



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0140NC-1 for Edgecombe County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant provides a limited reform vision as evidenced by the information contained in their vision narrative.</li> <li>LEA developed their program, named Educating the Digital Generation for Excellence (EDGE), that will address the four core educational assurance areas with their five core values: community, relationships, safe schools, continuous improvement and rigorous curriculum and instruction.</li> <li>The applicant outlines a systematic approach to create a continuously improved personalized learning environment for students and teachers. Specifically, the applicant hinges the success of their EDGE platform on the themes of Professional Development, Digital Teaching and Learning, Integrated, Standards-based Curriculum.</li> <li>The applicant proposes interventions (called comprehensive themes by the applicant) that are vaguely aligned with the four educational assurance areas. Applicant further expands on these educational assurance areas with five CORE Values: community, relationships, safe schools, and continuous improvement. Applicant attaches defined goals to each of these CORE values.</li> <li>Applicant will partner with Visiting International Faculty (VIF) to establish the first dual immersion program in Edgecombe County Public Schools; based upon the premise that such programs demonstrate significant gains in student academic achievement (Thomas and Collier, 2012). Each of these themes show inconsistently application to the core educational assurance areas.</li> <li>Applicant demonstrates inadequate evidence to meeting the requirements of this criterion.</li> </ul>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paragraphs one through four in section A1, Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision, give a picture of the poverty level, racial make-up, and intention of the LEA regarding school qualification and their general intent of impact.</li> <li>Applicant lists all fourteen schools that will participate in grant activities and the total number of students participating; number of participating students from low-income families, total number of high-need students and total number of participating teachers as required by grant criteria.</li> <li>Six elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools. Of the 6,750 students, 5,391 are from low-income families; 764 are identified as high needs. There are 436 participating educators. With the information provided, applicant addresses all components of this sector earning high points.</li> <li>Applicant provided information of their schools and student enrollment, but applicant failed include a description of the process in the selection of schools participating in the proposal, therefore resulting in low points.</li> </ul>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant proposes to affect all students, in all schools within its district. Scaling-up to eventually impact other students is not applicable in this case, since all students are originally a part of the process.</li> <li>"The EDGE will provide their teachers with the information, tools, and needed supports that will enable them to meet the needs of each student and substantially accelerate and deepen each student's learning."</li> <li>Applicant based this statement on their ECPS Logic model for continuous improvement aligned with the District CORE values. This logic model provides for a series of questions designed to arrive at sustained measures of success affecting student achievement. Questions such as: What resources are available; what activities or</li> </ul>		

processes are needed to achieve our goals; what products should be gathered; what short and long-term outcomes does ECPS want to achieve with EDGE? These questions do not specifically address the selection criteria qualifications, and creates doubt that the applicant is capable of affecting and sustaining district-wide reform and change.

- Applicant states the reform proposal will help reach its outcome goals through their logic model through implementation of the their EDGE platform comprehensive themes of Professional Development; Digital Teaching and Learning and Integrated, Standards-based Curriculum, however comprehensive methods to obtain these stated goals are lacking.
- LEA did not mention methods or strategies in moving the District forward and the ECPS Logic model is generic in its approach and does not address this criteria, therefore earning applicant low points.

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

**10**

**2**

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

- The applicant provides charts pertaining to each area as listed in this criterion, however it was difficult to interpret the data and confusing in its layout.
- The goals as set forth by the applicant are ambitious, based on previous performance.
- The applicant did show progress in some categories, as the student numerical performance based on North Carolina end of grade tests and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills as showed in (B-1) set a foundation for the goals for improved outcomes. ECPS students have risen 9 percent in reading proficiency and 10 percent in math proficiency over the last four years. Substantive student gains were recorded in English, Biology in grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>.
- A complete picture of a broad range of assessment tools was lacking, leaving many unanswered questions about the true picture of student outcomes. District students showed overall decreasing test scores in Algebra-1 and Reading EOC in school year 2010-11 & 2011-12. Applicant does not present a plan of high-quality components that lends itself to achieving an increase of nearly thirty percentage points in four years in Algebra-1 and Reading EOC. Such dramatic increases in student learning gains call for more details in the proposal or roadmap toward such achievements; applicant's plan was lacking such details.
- This discrepancy earns the applicant low points.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The applicant has documented some success during the past four years of advancing student learning and achievement as shown through their charts and graphs depicting academic by certain student sectors, using the North Carolina End of Grade Reading Assessment for grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>. Similarly, DIBLS scores for K-5<sup>th</sup> grade show increases from 2010 through 2013. One concern that may question the designation of a high quality plan as defined herein, is the downward trending of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade End of Year reading assessment.

This downward spike of this last year 2011-2012 is the last in a display of up and down results as they implement what will be a continuation of their current processes.

LEA demonstrated trending higher rates of college enrollment among participating students by stating in narrative, their college enrollment doubled from 2010 to 2012. The raw numbers were not clear for their college enrollment rate, nor did the college enrollment graph/graphic provide any clear insight related to the actual numbers for this criterion.

Applicant states it has demonstrated its ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently low-achieving groups, however there is insufficient supporting evidence for this claim.

Applicant states there are three SIG (school improvement grant) schools in its district.

Although generalized initiatives are mentioned, as tools used to achieve ambitious and significant reform, clear evidence of these reforms were vague and/or undocumented in narrative. It was not clear whether applicant's self-assessment of having an outstanding process for putting performance data in the hands of students, educators and parents, was in fact

outstanding as described.

In applicant's proposal, the development of a Parent University should assist in enhancing the availability and use of student performance data to have a positive impact on student academic performance. The overall lack of completeness lessens the LEA's point total in this sector.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The LEA provides information about expenditures available to the public through the Annual Report at their Board of Education meetings and publishing these data on the district's website.

