if such goals are actually achievable via the implementation of this grant.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>For B1a, the applicant only partially meets this criterion, by noting the many reforms that the state has implemented as part of its RTTT efforts (e.g., enhanced assessments and standards; a revised teacher and leader evaluation system, and empowered local districts with greatly reduced state requirements and increased local autonomy). It also provides some data within the A1 section which reveals small increases on several performance measures as aggregated for the districts participating in the grant for years 2012 and 2013 (the only years for the new data systems). Slight increases were noted: students entering kindergarten ready to learn, went from 52% to 54%; students arriving to 9th grade on-time and on-level, went from 42.8% to 43.8%; students on track to college in 9th grade by achieving a 17 on the composite EXPLORE, went from 19.95% to 40.1%; students graduating on time, went from 71.4% to 72.3%; and students enrolling in college or joining work force, went from 61.9% to 68.3%. No data, however, were offered regarding success in closing achievement gaps.</p> <p>For B1b, the applicant does not meet this criterion, since nothing was offered regarding the achievement of ambitious and significant reforms in any persistently lowest-achieving or low-performing schools within the participating districts.</p> <p>For B1c, the applicant does not meet this criterion since nothing was offered regarding how data is now being made available to the students, educators, and parents in the participating districts in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.</p> <p>Overall the applicant scores in the lower end of the middle range.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>For B2 (a - d), the applicant only partially meets these criteria, by noting that actual salary information for all school-level instructional and support staff, and all non-personnel expenditures for the district and each school, are posted on each district's website. They also note that their school board meetings are public meetings, as announced in local newspapers, and that financial reports are available in the district office with copies available at each school. Monthly budget expenditures for each school are also available in each school office.</p> <p>However, there are not enough detail offered to ascertain that data for each of the four categories of school-level expenditures for state and local funds is readily available in a format that allows one to find the 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</p> <p>The applicant scores in the middle range.</p>		

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>For B3, the applicant meets this criterion by noting the many reforms that the state has enacted as part of its state RTTT efforts, including enhanced standards and assessment, a new teacher and leader evaluation system, and enhanced local autonomy). The note that students can now earn credits at any point in time during the year by demonstrating proficiency through assessments of learning portfolios, and can earn credits by instructional time not dictated by place-based school settings, but by a flexible combination of pace-based and online learning. They also note that the new single high school diploma with two pathways will allow industry-recognized training for high-wage careers in high-growth job sectors in real world, work-based learning, combined with enhanced levels of career and life counseling.</p> <p>This information reveals that the participating districts in the grant would have sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments described in the grant, and the applicant scores in the high range.</p>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>For B4a(i and ii), the applicant only partially meets this criteria, by generally noting that they held many community meetings with various district and community groups. They also included the necessary paperwork as signed by each of the 14 districts, including the signature of the union president for the four districts having a union. However, they offered no details on how students, families, teachers, and principals in the participating schools were actually engaged in the development of the proposal, and as appropriate, how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback. And for the 10 districts without union representation, there was no data offered which revealed that at least 70% of their teachers support the proposal. Without this vital piece of information, there is no evidence regarding the support of the teachers, which is important for the success of the overall reform plan.</p> <p>For B4b, the applicant partially meets this criterion, by including 11 letters of support as follows: workforce investment board (1); mayors (2); sheriffs' office (1); state senator (1); district attorney (1); school board (1); parish chamber of commerce (1); local united way (1); LA resource center for educators (1); and Voyager learning (1). Noticeably absent were any letters from parents and parent organizations, student organizations, and at least one letter from some group within each of the 14 districts.</p> <p>The applicant scores in the lower end of the middle range.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>For C1ai and ii, the applicant partially meets these criteria, by profiling how having 21st century skills and competencies, blended learning, personalized education, and industry-recognized competencies, will help students understand what they are learning is key to their success, and to help them identify and pursue goals linked to college- and career-ready standards. The applicant offers a list of 21st century essential skills and competencies, and offers a number of mini-lesson plans as examples of what would be created and available to teachers and students via their BLEND technological repository. However, there are no clear details on how students will learn how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, nor how to measure progress toward those goals.</p> <p>For C1aiii, iv, and v, the application partially meets these criteria by noting how students will be exposed to real-world experts, and that through the creation of personalized learning environments, student conferencing will be build into weekly classroom routines in which student learning goals and targets are discussed, planned, and assessed. There will be continuous opportunities for student-led discussions, including virtual learning with others groups with similar interests in the community, throughout the nation, and abroad. The applicant notes that there will be new ways of learning which will help students be involved in deep learning, have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives, and help them master critical academic content and traits such as goal-setting and teamwork. Despite all of these things, and many more listed within the grant as to how the learning environments for students will be changing, the elements of a high quality plan as to exactly who will be doing what, and by when, is missing.</p>		

For C1bi, and ii, the applicant really does not meet these criteria. Although the applicant notes that each students will have a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development (criterion i), and access to a variety of high -quality instructional approaches and environments (criterion ii), there is not enough detail to ascertain as to exactly how they would be accomplishing these things with all students within 14 districts. The lack of a high quality plan for this section has impacted the ability for the applicant to meet these criteria.

For C1biii, the applicant partially meets this criterion by noting that students will have access to high quality content, including digital learning, aligned with the state's college and career-ready standards. Such content will be developed by individuals and teachers involved in the grant and placed on the repository for all to share. Examples were offered of lessons that align with such standards, but again, these was inadequate detail allowing one to ascertain whether all students in all participating districts would really be receiving such lessons.

For C1biv (a and b), the applicant really does not meet these criteria in that there are no concrete details as to how all students will be receiving frequently updated individual student data used to determine mastery toward standards completion, other than via the new state assessments. Yet no details were provided on how such data would be used to develop personalized learning recommendations based on the students current knowledge and skills.

For C1bv, the applicant partially meets this criterion by noting that the materials available within the repository will make it easier for teachers to support high-need students. They share a summary of a potential resources on how best to support LEP and low-language students. But again, without the details of a high quality plan, it is difficult to ascertain whether all LEP students in all participating districts would really be receiving such lessons.

For C1c, the applicant partially meets this criterion by noting that each participating school will include a zero-hour each day for all students to learn how to use equipment, tools, resources, and how to virtually interact with others. They also note that online virtual assistants will be available 24/7 and students will be able to access them by phone or email should they lose login information. They share a summary of potential resources on how best to support LEP and low-language students. But again, without the details of a high quality plan, it is difficult to ascertain whether this criterion is fully met.

Overall, the applicant scores in the middle range for generally having good ideas, but lacking the details needed for a high quality plan related to the learning portion of preparing students for college and careers.

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

**20**

**9**

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

For C2a (i - iii), the applicant partially meets these criteria by noting that the grant will provide professional development institutes for educators that will lead to a certificate in blended learning. Such professional development will be offered via various professional approaches, strategies, and varied levels of educator support, including remote, real-time online professional development, face-to-face onsite support, long-term coaching and mentoring, professional growth through the use of assessment data and student work, collaborative professional learning communities, and leadership development. Specific components to be covered include: teaching development and professional growth, coaching and mentoring for teaching and learning, professional learning through curriculum, instruction, and assessment, teacher and school leadership development through data-driven decision making and continuous improvement, administrator/school leader coaching for teacher development and establishing professional learning communities, and recruitment, retention, and induction. As part of such training, the applicant notes that teachers will receive the training needed to support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time and college- and career-ready (criterion a); gain the ability to adapt content and instruction, providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches (criterion b); and learn how to frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators (criterion c). But, the applicant is missing the details of a high quality plan including exactly how, when, and by whom such training will be provided to ALL teachers within the 14 districts.

For C2a (iv), the applicant really does not meet this criterion. They note that the new state teacher and leader evaluation system will be providing good data on teacher and leader effectiveness, but do not offer any details as to how such data would be used to actually improve practice, or to provide recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement.

For C2b (i - iii), the applicant partially meets these criteria. They note that each week, an assessment or

progress monitoring activity should occur (e.g., first grade DIBELS, 5th grade DRA, end-of-unit assessment, online assessment), and then monthly data meetings would bring each week's assessment data together, and in collaborative teams, plan for instruction, implement instrumental accommodations, assign students to groups, peer tutor or tiers of instruction, and revise program services base on that data. In theory, this would provide teachers with actionable information to help them identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests (criterion i); access high-quality learning resources, including digital resources, as appropriate, that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (criterion ii); and acquire processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs. But without the details of a high quality plan depicting how this would actually be implemented with all teachers across the 14 districts, one cannot ascertain to what extent this will actually occur.

For C2c (i-ii), the applicant partially meets these criterion by noting the new state teacher and leader evaluation system will be providing data, but does not offer detail as to how such data will be used to help school leaders and school leadership teams assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement (criterion i). For criterion ii, which is to include training, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps, the applicant provides a long list of available training, as well as the support of a program from a major university to help prepare, develop, and support school administrators in becoming high effective leaders. But again, without the details of a high quality plan which describes how this would actually be implemented with all teachers across the 14 districts, one cannot ascertain to what extent this will actually occur for all leaders within the 14 districts.

