



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0192NJ-2 for East Orange School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a proposal that builds on momentum generated from New Jersey's Race to the Top program and seeks to resolve local challenges. The proposal describes strategic priorities including early childhood education, teacher and principal excellence, linking community supports to student achievement and increasing post-secondary access and success through fifteen specific projects:

- professional development related to CCSS
- technology
- inclusion
- Edmentum credit recovery system
- FAMILYConnections on-site counseling services
- Mental Health Association school-based counseling and mental health services
- College and Career Readiness program
- Renaissance assessment system
- External grant evaluator
- School of Industry Training
- Career and Technical Education Program of Study
- Achieve Academy
- College Prep School
- Campus University
- Naviance software systems for personalized learning plans

The applicant makes a strong case that the proposal meets the four required core assurance areas and also aligns with the New Jersey Department of Education's reform levers. There is clearly need in this district with high dropout and truancy rates, as well as community factors, such as gang violence and high crime and poverty rates. A clear strength of the application is that the authors have looked beyond the symptoms to identify and seek to impact underlying causes, such as family and community factors and issues of mental health.

The proposal seeks to bring together a wide array of resources to have a broad impact on student learning and progress toward college and career readiness. While this is a strength, it also brings with it some questions about whether the proposal represents a cohesive system or simply a list of disconnected interventions. Similarly, the abundance of reliance on commercial products as solutions raises some question about whether the plan is something the district really owns and buys into. The work at hand is monumental, but a series of pre-packaged curriculum, courses, and services may not offer the comprehensive and coherent system required to develop district capacity and bring about substantive and lasting change.

Overall, the proposal scores in the medium-high range for articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a process through which a committee of stakeholders reviewed RTTT-D eligibility requirements, assessment data, trend data, district goals, and curriculum to perform a needs assessment. Committee members decided to include all district schools in the RTTT-D proposal. This process did ensure that the participating schools collectively meet

the competition's eligibility requirements.

The application includes a list of all the schools that will participate, as well as the total number of participating students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, and participating educators as required by the selection criteria.

Overall, the applicant's approach to implementation makes sense -- there are many needs in this district, and all schools would benefit from participation. The application shows that there is a need for significant technology upgrades, professional development for all educators, socio-emotional supports for students and their families, and supports to keep students in school. However, it is unclear whether internal needs or external forces are driving the proposal. There is a lot of attention paid to alignment with NJDOE's priorities and concerns about upcoming PARCC assessments, and little attention paid to the voices of teachers, students, parents, and principals identifying their own next right steps.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a thorough and detailed account of the proposal for LEA-wide reform and change that covers all required components of a high quality plan. A high quality plan must include key goals, the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible for implementing the activities. These things, considered together, should be credible.

The plan provides strong alignment of resources, activities, and deliverables to stated goals. However, it is problematic that the majority of the key goals of the proposal are not linked to student learning or system-driven areas of need:

- meet the conditions of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)
- link our student database to system to the State NJ SMART system
- provide parents with clear and timely information about the progress of their students
- continue participation in the state teacher and administrator evaluation system

In the description of the work that will be put into action, the relationship to students and their learning becomes more clear:

- provide additional academic support and enrichment to improve academic performance
- implement special programs to improve students' classroom behavior and social skills
- train teachers to personalize the learning environment and instructional process and provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students

The overall credibility of the plan is negatively impacted by the feeling that goals and programs are disconnected or being impacted by the wrong drivers.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application notes project goals that match New Jersey ESEA Waiver goals, which aim to reduce the failure rate by 50% in six years. The applicants have provided annual goals to that end for each of the required student subgroups. For example, the proposal sets a goal for overall 11th grade English language arts proficiency that moves from the current 72.8% proficient to 85.6% proficient by the end of the grant period. Similarly, the English Language Learners subgroup is currently 45.2% proficient, and the application sets a goal of 63.3% proficiency by the end of the grant.

Goals related to performance on summative assessments (both for proficiency and growth) are ambitious, but appear to be grounded in two years of baseline data, making them appear achievable. Current performance among students with disabilities is troubling in comparison to overall student performance, but there are strong goals in place for improvement over the grant period.

The applicant notes goals of 90% proficiency status among all subgroups with a 10-point gap or higher in the 12-13 baseline year. This goal appears to match the statewide goal, but seems unrealistic given that some groups are starting with proficiency rates close to (and even some below) 10%. Given the huge performance gaps among the students with disabilities subgroup, a massive effort would need to be in place to support such a rate of growth. However, there is nothing in the proposal that seems to really target supports and interventions for students with disabilities and their teachers.

Goals for graduation rates appear much more realistic and attainable, but still end with a goal of 95% graduation rate among all subgroups. College enrollment goals are ambitious and require significant improvement among the Hispanic and

Special Education subgroups, but the application supports these goals with many supports to these ends.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides data to show a trend of improvement in 11th grade English/Language Arts, but leaves out data from other content areas and grade levels, which raises questions about how widespread the improvement has been. The data included in other sections of the application show real concerns about subgroup performance -- particularly the special education subgroup.</p> <p>Additional evidence includes a description of changes to instruction in reading and writing, which appear to show improvements in alignment to Common Core State Standards. Additionally, the district arranged time for grade level teams to meet and discuss data and collectively implement promising practices. The applicant also noted twice as much time for English courses, which may be relevant in the question about how isolated the improvement has been. Did other content areas suffer as a result of the increased focus on English? Is the model of doubling instructional time scalable to other content areas? Additionally, the level at which high stakes tests drive the culture and substance of teaching and learning in the district is troubling.</p> <p>The applicant also notes a Saturday tutoring program that promotes differentiated instruction. Such substantively different approaches to teaching and learning will be necessary to make the kind of improvements required. The selection criteria also require that LEAs show evidence of how they have made student performance data available to student, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. There is evidence that teachers are using data to make decisions, but there is no mention of how parents and students have been involved in meaningful ways.</p> <p>The application lacks evidence that truly ambitious and significant reforms have been made and earns an overall low-medium score.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicants have provided evidence of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments through a description of available financial reports, public hearings on operating budgets that provide actual personnel salaries, and Board meetings that are public. It is clear that information is readily accessible to anyone who wishes to pursue it and that there are opportunities for comment should people wish to do so. However, all sharing is passive in that it is accessible and open, but there does not appear to be any effort to engage stakeholders in a meaningful dialog. Similarly, there is no evidence of efforts to increase transparency.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has explained how the proposal aligns with state priorities, setting statewide conditions that would be supportive of the work as proposed. The chart provided in section A(1) shows how pieces of the local proposal align with pieces of the New Jersey Race to the Top effort. For example, the New Jersey Race to the Top effort seeks to implement a consistent, transparent evaluation system for school leaders and teachers, and the local proposal describes a system of educator professional development built on the Charlotte Danielson Evaluation system for teachers and the Multi-dimensional Principal Performance Rubric system for administrators. However, there is still some question about whether the statewide reform work is driving the locally-proposed work or whether there is genuine locally-derived will to do work that aligns with statewide efforts. There is some discussion of requirements and obligations to participate. At the same time, the applicant does note involvement by and negotiations with the local bargaining unit. Overall, however, the evidence provided points to a context that provides little autonomy because of the district's current position with achievement.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	5
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The application demonstrates a clear understanding of the roles different stakeholder groups should play in situations of meaningful involvement. The application consistently provides a rich grounding in the literature that demonstrates an understanding of current promising practices and models. The application includes a list of fifteen external stakeholders who have had some level of involvement in the proposal. Some of these include the East Orange Police Department, Habitat for Humanity, and the YMCA.

The application states that the goal of community stakeholder involvement is to provide services so students will have an equal opportunity to learn and pass district and state-mandated tests. While, this prompts further concern about what's driving the proposal, it also demonstrates a short-sightedness about the potential value of community stakeholder engagement. The application notes a compelling vision for parent engagement -- that parents will experience pride, success, and opportunity for their children -- but it is unclear how this will happen.