Additional information can be obtained by making requests for public records to appropriate personnel. In keeping with the intent of a high level of transparency, LEA would be expected to outline a more robust structure of transparency for public access to RTTD monies, but fails to do so.

Applicant states in narrative that they compensate employees based on the state salary schedule and provides a website where this schedule can be viewed.

Applicant states that salaries of certified and non-certified staff can be found on this site. It is not certain what degree of detail and transparency is available at the website provided by LEA.

Applicant does not adequately address requirements of this sector, thereby earning them low points.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

- LEA provides only one reference to a state regulatory or legal statute that could be perceived as rendering autonomy under the law to implement grant expectations and requirements. North Carolina statute 115C-105.41 mandates early intervention for students. Applicant provided a paragraph actual wording of the statute, however applicant's summary of the law lacks the evidence expected under this criteria to create the unencumbered legal space needed to confidently implement its proposal.
- Other examples provided by LEA under this selection criteria, are not applicable and provide no support.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Whether or not students and families, provided input toward applicant's proposal is not clearly demonstrated in this narrative.

From the narrative provided by applicant, the LEA demonstrated little to no parent, family or student input was solicited or valued during the early formative stages of grant proposal.

However, the applicant states that stakeholders provided input throughout the development of grant proposal.

The general composition of stakeholders would appear to be local mayors, upper level education administrators and teachers. It was unclear the role students and families might have played in providing feedback, input and revisions to grant proposal.

In this section, the LEA does not confirm or deny, representation of their teachers by a collective bargaining unit (Union). This omission prevents (a)-I and II from being sufficiently addressed. Applicant states that staff surveys such as the NC Teacher Working Condition Survey and Comprehensive Needs Assessment Data were used in the application visioning process. When considered in total, although some stakeholder feedback was obtained, the actions of the LEA under this sector are spotty, inadequate and at times unclear, and as such earns low points.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>

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

- Applicant's plan focuses on student academic achievement through a personalized sequence of instructional content and a plan for each student with structured, coordinated involvement of teachers, students, specialized teams to formulate and periodically adjust the plan to generate the most educational gains.
- LEA will draft a personal learning plan drafted by academic teams made up of teacher, school administrator and a coach. They will meet with each student every Trimester and the teacher will meet with each student every 2 weeks to adjust the plan based on results. Applicant outlines various components of the personalized learning plan and denotes the goals of these activities. The physical magnitude of initially meeting with each student (6,100 students) with the goal of preparing a personalized learning plan and subsequently meeting each student again every quarter is daunting. More details of the goals and processes of the student meetings would be expected in order to qualify as a high-quality plan. Further, the teachers are expected to meet with each student every 2 weeks to re-evaluate the students progress toward the set goals and consult with the Academic Team if adjustments are necessary. Again, to qualify as a high quality plan, more details and preparation to assure maintenance of the plan itself is expected, but is lacking.
- Applicant places high hopes and high value on teaching participating students another language. The expectation of positive academic results from learning a foreign language is expected to translate into the student's increased ability to read, write and solve math problems. Applicant offers researched based support for the association between learning a foreign language and increased academic performance.
- The disproportionately high student learning gains the applicant expects to realize by incorporating a foreign language into its curriculum is unrealistic.
- Some of the stated requirements listed in the grant criterion are not specifically addressed in the applicant's narrative.
- Missing in the applicants plan is a variety of high quality instructional approaches and environments, resulting in low-range points.

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

**20**

**4**

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

- Applicant addresses sub-sector (b) 1 through 3 through its (PTU) Parent and Teacher University. According to applicant, PTU will be a major force in affecting personalizing learning for these two audiences (teachers, parents), and indirectly to the students. Online, internet based resources will play a prominent role in providing participating educators with access to, tools, data and understand how to use these resources to positively impact student's college and career ready graduation requirements. With the numerous out-of-classroom commitments required of the teacher included in applicant's proposal such as, Testing and Accountability Team, other academic teams, Parent Teacher University and one-on-one student meetings every 10-days, it is conceivable that actual classroom instruction time could suffer as a result. This is a likely problematic realization that could surface during proposal implementation thereby decreasing probability of full realization of plan according to narrative.
- Applicant has developed Academic Teams that have the enormous responsibility to assist students, teachers and parents in using digital based information to generate their personalized learning plans. These teams are charged with analyzing grade level results, reviewing particular standards, questions/answer choices, instructional vocabulary, needed foundational skills, homework, lesson plans, pacing guides, teacher tools, resources, and teaching methodologies. Considering the impact these academic will have on the success or failure of the applicant's plan, much more attention to details of this team was expected to qualify as a high quality plan and contribute toward the probability of proposal success. Applicant has also developed other groups such as the Testing and Accountability Team to analyze grade level subject specific data to share their findings with school educators. Sub-sector (a) 1 through 4 has been addressed in applicant's narrative, however it is unclear how the plan will be fully implemented as written, given the time limitations of the traditional school day and lack of information from LEA on the details of implementation.
- Academic Teams will utilize match each student and teacher with specific resources and approaches needed to determine the effectiveness of currently used resources through an audit (Spring 2014). Applicant states if audit findings and data analysis are not favorable for student, teacher progress, they will begin to phase out certain resources and secure a more suitable replacement. It is unclear what these replacement might be, from where would they originate and how applicant would determine the success of the replacements over the originals.
- Applicant addressed sub-sector (c) 1 and 2 through implementation of its Global Parent University to provide participating educators with access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress. Applicant states continuous improvement is confirmed for teachers/educators through their Global Teacher University where teachers will have access to their own personalized learning plans based on their desired growth areas, data analysis, personal input and goals which will drive course selection. A coherent timeline for teacher

participation is not detailed to the extent required for a high quality plan.