For C2d, the applicant does not really meet this criterion. The applicant notes that they are receiving data for the state's new teacher and leader evaluation system, but do not offer any details as to how such data will be used to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. Many of the ideas for creating personalized learning environments as supported by virtual resources will assist in this goal, but the applicant does not offer specific details as part of a high quality plan to address this criterion.

Overall, the applicant is missing the details needed for this overall section to be considered a high quality plan for this teaching and leading section, and scores in the middle range.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>

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

For D1 (a-e), the applicant only partially meets these criteria by noting the significant policy changes that have occurred at the state level to allow significant local autonomy in reference to curriculum and competency-based learning. They note there is nothing in state policy that would now prevent them from organizing the LEA central office, or the consortium governance structure, to provide support and services to all participating schools (criterion a); from providing school leadership teams in participating schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets (criterion b); from giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic (criterion c); from giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways (criterion d); and providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners (criterion e).

However, the applicant offers no evidence that the participating districts have plan to ensure that the needed practices, polices, and rules will be put into place that facilitate personalized learning by doing all of the items noted above. It simply notes that each LEA has the local autonomy, authority, polices, procedures, and governance permission to implement the

changes proposed in the grant, and offers no details as to how this will occur from a policy level with 14 local school boards.

Overall, the applicant scores in the lower middle range.

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

For D2 (a-d), the applicant does not really meet these criteria. All they note (within a single short paragraph) is that each participating districts signed an MOU which indicated that it will indeed do each of the listed items (a-d). No evidence is offered at all to ensure that each LEA and their school infrastructure supports personalized learning by having these elements in place within each of the 14 districts.

The applicant scores in the low range.

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

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

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

For E1, the applicant does not meet this criterion. Within the two short paragraphs for this section of the grant, they simply note the importance of using and integrating continuous improvements into daily instructional practices and school routines to close achievement gaps. They do not address the criterion which requested a high quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. The applicant offers nothing on how it 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 scores in the low range.

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

For E2, the applicant partially meets this criterion. Within the one short paragraph for this section of the grant, they simply refer back to a listing of project activities offered earlier in the grant. That listing does include the creation of advisory councils; monthly community, stakeholder, and parent meetings on progress, input, revisions, and plans; and monthly consortium meetings and virtual communities to share practices, results, revisions, successes, celebrations, provide/attain collegial support, provide input, feedback, and recommendations, share resources, and to ensure consistency of implementation among consortium members.

While this is good information and these are good activities, that table only profiles a timeline for the first year of the project, and does not offer all elements of a high quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

The applicant scores in the low range.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

For E3, the applicant partially meets this criterion. They propose the following performance measures:

- For all grades level, increase % of students who have highly effective (and effective) educators. The applicant includes baseline data and projected targets of 5-6% increases per year for each of the 14 districts as a whole (although another section of the table indicates a 20% increase per year). There are no subgroup breakdowns and no rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.
- For grades PreK-3, increase DIBELS scores by 5% per project year, and reduce the disparities between subgroups by

50% per project year. Applicant offers aggregate baseline data for students overall, and as broken down by African American, Latino, Asian, LEP, and Free/Reduced. No rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

- For grades 3-8, increase state math and science scores by 5% per project year, and reduce the disparities between subgroups by 50% per project year. Applicant offers aggregate baseline data for students overall, and as broken down by African American, Latino, Asian, LEP, and Free/Reduced. No rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

- For grades 9-12, increase proficiency scores in Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, English II, and US History by 5% per project year, and reduce the disparities between subgroups by 50% per project year. Applicant offers aggregate baseline data for students overall, and noted that the baseline for the subgroups will need to be collected (as broken down by African American, Latino, Asian, LEP, and Free/Reduced). No rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

For grades 9-12, increase HS graduation rates by about 5% per year. Applicant offers aggregate baseline data for all students overall, but nothing for subgroups (nor are there subgroup targets). There are no subgroup breakdowns, no rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

For all grades, reduce youth health risks factors by 75% for a minimum of 90% of students (using a state health risk behavior survey). Noted that baseline data for all participating students was attached, but this could not be found. There are no subgroup breakdowns, no rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

For grades 9-12, increase the number and percentage of participating students who complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. Baseline and targets are offered as broken down by each high school in the grant, with baselines ranging between 22.64% and 100%, and all projected to be at 100% by the end of the project. There are no subgroup breakdowns, no rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

For all grades, increase college- and career-readiness by a minimum of 10% per project year, as evidenced by college enrollment rates and PARCC college/career assessments. Applicant offers aggregate baseline data for all students overall, but nothing for subgroups (nor are there subgroup targets). No rationale is provided, nor do they indicate how this measure is tailored to their proposed plan and theory of action, or how it will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

For all schools, attain 95% fidelity of implementation by a minimum of 90% of teachers and leaders as evidenced by fidelity of implementation rubrics and teacher/leader evaluation tools. Initial baseline is estimated, and targets of about 30-40% increased each project year are offered. A brief rationale for usage was offered.

Overall, the applicant offered a performance measure for each of the required categories within this criterion, but most did not have subgroup breakdowns, and rationales for their usage. They offered more than the suggested 12 minimum measures. Without a rationale to tie each measure back to specific activities in the proposed grant, it is difficult to ascertain whether these ambitious goals are indeed achievable. The applicant scores in the lower end of the middle range.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

For E4, the applicant partially meets this criterion by noting that an external evaluator will be used to establish effective protocols and procedures to ensure the attainment of established objectives, to provide sufficient information on the progress of attaining outcomes; and to verify the project's effectiveness including follow-up activities. They note that control groups and random assignment will be used, but offer no details for what. They note that evaluation reports will include

mid-year, annual, and end-of-project, and that progress, results, and evaluation findings will be shared with consortium members, project partners, majors, Interagency partners, stakeholders, and schools during regularly-scheduled quarterly BLEND meetings. Yet, other than the identification of various evaluation terms and ideas, almost no detail was offered.

Overall, the applicant offers inadequate detail for this to be considered a high quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology. Not all core elements of a high quality plan as such specific activities, timelines, and persons responsible are not evident. The applicant scores in the lower end of the middle range.

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

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

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

For F1, the applicant partially meets the criterion. They do provide an overall budget that includes all core aspects of the grant, and then offers 14 individual budgets for each of the participating districts. Within each budget, they do identify all funds that would support the project (including the grant, state, local, other federal, etc). They do offer a rationale for each proposed budget item that does align with their overall grant proposal.

However, they do not identify those funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those used for ongoing operational costs. There is also insufficient evidence to ascertain whether the proposed budget is sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. These applicants have taken on a major task by including all students in 14 districts, and while many good activities could be supported with the proposed budget, it is likely insufficient for them to be creating a personalized learning environment for all students (e.g., there is nothing for student-based technology, and overall inadequate on-going support for all teachers and students in the districts)

The applicant scores in the middle range.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
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### (F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

For F2, the applicant partially meets this criterion by listing a variety of ways that revenue can be obtained to sustain the program, many of which focus on retaining more students and thus securing additional student enrollment funding from the state, and/or improving education and thus attracting for families and employers to the tax base. They note that a BLEND advisory committee will be established to seek out funding to sustain the project.

While this list of ideas is good, the applicant does not offer adequate details for this to be a high quality plan for sustaining the project's goals after the term of the grant. Not all core elements of a high quality plan as such specific activities, timelines, and persons responsible are not evident. The applicant does not include a description of how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments. Nor does it address how the applicant will evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget, and it not not include an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds.

The applicant scores in the lower end of the middle range.

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

For the Competitive Preference Priority, item 1, the applicant partially meets this criterion by describing how they would be creating a "School-Community Interagency Collaboration Team" for each participating school which brings together

community family/children service providers on a consistent basis to provide coordinated case management or social, emotional, health, mental health, and basic needs of the student and their family. They offer a list of potential partners such as postsecondary education, dual enrollment programs, credit retrieval programs, workforce investments boards, industry and professional organizations, chambers of commerce, adult education, early childhood program, public libraries, alumni associations, civic organizations, corporate liaisons, juvenile justice, youth advocate programs, and positive youth development programs. They note that these collaboration teams would focus on project orientations and training workshops; ongoing community and service provider awareness and training in children, youth, family, education, and community issues; professional development; and dissemination. They note that each team would meet at least twice per month to review each family, although it is unclear how feasible that would actually be. Overall, the applicant offered good ideas on who might be involved in such teams, but almost no detail as to how this would actually be accomplished by every school across 14 districts.