The proposal describes stakeholder engagement at STEM Academy High School that enriches and expands opportunities for students at the school through a variety of partnerships, such as the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey which offers students opportunities to educate themselves about health careers. It is particularly wise that the partnerships are vetted for shared vision. It is unclear how or if there is a plan to expand this model to other schools throughout the district.

The application details a process that involved many groups of people in the review of last year's RTTT-D application and feedback, as well as a step of reaching out to share the vision and goals with parents, teachers, and community groups. Overall, the applicant presents low-moderate evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement, as the evidence paints a picture of stakeholder engagement that is more procedural than robust.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicants describe a focus of creating personalized environments, capitalizing on the modular nature of online learning, but describes a technology infrastructure that is inadequate for such a focus. Relying on two carts of computers for each school will seriously limit access to online tools during the school day, and the proposal does not address access outside of the school day. Options such as blended learning, computer-based assessment and tracking, and online textbooks all require a much more robust infrastructure than what is described. Additionally, the proposal lacks clarity about how the different initiatives will come together to result in deep learning. There is a lot of evidence that breadth of learning will be improved, but depth is not addressed.

The proposal identifies fifteen projects all designed to ensure students graduate on time, ready for college and careers. However, there are concerns about quality of approach and environment. The proposal does not generate a sense that these projects will create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

- Professional development in CCSS - Ten days at the elementary level and 20 days at the secondary level of professional development provided by Pearson. Goals include deep understanding of the standards and development of student tasks and curriculum models. It is difficult to determine the quality of such an investment without more details about what the professional development would look like.
- Technology - A staffed parent technology center during the school day that provides access to and training on tech tools. This is an excellent idea for the population the district serves. One concern, however, has to do with whether it is accessible to working parents. The proposal includes a plan to make FOCUS data available to parents and offer twice yearly trainings, but that may be too little training for meaningful parent engagement. Purchase of two mobile labs per building and assigning a laptop to each teacher. While this is a significant improvement from the current state, this is not nearly enough access to technology to put into practice the most current promising practices. The proposal lacks a plan to scale up or even sustain access to technology. The proposal is limited in its vision for the role technology plays in a contemporary classroom and appears to be largely driven by testing. The proposal specifically notes that students will have access to materials wherever they have internet access, which raises questions about how many students have internet access at home and if there are plans to increase connectivity outside of school.
- Inclusion education- Programs a professional development designed to increase opportunities for students with disabilities in general education settings. The district's data raises concerns about the quality of teaching and learning for students with disabilities, so this is an important component to the plan. There is a large number of significant initiatives in place for general education teachers, which raises questions about whether there will be

targeted audiences for certain initiatives or if all will be expected to participate. Students may also benefit from professional development that impacts the quality of teaching and learning happening in special education classrooms as well.

- Edmentum- Credit recovery option focused on filling individual gaps. While there is a place for efficient credit recovery options for some students, districts should proceed with caution. There are instances in which it makes sense to outsource instruction to technology, but there are also instances in which it does not make sense to do so. The proposal does not address the use of Edmentum in a way that evokes confidence that it will be used in a way that is advantageous in terms of student learning.
- Family Connections and Mental Health Association- mental health counseling provided on-site at an hourly rate to address life skills and therapeutic services. Given the demographics of the district, these services could be highly advantageous, but the proposal lacks a description of how the services will be integrated to maximize benefits to students and their families.
- Career and College Readiness - Partnerships with institutions of higher learning and the local business community to drive curriculum offerings and establish CTE as a viable pathway. The applicant describes a promising model at its STEM high school, but the proposal lacks a clear plan for scaling this across the district.
- Achieve Academy - Targets students in danger of dropping out. Focused on technical and academic skills necessary for certification from technical schools and apprenticeships. This support targets the highest need students as required by the selection criteria.
- College Prep School and Campus University - Two options for students pursuing college as an option. Increased dual credit and transition support are beneficial for all students.
- Naviance - a system for capturing and tracking student goals and data. While the tool sounds promising, it is unclear how it will be leveraged to enhance quality of teaching and learning, empower students to accomplish their goals, and engage parents in meaningful ways.

The proposal notes personalized learning experiences and interventions in the narrative, but it is not clear how the distinct programs and initiatives will come together to result in meaningful personalization. The tools for differentiation and choice are embedded, but there is no clear path for getting beyond differentiation and choice to meaningful student-driven personalized learning. Overall, the proposal scores in the low-medium range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal identifies four efforts to address teaching and leading:

- New supports for students that come in the form of three behavioral specialists and connections with external referral agencies.
- Structured, supportive professional development through peer coaching, study groups, clinical classrooms, a professional development library, rewards for teachers deemed masters, professional development partnerships with universities, and Administrator Academies for school leaders.
- Assigning each teacher a laptop computer to find resources, access virtual workshops, and prepare lessons.
- Participation in the state teacher and evaluator initiative to identify needs and align supports.

The applicant has provided all the required elements of a high quality plan: key goals, the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible for implementing the activities. However, the same concerns expressed in other sections are relevant here as well. Specifically, the plan's credibility is negatively impacted by the lack of cohesiveness of seemingly separate efforts and questions about whether this is a plan driven out of local needs and local vision or whether it is driven by state efforts and high stakes test performance.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	2

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Again, the applicant has provided most of the required elements of a high quality plan: the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities, a timeline, and persons responsible for implementing the activities. There are no deliverables or key goals included.

By describing the process used for hiring and assigning staff and scheduling, the applicant has demonstrated that schools have some flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, personnel decisions, staffing models, and budgets as required by the selection criteria. However, the overall context for the district is one of compliance, rather than autonomy.

While the application notes additional central office supports for content areas and data use, there is no evidence that leadership teams operate at the school level with meaningful autonomy and flexibility.

Online course and credit recovery options do provide students with the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery and to demonstrate mastery at multiple times and multiple ways, but it appears these options are only readily available to students who have already failed or fallen behind. However, the technology infrastructure planned is wholly insufficient to support reliance on technology on any widespread basis.

The applicant does not address accessibility of resources and instructional practices for students with disabilities or limited English proficiency. This is particularly troubling given the district achievement gaps.

Overall, the proposal scores in the medium range for LEA practices, policies, and rules.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

A high quality plan includes key goals, the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible for implementing the activities. Considered together, these things present a credible and coherent approach to supporting project implementation through policies and infrastructure.

The application states that the district will ensure that policies and infrastructure are in place to support personalized learning for every student, but there is no evidence that a review of policies that may need to be changed has been done. Further, there are questions about whether the district has planned for an infrastructure that will bring many separate projects together into a cohesive system.

The applicant also notes that the superintendent will ensure stakeholders have technical support. The district does have several different systems that maintain student data and allow access and export ability to students, parents, and teachers. However, there remain questions about whether teachers, students, and parents will have the tools (or access to the tools) they need to participate fully.

The applicant does appear to meet the requirement to have interoperable data systems as required in the selection criteria through a variety of data systems: FOCUS, School Messenger, Destiny Textbook Inventory, Edusoft, School Fusion, ACHIEVE 3000, and Plato Recovery Program.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a continuous improvement process that uses three processes that will be used to make incremental changes to the system.:

- Project leadership keeping stakeholders informed, using established priorities to ensure grant components are met, and monitoring instruction through data analysis
- Internal and external stakeholders maintaining a shared understanding of goals and progress toward them, analyzing outputs, and monitoring and adjusting activities for desired outcomes
- Develop a common set of key messages and sharing them through a careful, deliberate and coherent approach

The application also describes a process to be used when stakeholders identify specific problems, which includes:

- analyzing problems
- brainstorming sessions
- interviews

- designing strategies to address problems
- implementing strategies
- monitoring and evaluating changes
- determining whether changes have produced desired results

The main strategy for each of these processes will be to rely on data supplied through technology from various databases.

The lack of detail related to specific timelines and persons responsible cause questions about the credibility of the plan for continuous improvement. The plan as described appears to accommodate feedback that may come to the district, but does not detail a method for methodically soliciting feedback or tracking specific data in pursuit of clear goals.