- The grant expectations listed in this selection criteria are detailed and unambiguous. Nonetheless, applicant failed to provide sufficient details that would lead to assessing its plan as high quality. Generalized sentences such as: "District wide data will be reviewed and analyzed by Central Office staff and by each department", are not developed further with more details to comply with high-quality requirements.
- LEA did address some of the selection criterion in this sector, but more details were required to support teaching and leading requirements as described in this section, earning the applicant low range points.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>

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

Applicant seeks to address sub-section (a) of this category with reference to Greenleaf (2008) and the philosophy of servant-leadership.

Applicant chose to describe their central office governance philosophy instead of describing and exhibiting the organized leadership structure required in a high quality plan. Within the LEA's narrative it was difficult to identify the LEA central office or a governance structure in place to provide support for the district.

Applicant states that it complies with the qualifications in this section regarding sufficient flexibility and autonomy. Applicant provides school leadership teams with sufficient flexibility and autonomy. However, these teams were outlined in greater detail in C2, but not adequately addressed in this section.

Applicant offers significant narrative detailing methods where LEA will give students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. As detailed in C2, applicant again mentions the responsibility of the academic team to work with students and teachers in an ongoing manner to adjust teaching and plans giving student opportunities to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on the subject matter.

The governing structure consists of policies, practices and rules of the LEA, which call for teacher involvement with an academic team to assist the student and teacher in shaping a personalized learning for both student and parent. LEA includes some details in the last pages of their proposal with a more detailed account of their Core Values and the ways it drives the LEA's organized approach to implementing their grant proposal.

The inconsistent and confusing manner in which the applicant offers as compliance to this sector does not comply with high quality standards, resulting in low points.

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

- The applicant is noticeably short on specifics in several sub-sections herein.
- At several points, the applicant merely re-states in the affirmative, the statement contained in the grant criteria.
- LEA asserts that their EDGE application sufficiently addresses the points within this sector. Providing statements such as: "The EDGE will provide technical support through various channels including community meetings, Global Learning Centers, extended day programming, various marketing materials, summer day programming and Parent Universities". To qualify as a high quality plan, applicant would be expected to include expanded explanations in how they would carry out and comply with the grant expectations in addressing the sub-sections of the selection criteria.
- Applicant does not offer reasonable support to qualify as a high quality plan and therefore earns low points.

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

	Available	Score
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<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As outlined in C1 and B2, applicant provides for timely and regular feedback on progress toward enhancing student academic achievements.</li> <li>• Lesson plans are systematically reviewed to verify alignment with CCSS (Common Core State Standards) and pacing guides. Lacking were the detailed procedures of how school administrators would use their Walk-Through to deliver corrections and improvements to the teachers. Further, it is unclear how this information will be applied to enhance the student learning outcomes.</li> <li>• Not readily apparent—at least in this section—was how the LEA would publicly share information on the quality of products purchased with RTTD monies.</li> <li>• Applicant lists weekly collaborative teacher meetings using various tools to monitor, measure and adjust if needed. These weekly meetings are in addition to the scheduled meeting planned for professional development and student assessment. The number and frequency of meetings seem not to have been considered in assessing the impact on practicality.</li> <li>• Overall, applicant provides generalities and broad views of its continuous improvement processes. Statements such as: "Quarterly reports and discussions between the school board, superintendent, LEA administrators and the school principal concerning student learning progress and next to developing focused strategies in middle and high school that provide quality educational experiences", are lacking sufficient evidence of a high quality plan.</li> </ul>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant proposes to hire an outside evaluator for the length of this proposal to maintain ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders, the applicant already has a management team, but fails to list the duties and responsibilities of the team.</p> <p>Communication with stakeholders such as district staff, parents, students, and community leaders will be continued through the various methods including web postings, weekly updates to the Executive Cabinet, monthly updates to the Board of Education and District Leadership Team.</p> <p>The impact of applicant's planned ongoing communication will serve to keep all stakeholders thoroughly apprised of the likely adjustments and revisions of the applicant's plan.</p> <p>Applicants plan for ongoing communication is adequately met under this sector.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the applicant's performance measures is: the number and percentage of students who will be taught by effective and highly effective teachers, as well as served by effective and highly effective principals.</li> <li>• The state of North Carolina has a waiver from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act stating that no teacher or principal in NC will receive a status of effective or highly effective until the start of the 2015-16 school year. Therefore, at this point, the applicant's proposal contains no data on this measure.</li> <li>• The LEA's application does contain the required descriptions of this measure in other locations in their proposal (such as A1-Vision Evaluate and support teachers and school leaders). Applicant supplies sufficient information for some performance measure, including applicable population, subgroup, and grade level. Applicant chooses performance measures, identified as Goal areas that equate to normal subject grade assessments.</li> <li>• It is noticeable that the goals as set by the applicant are ambitious, but may not be achievable due to across the board, significant decreases in test scores among all subgroups from school year 2010-11 to 2011-12. The data is not yet available for school year 2012-13.</li> <li>• It was unclear if applicant supplied at least one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator in its implementation plan.</li> <li>• The applicant failed to address how it will review and improve performance measures over time.</li> <li>• For the above reasons, applicant earns a low score.</li> </ul>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

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

- Applicant addresses the requirements of this sector by referring to a different section of the proposal, specifically E2 at minimum.
- Applicant outlines key goals, activities to be undertaken, who is responsible for the implementation of each activity, the rationale for inclusion of each activity related to project goals, the timeline for completion of each activity and the deliverables.
- The applicant proposes to comply with the section through the application of its Continuous Improvement Logic Model. The applicants Logic Model lacks many of the components necessary to qualify as a high quality plan, even though information is included under high quality plan categories, the rationale for their application does not meet selection criteria.
- The information that could be related to a continuous improvement process is scattered throughout the proposal making it difficult to make a complete assessment of plan quality. From what is written in this selection criteria applicant fails to display characteristics of a high quality plan.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