For item 2 the applicant partially meet this criterion by offering four performance measures that align and support other aspects of the grant. These include: reducing barriers to learning by providing coordinated and collaborative case management, as evidenced by increased reading scores; reducing rates of recidivism of juvenile justice involved youth by increasing the graduate rate; increasing access to GED, HS completion, postsecondary and trade training for parents, as evidenced by pre-post adult educational attainment levels; and increasing access to positive youth development programs for at-risk students as evidences by pre-post four-year cohort graduation rates.

For item 3 (a-d), the applicant only partially meets this criterion by noting how they will collect the data to track the performance indicators over time. They do not detail how they would use the data to target its resources in order to improve results for participating students, with special emphasis on students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students affected by poverty (including highly mobile students), family instability, or other child welfare issues. They also have not developed a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students to at other high-need students and communities in the consortium over time

For item 4, the applicant partially meets this criterion by noting how they would use these teams to help integrate education and other services (e.g., services that address social-emotional, and behavioral needs) for participating students. Again, details as to exactly how this would work for each school are not offered.

For item 5 (a-e), the applicant really does not provide adequate detail to meet these criteria. Nothing is really offered as to how the partnership and consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports to: assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with the partnership's goals for improving the education and family and community supports identified by the partnership; identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with those goals for improving the education and family and community supports identified by the applicant; create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students and support improved results; engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs; and routinely assess the applicant's progress in implementing its plan to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems.

For item 6, the applicant partially meets this item by identifying annual ambitious goals. For example, they propose decreasing the number of parents with less than a HS degree from 23.80% to 14.05%, and increasing the percent of adults, and increasing the high school graduation rate from 71.34% to 100%. While these are clearly ambitious, there is not adequate detail offered to ascertain whether they are achievable.

Overall, the applicant scores within the middle range.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Although lacking in adequate detail in many areas of the proposed grant, the application did somewhat coherently and comprehensively address how it would build on the core educational assurance areas to 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 standards or college- and career-ready graduation

requirements; 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.

Overall they had proposed to do this via a combination of personalized learning environments, blending learning, integration of real-world experts into grades K-12, dual enrollment, and students meeting college and career-ready standards. A BLEND technological repository would also be created to provide teachers and school leaders with tools, resources, training, and ongoing support in making the changes needed to create personalized learning environments. Overall, attempting to do this for every student and teacher across 14 districts made it difficult to offer the level of implementation data needed to ascertain that the applicant had met various criteria.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>89</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0110LA-3 for District Cooperative of Louisiana/Vermilion Parish Public Schools

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

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

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

The applicant's reform vision does not sufficiently build on its work in all four of the core educational assurance areas.

In support of its reform vision, the applicants proposal sufficiently addresses the core educational assure relative to adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace, and to compete in the global economy as indicated by the following: The applicant indicates that the state has adopted more rigorous Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math, added writing in assessments, and incorporated literacy standards in social studies and science. Academic standards define the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn in a subject in each grade. The Common Core State Standards increases academic rigor not by focusing solely on outputs but by setting the stage for educators to understand what students know and are able to do.

In support of its reform vision, the applicant does not sufficiently address the core educational assurance relative to building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction. The applicant indicates that its Louisiana Believes concept is resulting in turning schools around. In one year, increases have been seen in participating schools, and a foundation has been set for continued improvement. The applicant only provides one year of achievement data relative indicating student grown and success which does not equate to a systematic approach relative to measuring student growth.

The applicant indicates that B.L.E.N.D. uses and integrates continuous improvement into daily instructional practices and school routines in order to close achievement gaps. However, the applicant does not articulate how B. L.E.N.D. would be integrated in to the daily process and routines. The applicant also does not indicate who would be responsible for ensuring that B.L.E.N.D would be integrated into the daily instructional practices and school routines.

In support of its reform vision, the applicant does not sufficiently address the core educational assurance relative to recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most. The applicant indicates that B.L.E.N.D. provides for a variety of ways to support educator professional growth, provide practices and leadership skills. The use of the remote, online platform allows experts, academic professors, and instructional leaders to plan, demonstrate, guide, model, observe, and provide ongoing feedback for effective

implementation of those best practices, leadership skills, and to implement changes that result in student-centered instruction. "Compass" is used as the teacher and principal evaluation and professional growth system. It is designed to provide all teachers with regular, meaningful feedback on their performance with aligned supports to foster continuous improvement. Student growth on Compass is 50% of each educator's evaluation. For school leaders, half of their evaluation is based on student learning targets they establish in collaboration with their evaluators and half is based on the state's Compass leader rubric.

However, the applicant does not articulate a clear and coherent process for recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals.

The applicant articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests as indicated by the following: The applicant proposes to implement personalized, blended learning provides high-quality instruction integrated with real-world problems, contexts, and application of learning. It promotes learning and doing and establishes an educational experience in which both student and staff understand what they should know and be able to do. The applicant's approach would also involve providing a variety of ways to support educator professional growth, provide on-going collaborative planning, frequent observation, and continuous feedback to strengthen best practices and leadership skills. Relative to teacher professional development and its impact on student achievement, the applicant provides on one year of activities inclusive of a timeline, deliverables and persons responsible.

The proposal clearly describes what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments: as evidenced by the following: The applicant proposes to create student-centered classrooms that focus on the process of facilitating learning and differentiating instruction. This would include instruction that is customized to the student's particular academic needs, interests, and learning preferences.

However, the applicant does not clearly set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in the for core educational assurance areas. It is unclear and ambiguous as to whether the applicant will concentrate its efforts on teacher professional development or improving or improving student learning through individual personalized instruction. The applicant does not evidence specific goals, a timeline, specific deliverables and persons responsible for the overall implementation of its reform model for the duration of the grant period and the year beyond.

The applicant scored in the medium range in this section.

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

**10**

**7**

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

The applicant does not provide a description of the process that the applicant used or will use to select schools to participate.

Fourteen member school districts are participating in B.L.E.N.D. The applicant clearly evidences a list of the schools that will participate in grant activities

The total number of participating students participating, students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students and participating educators are clearly evidenced.

Overall, the applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal (e.g., schools, grade bands, or subject areas) will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the medium range.

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

**10**

**5**

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

The proposal includes a timeline, planning, training and professional development, program implementation, community collaboration and capacity building, financial aid program reporting. In addition, the applicant evidences a logical, well-developed theory of change as indicated by the following: B.L.E.N.D. proposes to result in intentional changes in teaching and learning by focusing on exhibits of student learning (student projects that exemplify student proficiency and mastery of subjects) integrated with real-world, career-focused experts, settings, problems, and solutions. This change, along with building student independence in personalized learning environments, would result in ensuring that students are prepared for the workforce in careers and professions that are of interest to them, students staying in school, preventing dropout, and maintaining engagement in learning throughout their school years.

The applicant indicates that the District Cooperative of Louisiana anticipates the involvement of several more districts and

will ensure that the grant application is revised within 100 days of receiving the grant. However the applicant does not evidence a reform proposal that will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools.

Strategies and deliverables are not evidenced relative to how the applicant intends to achieve its goals.

Overall, the application does not demonstrate a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools, and will help the applicant reach its outcome goals.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the medium range.

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

For grades K-3, the applicant proposes to increase the Scoring at Core Proficiency in Reading on the DIBELS assessment by 20% each year of the project. The goal is ambitious, however, it is highly unlikely that the goal is achievable based on the overall project goals and activities and the approximate amount of funds available per student.

The applicant proposes to reduce disparities by a minimum of 50% per project year for identified subgroups for schools participating in the grant, is ambitious, but is highly unlikely that it is achievable based on the overall goals and activities and the approximate amount of funds available per student.

The applicant proposes to increase the high school graduation rate by 5 % per year for five years for all high schools participating in the grant is ambitious yet achievable.

Although data for the 2012-13 academic year, the applicant proposes to increase Postsecondary enrollment and/or dual enrollment with industry-recognized credentials completion by an average of 6% each year through the post-grant period.

Based on the overall goals and activities of the proposal, it is highly unlikely that the applicant's vision will result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity to the degree for which the goals were set. Overall, it cannot be ascertained if the goals are ambitious because achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup for each participating LEA are not included in the proposal.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the medium range.

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

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

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

From 2012 to 2013, promising increases have been seen in participating schools in the following areas:

Students entering Kindergarten ready ; Students arriving at 4th grade on-time and on-level (passing both ELA + Math 3rd grade iLEAP); Students arriving at 9th grade on-time and on-level (passing both ELA + Math 8th grade LEAP); Students on track to college in 9th grade (achieving 17 on composite EXPLORE) 20.2 %; Students graduating on time (Cohort Graduation Rate); Students enrolling in college or join workforce; and the Percent of students who enroll or are certified to work:

In all of the above areas except students being on track to college, the district experienced an approximate average of 2.5% increase. The district experience a 20.2% increase for students who are on track to college in 9th grade.