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

The applicant describes a process for ongoing communication and engagement that relies on a common set of key messages shared through traditional and contemporary channels, such as the district website, School Messenger, a local television channel, public board meetings, a community newspaper, the school newsletter, and town hall meetings. The application includes a statement that there will be an evaluation process that considers process and outcomes, as well as quantitative and qualitative measures; however, there is clear description of these measures. While most of the elements of a high quality plan can be discerned, it is difficult to assess the credibility of the plan without more detail.

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

The application includes goals for the number of students who have effective and highly effective teachers as required by the selection criteria, but the goals are confusing. 95-100% of teachers and principals are identified as effective in the baseline year, and goals for future years range from 80-95% of students having an effective teacher and/or principal. It is unclear why the goals would be lower than the baseline data.

Similarly, the application includes all required goals for students, broken down by subgroups. For the most part, goals seek to see 5% improvement annually, which seems to be ambitious and achievable. What is unclear, however, is why only 3% growth is expected for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Particularly, given the low performance of students in the special education category, we would expect to see more ambitious goals for improvement.

Finally, the application includes the percentage of students taking the PSAT and SAT as a 9-12 indicator, but only tracks the data for the all students category. It is unclear whether this is because small population sizes or some other reason.

The application does not address the rationale for selecting measures, describe how the measure will provide meaningful feedback and support the district's theory of action, nor does it describe a plan improving the measure over time. Overall, the application scores in the low-medium range for performance measures.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application notes guiding principles of accountability and transparency in its efforts to evaluate effectiveness of investments. Timelines and persons responsible are two requirements of a high quality plan, and these are missing from the process described in the proposal. While there are clear actions and rationale for them, the plan is not rooted in goals, which is also a requirement of a high quality plan. Overall, the plan for evaluating effectiveness of investments is not developed specifically enough to meet the intent of the selection criteria and earns a low-medium score.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The evidence provided in the application budget is a reasonable match for the activities described in the overall application. It does appear sufficient and reasonable to implement the plan as proposed. There is a clear match between

the efforts proposed and funds to implement them. For example, the budget identifies one-time costs associated with hardware purchases to increase access to technology, as well as ongoing subscription and service costs for software and programs identified in the proposal. However, the plan as described does not appear to be sufficient to achieve the results needed. The budget is detailed and notes all funds that will support the project from all sources, but does not include any outside funding. The significant investments in professional development will be on-time expenses with the intent of building capacity within the district to be carried forward after the grant period ends.

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

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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal's main strategy for sustainability is the hope that an Advisory Council will be supportive enough of the work that they are willing to raise funds to pay for ongoing expenses to replace the one-time grant funds. There is also acknowledgement that it will be necessary to integrate grant activities into the ongoing operations of the district, but the proposal lacks a high quality plan for doing so. The proposal is missing the key elements of a high quality plan, which include: key goals, the activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities, a timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible for implementing the activities. These things, considered together, should be a credible approach to sustainability. Continued fundraising does not meet the standard of credibility in terms of sustainability. Integration of activities could be a credible strategy, but the proposal lacks sufficient detail to prove credible.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant details a system of career academies in the competitive preference priority. The structure of the academies offer common planning time for teachers and partnerships with local employers and supports students with work-based learning opportunities and college and career counseling. The application provides a lengthy list of partners, but many of them seem to have auxiliary roles, rather than true collaborative efforts that impact the depth and quality of learning in pursuit of a career option. For example, the East Orange Police Department is listed as a partner, but the contributions are limited to ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment, assisting with truancy problems, and addressing bullying issues. If the intent of the career academies is to help students understand a career pathway while gaining experience, knowledge and skills that will assist in smooth transitions from high school to post-secondary training and employment, there is a lot of potential lost in an arrangement described in such a limited way. This appears to be a pattern where many of the partnerships are described as services to the district, rather than partnerships that substantively impact teaching and learning.

The competitive preference priority also addresses technology, but envisions a very limited role for it. The application describes ways to make data sharing and use more efficient, but ignores the potential of technology to positively impact teaching and learning in ways that align with the core assurance areas of the competition, nor does it address integration of public and private resources to augment the schools' resources as required in the selection criteria.

Similarly, the competitive preference priority description references the teacher and principal evaluation system, but does not describe the evaluation system's use in a way that represents integration of public and private resources to augment the schools' resources as required in the selection criteria.

The most promising piece is the description of socio-emotional support services. Brining therapeutic services on-site is a clear example of integrating of public and private resources to augment the schools' resources. However, there is no clear description of how the partnerships will be established or how students will receive services.

The application notes a desire to impact kindergarten preparedness, but offers no clear plan for doing so.

While the application does supply the required performance measures, it is unclear how or if the partnerships will build capacity in staff in the participating schools. Overall, the competitive preference priority scores in the low range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
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Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application does address a plan to build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through personalization of strategies, tools, and supports aligned with college and career ready standards. However, there are serious concerns about whether the plan is cohesive or sufficient. Overall, the proposal reads like a list of disconnected initiatives that could have the potential to make real and substantive changes within the school. However, these separate initiatives are never depicted in a way that represent a cohesive plan. Additionally, there are major concerns about whether the proposal is targeting the right priorities. Based on the data provided, there are major concerns with the quality of learning students with disabilities are experiencing, and the plan does very little to impact that. Similarly, there is an acknowledgement that social and community factors have a significant, negative effect on the quality of learning, but the options to address those things are either not fully developed or treated as services to a system that has not made substantive changes.</p>		

Total	210	70
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0192NJ-3 for East Orange School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	6

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA has presented a comprehensive vision of reform.

The applicant has done an excellent job in the Executive Summary Section of tying its goals to that of the Race to the Top areas, as well as the reform efforts in New Jersey. The four core assurance areas are addressed at the district and state level in terms of career academies to decrease the dropout rate, upgraded technology for online testing, educator professional development to improve instructional practices, and support services to remove barriers for student growth. The applicant has provided convincing evidence that it has built on its work during the proposal development process, such as using the Charlotte Danielson Framework in order to improve teacher practices. The LEA has put forth a credible plan for activities that will accelerate student learning.

Section A1 includes some background rationale for the 15 projects that relate to the personalized learning environment. Urgent community needs include youth unemployment, gang violence, truancy, and a high drop out rate. These projects address the community needs as well as core assurance areas, through professional development in the Common Core standards, technology initiatives related to credit recovery, and Naviance software, which can create personalized success plans for students. Accelerated learning will occur through the Campus University, the College Prep program, and Edmentum software. Students will have deeper learning experiences with College and Career readiness program, the School of Industry Training, and the Career and Technical Education Program of Study. Increasing equity will occur through the Twilight programs at all high schools, and the Inclusion Education program. Software will allow for personalization of tasks so that students can pursue individualized academic interests.

Although it contains a compelling statement of vision for parts a and b, the application does not describe what the new classroom experience would be like for teachers or students. In addition, the applicant did not include activities to address the urgent issue of truancy. Furthermore, these 15 activities did not form a coherent unity. The LEA had no evidence for a single vision of personalized learning.

Because of the LEA presented a comprehensive, but not coherent, vision of reform, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 6 points.

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

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8

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant described its method of including participating schools in detail.

The LEA first created a committee to consider applying for the Race to the Top grant. This committee reviewed grant requirements, local assessment data, and district goals and curriculum in a needs assessment. It was decided to include all schools in the application. A Town Hall meeting was conducted to solicit comments, as documented in the appendix. Because of the great level of detail in describing the selection process, there is ample evidence that the participant has thoughtfully considered which schools should participate in the grant.

All schools are listed in the table in Section A3, as are the total number of educators (981), and total number of students (9550). Of these, 78% are high need students and 78% are from low income families.

However, no documentation of the needs assessment process was provided in the application.

As the LEA meets the eligibility requirements, and has clearly addressed this criterion, it was scored in the high range with 8 points.

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

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6

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has chosen to include all schools in the district in the proposal.

The district hopes to build on the State's success of its reform, and link its database to the state structure, NJSMART. The district will use the Charlotte Danielson teacher evaluation framework as part of its state's Race to the Top program, along with curriculum change due to the Common core Standards adoption.