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

- The applicant provided information of the budget of their plan, including a narrative and chart. The EDGE project will connect the 14 schools in the District. EDGE is aligned with the 3-year district strategic pan and can impact student achievement through the creation of a culture that values education, using evidence-based strategies and alignment of efforts that support personalized learning environments. EDGE builds on the foundational transformation work that is embedded in four core comprehensive themes: college and career standards; data systems to guide teaching and learning; evaluate and support teachers and leaders; and turnaround schools.
- The applicant describes the personnel to implement their plan and the cost description and assumption. These positions include the Edge Director, Home-based Director, Data Coach, EDGE-Community Learning Center District Coordinator, School Coordinator, School Facilitator, Global Academy Counselors, and more.
- The equipment includes the EDGE 3-12 devices – Google Chrome book devices over a 3 year lease, EDGE K-2 devices-approximately 1300 literacy devices and the content to enhance early literacy strategies, programming, instruction and supports; Interactive Projectors – approximately 420 interactive projectors designed to engage learners in the digitalized personal learning environments; and laptops for teachers to enhance digital learning resources Monies are also set aside for training and professional development.
- Although the applicant provides a line-by-line budget proposal in the plan is the budget year, budget categories, project year with month, cost description and assumptions, personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and training stipends, the applicant does not address the identification of funds that will be used for one time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grand period.
- Applicant narrative fails to provide sufficient data in their proposed budget which focuses on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments that results in applicant receiving low points.

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

- The District and their project named EDGE, will increase leadership capacity of teachers, school level building administrators and the Central Office support, while enhancing professional development. This is the LEA's stated method for sustaining their proposal
- The growth of creating personalized learning environments, enhancing reading performance and long term growth towards college and career standards will be accelerated through the project vision of EDGE.

- The partnership of the applicant with on-going business and industry will be continued with a focus on connections of Common Core Standards and NC Essential Standards. Insufficient details are presented to acknowledge financial support for project sustainability. LEA simply states that it will "maintain on-going business and industry partners...". While very important, this is not sufficient to be considered a high quality plan. The LEA's Continuous Logic Model is presented as a major example of complying with various selection criteria, including Budget and Sustainability. The model does not provide a clear picture of effective processes needed to satisfy this selection criteria.
- The applicant states that their project EDGE is aligned with the District core values of continuous improvement will provides opportunities for students to identify and pursue areas of personal academic interest, will ensuring that each student master career and college-ready standard for college and career-ready high school graduation requirements. Again, insufficient data or narrative is provided to support the statement.
- The applicant's EDGE project is missing methodology they will use to evaluate effectiveness of past investments and how this information could be used to affect future investment, therefore resulting in low points.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant indicates that the low-wealth of their participating students and the stagnant business environment does not condone the possibility of sustainable partnerships to support the plan.
- Applicant places significant emphasis on teacher professional development, academic team collaboration to assist student and teacher with lesson plans and data interpretation to make continuous adjustments to the personalized educating platforms. LEA has performed a review of the standard tests and student assessments and identified the needs and assets of the school/community. Their results indicated that reading was a top priority.
- Applicant used this data and the information that will be gathered from researched based assessment tools to target resources in order to improve results. The applicant's proposal fails to addresses the listed requirements in this sector.
- Applicant fails to demonstrate partnerships in decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and addressing student, family, and school needs, resulting in the low point range.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Not Met</b>

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Applicant attempts to address this sector in its Vision narrative. Applicant re-phrases the four key areas contained in core educational assurance areas and calls them their four comprehensive themes: 1) college and career standards; 2) data systems to guide teaching and learning; 3) evaluate and support teachers and school leaders; 4) turnaround the lowest performing schools.

College and career standards: LEA recognizes that its students are generally unprepared academically for college acceptance. State graduation requirements are often unmet in Algebra I and English I. Applicant states it will rely on formative and summative assessments to gauge student academic status and quality of instructional methodology. Applicant says it partners with the state in contracting SAS EVASS to use metrics and data-systems to predict student success probabilities at academic milestones. As part of their EDGE program, applicant says this predictive capability will enable them to enhance their personalized learning environment for each student. For the purpose of this grant, and to provide more insight on how this interaction will enhance student academic results, applicant must provide greater detail of

the process, but fails to do so.

Data systems to guide teaching and learning: the newly implemented North Carolina Student Information System began use in 2013. Applicant has plans for many programs to utilize this system, but thus far does not have an effective program in place. Applicant states that it will do, perform and setup various capabilities that relate to the core educational areas, however strong evidence of a well-thought out plan is lacking.

Evaluate and support teachers and school leaders: applicant states that they have created several innovative programs to attract and retain at both the school and administrative levels. However, no data accompanies this statement. High quality plan components were not provided for this sub-sector.

Turning around the lowest performing schools: the applicant's state school administrators are currently in the midst of enacting steps to turnaround low performing schools within the state. Applicant states that this grant funding will serve to augment the current efforts in turning around these low performing schools. Applicant implies that the economic synergy of this grant funding coupled with existing state funding already targeting low performing schools could serve to ensure success in these schools. LEA has teamed with the state's Department of Public Instruction to complete a comprehensive needs assessment of three low performing schools in the district. This detailed needs assessment will support some of the qualifications of a high quality plan, though much more details are necessary.

As depicted above the requirements for a high quality plan are inadequately addressed in important ways. There are vestiges of heartfelt good intentions that are supported by incomplete and at times confusing data. Often and throughout the proposal high-quality plan components are left unsatisfied. Often good intentions are offered as justification for program applications. The need for a detailed, integrated, complete plan to deliver a personalized learning environment with components as listed in selection criteria are not adequately complied with.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>45</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0140NC-2 for Edgecombe County Public Schools

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

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

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

The applicant clearly situates its schools in a community described as rural (county pop. 56,000), low-wealth (median household income of \$34,000), struggling to attract business and industry, but also struggling to fill open entry-level and advanced positions with qualified employees. The applicant provides further context by describing selected characteristics of students served through its 14 schools (four high schools, four middle schools, and six elementary schools), such as 80% qualify for free and reduced lunch (FRL), 57% Black, 34% white, 7% Hispanic, and 2% Multi-racial. With regard to student achievement, the applicant appropriately points out that, although the district has undertaken several focused improvement efforts in the past that have resulted in some areas of increased achievement, the district lags behind state averages of grade-level proficiencies in reading, math and science, and within the state three of the lowest-performing schools (FRL is 88% or greater) are located in district.