However, the applicant only evidences one year of student achievement data relative to student achievement and closing the achievement gap.

As indicated by the applicant, all schools in each district are included with resources dedicated especially to low-performing schools, struggling educators, and schools with low graduation rates and/or high percentages of low-income students. As a persistently low-achieving state with less than 20% of the students that graduate from postsecondary education, this project provides a significant way to engage students from the first day of school, through to high school graduation, and on to their careers.

The applicant does not evidence what the re resources dedicated especially to low-performing schools are. The applicant also does not clearly define the significant way it engages students from the first day of school, through to high school graduation, and on to their careers.

The applicant does not clearly demonstrate the ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools based on the limited information provided.

The applicant clearly provides evidence that demonstrates its ability to make student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services as indicated by the following:

Ongoing, formative assessments drive instruction, empower educators, is part of teacher-student conferencing, is used in continuous improvement plans and activities, and made available to parents.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence making performance data available to students. For example, real-time information is used to support each student in projects and learning based on their interests, evaluating their level at the start of a lesson and charting their progress, so teachers may provide extra help or new challenging opportunities, as needed.

Students are constantly informed by different ways of demonstrating and measuring their progress.

Data was only provided for two years for college enrollment and post-secondary degree attainment.

Based on the limited information provided, the applicant does not adequately demonstrate its ability to improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps, including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates over time. The applicant does not document a clear record of success in the past four years in all of the areas identified by the criteria.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the medium range.

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

**5**

**5**

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

The applicant clearly demonstrates a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration as evidenced by the following:

Louisiana promotes transparent practices at every level by requiring that actual salary information for all-school level instructional and support staff and all non-personnel expenditures for the district and each school are posted on the district's website and kept up-to date.

All School Board meetings and work session that include discussions and action items including personnel and non-personnel expenditures are public meetings, on each month's meeting agenda, and announced in local newspapers.

Financial reports are available in the district office with copies available at each school. Each school also has available monthly expenditure and budget expenditures in the school office.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

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

**10**

**10**

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

Each LEA identified in the proposal has clearly demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal based on the following:

The state has adopted more rigorous Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math, added writing in assessments, and incorporated literacy standards in social studies and science.

As indicated by the Louisiana Believes concept, the state has eliminated state-adopted and required curriculum and instructional materials, and has radically changed its "Bulletin 741" (state basic education requirements) to provide local autonomy in decisions that may have prevented students from progressing based on what they can do.

The state is improving high school diplomas by moving from three diplomas to one diploma with two pathways. The

Louisiana Diploma Career Pathway (and Career Pathway Jump Start) provides a strong academic base (two years), industry-recognized training for high-wage careers in high-growth job sectors (two years) in real-world, work-based learning, combined with enhanced levels of career and life counseling.

Louisiana has adopted “Compass” as the teacher and principal evaluation and professional growth system. It is designed to provide all teachers with regular, meaningful feedback on their performance with aligned supports to foster continuous improvement. The evaluation is based on at least two observations of classroom instruction per year or school leader activities that are measured against established professional practice standards and a measure of student growth.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant indicates that monthly community, stakeholder, and parent meetings on progress, input, revisions, and plans. However, the applicant does not clearly demonstrate a description of how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal and, as appropriate, how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback.

The applicant did not provide adequate evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools. The proposal included a Memorandum of Understanding from all of the participating districts. Five of the MOUs included signatures of presidents of local teachers unions respectively.

Letters of support from such key stakeholders as a state senator, the mayor's office, the Chamber of Commerce, a Parish Sheriff's Department, and the Office of the District Attorney were evidenced.

Letters of support were not included from parents and parent organizations, student organizations or early learning programs.

Overall, the proposal demonstrated minimally adequate evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the medium range

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

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

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

The proposal clearly evidences that all students understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals based on the following: The proposal is inclusive of building in student conferencing into weekly classroom routines in which student learning goals and targets are discussed, planned, and assessed; developing times/ways to include parents into student conferencing routines; utilizing virtual, real-time means for parents to participate in student learning, to observe their growth, and for teacher-student-parent conferencing and how students can exemplify their understanding.

The proposal clearly evidences that students will be able to identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals as evidenced by integrating student conferencing and feedback with the use of teacher observation and assessments is critical in establishing structures that identify, develop, and assess student goals, their progress, and to ensure timely attainment of those goals.

The applicant clearly evidences that students will be able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest via blended learning. Blended learning incorporates principles of personalized learning based on individual strengths, interests, assets, and needs of each student and better prepares them success through school, in college, and in their careers.

The proposal clearly demonstrates that systems are in place for students to have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning based on the following: Students are exposed to non-teacher instructors, mentors, and real-world experts is a formal, integrated part of the students' learning

experience rather than an occasional occurrence, serving to deepen relationships and facilitate more targeted interventions and enrichments.

The proposal clearly demonstrates that systems are in place for students to master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving as evidenced by the following: Students work collaboratively with teachers, advisors, coaches, mentors, and their families to use evidence from teachers data analysis and feedback, ongoing diagnostic assessments, surveys, conversations, and other sources in goal-setting.

The proposal clearly evidences a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career-ready via its Hub technology tool. The hub is a unique central location for instructional resources, online professional learning communities and real-time teacher student collaboration and differentiation. The applicant utilizes the Hub Tool as a part of its framework for setting student goals, targets, sequence of instruction, and assessment used in student conferencing.

The proposal clearly demonstrates a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments as indicated by the following: Students will experience new understandings, personalized learning environments, blended learning approaches, and the technological repository. B.L.E.N.D. includes a focus on educator-student interaction and promotes positive communication strategies through use of questioning, assessment data, exemplars, student centered instruction. In blended learning schools, technology and teaching inform each other. Students alternate regularly between engaging with teachers and peers and focusing on online content tailored to their learning pace and progress.

The applicant provides clear evidence of high-quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate, aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation via its proposed digital platform. The applicant boasts a digital platform that creates an interactive online community where teachers can assign individual student work, track participation and performance, provide targeted individual feedback, collaborate with other teachers and share best practices, all online and in real time.

The proposal evidences on-going and regular feedback of student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements. The applicants proposed design principles of personalized learning provides a blended platform for instruction, enabling teachers to personalize learning for each student by posting individual student work, based on their personal needs, and by tracking individual progress so that subsequent targeted feedback and instruction can be implemented.

The applicant clearly evidences accommodations and high quality strategies for high-need students to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college and career-ready standards or college and career-ready graduation requirements by providing ongoing, positive feedback, genuine praise, and instructional accommodations. The applicant strategies include creating flexible student groups based on needs and strengths, differentiating instruction and making instructional accommodations and modifications. The strategies also include using student assessment to drive instruction, target specific student needs, and to make instructional accommodations or modifications.

It is clearly evident that mechanisms are in place 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 based on the following: Each participating school will include a zero-hour each day for all students to learn how to use equipment, tools, resources, and how to virtually interact with others. The media center will also provide training as needed or on-demand throughout the school day. Zero-hour staff will ensure that all students understand protocols, policies, appropriate use, and care for equipment, technological resources, logins, email, websites, and style of communication.

Overall, the applicant clearly demonstrates a comprehensive that evidences all of the elements of 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 section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

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

The proposal clearly demonstrates that all participating educators engage in training, and in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity. B.L.E.N.D., which is the applicant's primary reform approach, will provide professional development institutes for educators that lead to a certificate in Blended Learning. Institutes include being mentored by experienced teachers and experts and the development of a unique skill set that will enable educators to effectively engage students, facilitate personalized learning settings, and differentiate instruction for

their students.

The applicant evidences the training received by all participating educators support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time and college- and career-ready. The applicant proposes training personalized learning environments and blended learning that allow staff to consistently implement differentiated instruction which provides equitable access to knowledge, skills, and activities for all students regardless of student levels.

It is clearly evident that the applicant's proposal adapts content and instruction, providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches. For example, Differentiated instruction addresses a range of needs by adapting teaching or materials, rather than expecting all students to learn from the same teaching style or same text.

The applicant clearly evidences a system that frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators. The applicant uses data that effectively increases the flexibility to respond rapidly to students' unique needs, and to make objective decisions based on the evidence at hand. The use of data is integrated, ongoing, relative to measuring student progress. Weekly assessment and progress monitoring occurs. Monthly data meetings bring each week's assessment data together for guiding team collaboration, plans for instruction, the implementation of instructional accommodations, assigning students to groups, peer tutoring, tiering instruction, and revising program services based on that data.

It is clearly evident that the applicant's plan includes systems that are in place to increase educator effectiveness. The applicant utilizes a technological hub for professional resources, tools, and ongoing support, continual access to real-time, virtual academic experts. The hub offers professional support that provide for customized and personalized professional coaching, mentoring, and collegial support as educators move into highly effective teacher and leader categories.