The LEA has some elements of a high quality plan for the proposal to be implemented in all schools. These include performance measures for all grades, as shown in Section E3. Rationale for the 15 activities is given in the introduction and in Section A1, which focuses on more relevancy for secondary students, reducing drop out rates and truancy for all students. However, there is no clear linkage between goals, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

Although the applicant has shown that it is using the state's reform as its model, it does not clearly outline its own actions for its local version of reform. This criterion was scored in the medium range with 6 points.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA has indicated it will have increased performance and equity through its goals, which align to state targets.

The applicant has provided targets for language arts in grades 3-11, including subgroups, so that most student groups will be at 75% proficiency at the end of five years. This table was repeated in Section A4 for decreasing performance gaps. High school graduation rates will increase for the total population as well as subgroups, so that they increase from 52% in the case of special education to an ambitious 95% over a period of 5 years. Similarly, college graduation rates for Hispanic students will move from 35% to 95%. The LEA has also included data on postsecondary degrees, with overall rates moving from 55% to 77.5% in five years.

However, other subjects, such as mathematics were not addressed, nor were grades PreK-2. This is of particular concern since the LEA included PreK-2 students, and PreK-K campuses, but has no targets for these students. Although the high school graduation for each subgroup is 95% after five years, it is not realistic to think that rates will almost double in that short period of time. In a similar way, college enrollment is unlikely to almost triple in five years. In addition, the LEA does not provide evidence for targeted interventions for English Language Learners or students with disabilities.

The applicant has presented ambitious targets in the areas of language arts assessments grades 3-11, and graduation rates. However, the LEA has not provided evidence that it can meet these targets in a short period of time. The applicant has not provided targets for all grade levels included in the proposal. Therefore this criterion was scored in the low range with 2 points.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA has presented data that shows student improvement over the last four years.</p> <p>The applicant plans to provide students and parents with student level assessment data through the NJSMART state student information system. This project is a work in progress, as indicated in section A3.</p> <p>The applicant has provided data in the chart in section B1 that shows improvement in 11th grade student performance in reading language arts, as well as a gap reduction. In 2009, East Orange had a first-time proficiency rate of 51.4 percent in English Language Arts (ELA), with a 32.2 gap with the state. This gap decreased to 20.5 percent in 2013. Changes that lead to this improvement include data meetings with teachers, grade-level team meetings, double English periods, and Saturday tutoring.</p> <p>However, this chart only provided one grade and one content level, with no discussion of gap reduction by the subgroups mentioned in the narrative sections of A1 and A4. While low achieving or low performing schools were not addressed in the narrative, Tyson Middle was a School Improvement Grant (SIG) school as indicated in section B3. There was no mention of progress at this school. In addition, high school graduation and college enrollment rates were not given as evidence as success.</p> <p>Because the LEA has shown an improved state assessment record, but only provided data for high school students at one grade level, this criterion of a clear track record was scored in the low range with 3 points.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA has provided evidence in the application of a very high level of transparency in its processes related to school expenditures.</p> <p>The district has included in the application actual personnel salaries at the school level for all instructional and support staff, including actual personnel salaries for instructional staff, for teachers, and non-personnel expenditures. Salary guides for teachers and administrators were given in the appendix. The district also posts budget information on its website. The large amount of data posted and provided in the application shows convincingly that the district has a commitment to transparency.</p> <p>However, the LEA has not provided evidence as to how it will increase its current level of financial transparency.</p> <p>Because the applicant has included evidence of actual personnel salaries at the school level, and has posted its budget on the website, this criterion was graded in the high range with 4 points.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	3
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA has provided data concerning New Jersey's conditions that may lead to a successful proposal.</p> <p>The applicant has listed some successful conditions that may allow the plan to succeed. New Jersey is in the process of creating a new Effective Teachers and Principals program, and as a result the district has begun to participate in this new process. The state has also permitted the district to conduct quality training opportunities for staff that relate to personalization of learning.</p> <p>However, the LEA does not provide any evidence that it will have sufficient autonomy from state regulatory requirements to successfully complete its plan. The district had a SIG campus. No details were given about related evaluation process, nor evidence supplied that lessons learned from the SIG process were scaled up across the district.</p> <p>While some successful conditions may be present, the LEA has not provided evidence for autonomy, and thus this criterion was scored in the medium range with 3 points.</p>		

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	7
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA has provided evidence of stakeholder participation in the development of the proposal.</p> <p>The applicant has included details of the town meeting it held concerning the proposal, including an advertisement, agenda, and sign-in sheets. Attendees included parents as well as board members. Minutes of this meeting were distributed to the public. However, It is not clear how feedback from this meeting was incorporated into the proposal, nor if students were part of the decision-making process.</p> <p>The district has a history of partnerships with the community, and has included letters of support from the hospital, police department, YMCA, United Clergy, as well as from vendors who will provide services listed in the proposal.</p> <p>The application was signed by the representative of the teachers in the district. The proposal was sent to the mayor as well as the state department of education.</p> <p>However, there were no letters from parents, or parent organizations such as PTA, or letters from student organizations. There is a teachers' union and administrators' union, but no letter of support from these organizations.</p> <p>As the applicant has provided some evidence of stakeholder engagement in the proposal process, but fails to demonstrate that a majority of teachers support the proposal, nor evidence of modification of the proposal due to feedback, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 7 points.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has proposed a variety of activities related to learning.</p> <p>The district has elements of a high quality plan, with particular detail in the budget narrative for activities, parties responsible, deliverables and basic timelines.</p> <p>The LEA will obtain and use professional development in the Common Core Standards, a Parent Technology Center, enhanced technology in schools, an online assessment infrastructure, a parent portal for student data, inclusion education for students with disabilities, Edmentum software for course recovery, Renaissance software to measure reading and math abilities, a School of Industry Training, a Career and Technical Education Program, Achieve Academy for dropout prevention, the Naviance college readiness software, and restructure high schools.</p> <p>Technology is the focus of the proposal as it relates to improved learning. The district will invest in software that will allow all students to have personalized learning. High school students who are at risk of dropping out can utilize credit recovery software. In general, secondary students can participate in many opportunities to explore college and career goals. Through the School of Industry Training or the Career and Technical Education Program, they will become ready for careers. The Career Academies will be another way that secondary students will have deep learning experiences related to their interests.</p> <p>All students and parents will have access to student level assessment data that will allow for personalized learning goals. Students and educators can quickly receive feedback due to the ability to test online. Parents will be trained to use the electronic portal at the Parent Technology Center. However, the usefulness of the PTC is in question, as it has limited hours of operation, and has only six computers, as demonstrated in the budget.</p> <p>Parents, students, and staff can use software to frequently monitor student progress toward mastery of college readiness and career readiness standards. Inclusion training will help teachers better serve high need students.</p> <p>However, there is no evidence given that elementary students will understand that what they are learning is key to their success, or create and pursue goals related to college and career readiness. It is not clear that younger students will receive high quality digital content as part of a variety of instructional approaches. No provision is made for accommodations so that students with disabilities can fully participate in the new technological benefits that high school</p>		

students will enjoy.

The proposal does not include specific skills such as goal-setting or teamwork, nor providing students will exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives.

Although some mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to parents, such as the online help desk and the Parent Center, it is unclear if students can access these resources. The main support for students related to tools and resources appears to be teachers.

Though the applicant has provided evidence for fifteen worthwhile projects, it has not made a compelling case that it has a high quality plan for learning. The LEA has no graphic or description that ties all projects into a single coherent vision of personalized learning.

As the applicant has not made a credible high quality plan that benefits elementary as well as secondary students, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 5 points.

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

20

12

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has proposed a variety of activities related to teaching and leading.

The LEA proposes professional development in the Common Core Standards, laptops for staff members, online assessment infrastructure, Renaissance software to measure reading and math abilities, Naviance college readiness software, and restructuring high schools.

Elements of a high quality plan relating to professional development and technology are contained in the budget narrative, with timelines, deliverables, and parties responsible. Letters of support from service providers are included in the application. The teachers will receive staff development in the Common core standards, learning styles, hands-on activities, and a variety of instructional methods so that individually and collectively they will be able to adapt content and instruction for all students, personalizing learning so that each student can graduate career and college ready. Teachers will be trained in assessment software so that they can track and support student progress frequently. Peer coaching and study groups will enhance professional learning as teachers put these new tools into practice.