Related to the title of its proposed project, EDGE (Educating the Digital Generation for Excellence), the applicant clearly describes a guiding vision to provide its students with a global education through personalized learning environments that allow students the opportunity to escape poverty and flourish as citizens. Within this vision, the proposed project would

provide educators with information, tools, and supports that enable them to meet the needs of each student and to accelerate and deepen each student's learning; students would be able to identify and pursue their personal academic interests while mastering critical knowledge and skills linked to college- and career-ready standards. Stated poignantly, the applicant's inviting appeal is to provide students in the district the opportunity to pursue *their* American dream.

The applicant clearly describes how the four core educational assurance areas—college and career standards, data systems to guide teaching and learning, evaluate and support teachers and school leaders, and turn around the lowest performing schools—will be built on to advance the district's core values and goals for developing and sustaining comprehensive school reform by:

- Communicating effectively and actively engaging with all stakeholders.
- Embracing positive relationships with all stakeholders.
- Providing safe, orderly, and caring environments that promote student success.
- Building and sustaining a culture based on high expectations and continuous improvement.
- Developing and implementing rigorous curriculum and instruction.

Related to a coherent reform vision for its project, the applicant appropriately begins with a comprehensive needs assessment framework that is linked to a school transformation model embedded in a School Improvement Grant, which is focused on its three lowest-performing schools (all high-poverty elementary schools). However, the reform vision consistent with the school transformation model that briefly presented in the proposal is not sufficiently articulated to assess how well it would support the goals of accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning.

A medium score is awarded this section because, while an overall reform vision is attractively presented, sufficient detail is not present in the proposal in order to assess how well the goals of personalized learning would be supported or what the classroom experience would be like for students and teachers.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant clearly provides a list of schools that will participate in the project, the total number of participating students (including the number of students from low-income families and the number of high-need students), and the total number of participating educators. The applicant also clearly indicates that all schools, students, and educators in the district will participate in the proposed project.

A high medium score is awarded this section because the number of participating schools, students, and educators are clearly identified but the process used to select schools is not addressed.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

Within the narrative and an accompanying graphic, the applicant effectively presents a logic model for continuous improvement efforts—intended to sustain district-wide reform efforts toward increased student achievement—by focusing on responses to five inter-related questions that link from one to the other in a linear fashion:

- What RESOURCES are available to achieve the activities and processes necessary to produce outputs related to EDGE outcomes?
- What ACTIVITIES or processes are needed to produce outputs to reach EDGE outcomes?
- What PRODUCTS should be gathered that can be counted as evidence of meeting EDGE outcomes?
- What SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES does the district want to achieve with EDGE?
- What LONG-TERM OUTCOMES does the district want to achieve with EDGE?

A low score is awarded this section because, while the applicant includes a logic model useful for describing the project's approach to improving learning outcomes, a high-quality plan (with goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and person(s) responsible) for how the reform will result in meaningful change district-wide is not provided.

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

**10**

**1**

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

The following observations identify several shortcomings in the information provided by the applicant regarding district-wide goals for improved student learning :

- The tables on “performance on summative assessments” and “decreasing achievement gaps” show project goals for 2012-13 (this past year) through a post-grant year of 2016-17 (the intended fourth year of the project). This confusion raises doubts about which baseline and end-of-project goals are to be considered.
- With regard to “performance on summative assessments, it is not clear whether the data in the table refer to proficiency or growth because both methodologies are defined yet only one undefined target number is listed in each table cell.
- With regard to “decreasing achievement gaps,” the data in the table are not defined with regard to measure or kind of data (percentage or point gap).
- English learners as a student subgroup are missing from each of the four tables.
- The table on “college enrollment” includes no subgroups, one baseline entry (for 2011-12), and no goals for any of the project years.

While the table on “graduation rates” also is missing English learners as a subgroup, data in the table indicate an overall improvement of 15% in the graduation rate, and greater gains for Hispanic students (25%), students from low-income families (23%), and students with disabilities (20%).

With regard to all four tables and goals for improved student outcomes, the state ESEA targets for districts are not identified in order to help assess whether the goals are both ambitious and achievable.

A low score is awarded this section because, with the partial exception of graduation rate, data and information provided are incomplete, confusing, or both in order to assess whether and to what extent the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance, and in increased equity, as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable goals.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

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

The applicant provides a broad range of evidence demonstrating a track record of success in improving student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps, undertaking ambitious reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools, and making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents. Specific evidence of these accomplishments as provided by the applicant follows.

**Improvements in student learning outcomes.** Using data from DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), the percent of students proficient in reading rose from 49% to 63% in kindergarten and from 28% to 50% in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Grades 2-4 showed more mixed results. Using 2008-09 to 2011-12 data from end-of-grade, state-level tests in

reading and math, the percent of students achieving at or above grade level increased by 6%-7% in reading for grade 3 and grade 8 and increased by 8%-11% in math for grades 3, 4 and 8. The other grade levels had more mixed results. Also using data from state-level tests over the four-year period, students achieving proficiency or higher in science increased by 13% in grade 5 and 12% in grade 9.