The application clearly evidences resources relative to actionable information that helps educators identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests. For example, real-time information is used to support each student in projects and learning based on their interests, evaluating their level at the start of a lesson and charting their progress, so teachers may provide extra help or new challenging opportunities, as needed.

High-quality learning resources including digital resources, as appropriate, that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements and the tools to create and share new resources are clearly evidenced in the proposal based on the following: Digital resources supplement a teacher's instruction, allowing students to take interesting online courses (under the guidance and support of a classroom teacher) that meet their needs, such as college level, credit recovery, elective, industry-recognized trade training, or language courses.

The proposal clearly evidences, tools, data, and resources that include information, from such sources as the district's teacher evaluation system, that helps school leaders and school leadership teams assess, and take steps to improve, individual and collective educator effectiveness and school culture and climate, for the purpose of continuous school improvement by integrating of a variety of student data, assessment, student work samples, and student projects in the decision-making, instructional modifications, and continuous improvement process bases on teachers and school leaders evaluations and effectiveness. The applicant also proposes to create a culture of promoting opportunities for learning that goes beyond the school door (traditional brick and mortar environment) and allows districts to combine face-to-face, place-based instructional practices with online, student-centered modalities that incorporate both brick and mortar locations and online learning.

Training, systems, and practices to continuously improve school progress toward the goals of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps are clearly evidenced in the proposal based on the following: Assessment is formative, summative, makes use of student portfolios and work samples, and uses rating scales, rubrics, and continuums that include fidelity of implementation and exemplars to ensure student, teachers, and leaders meet expectations, standards, and accelerate student progress, especially in closing achievement gaps.

The applicant proposes to engage in ongoing coaching and professional development on integration of Rtl (response to intervention) practices, support for high-needs students and for struggling learners.

Relative to meeting this criterion, the applicant does not evidence a high-quality 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, and specialty areas.

Overall, the applicant clearly demonstrates 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. In addition, the plan includes 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 college- and career-

ready graduation requirements and accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has provided clear evidence that it has practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning. Each LEA has local autonomy, authority, policies, procedures, and governance permission to implement the changes contained in this application. The state has eliminated state-adopted and required curriculum and instructional materials, and has radically changed its "Bulletin 741" (state basic education requirements) to provide local autonomy in decisions that may have prevented students from progressing based on what they can do.</p> <p>The applicant evidences that participating schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators. Students learn from a wide variety of adults and peers depending on the particular content and setting.</p> <p>However, the applicant's plan does not clearly demonstrate that the proposal provides school leadership teams in participating schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as calendars and school-level budgets.</p> <p>The applicant well demonstrates that it's plan includes giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic based on the following: Instead of students earning credits by passing a class that is based on instructional time (semester), they can earn credits at any point in time during the year by demonstrating proficiency through assessments or learning portfolios. They can also earn credits by instructional time not dictated by place-based school settings, but by a flexible combination of place-based and online learning (including beyond school traditional hours).</p> <p>The proposal plan clearly evidences giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways as indicated by the following: Assessment of student performance requires that students demonstrate proficiency through projects, products, capstone group projects, demonstrations, expressions, and portfolio collections of their work.</p> <p>The applicant well demonstrates within its plan that students are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and multiple comparable ways. All schools in each district are included with resources dedicated especially to low-performing schools, struggling educators, and schools with low graduation rates and/or high percentages of low-income students. All students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners, demonstrate deep thinking, strong habits of mind, and higher-order skills through their performance of academic tasks.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant well demonstrates a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provides every student, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.</p> <p>This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.</p>		

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

**10**

**8**

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

The applicant clearly demonstrates a plan for ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders, regardless of income, 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 as evidenced by the following: The proposal include a Hub Tool which keeps track of student time online, records daily progress, provides open-sharing of student work so that teachers or parents can watch student work and provide feedback regardless of location. The plan also provides a virtual, real-time means for parents to participate in student learning, to observe their growth, and for teacher-student- parent conferencing.

The B.L.E.N.D.'s plan includes Technical Support for technological hub from October to November. However, a clear plan for ensuring that students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have appropriate levels of technical support, which may be provided through a range of strategies (e.g., peer support, online support, or local support), is not evidenced.

The applicant clearly evidences a plan for 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 (e.g., electronic tutors, tools that make recommendations for additional learning supports, or software that securely stores personal records) as indicated by the following: The plans technology hub ensures access only to safe, continuously reviewed, sites, groups, organizations, and resources. Students and teachers gain access to the hub through password-protected means which will cause the system to immediately deny access to inappropriate, unsafe, or unreviewed sites.

The applicant clearly demonstrates a plan for ensuring that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems (e.g., systems that include human resources data, student information data and instructional improvement system data). The applicant proposes a technology hub, which is a unique central location for instructional resources, online professional learning communities and real-time teacher student collaboration and differentiation. It is a cloud-based solution with unlimited storage for instructional content which allows teachers and students the opportunity to share content inside and outside of the classroom.

The applicant does not evidence the hub would be utilized for the proposal's budget data.

Overall, the applicant well demonstrates elements of a high-quality plan that promises strong support of project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

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

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

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

The applicant well demonstrates a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during the grant period and after the term of the grant as evidenced by the following: B.L.E.N.D., the applicant's turnaround model, uses and integrates continuous improvement into daily instructional practices and school routines in order to close achievement gaps. Effective continuous improvement models employ data-driven decision making and collaboration between teachers to improve academic achievement in their schools. Continuous improvement includes the critical aspects of 1) decisions that are made in the best interest of children, 2) investing in best practices professional development and instruction, and 3) the systematic use of data in driving decisions, responding to student needs in a timely fashion, and designing effective instructional practices. Weekly assessment or progress monitoring activities takes place. Monthly data meetings bring each week's assessment data together and, in collaborative teams, plans for instruction, implements instructional accommodations, assigns students to groups, peer tutors, or tiers of instruction, and revises program services based on that data.

Overall, the applicant evidences a high-quality approach to continuously improve its plan and address how the applicant will publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District as evidenced by the following: Data will include publicly-available data and information collected that is coded in a way to ensure the protection of personally-identifiable information, student/family privacy, confidentiality, and objectivity. Evaluation reports will include midyear, annual, and end-of-project. Progress, results, and evaluation findings will be shared with consortium members, project partners, mayors, InterAgency partners, stakeholders, and schools during regularly-scheduled quarterly B.L.E.N.D. meetings.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

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

The proposal clearly demonstrates elements of a high-quality plan with support for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders as evidenced by the following activities: Compass is identified as the teacher and principal evaluation and professional growth system. It is designed to provide all teachers and leaders with regular, meaningful feedback on their performance. The applicant's reform model, B.L.E.N.D., provides for a variety of ways to support educator professional growth, provide ongoing collaborative planning, frequent observation, and continuous

feedback to strengthen best practices and leadership skills.

The applicant proposes to conduct monthly consortium meetings and virtual communities to share practices, results, revisions, successes, celebrations, provide and attain collegial support, provide input, feedback, and recommendations, share resources, and to ensure consistency of implementation among consortium members.

In addition, the applicant proposes to conduct monthly community, stakeholder, and parent meetings on progress, input, revisions, and plans.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

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

The applicant presents ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures for fourteen participating school districts.

The applicant proposes to reduce achievement disparities in reading, math, increase on-time high school graduation rate, increase college- and career readiness, inclusive of their respectively identified sub-groups and to increase percentage of effective teachers and administrators. Baseline and target data is provided for four years and one post year of project.

The performance measures that the applicant has selected are quantitative academic data and qualitative observation data.

The applicant failed to offer rationales for each subcategory and base-line achievement measures for the implementation year are not evidenced.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the medium range.

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

The applicant clearly demonstrates a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology and an educator evaluation partly based on student academic growth as well as overall student achievement in reading, math, the reducing of gaps in achievement, increased graduation rate and college and career-readiness. The plan includes who would be responsible for the overall evaluation, and who would be the recipients of the evaluation outcomes. The plan proposes to provide evaluation data and project updates quarterly.

The following elements within the plan provides strong support for the plan to be of high quality. The evaluation, use of data, and communication of results for the activities contained in this project will be part of the B.L.E.N.D. evaluation plan which includes the use and integration of an external, third-party evaluator to establish effective protocols and procedures to ensure the attainment of established objectives; to provide sufficient information on the progress of attaining outcomes; and to verify the project's effectiveness including follow-up activities. All evaluation methodologies, instruments, collection of data, protocols, measurement procedures, research design, and analyses will adhere to all applicable research and data collection policies and procedures of the local school board and state department of education.

Additional elements of the applicant's plan being of high quality are evidenced via the following: Data will include publicly-available data and information collected that is coded in a way to ensure the protection of personally-identifiable information, student/family privacy, confidentiality, and objectivity. Evaluation reports will include midyear, annual, and end-of-project. Progress, results, and evaluation findings will be shared with internal and external stakeholders and schools during regularly-scheduled quarterly meetings.