The focus on technology and staff development will ensure that educators have time to find resources so that they can personalize learning. Additional assessment and high quality content software will be provided as resources to educators. Access to laptops will provide teachers with flexibility to access and post student data and plan lessons collectively and individually. With these tools, teachers will also be better able to interact with students and parents electronically.

The student data systems will inform teacher and principal practice as well as contribute to the new educator evaluation system in New Jersey. Specific training on these systems are contemplated in the proposal so that educators continuously receive feedback on effectiveness. Professional development on software that addresses acceleration and individual tasks is also a major focus of the plan.

While the idea to restructure the district high schools into academies, a College Prep School, and a Campus University appears to be reasonable, not enough evidence of detailed planning and vision of these news schools was included in the proposal to establish confidence that the applicant will be successful in this difficult endeavor. No surveys or minutes from planning sessions are documented that substantiate that the community, educators, and students are ready for this major transition. Although educators will be heavily involved in these activities, no provision is made in the proposal to prevent these time-consuming, labor-intensive restructuring activities from conflicting with the important professional development on personalized learning, software, and technology.

In addition, the LEA does not plan to increase the number of students who are served by qualified or highly qualified educators as demonstrated in Section E3. The percent of qualified educators remains at about 90% while the percent of highly qualified educators barely moves to 5% after five years. No rationale is provided in the proposal for this lack of ambitious goals. Furthermore, the LEA does not provide a compelling plan for implementation of peer coaching, as this will require a substantial commitment of time as well as resources. No evidence of changes to time structures were included in the proposal.

As the applicant has a strong and appropriate focus on the improvement of teaching and leading for parts a-c of this section, but fails to have a plan to address time issues and to increase the number of highly effective educators, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 12 points.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	3
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has presented evidence that will support the implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>The LEA demonstrated that it supported a campus that was designated a SIG school, and put into place state mandated measures, such as more instructional time, changes in collective bargaining agreements, and creative schedules. The administrators at this school received autonomy from the district to carry out these measures. By setting such a precedent, the LEA learned that such flexibility and autonomy can lead to success. However, it is not clear if the governance structure of the LEA was permanently changed by this experience. No data was provided that the LEA was successful in scaling up lessons learned in the SIG process.</p> <p>The LEA provided evidence that it will use software to allow for progress based on demonstrated mastery, rather than seat time, as evidenced by budgeted software. The variety of software will allow students to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways at a variety of times.</p> <p>However, no evidence is provided that the instructional practices will be effective for or accessible to English language learners or students with disabilities.</p> <p>The LEA does not present a high quality plan to support implementation, as there are no goals, timelines, deliverables or parties responsible for project support.</p> <p>Because of the lack of a high quality plan, this criterion was scored in the low range with 3 points.</p>		

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The LEA demonstrates support of teachers and staff in order to better support personalized learning.</p> <p>The district will use Charlotte Danielson's framework as its teacher evaluation, so that educators have a range of strategies to support student learning. A large portion of the grant will focus on training educators in software and pedagogy. However, there was no direct link provided to show how this support for teachers will enhance personalized learning.</p> <p>However, the LEA did not demonstrate that it will ensure that low income students will have access to tools and content outside of school. A parent technology center will be created, but the capacity is limited to six computers. Though the technical support program was allocated funds, including in person and telephone assistance, it is not clear if this support will be accessible to students.</p> <p>The applicant did not address the ability to export data in an open data format. While the district can export human resource data into the student assessment NJSMART system, there is no evidence that budget data is part of the interoperable data system.</p> <p>The applicant has not provided a high quality plan for implementation support. There are no clear goals, timelines, or parties responsible for most of the technical support activities.</p> <p>Because the LEA does not have all of the elements of a high quality plan for implementation and support, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 3 points.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant has addressed continuous improvement in the proposal.

The LEA has provided evidence for portions of a high quality plan for continuous improvement. Although no one person was designated as the party responsible, several team members are named for specific tasks, such as a college intern as the project webmaster. A project evaluator and auditor are allocated funds in the budget and will help with the formative evaluations. While the assignment of names to some of the tasks is a good first step, the applicant needs to designate each task to a job position at the minimum (in the event that the position is not yet filled). More links of names to tasks are needed in the continuous improvement plan.

Specific activities and methods for sharing information were given, such as holding public meetings, using television, and posting news on the district website. A general improvement plan was outlined, with a basic graphic illustrating a feedback loop. Nonetheless, more details are needed to establish confidence in the success of the continuous improvement process. The current level of information is not strong evidence for a thorough process that is likely to function well.

Similarly, details of an infrastructure for evaluation are lacking. The applicant states that there will be formative and summative evaluations, with both quantitative and qualitative measures. These will include performance measures, interviews, surveys, and focus groups. These are good beginnings of an evaluation process, but specifics should be outlined. For example, there is no evidence presented for implementation of these processes or what systems are currently in place.

Because some evidence was provided for portions of a high quality plan of continuous improvement, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 5 points.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	4
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a high quality plan for engagement.

The applicant has designated parties responsible for components of communication and engagement with stakeholders. Information will be shared via newspaper, television, town hall meetings and website, while at the same time feedback will be collected through surveys and focus groups. The level of detail provided in the engagement portion of the plan gives a high level of confidence for its success. The activities are linked to rationales so that internal and external stakeholders understand the progress of the project. Deliverables include reports that are produced quarterly, as well as formative and summative evaluations produced by external auditors. These frequent reports also speak well of the applicant's commitment to timely communication with stakeholders.

Most of the activities focus on adult members of the community, teachers, or parents. There is little evidence of engagement of students in the communication plan.

This criterion was scored in the high range with 4 points because the applicant has provided a sound high quality plan of stakeholder engagement, but has not provided strong evidence for the inclusion of students.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided multiple measures of performance.

All required targets are present for each of the three grade spans, including those for qualified educators, highly qualified educators, and increases in Lexile and literacy scores. FAFSA completion rates are set to increase from 85% to 100% over the life of the grant.

However, the targets are not all ambitious. The LEA has set targets so that after five years, 5% of all students will be served by highly effective educators. Similarly, the number of teachers who are proficient in instructional practices are set to increase by five percent each year. For the NIEER scores, it is unclear if 5.0 is ambitious compared to the baseline of 4.76. It is not clear how this measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to the plan. Furthermore, there is no increase in students with effective teachers over the life of the grant.

There was a lack of evidence for many requirements of this criterion. While not specifically mentioned, math targets are absent from the proposal. No rationale is given for the focus on English Language Arts. However, at the same time, targets for English language learners were omitted, including those for the PSAT and SAT. No grade appropriate health indicators were included in this section. There was no description of specific provisions to review the selected targets.

As the applicant has failed to provide rationales for all targets, did not include review mechanisms, and did not have ambitious targets, this criterion was scored in the low range with 1 point.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has produced a plan to evaluate the project, include its activities related to professional development and budget.

The LEA will allocate funds for an external evaluator and auditor, who will produce formative and summative evaluations of the plan. The effectiveness will be measured by qualitative and quantitative measures, including stakeholder testimonials, teacher evaluations, and meeting performance targets. Timelines are related to specific activities, such as quarterly formative reports, ad annual town hall meetings. However, while teacher effectiveness is addressed, no evidence of evaluation of technology (such as usage or website hits) were part of the evaluation plan. Both professional development and technology are large portions of the grant budget.

Because the district has addressed elements of a high quality plan to assess professional development, but has not provided evidence that it will evaluate the technological aspect of the project, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 3 points.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA is to be commended for its budget, which clearly indicates funds allocated to each of the 15 projects in detail. All of the funds used in the proposal will come from the Race to the Top grant.