**Closing achievement gaps.** *When high school students within the district are compared to high school students statewide,* the applicant reports that for the English I end-of-course test the achievement gap was reduced by 5% (over a three-year period) and in biology by 2% (over a two-year period). For this same time period, the applicant also reports that, across end-of-course tests, the achievement gap between African-American and white students (the state comparison group) decreased by 4% and between Hispanic and white students decreased by 6%. *When students in grades K-8 grades are compared within the district,* gains were made between 2008-09 and 2011-12 in reducing the achievement gap for both reading and math. While the achievement gap between student subgroups within the district is still evident, importantly: (a) there were gains in proficiency for African-American, Hispanic, white, economically disadvantaged, and non-economically disadvantaged student for both reading and math; (b) there was a greater increase in percent proficient for Hispanic and African-American students compared to white students over the four-year period in both reading and math; and (a) the gap between disadvantaged and not-disadvantaged students did not widen in either reading or math. No evidence was provided for students with disabilities and English learners in the student subgroup comparison tables.

**Improved high school graduation rates.** The overall graduation rate in the district rose from 58% in 2009 to 80% in 2012. Graduation rates increased between 18% and 43% across the four high schools. Notably, the high school with the highest gain in graduation rate also graduated 100% of its students in four years, and 77% of its graduates in 2012 received an associate art degree in conjunction with their high school diploma.

**Improved college enrollment.** The applicant states that the number of students enrolling in colleges or universities doubled from 2010-2012, although the exact numbers were not reported.

**Ambitious and significant reforms in persistently lowest-achieving schools.** The applicant reports that, within its School Improvement Grant (SIG) activities, the district is using the transformation model which has four required components: increasing teacher and school leadership effectiveness; providing comprehensive reform strategies that are research-based; increasing learning and community-oriented school; and providing operational flexibility and sustained support. Among the district's six elementary schools, the three identified as among the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the state are participating in the SIG. These grant activities include but are not limited to: needs and gaps assessments; a cultural audit; strategies to support teacher effectiveness through job-embedded coaching and teacher evaluation; professional development focused on increased expectations, rigor, and data-driven instruction for increasing personalization and improve learning for students.

**Making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents.** *Students* can access a range of performance data that includes personalized education plans (PEPs), Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), rubrics, benchmark data with summaries by objective, progress reports (e.g. DIBELS reports of reading readiness), and report cards. *Teachers* have access to system-wide data (e.g., student benchmark data) to examine objectives based on study mastery and for re-teaching or enriching content, and to guide students toward deepening their understanding of their academic strengths and weaknesses. Teachers coach students through the process of using data to set realistic goals. Follow-up conferences with students focus on student performance (as observed by both the student and the teacher) and steps for forward progress. Teachers also meet with students to review quarterly DIBELS reports and to guide students in individual reading skills and working independently. Grade-level elementary school teams and content area team in middle and high schools meet weekly (along with school leaders) to review individual and subgroup student performance on district assessments and to make collaborative adjustments to instruction strategies and curriculum pacing as needed. *Parents* receive report cards, progress reports, benchmark results, and DIBELS reports that are sent home and have online access to state-level report cards the district's annual report. Quarterly curriculum nights are held for helping parents to interpret reports that are sent home. Parents also are invited to board meetings to learn about student performance and specific issues affecting the district.

A high score is awarded for this section because the criteria are effectively addressed with the exceptions of (a) not

explaining some mixed results in student achievement in reading and math across grades 3-8 and (b) omitting students with disabilities and English learners from the student subgroups.

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

**5**

**1**

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

The extent to which the district provides transparency in its processes, practices, and investments is not entirely clear from the applicant's proposal. For example, the applicant states that it routinely seeks input from stakeholders before making decisions about major expenditures and that it makes information about expenditures available to the public. At a general level, the applicant briefly explains that the district budget and annual report are shared at board meetings and published on the district's website. With regard to specific information requested for this section focused on school-level personnel salaries (instructional and support staff, instructional staff, and teachers only) and non-personnel expenditures, the applicant's only evidence provided for transparency is (a) it *compensates* employees based on the state salary schedule available on the state education agency website, and (b) it *collects* such personnel and non-personnel expenditure data that are then reported to the US Census Bureau and compiled into a NCES report available to the public at the end of each fiscal year.

A low score is awarded this section because the applicant does not provide specific information about stakeholder availability of, and ease of access to, personnel salaries and non-personnel expenditures at the school level, or the transparency of district processes and practices other than those that are budget related.

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

**10**

**10**

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

Directly linked to being a district within a state that received one of the 12 Race to the Top grants in 2010, the applicant clearly and effectively describes three key features of the state context that provide successful conditions to implement personalized environments:

1. **Adoption of Common Core State and Essential Standards.** The district is part of a statewide implementation of Common Core State Standards in in K-12 Mathematics and K-12 English Language Arts. District administrators and teacher leaders have participated in summer institutes to support transition to these new standards, teacher teams have created and published on the district's website guides for K-12 English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies, and unit plans have been developed as exemplars with a section on differentiation to provide tools and resources that will help to personalize learning and meet the needs of all students.
  
2. **North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES).** This statewide system encompasses standards and evaluation processes for every teacher and administrator in the state. Each set of standards captures the skills, knowledge, and behaviors expected of individuals in a particular role. An example of how NCEES supports personalized learning is Standard IV, Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students: teachers know the ways in which learning takes place, and they know the appropriate levels of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of their students; teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students; teachers use a variety of instructional methods; teachers integrate and utilize technology in their instruction; and teacher help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. All staff members in the district have received training to use NCEES, which is supported by an online environment.
  
3. **Turnaround of Lowest Achieving Schools (TALAS).** This initiative targets elementary, middle, and high schools in the state in which less than 60% of their students achieve proficiency or above, based on a composite performance score (using 2009-10 data), and high schools with graduation rates below 60%. The district has three of these schools (all elementary schools) among the 118 schools in the state that meet one or both of these criteria. The district has been awarded RTT-S grant funds of \$880,000 for the district to improve teaching, learning, standards, and assessments.