This section of the proposal was assigned a score in the high range.

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

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

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

The applicant clearly identifies overall, all funds that will support the project to include the grant funds as well as corporate

giving donations and matching funds. Sub-budgets for each of the fourteen participating schools are also evidenced and are reflective of the overall project budget.

The budget appears to be reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. The project will concentrate its efforts on all grades for fourteen school districts. Educators directly involved with the implementation of the project will receive intensive professional learning and related supports that will help implement blended learning strategies based on the applicant's proposed reform model (B.L.E.N.D.). The project will also serve approximately 43,514 students in grades preK-12 to cover the cost of implementing strategies that will improve their academic achievement and increase their college- and career-readiness. With a total four-year project cost request of \$30,000,000, this amounts to approximately \$650.00 in annual program costs, per student participant. The total cost is also inclusive of the following defined line items: personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractals, training stipends and indirect costs.

The applicant provides a rationale for the investments and priorities, including a description of all of the funds that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal. The applicant does not however, provide a rationale for investments and priorities relative to the identification of the funds that will be used for one-time investments.

The applicant scored in the high range in this section.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant evidence goals of the proposal that promise to have an overall impact on its intended outcomes and benefits. It cannot be determined; however, to what degree the benefits or proposal's outcomes would be sustained until each consecutive year at the end of the project ends.

The proposal includes the following strategies for sustainability: The development of an B.L.E.N.D. business and industry Advisory Board focused on attracting additional funding; corporate fundraising activities and events; a corporate volunteer programs or work-based volunteer opportunities that can bring additional funding to the school; and an advisory dedicated to bringing in funding to sustain the project; and a will seek out school-based Medicaid Administrative Match funding for providing access to needed social/health services.

The plan does not include 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.

However, the proposal does not include how the applicant will evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget, and include an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds based on the above strategies.

Overall, the applicant does not evidence a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant based on the criteria set forth.

The applicant scored in the low medium range for this section.

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant clearly provides a description of the coherent and sustainable partnership to support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1 that it has formed with social service and integrated student service providers as evidenced by the following: B.L.E.N.D. includes InterAgency community collaboration activities specifically designed to increase, strengthen, coordinate, and provide seamless and collaborative services to meet the social, health, emotional/mental health, substance abuse, growth and development, parenting and family services, positive youth development, access to high-quality early childhood education, adult education, workforce training, access to employment, and basic needs of the students and their families in each local community served by each school districts in this project.

The applicant proposes to engage the community at the family point-of-service to identify and reduce any barriers to learning in a coordinated and collaborative fashion will bolster student engagement and ensure that all students are able to attend school, ready to learn. The applicant proposes to provide access to GED, high school completion, reduce barriers to

learning by providing coordinated case management services to students and families, reduce rates of recidivism of juvenile justice involved youth and increase access to positive youth development programs.

The priority adequately describes how the partnership would track the selected indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the LEA or consortium and at the student level for the participating students. The Community Needs Assessment component and subsequent action plans will be presented to, revised with input, and disseminated to InterAgency partners. The applicant proposes to have monthly meetings on the variety of topics and issues relative to students and families. The applicant will identify current services for children, youth, and families, obstacles each service provider faces, gaps in services, and brainstorm ways to close the gaps and address barriers in long-term ways.

The applicant adequately proposes to use data to target its resources in order to improve results for participating students (as defined in this notice), with special emphasis on students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students affected by poverty (including highly mobile students), family instability, or other child welfare issues in following manner.

The applicant proposes to meet quarterly with outreach managers from Workforce, Adult Education/ESL, parenting and family support, family literacy, etc., for adult support to develop action plans for gaps, obstacles, and needs identified in needs assessment process, resulting in re-positioned staff and synergetic priorities. In addition, the applicant proposes to maximize services in a cohesive and collaborative fashion, and develop a depth of financial and in-kind resources to sustain and increase services provided.

The applicant adequately evidences a means to develop a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students as indicated by the following: The goal of InterAgency activities relative to addressing persistent issues and at-risk factors in the community, focus on problem-solving and community strengths, maximize services in a cohesive and collaborative fashion, and develop a depth of financial and in-kind resources to sustain and increase services provided.

The applicant anticipates results that would maximize services reduce disjointed services and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of participating partners relative maximizing services to students and families.

Relative to partnerships, each school will participate in a School-Community Interagency Collaboration Team which brings community family/children service providers together on a consistent basis to provide coordinated case management for social, emotional, health, mental health, and basic needs of the student and their family.

The applicant sufficiently describes how the partnership and LEA or consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports. The applicant will engage in planning and collaborative partnerships that maximize existing services for children, youth, and families, and that result in re-positioned staff to provide coordinated services as a team rather than in isolation.

Team members will meet to identify, and assess the needs of participating students, the school and community that are aligned with the goals for improving education and family and community supports as identified by the applicant. The supports will include intensive outreach for families in areas such as tutoring and mentoring services, mental health and substance abuse services, parent support and education, transportation and financial support, health services and food, clothing, housing, and unemployment assistance.

InterAgency activities and shared case management allow teams to mutually identify needs and assets of individual students and families aligned with B.L.E.N.D. goals identified in this project, develop and frequently review cohesive case management plans that maximize community resources, include parents and families in the determination of needs, decision-making, case management plans, individualized family plan, and frequent review of progress. Each school and community agency will share resources, tools, supportive systems, and training rather than each agency attaining their own resources.

The applicant clearly evidences annual ambitious performance measures that are achievable for the proposed population-level and describe desired results for students. The performance measures are promising and achievable based on the proposed InterAgency activities, resources and services the applicant intends to provide.

The applicant has thoroughly described its efforts to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students and families. The high quality of the InterAgency partnership will enhance the project and the services are sustainable after the project period ends.

The applicant scored in the high range for this section.

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<p><b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant's reform vision does not sufficiently build on its work in all four of the core educational assurance areas.</p> <p>In support of its reform vision, the applicants proposal sufficiently addresses the core educational assure relative to adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace, and to compete in the global economy as indicated by the following: The applicant indicates that the state has adopted more rigorous Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math, added writing in assessments, and incorporated literacy standards in social studies and science. Academic standards define the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn in a subject in each grade. The Common Core State Standards increases academic rigor not by focusing solely on outputs but by setting the stage for educators to understand what students know and are able to do.</p> <p>In support of its reform vision, the applicant does not sufficiently address the core educational assurance relative to building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction. The applicant indicates that its Louisiana Believes concept is resulting in turning schools around. In one year, increases have been seen in participating schools, and a foundation has been set for continued improvement. The applicant only provides one year of achievement data relative indicating student grown and success which does not equate to a systematic approach relative to measuring student growth.</p> <p>The applicant indicates that B.L.E.N.D. uses and integrates continuous improvement into daily instructional practices and school routines in order to close achievement gaps. However, the applicant does not articulate how B. L.E.N.D. would be integrated in to the daily process and routines. The applicant also does not indicate who would be responsible for ensuring that B.L.E.N.D would be integrated into the daily instructional practices and school routines.</p> <p>In support of its reform vision, the applicant does not sufficiently address the core educational assurance relative to recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most. The applicant indicates that B.L.E.N.D. provides for a variety of ways to support educator professional growth, provide practices and leadership skills. The use of the remote, online platform allows experts, academic professors, and instructional leaders to plan, demonstrate, guide, model, observe, and provide ongoing feedback for effective implementation of those best practices, leadership skills, and to implement changes that result in student-centered instruction.</p> <p>However, the applicant does not clearly set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in the for core educational assurance areas. It is unclear and ambiguous as to whether the applicant will concentrate its efforts on teacher professional development or improving or improving student learning through individual personalized instruction. The applicant does not evidence specific goals, a timeline, specific deliverables and persons responsible for the overall implementation of its reform model for the duration.</p> <p>The proposal articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests as evidenced by the following: B.L.E.N.D. will provide a focus on the "how's" of teaching and learning and gives open-shared access to all educators in the consortium to tools, resources, professional experts, university staff, and education innovators. Blended learning incorporates principles of personalized learning based on individual strengths, interests, assets, and needs of each student and better prepares them success through school, in college, and in their careers.</p> <p>The proposal clearly demonstrates that all participating educators engage in training, and in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity. B.L.E.N.D., which is the applicant's primary reform approach, will provide professional development institutes for educators that lead to a certificate in Blended Learning. Institutes include being mentored by experienced teachers and experts and the development of a unique skill set that will enable educators to effectively engage students, facilitate personalized learning settings, and differentiate instruction for their students.</p> <p>It is clearly evident that the applicant's plan includes systems that are in place to increase educator effectiveness. The applicant utilizes a technological hub for professional resources, tools, and ongoing support, continual access to real-time, virtual academic experts. The hub offers professional support that provide for customized and personalized professional coaching, mentoring, and collegial support as educators move into highly effective teacher and leader categories.</p> <p>The applicant proposes to engage in ongoing coaching and professional development on integration of Rtl (response to intervention) practices, support for high-needs students and for struggling learners.</p>		

The applicant does not, however, evidence a high-quality 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, and specialty areas.