The amounts for each of the 15 projects are reasonable, and reflect the rationale and activities outlined in the rest of the proposal, as well as the narrative included in this section. Professional development will be contracted to Pearson, which explains approximately 15% of the total budget. Additional training will be contracted out in the area of inclusion. Technology initiatives (20% of the total budget) include the parent technology center, enhancing the infrastructure to allow for online testing, and purchasing laptops for all staff. In addition, software such as Renaissance, Naviance, and Edmentum make up about 10% of the budget.

However, the \$175,000 per year for technical support in the Table 4-1 for Technological Initiatives needs to be described in more detail, as it is unclear whether this is contractual or personnel costs.

Although the budget differentiates between one time and ongoing operational costs, particularly for software, the district has not contemplated how it will meet this high demand past the life of the grant. Training will occur only during the grant period, but no provision is made for training new staff. Travel is an integral part of the Achieve Academy, with costs over half a million dollars, as shown in Table 4-1. There is no evidence for strategies described in c(ii), those that focus on long-term sustainability.

Because the applicant has made firm connections between its budget and activities, but does not provide a rationale for its heavy dependence on ongoing operational costs with no outside funding, this criterion was scored in the medium range with 5 points.

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

The applicant has included elements of a high quality plan for sustainability in the proposal.

The LEA will continue to provide constant communication to all stakeholders so that they can appreciate the value of the project throughout and beyond the life of the grant. Town meetings will be held twice annually, with advisory council meeting held monthly. This key goal of communication is one aspect of a high quality plan for sustainability. However, other elements of a plan are lacking, such as deliverables and responsible parties.

The district contemplates phasing out some of the professional development needs as teachers and administrators will have capacity in the areas of evaluation and personalization of learning. However, no provision was made to train future new staff.

The LEA does not include local or additional grant money as part of the proposal. The applicant will continue the activities of the proposal by seeking additional grants. However, none of the letters of support include mention of future funding possibilities, nor was there evidence provided for commitments beyond the life of the grant. As there appears to be no mechanism for additional funding beyond the life of the grant, the sustainability plan is not credible.

Because only timelines and key goals are present as part of a high quality plan, and no evidence was given for support beyond the life of the grant, this criterion was scored in the low range with 2 points.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has listed a variety of services that community members are prepared to offer.

The applicant has listed ways that community partners such as the hospital and police department can contribute to the project, such as linking students with mentors, and offering ESL classes for adults. However, these are not connected to goals or measures in this section. While letters of support from listed partners do mention specific services and fee structures, nothing in the letters indicate future relationships that might foster sustainability of the project.

Two lengthy charts were contained in this section. The chart detailing desired results listed goals such as: stable parental home relationships, parents will experience quality child care, and students will experience adult support. However, no measures accompany these family results. The second chart shows educational measures including timelines, population to be served, targets, and targets one year after the life of the grant. However, there was no connection made between the two charts.

In addition, while these educational measures are attainable, they are not ambitious. For example, one measure is that after five years, 6% of all students in grades PreK-12 will have highly effective teachers and principals. For staff, a goal is that by the end of the grant, 75% participate in professional development. As professional development is a major component of the proposal, it is likely that this target will be met in the first year.

Furthermore, there is no evidence of a plan to form a coherent focus of the activities in this section. There are no details about improving results for high need students, or integrating education with other services.

As the applicant has not presented a plan that is coherent or sustainable, this criterion was scored in the low range with 2 points.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has addressed how it will build on the four core areas to meet this absolute priority, but it does not do so in a clear, coherent way that ties all of its activities into a single vision.

The applicant has addressed the four areas as evidenced in the narrative. The LEA has signed the assurance areas in the initial section. It has a teacher and principal evaluation system that is based on individual student performance and growth, as evidenced by the use of the NJSMART program. The LEA is located in New Jersey, which has adopted the Common Core Standards, and has a state data system that matches students to teachers. In addition, the district participates in the National Student Clearinghouse which reports data on former district students.

The proposal is based on personalization of learning by using technology focused on college and career ready standards, as evidenced by a large portion of the grant budget. The LEA emphasizes on professional development, with more than

\$3 million allocated to this purpose. This dedication of funds will create highly effective teachers and principals who can use the new technological tools to accelerate student achievement and deepen learning. College enrollment for East Orange High School graduates is moderate at 55% and high at Tyson High School at 84%; these both will increase to 95% by the end of the grant, as credit recovery, twilight programs, and software programs improve achievement rates.

However, the use of 15 targets by the applicant presents a challenge to success. The LEA did not provide evidence that it has a coherent plan to successfully accomplish these disparate activities so that they are singularly focuses on the goal of personalization of learning. The applicant has produced ambitious goals for high school students, but with little emphasis on the achievement of younger students. The proposal contains very little evidence for its sustainability beyond the life of the grant.

As the consortium has addressed this priority to create personalized learning environments, but not in a credible way that was coherent, this criterion was scored as not met.

Total	210	84
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0192NJ-4 for East Orange School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The information contained in the narrative presents a listing of information based on data that is often more than 15 years old. In their preparation and vision development for the implementation of new programming, the vision statement focuses on data about truancy, gang violence, crime, incarceration and "fatherless" children. The narrative quotes data from the US Census Bureau but there is no reference to the year from which the data was used. According to the information in the vision statement, 77 percent of households are led by a two parent household. The dropout rate used is from 2005-2007 and quotes a 77% graduation rate from high school. Data quoted from school administrators was from a survey published in 1998. This data forms the basis for the school district's desire to form a "Career to College Readiness Partnership Collaboration".

Truancy and truant behavior is also listed in the vision statement yet there is no clear data about the truancy rate in this school district nor any goals included in the strategies statements or proposed projects that will address the district's efforts to improve truancy rates.

The goals and projects listed in the narrative for accelerating student achievement are unclear and there is no link from the **goals** included in the strategies to the the issues, problems and deficits articulated in the narrative. Terms such as "backfilled design", "common language", "shared approach", "Abbott District School", "Twilight Program" are used in the proposed strategies with no explanation of the specifics of what these are and how they will effectively be linked to personalized learning, increased student achievement, improved college to career outcomes or improvement in assessment measures.

The vision statement includes references to acronyms that are not clearly defined or not defined at all (Twilight programs, CRAM, PLATO, SGO's). The goals/strategies include a reference to out-of-school suspensions but there is no data that details the suspension/discipline rates currently present in the district and the impact these rates have on student achievement. With the information provided it is impossible to determine the efficacy of any of the listed programs.

The technology integration portion of the goals statement speaks of the benefit to student (the what) but fails to link the

implementation of the new infrastructure and programs to how they will be used to improve student achievement.

A chart is included that lists the "New Infrastructure", "Program", and "Rationale" for each of the proposed projects. The chart included describes a "visual depiction of what we plan to do" to differentiate from grade to grade, student group to student group. However, each of the new strategies for Grades Pre-K through High School, At Risk and Alternative Schools contains exactly the same language. It talks about a Common Language and Shared Approach without elaborating on what that would look like at each level. A plan that addresses the needs of Special Needs and ELL students was not included.

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

10

2

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The information in (A)(2) provides a brief paragraph describing a "committee of EOSD stakeholders". The narrative refers to the "members of a committee of stakeholders" but there is no specific reference to describe/define the roles of these stakeholders relative to the development of the grant. There is little information about the **process** used by this committee to review data and determine specific district-wide or school specific needs prior to the writing of the proposal. Although a sign-in sheet is included in the appendix the roles of the members of the committee were not listed. There is a statement that the committee "believe strongly that focusing on English Language Arts and providing personalized learning environment for students...will lead to student mastery in all subjects..." There is no data included that indicates to what extent there is a link between "focusing on English language arts" and the improvement of student mastery.

Other than the opening paragraph in (A) (2) the narrative did not include a description of the **process** or the "needs assessment" used to select the district schools nor the rationale specifically related to the district's achievement data. This information would address the statement in (A)(2) that requests a description of the "process the applicant used or will use to select schools to participate".

The narrative states that "each school...must improve educational practice and implement reforms with transparency and fidelity". There is no data included in this section that is specific to the schools included in the grant. Reading this sentence it is difficult to determine the needs at the school level relative to the programs proposed in the vision statement. Again, the "what" related to the implementation of the projects included but not the "how" relative to this portion of the proposal.