With regard to autonomy, the applicant clearly explains that the state does not restrict personalized learning environments but rather, through state statute [North Carolina General Statute 115C-105.41], encourages the creation of such environments, particularly for students who are deemed at risk of academic failure.

The highest score is awarded for this section because all of the criteria are effectively addressed.

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

**15**

**3**

**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not provide sufficient information to determine whether the full range of stakeholders were meaningfully engaged in the development and support of the proposed project, based on the lack of evidence as indicated [ ] below:

- In response to the RTTD grant announcement, the district superintendent received feedback from members of his executive cabinet [not specified] to move forward with the application process, which resulted in the formation of a grant development committee [not specified].
- All extended cabinet members [not specified] received a copy of the grant application at the district leadership [not specified] retreat in August 2013, and work groups [not specified] were formed to brainstorm components and consideration of each section of the grant.
- Team [not defined] focused on application alignment with the district strategic plan, and the grant development committee [not specified] used this information to create a grant roadmap, a document which guided their work throughout the development of strategic initiatives and the writing process.
- Multiple data sets including surveys and needs assessment data were considered [by whom not specified] in the application visioning process.
- School improvement teams [membership not specified] and teams across the district [not specified] contributed to the development of the application considerations [not specified] through school and district improvement plans [not specified or differentiated from the proposal under development].
- This feedback from leadership teams [not specified] was used [by whom not specified] to identify the key components of EDGE, which is the title of the proposed project.
- Local mayors were allowed access to comment and a digital folder if requested that housed all of the grant materials and, in addition to a letter of support, were asked to provide feedback on the grant. This valuable feedback from community stakeholders [not specified] was incorporated in the last round of revisions.
- Various platforms [not specified] were used to solicit feedback and garner support from stakeholders [not specified].
- The executive summary was published on the district’s website [specific users or feedback not specified].

The applicant also provides fourteen letters of support, found in the appendix, from:

- City majors (2)
- City managers (2)
- Community manager
- County sheriff
- Congressman, US House of Representatives
- Executive director of a multi-county partnership
- President/CEO of the county economic development agency
- President of the local chamber of commerce
- President of the local community college
- Director of the county library
- Executive director of the community partnership for children
- Executive director of the county cultural arts council

A low score is awarded this section because there is no specific information about how teachers, students, and families were engaged in the development of the proposal, how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and

feedback, or the extent to which they support the proposed project.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>

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

To empower and engage all learners in order to prepare them for college and careers, the applicant proposes a reasonable approach for the district based on current practices and new initiatives as demonstrated in the following evidence:

- Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) for students.** The applicant explains that, currently, students who have been tested for learning disabilities and have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) receive exceptional student services. The new initiative is for all students in the district to have a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) that addresses their learning needs, learning goals, and learning style. Each student’s PLP would be drafted by an academic team composed of teacher, principal, and academic [role of parent and student not specified in preparing the PLP]. The academic team will meet every trimester (12-week period) with each student to set goals, assess performance, adjust goals, and set new targets based on curriculum maps. In the interim, every two weeks, the classroom teacher or team teachers will meet with each student to determine re-teaching or enrichment activities. Also, PLPs may include after-school learning programs, holiday hotline and helpers, and summer technology enrichment camps
- Community learning centers.** The applicant describes these centers, which are a new initiative, to be placed physically throughout the district at various schools in order to provide after-school learning opportunities. Through these centers, elementary and middle school students would receive homework help, remediation and enrichment through online resources, and character education programs aligned to service projects. Also at the centers, high school students would receive homework help, online services for credit recovery, advanced digital courses, college readiness and catch-up opportunities, and comprehensive service learning projects related to at least one academic discipline.
- Global school and dual immersion language programs.** The applicant points out that, currently, none of the elementary or middle school students receive instruction from a foreign language teacher. Foreign language instruction is available only through the high school curriculum and only includes Spanish as a foreign language. The new initiative is to provide students with an opportunity to experience a global education through language and cultural awareness. The applicant proposes that one of the 14 existing schools will become a Global School beginning 2014-15. A partnership with VIP International Education will provide access to their global curriculum and professional development focused on inquiry-based learning and a learning spiral for acquiring cultural and global competence. Beginning in 2014-15, the district would employ 8-10 foreign language teachers. Each elementary and middle school will provide a foreign language elective course as part of their selections. Citing research that links second language proficiency with overall academic achievement, the applicant proposes to transform, in the third year of the project (2015-16), three elementary schools into “dual immersion schools,” with at least two kindergarten classrooms at each school participating. In the fourth year of the project (2016-17), the intention is that all six elementary schools will become a dual immersion schools, beginning with kindergarten students and adding a grade-level classroom each year.
- Parent University.** Another new initiative proposed by the applicant, without a district forerunner mentioned, is Parent University. Using the community learning centers as a physical location, Parent University classes would be held for 90 minutes to two hours, and would be offered monthly (one week each month) with the goal of helping parents assist their students with learning. Each class would have a feedback component and a recognition of completion. Classes offered to parents would include an overview of the Common Core Curriculum and Essential Standards as well as parent questions for teachers and children on learning progress. Parents would be encouraged to learn and implement some of the best teaching strategies to support their children while completing homework. Parents could select classes based on their skill level, needs, and goals (e.g., technology-related, resume writing, job search, college applications, GED classes, literacy classes, entrepreneurial start up, etc.). Other classes would be generated by parent need and request as well as district strategic goals and core values.

The applicant also provides in a multi-page chart within the proposal narrative a partially incomplete plan (activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible party, but not goals stated as intended outcomes) for three of four new initiatives—

for personalized learning plans, language programs, and Parent University, but not for community learning centers.

A middle score is awarded this section because, while many of the criteria are addressed, there are not enough specifics to determine the extent to which: students will be helped to understand what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals; students will be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of their academic interest; or accommodations and strategies that will be provided for high-need students. Also, goal statements are not included in the action plan for learning and one of four new initiatives (community learning centers) is not addressed in the required high-quality plan.