Overall, the applicant clearly demonstrates 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. In addition, the plan includes 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 college- and career-ready graduation requirements and accelerate his or her learning through support of his or her needs.

The applicant well demonstrates a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during the grant period and after the term of the grant as evidenced by the following: B.L.E.N.D., the applicant's turnaround model, uses and integrates continuous improvement into daily instructional practices and school routines in order to close achievement gaps.

The applicant proposes to reduce achievement disparities by a minimum of 50% per project year for identified subgroups for schools participating in the grant. The applicant proposes to increase the high school graduation rate by 5 % each year for five years for all high schools participating in the grant. The applicant proposes to reduce achievement disparities in reading, math, increase on-time high school graduation rate, increase college- and career readiness, inclusive of their respectively identified sub-groups and to increase percentage of effective teachers and administrators. Baseline and target data is provided for four years and one post year of project.

The applicant has clearly outlined a vision to meet the core assurances and has met priority and provided strong response to the selection criteria relative to addressing Absolute Priority 1.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>162</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0110LA-4 for District Cooperative of Louisiana/Vermilion Parish Public Schools

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

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

#### (A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(A)(1)(a) The cooperative has a number of initiatives/programs in place that are coherent and comprehensive. Indeed, the vision appears well integrated with clear objectives and deserves a high score because:

- They have adopted Common Core standards and participate in *Louisiana Believes* which are the reform efforts implemented consistent with the district's state RtTT grant. The common core, by definition, addresses career/college ready standards.

- It has altered its pathway to diploma, recognizing the need for college/career ready prep. Interestingly, it has analyzed data regarding projected employment in the region. The attention to the career needs of the region adds a layer of coherence to their vision and addresses the first core assurance area. (e.g, BLEND program). Moreover, they have supported their initiatives with credible research citations.

- The PARCC assessments have been adopted, thus, assuming these are aligned to the content (as advertised) this addresses core area 1. These efforts/undertakings provide a firm foundation by which the district can assess its fidelity to core assurance areas related to assessments.
- The district's evaluation process (core area 2) have been applied in a manner consistent with best practice (e.g., finding a more limited number of teachers as highly effective). Indeed, the district proposes to use the evaluation system in a more aggressive manner and one that generally reflects a reality (e.g., that not all teachers are "advanced"). Thus, through its use of the evaluation system it will continue to improve its teacher quality in the district, a core educational assurance area.
- BLEND appears to provide access to data. Indeed, the BLEND approach also describes how the students will be able to integrate various personalized learning opportunities with the use of technology. The premise of blend is that it provides an open share hub, where teachers, instructors, can access data and, importantly, contribute feedback in a collegial manner. The use of BLEND is a proposal to address the integration of data.
- The description of the classroom experience, from the student perspective, is lacking, to the extent it can be discerned at all.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The applicant (a consortia) warrants a mid range score because

(a) The application lacks details about the process of selection. Rather it appears that the pre-established collaborative/consortia of schools opted to apply.

(b)(c) a list of schools is provided as are the number of students per participant. The district has completed tables that reflect the number of participating students as identified in this subgroup.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The application warrants a low score because:

The applicant includes a detailed plan complete with timelines and objectives. Yet the applicant lacks specificity as the theory of change and how this will support meaningful change. Rather the applicant makes conclusions that the BLEND option will result in changes. In other words, the plan does not include considerations of "scaling up" or translation into meaningful reform. Rather the applicant assumes that the implementation of BLEND results in transformation. Similarly, the applicant's theory of change suffers in the sense that it addresses all different students (e.g., special needs, ELL) in the school consortia without regard to the specific needs relative to those subgroups.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The goals are ambitious, yet achievability may be questionable in some instances.

(a) For instance, the district proposes a 20% increase in proficient per year in K-3 DIBELS scores. This is ambitious. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that the applicant can effectively double its proficiency in one year is questionable, especially in the first year of the grant. The reduction of subgroup achievement gap by 50% on some measures is a commendable goal, but not likely achievable. However, the other improvements in summative assessments (e.g. 5% increase per year in gr 3 math proficiency) appear more realistic.

(b) the decrease in achievement gaps - and the goals here - are ambitious and achievable. The vision - including adoption of the common core, PARCC assessments, etc, according to the research, will contribute to a reduction in the achievement gap.

(c) the plan's vision -- which reconfigure graduation requirements and links graduation to career paths - should have considerable results relative to (c). Indeed, providing multiple pathways to graduation - rather than requiring students to adhere to pre-set manner of achieving credits is a credible approach, as demonstrated in the research to improve graduation rates.

(d) the applicant shows attention to the various nuances of a particular school (e.g., Port Hudson Academy in Zachary has

a college enrollment rate at the end of the grant of 62.75%. While this is relatively low, it does show that the applicant was attentive to the needs/potential of each district). Compare to (North Vermillion HS, which has 100% because it started at 68%). However, the link between the improved college enrollment and BLEND is weak. BLEND promises to create an information hub; however, the link between improved college enrollment and an information hub is not established in the literature.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant deserves a moderate score here because:</p> <p>It is not apparent that there is a clear record of success over 4 years because insufficient data is provided (not all years). As a preliminary matter, data is not provided in the four year span, as required. Missing data over the required time frame are relative to achievement gaps, graduation rates and enrollment. The applicant does refer to the reforms it implemented and discussed in (A)1), however this does not constitute the evidence as required by this part of the application. At the same time, the district should be credited for achieving these reforms (e.g., implementing common core, new degree requirements).</p> <p>Likewise, the applicant does not describe the methods it has employed to make data available, especially to students and parents, in a manner that informs and improves participation. (c).</p> <p>Thus, in sum, a low score is warranted here primarily because of the lack of detail with respect to the required time span for particular data. Without such data, it is difficult to ascertain any "clear record" of success.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district deserves a low score here. It does not indicate a high-level of transparency primarily because it simply suggests that its compliance with state regulations equates to a "high-level" of transparency.</p> <p>However, the applicant has not demonstrated evidence of a increasing transparency to high-level of transparency. Indeed, the applicant notes that "Louisiana" requires posting of actual salaries. However, the applicant does not indicate that they comply with this requirement. Moreover, the requirement of the state does not itself does not ensure a high level of transparency. It does not suggest that the district is proactive in demonstrating high level of transparency.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>A high score is warranted because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The state received an RTTT grant, thus suggesting that the conditions of reform are already in place. Indeed, the conditions of the grant requires the state to set forth various regulations and conditions for the implementation of personalized learning environments. This includes the adoption of common core standards and this is evidence of sufficient autonomy to achieve reform. Another example relates to graduation and credit requirements - the state has removed instructional hour requirements to earn credit and has instead allowed students to demonstrate proficiency on assessments and portfolios. Similarly, the state has authorized the issuance of one diploma, but provides two pathways (including one that focuses on developing skills and knowledge recognized by industries in the area).</li> </ul>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant deserves a low to mid score because:</p>		

- The applicant insufficiently describes how feedback was used to construct the application. Instead, it appears to rest primarily on letters of support.
- The support of teachers is unclear and does not appear to address the requirements of this subpart. See (a)(ii)(requiring 70% of teachers in non-bargaining states to approve).