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

10

2

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal in this section describes the "what" but not the "how". For example, there is reference to "Race to the Top reform efforts currently underway" but no information about what those efforts look like and how they are effecting student achievement.

There is a reference to EE4NJ in the selection of the Danielson framework. There is no information to describe what this is and how funding proposed under this grant will improve student achievement.

The narrative in (A) (2) states "there are no discussions of scale-up activities" because all schools are participating. The question of how the proposal will be used and translated into meaningful reform remains unanswered in this portion.

There is no logical model or theory of change included in this section that will result in improved student learning outcomes.

The narrative speaks about the EOSD data systems that will be utilized but there are no specific steps that speak to the people who will be responsible for reviewing the data, providing professional development when necessary as well as monitoring the learning environment to ensure students are engaged in personalized learning that will result in students well prepared for college-career.

The goals and professional practice connection to the school related projects was unclear and did not reflect the elements of a high-quality plan.

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

10

1

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The information in (A) (4) consists of a statement that the district will base their project goals on the "same goals New Jersey uses in the EASA waiver". There is no information about the EASA waiver and how it is related to the district's data or the plan to improve student achievement.

Data charts are included to show student achievement from the 2011-2012 baseline school data through the post-grant goals. Student outcomes listed are based on summative assessments provided by the state of New Jersey. High school data (graduation rate, college enrollment rate, degree attainment) were listed as not available or N/A. The process used for selecting the performance goals, decreasing achievement rates, graduation rates and college enrollment was not included along with the charts.

Charts and graphs are included and list current data in English Language Arts and Mathematics by grade level and student sub-group. Each chart reflects an increase of 50 percentage points in achievement as well as a reduction in the failure rate by 50 percent. The calculations were consistent for grades 3 through 11. There is no district-specific narrative information that presents a rationale for the selection of these targets. Though the goals for each grade level were ambitious some seemed unrealistic given the baseline data for the particular sub-group, particularly for ELL and Special Education students. Based on an analysis of the data and the programs proposed it is unlikely the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning, improved performance or increased equity.

Analysis of the proposed effects of grant funded programs was not included in this section.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district included a chart showing the English Language Arts performance of 11th grade students over the past 5 years. The chart shows a nineteen percentage point increase in the number of first-time eleventh grade students passing the assessment. This is the only chart provided to document the advancement of student learning and achievement. No other data from any other grade band is presented to demonstrate the district has a clear record of success in any other area of achievement.

There is no other comparative data for prior years including data found in section A. The data contained in the previous section is limited to baseline data from 2011-2012.

The narrative explains how the district staff has "been working diligently to change the way we deliver instruction". There is no information or data describing what the instructional components looked like and the reason changes were needed. This reviewer had questions about how the "increase of the use of data to determine...student needs" was accomplished. The narrative states there was an incorporation of "double periods of English for all eleventh grade students" because "we felt...students would benefit from more time on task". Again, there is no data to substantiate this information and provide a link from the extension of instructional time to achievement in English Language Arts. The narrative mentions a "unified lesson plan that promoted differentiated instruction". A copy of this plan and a description of its use at the classroom level would have been beneficial in linking the use of this tool to the improvement of eleventh grade student skills in English Language Arts.

No data is included for any other grade bands or subject areas.

The narrative states "we also believe that HSPA success depends greatly on student motivation". There is no information to describe what the district means by student motivation or how it was measured. Although there was a statement of a "challenge" used as a motivational strategy there was no indication that this "challenge" was a factor in the improvement of test scores. Information about teacher or student input was not included in this section.

The question of how the student performance data is made available to students and parents in an **effective and useful** way was not answered in this section.

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

The narrative in this section describes the process currently in use by the district Board of Education to make salary and

budget information available to the public. The information describes the way the Board of Educaiton and/or the Superintendent must:

- vote for the approval of staff
- vote on the annual proposed budget
- convene public hearings to set tax levies
- provide information to the public in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act

Actual personnel salary scales were included in the appendix of the document. These salary scales were taken from the collective bargaining agreemt and provided the documentation of salary ranges for personnel through 2013. These figures are helpful in providing realistic figures for the purpose of budgeting.

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

10

0

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

There is little evidence the LEA has sufficient autonomy to implement effective personalized learning environments. The information in this section describes the process by which the state will proceed with teacher and principal evaluations. The proposal mentions that the district was "able to get ahead of the curve due to the designation of (one school) as a **SIG** school". There is no information contained in the document that would allow the reader to determine or understand what an **SIG** designation means for the district or the school. There is a reference to "mandates for reform" that may or may not be punitive in nature. It is unclear how the information gathered from the "**SIG**" school's implementation of an evaluation system gave the district information that would indicate such reforms would be successful throughout the district.

There is a mention of an "Evaluation Committee". It is unclear through the narrative information whether this was at the district level, mandated by the state or part of the grant proposal team. There was no indication that the piloted reforms were successful during the 2012-2013 school year at the school mentioned. There is some indication that federal timetables mandated full implementation of an evaluation system during the 2013-2014 school year. There is no evidence of the success of the implementation to this date.

According to the narrative, access, opportunity and training are available. There is no evidence that supports the success of these opportunities.

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

15

5

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative in this section begins with reference to "systemic perceptual change...". This data is from 2008 and is not linked to specific data and reforms listed in the proposal.

The appendix includes letters from stakeholders and community partners that indicate support of the proposals. The community partners (such as the library)There is no indication of how many students are currently using the resources and how the district will measure the "equal opportunity to learn" as mentioned in the narrative section.

The proposal states that "students will be part of the decision making" but no indication of how this will be accomplished.

The narrative states that "support from the teacher's union-evident from the president's attendance and participation...". There is no direct evidence of the support of the union nor their participation or letters of support about the proposed RTT-D initiative.

Although there are numerous letters from community based organizations pledging support and promising to provide opportunities for students, there is nothing from student organizations nor the teacher's union indicating support for the initiatives proposed in the grant.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal narrative includes fifteen "projects" designed to accomplish the goals indicated in part A of the grant initiative. These goals includes very basic descriptions of what will be included but fails to link any of the information to how these initiatives will be used and monitored to ensure appropriate implementation and measure student achievement.

The proposal mentions that "East Orange has already taken initiatives to reinvent and re-imagine education by placing a high premium on personalized learning from preK-12 education". This statement seems to point to a progressive partnership aimed at personalizing learning for students but provides no details as to how this has worked, record of past success or *how* the district plans to use the current initiatives to improve student achievement.

The narrative mentions a partnership with Pearson but fails to describe who/what this is and what, specifically, will be provided to the students and teachers. There is extensive professional development listed (10 days on-site at the elementary level and 20 days for secondary). The goal is for teachers to have (quoting from the proposal) "attain the knowledge, skills and strategies to help more students graduate who are college and career ready". The meaning of this particular goal is unclear and there is no evidence of how the goal will be accomplished or measured.

The incorporation of computers and computer systems for students and adults is a key component of this section and includes a Parent Technology Center, mobile computer labs, laptops for all staff members and an upgrade to the infrastructure. There is no evidence to support how these tools will work to personalize instructional content and deepen learning experiences for students. Though the acquisition of an adult appoint as the Parent Technology Leader is included in the proposal it is not clear how this person will work in partnership with the school and parents to improve parental access to the technology and encourage parents' increased access to student data. The location of the center has not been established and a plan for specific training is not included in the proposal.

There was no information contained in this section to address the needs of ELL or Special Education students. In this section the personalized learning is focused on technology, particularly with on-line learning. Though the narrative talks about differentiation there are no details that would address the needs of students whose first language is not english or for students who may have difficulty with keyboarding, may have visual/perceptual difficulties and may not be able to use technology to their advantage.

There is no evidence that details how the newly implemented projects will be monitored for success and what steps will be taken in an on-going effort to improve student achievement and college/career readiness.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	5
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The East Orange School District will use the Danielson Framework for teacher evaluation. The instructional strategies included in the plan are likely to result in teachers taking more ownership of their teaching and improve planning. The narrative states the district is "supportive of an open climate and culture which fosters cooperation and respect among administrators and teachers".