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant deserves a mid score, primarily because of insufficiency with respect to its attention to (c) in this part of the application, as described below.</p> <p>(a)(b) The BLEND initiative includes a number of theories of learning that have demonstrated potential for addressing this subpart (e.g., online learning, student-led discussions, weekly student-conferencing, student project rubrics). The focus on career certainly addresses components in this subpart (i)-(iii) and linked to career ready standards/experiences (incorporating "real world" experts through personal and online experiences). This real word expert exposure addresses (iv) as well. However, the applicant fails to address the "support of parents" component in this subpart. The proposed use of online "field trips" suggests the use of high-quality content in a digital learning context (b)(iii) and the conferencing, described above, provides the ongoing feedback (b)(iv).</p> <p>(c) The applicant spends a great deal of time discussing the impact of juvenile incarceration, making it difficult to relate that discussion to the topic addressed in this subpart (access to understand the tools the collaborative will use). See(c). However, the applicant does have a separate section (d) where it addresses (c). In this part, nevertheless, the descriptions seem to provide some mechanisms (e.g., 24/7 virtual computing assistance), but lacks the specifics require of a high-quality plan (timeline, goals, responsible parties, etc.)</p> <p>The applicant provides a number of standards and links the standard to a real-world application. However, the applicant is lacking detail regarding this will improve student involvement in their learning.</p> <p>In addition, the elements of a high-quality plan are lacking in the list of initiatives. For instance, the key deadlines and deliverables are generally not attached to the initiatives listed in this subsection. Without attention to the key deadlines, etc., and elements of a high quality plan the quality suffers. Instead, the application refers generally to the use of student conferencing, establishing personal goals, personalizing feedback, etc. Yet it is unclear how this will be down in terms of the elements of a high quality plan (e.g., frequency of conferencing).</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant deserves a mid/high ranking because:</p> <p>(a)(1) The applicant proposes a number of best practices that have promise with respect to personalizing learning, monitor student progress and improve effectiveness, see(i)-(iv). These include: use of Common Core Standards; The BLEND program (integrating technology with instruction and data collection), curriculum mapping, and the use of the Danielson framework for evaluation and reflective practice. However, the applicant is short on addressing the components of a high-quality plan, as defined. Indeed, the application refers generally to the best practices that will be addressed, but fails to adequately discuss timelines, goals, etc. To be sure, the applicant, in other areas, does describe the COMPASS evaluation program in greater detail.</p> <p>(b)(c) The proposal related here - in particular, the use of the Danielson framework combined with use of data - holds substantial promise for improving student outcomes toward career ready/graduation requirements. The framework breaks down teacher effectiveness and evaluation into a number of relevant domains that are directly related to tailoring and personalizing instruction. In addition, the coaching and mentoring possibilities proposed are important tools in this manner. Yet the application speaks of generalities here - describing the various theories that may address this issue, but lacks a detailed analysis (e.g., of high quality plan) about how the theories would be concretely translated.</p>		

A tighter connection to the stakeholders involved here - the school leaders and leadership is required and more information would be sufficient . That said, the applicant does address this, to some degree, elsewhere in the application (where they discuss the current use of teacher assessment/ratings).

(d) The applicant's plan does have a plan that promises to improve effectiveness and, in this area, the applicant also adds the use of a program (LaPPASC) which will prepare school leaders. The LaPPACS is a consortium of districts that work together to develop school leaders through embedded programs (e.g., Aspiring Principals Program. It also promotes the development of current principles through its Practicing Principal Development Program. Recruiting and developing leadership through programs such as these is a crucial means to ensure that students have highly effective leadership.

However, in general the plan is lacking in high-quality elements and speaks in generalities. Thus, on a theoretical level the plan has promise. But without the deadlines and elements it cannot be characterized as a plan that has high-quality.

#### D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant refers back to Section (A)(1) where they do describe a number of governance structures that tend to address the subparts of this section. These include.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Louisiana Believes</i>, the statewide initiative that includes adoption of curriculum, instructional delivery, and evaluation.</li> <li>- The collaborative indicates that students can learn and earn credits at different intervals related to place based learning and there is a refined diploma option (Louisiana Diploma Career Pathways) See (c)(d).</li> <li>- The state used an outside consulting firm (Parthenon) to align the job market needs with the educational resource allocation.</li> <li>- To be sure, it is unclear how the districts central office structure addresses in sufficient detail (a) in this application, especially in relation to providing support for the additional supporting schools. A well-organized plan is integral for the plan's success, especially given the large number of participating districts.</li> <li>- The use of online resources, as proposed, holds considerable promise in addressing (e), but again elements of high-quality (e.g., stakeholders, deadlines, etc.). A more nuanced discussion of how these online resources will be used would have added to the application.</li> </ul> <p>Primarily because of the lack of detail with respect to the high quality plan requirements, the applicant deserves a low/mid score.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant applies circular logic to address this subpart. Specifically it concludes that the MOUs are the evidence that the LEA and infrastructure all address subparts (a)-(d). Citation to the MOUs is insufficient to comply with the requirements of a high quality plan. Thus, a low score is warranted.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Again, the applicant applies a circular logic that overlooks the requirements of a high-quality plan. Specifics are lacking with respect to the use of the funds will used to monitor and publicly share information regarding the quality of investments. The plan appears to address how it will monitor progress, and assumes that the plan, as written, will succeed. Yet it does not discuss how the plan may need to be altered (e.g., the BLEND model is unsuccessful). Thus, a low score is</p>		

warranted.

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

**5**

**2**

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

Applicant provides a timeline for implementation of the plan, including activities, responsibilities, and boxes that are checked off for completion. Yet the question asks for how the readjustments and revisions will be used to dialogue with internal and external stakeholders. The tables provided do not sufficiently address this question concerning revisions to the plan and communication required. In other words, the plan should have included more opportunities or room to provide readjustments. But, as written, the plan is simply addressing how the parts of the plan will be enacted, rather than ensuring ongoing communication to provide readjustments, if needed, as required under this subpart. Thus, a low score is warranted.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The applicant provides the required performance measures. These include increasing by 20% the number of highly effective teachers in the project, to increase proficiency in Algebra 1, geometry, English and US History II by 5%; to reduce disparities in science between the subgroups by 50%. These are laudable. However, there is some question regarding the achievability, especially given the fact that there are multiple districts involved. In other words, a reduction of 50% across science in one year, and then each success year, may be overreaching, given the number of students involved and this high bar that the district has set.

However, missing from the elective measures is a specific discussion as to why those were chosen (e.g., the rationale). Indeed, some of the goals are wide-ranging and across multiple subjects (e.g., improving proficiency in English, geometry, etc.) Again, this is commendable, but attending to all these different subjects may spread resources and focus thin, thus calling into question the achievability. Moreover, the narrative in this section lacks specific details about monitoring these data and making necessary changes. (b)(c). Therefore a low score is warranted.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The applicant's proposed use of an outside evaluator is one positive way to address the effectiveness of the plan. However, the elements of a high-quality plan are assumed, rather than sufficiently explained. It notes, for instance, that results will be shared but lacking details such as: deadlines and deliverables -- use of the information to promote improvement. Even still, it is unclear when and how frequently the evaluator will be engaged.

Thus, a low score is warranted.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>(a) the applicant identified the funds supporting the project.</p> <p>(b) the budget is broken down for each participating district. However, the grant proposal here will likely not result in sufficient funds to support the selected operations here across the span of all districts.</p> <p>(c) The district describes its rationale in short phrases in the budget tables. However, closer links to the goals of the initiative would have supported the rationale for the positions and expenditures. Each district attaches budgets indicating the source of non-grant funds, most of which are in-kind. In addition, the grant is unclear as to what funds will be one time investments and those that will continue beyond the grant thus contributing to sustainability.</p> <p>Thus, a mid score is warranted.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

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

The plan's goals are sustainable. A great deal of the grant will be leveraged to develop and improve human (improving, implementing teacher effectiveness) and technological capacity (e.g., online, web-based instruction). The districts appear to also be assuming a great deal of the costs associated with the overall program, thus relying less on the grant to achieve sustainability. However, the plan does lack specifics, (e.g., claims to excite and engage parents and this will in turn result in the public's willingness to increase the taxes supporting school). While that may be an aspiration, it is difficult to develop a long term budget on such assumptions. A mod score is warranted.

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

(1) The applicant discusses the "interagency collaboration" as the model to address this subpart. The use of schools as a point of service for other community needs and wraparound services is an effective approach to engage families and community agencies. A list of other agencies is included (with the., Head Start, libraries) as part of the BLEND Advisory Council. It is not entirely clear how the Advisory Council interacts with the collaborative. They work together, but the coherence of that arrangement is unclear.

(2) The applicant provides 8 priorities (e.g., access to GED, "reduction in barriers to learning").

(3)(4)(5) The applicant refers back generally to other parts of the application as sufficient to address this subpart. However, the application in various spots are not sufficiently detailed to gain an understanding (e.g., evidence of MOUs is not adequate) to describe the integration of the services. The goals are general - and good - but not supported by detail.

(6) The performance measures and desired results are described.

A mid-low score is warranted. As described, the link between the agencies involved here and the schools are not described adequately. Thus, without these connections the coherence and sustainability of the plan are called into question.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has satisfied this priority because:

- It proposes a redesign of how students achieve a diploma that is tailored to a student's needs and career goals, a core area.
- The BLEND program integrates a number of different ways to deliver instruction, including providing online instruction and contact with "real world" experts that will allow students to connect with career ideas and facilitate and education that helps them achieve this.
- Adopted common core standards that, by definition, are related to career standards and 21st Century Learning Goals. Moreover, goals have been set that are aimed at decreasing achievement gaps and in for students with high needs.
- The use of effective teacher evaluation systems, including the Danielson model.
- The use of data to inform instruction has been promoted, thus attending to the core area of improving effective educators.
- Connection to other services that can help address the needs of students in other social areas (emotional help) thru the use of wraparound services have been proposed, indicating some effort to address the non-instructional needs of children.
- The government context seems to allow the individualization of instruction (e.g., the state has received a state RTTT grant already), and the district seeks to build off of these efforts which are aimed to personalize instruction.

Total	210	105
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