The narrative states that student growth data will be utilized to determine educator impact or quality. The plan is to have teachers participate in a peer-coaching program. Job-embedded professional development is planned through the establishment of clinical classrooms. Master teachers will be identified and will allow themselves to be videotaped for the purpose of creating a professional development library. This innovation is likely to promote a positive culture of adult learning as teachers will be seen as leaders and "risk-takers" by opening their practice to their peers.

The district mentions in the proposal a successful implementation of school improvement strategies at one of their middle years schools. Specific data detailing specifics about the initiatives, the success or failure of the initiatives implemented at this school and how they connected to the development of this plan were not included in the plan and would have been helpful in making a connection to the proposed success of the RTT-D plan..

A stronger connection to the professional development of teachers using the Danielson framework and the achievement of students is a critical link needed to deem these proposed changes to the designation of a high-quality plan.

Teachers will be given personal laptops. There is no plan or school district policy listed for the accountable use of these computers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan included specific information about the process for posting positions, hiring and assignment of staff. There was no evidence to support the information such as copies of board policy or how the selection of staff members would support any of the core assurances. There was no specific information to speak to recruiting effective people, specifically as it related to the proposed projects listed in section C.

This section of the proposal also talks about the lessons (quoting from the proposal) *"learned when ...was designated as an SIG school"*. There is nothing to define what a **SIG** school is or what it means for the instructional programs at the school. There was mention of the implementation of "staggered start times for teachers and paying some for a longer school day...". Again, there was no evidence of the specific strategies adopted at the "SIG" school or how these strategies, if implemented district-wide, would be instrumental in turning around struggling schools.

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

10

2

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In this portion of the proposal, the East Orange School District provides details explaining that they will use of the Charlotte Danielson Teacher Evaluation Framework as its teacher evaluation system beginning in 2013. The proposal states that implementation of this system will be used as the vehicle that will ensure (quoting from the document) "all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders insist on appropriate and relevant teaching and learning..." The evaluation framework that is to be used is alluded to in the proposal narrative but no specific data or information is included in the application nor is there information that would link the adoption of high standards to ensuring high achievement for students. A specific implementation plan detailing how the system would be used and monitored was missing

The proposal mentioned the data systems that would be used in human resources as well as student "information" that would be exported for use by staff members. There was no evidence of these data systems included and it was unclear how the use of these systems would support personalized learning.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	4

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan lists three "activities" that will be used to ensure continuous improvement is taking place. These include the Leadership who will "maintain a constant understanding of the terms and conditions of the grant and keep all stakeholders informed...", all "internal and external stakeholders will maintain a shared understanding of what is to be achieved", key messages are to be developed to "communicate with and obtain buy -in from internal and external stakeholders.

A basic flow chart was included outlining the four steps the district would use to monitor the changes. There was no information that would outline specifically how the system on the flow chart would work, what the steps would look like, who would provide the leadership, planning, monitoring and feedback and how this monitoring would result in the student acquisition of high quality, college and career ready skills.

These activities may provide the structure for school improvement but the evidence contained in the narrative is unclear and not well developed. There is no vehicle for feedback that would provide participants with a basis for improvement.

Transparency in the sharing of information that was learned the previous year is not evident and is vital information in order for stakeholders to share in the "buy-in". The sharing of lessons learned at the middle school would lend more credibility to the plan.

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

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The grant narrative lists a number of venues designed to communicate with stake holders including the district website, school messenger, local cable access, school newsletters town hall meetings. There was no documentation of these meetings as it relates to the implementation of the grant. There is no evidence of the effectiveness of these communication sources.

The statement that "stakeholders shared understanding of what the grant is to achieve" is not supported in the communication section. It is important that there be a common understanding that is clearly stated and is linked to continuous improvement as reflected in student achievement. The evaluation process was vague and lacked rigorous substance. Though a number of venues were listed such as the district website, public meetings and "town hall" meetings there is no evidence this is the appropriate venue that would engage stakeholders at a high level.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

There were extensive charts detailing student achievement data for grades PreK through 12.

For grades Pre-K to 3 the scores were measured by **ECERS-R and NIEER**. These assessments were only defined by the acronyms included in the narrative. There was no additional information about these assessments, what they assess, how they are used, the audience and the data yielded. In the goal setting section, goals for grades Pre-K through 2 were missing.

In some of the tables the information was omitted or failed to include baseline information for data prior to the 2012-2013 school year. Although these are not a requirement they would have been helpful in establishing the basis for further analysis and program implementation.

There was no narrative analysis or additional evidence linking the data to the four core assurances.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative included guiding principles that, if followed with fidelity, would provide valuable information as the district implements the plan. Many of these principles were vague and provided no solid documentation of the process that would be followed to provide an effective evaluation. Words like "ensuring", "providing", and "fulfilling" did not rise to the level of high-quality to the specificity needed to appropriately evaluate success.

Formative and summative evaluations were mentioned but there was no documentation of how that looks or who would create these assessment. An "external program evaluator" is to be hired but there was no description of the job responsibilities and to whom this person would report.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget clearly identifies all funds that will support the project. These funds consists exclusively of Race to the Top-District grant funds aimed at providing professional development in the Common Core State Standards, additional technology and funds to support services for students.

Additional laptop computers are planned for staff members as teaching and learning tools and for professional development.

An upgrade to the infrastructure is planned in order to allow staff members with access to the **PARCC** (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessment system. It is unclear whether sufficient funds have been allocated to upgrade the system from the(quot) "occasional use of technology" stated in the narrative to the(quot) "always on, always connected environment" needed to support staff and students with the new technology.

It is not clear whether a full analysis of system requirements was performed that will allow the technology portion to be sustained over time without an additional infusion of funds.

There are plans for a Parent Portal that will allow parents and families access to data. The meetings/district-wide training is only scheduled for twice a year and there is no plan listed to make accommodations for parents who are unable to attend a session.

The plan is ambitious but lacks clear focus and attention to detail that would allow the project to be fully implemented and sustained over time.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As detailed in the previous section, the plan has some merit in the designation of funds towards the implementation of the projects listed. There are no funds directly listed in the budget tables outside of the Race to the Top-District funds that will be available at the end of the grant period.

Given the information included in the budget section it is questionable whether the district would be able to sustain all of the projects listed. Though ambitious and somewhat likely to result in success with some adjustments there are too many projects and a lack of outside/additional funding listed that would sustain the proposed projects.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The proposal submitted by East Orange presents an ambitious undertaking meant to address the multi-faceted needs of an urban school district. Fifteen projects were identified to address the needs of students, staff and families in the district. The needs assessment laid out a plan to address some of the issues but did not make a strong enough connection between the data that would support the plan and the appropriate use of the funds requested. There is mention of work done with the State of New Jersey and lessons learned as a result of sanctions placed but no details of what was learned and how these lessons would be used to move the district towards the goal of high student achievement.

The plan was weak in addressing the specific needs of special education and ELL students. There was also a significant focus on the issue of truancy in section (A)(1) but this was not district data on truancy and nothing in any of the projects to address the needs.

The district is poised to work with the state in using a new teacher evaluation system and some of the projects were spelled out in the narrative. There was insufficient evidence of the specifics that would move teachers towards skills and practices designed to support students in personalized learning.

The district identified a number of community supports in the projects. There was a weak connection between the identification of the resources to their actual use and the monitoring that would be used to assure students and families were receiving the services they needed.

Though there were some strong narrative portions, the plan did not rise to the level of a high quality plan given the evidence contained.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Although there was a great deal of information provided, the plan did not present a coherent model that would justify its funding and implementation. There was data missing, details that were vague and it was difficult to find a link between the implementation of the plan and successful personalized learning environments for students.

Given the information presented throughout the document the overall plan lacked the credibility that would make the gains seem realistic. Though some of the components here was a lack of cohesiveness throughout the plan that would make implementation difficult. The district had some experience with a mandated reform process implemented in the previous school year but the information learned/gained from that experience was not detailed in the plan or linked to the continuous

reforms needed to make the students successful and career-ready.

Total

210

47