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

**20**

**10**

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

To help educators improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward college- and career-ready standards, the applicant proposes a reasonable approach for the district based on current practices and planned initiatives as demonstrated in the following evidence:

- **Data analysis.** The applicant explains that, for the 2012-13 school year, data analysis has been the sole responsibility of the Testing and Accountability Team. Based on their analysis, celebrations were held and opportunities for improvement acknowledged; individuals or teams of teachers were held responsible for working harder to improve the results for the next assessment. The new initiative is intended to infuse data analysis throughout the district transformation process. District-wide data will continue to be reviewed and analyzed by the central office staff as well as by each department. At the school level, the principal (with the support of the Testing and Accountability Team) will analyze each individual teacher’s test results by whole class and individual student. This information then will be shared with the classroom teacher and other members of each student’s academic team (including the teacher-coach along with the classroom teacher and principal). Using the foundation of needed knowledge and skills as a reference point, the academic teams will analyze results related to personalized learning plans as well as grade-level results, review particular standards and associated curriculum and instructional strategies, and identify practices for replication, improvement, or abandonment. Students and parents will be provided the analysis of data related to their personalized learning plan and invited to add their corresponding assessments.
- **District-wide, online curriculum resources.** The applicant points out that, currently, the district has an array of commercial online resources, mostly for English language arts or math, funded for various schools in the district. Also, a small fraction of the district’s students (mostly high school level) are enrolled in the state-wide virtual public school or the online course recovery service provided by a vendor fee. An audit of current online resources would be conducted in spring 2014 to determine their benefit, longevity, and usefulness in the district—with the potential of phasing out existing online resources and/or finding suitable replacements. The planned innovation focuses on providing each grade-level teacher with useful curriculum online resources. Lesson plans are at the heart of the proposed curriculum resources for guiding teaching and learning activities. An online “lesson plans repository,” consistent with curriculum maps and pacing guides developed by the district curriculum team and based on the Common Core and Essential Standards Curriculum, is to contain exemplar lesson plans. Between the Standards Curriculum and lesson plans, at an intermediate level, unit plans are to be developed with a district-approved template along with common formative (pre/post) assessments and associated feedback. Each lesson plan, developed collaboratively with colleagues prior to implementation, is intended to provide students with contextual vocabulary and balanced literacy and math practices, while incorporating the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy along with differentiation strategies. Lesson plans also are intended to respond to language development as well as extended and enrichment activities to provide students with multiple opportunities for success.
- **Teacher University.** The applicant explains that, several years ago, the district’s central office created a Professional Development Plan (PDP), consisting of a buffet of options, many of which required face-to-face interaction either during or immediately after the school day. Apparently, the needs of individual teachers or staff were not addressed in the development or implementation of the PDP, and there was little follow-up or feedback from these activities. Therefore, another new initiative proposed by the applicant is to create a Teacher University [name not explained and organizational/physical location not specified] that will offer individual learning opportunities for teachers. Based on data analysis as well as personal input and goals, each teacher will select a course of study. The course options will be developed based on student needs, district and school strategic plans, and individual

teacher needs for growth and development. Similar to students, each teacher also will have a personalized learning plan (PLP). Teacher choices of which activities to undertake will be signed off by their school administrative team and will be part of their evaluation artifacts. Course choices will include modules delivered online as well as ones designed to be done in a collegial setting. Certificates of course completion also would be available.

- **Educational Leadership Plan.** The applicant explains that during the 2012-13 school year the district had a professional development plan with a large variety of offerings but with a “one size fits all” approach—everyone in similar job received the same training without respect to their skill set, learning styles, experience, or leadership level. The intent was to provide educators with everything they needed to be successful rather than to focus on personalized needs and leadership. The new initiative is to develop an Educational Leadership Plan based on data from the district, school, and individual student levels to ensure that student growth and improvement is the central focus for educational leadership. More specific details regarding the Educational Leadership Plan are not provided by the applicant.

Although not specifically mentioned in the section, district teachers and administrators also participate in training provided through the Friday Institute at North Carolina State University, particularly with regard to its one-to-one technology initiative.

The applicant also provides in a multi-page chart within the proposal narrative an partially incomplete plan (activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible party, but not goals stated as intended outcomes) for data analysis, district online resources, and Teacher University.

A middle score is awarded this section because, while many of the criteria are addressed, a key omission is a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and person(s) responsible) for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. In addition, specifics are not provided for how feedback from teacher and principal evaluation systems will be used to improve teachers’ and principals’ practice and effectiveness. Goal statements as intended outcomes for the teaching and leading plan also are omitted.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>

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

The applicant clearly and effectively explains that each student will have a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) that is implemented, monitored, and adjusted to meet the needs of each individual student, including the pace at which the student proceeds in meeting college- and career-ready standards. Using the PLP with an academic team, students will have the opportunity to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than amount of time spent on a topic and to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways.

The applicant states that the district central office is organized to provide support and services to all 14 district school, but *no specific information* is provided about support and services that facilitate personalized learning.

Likewise, *specific information is lacking* to determine the extent of flexibility and autonomy granted to school leadership teams in order to facilitate personalized learning.

Applicant states that the district will provide learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible for all student, including students with disabilities and English learners, however *no specific information* is provided as evidence of adaptability and accessibility.

A low middle score is awarded this section because specific evidence has been provided that two of the five criteria have

been sufficiently addressed.

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

**10**

**4**

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

The applicant provides partial evidence that two of the four criteria in this section of the proposal are reasonably addressed:

- All students, parents, and educators are to have appropriate access, both in and out of school, to a mastery learning program centered on personal learning plans for students, but specific methods or strategies for this access to occur are not addressed; and,
- Technical support for the use of technologies and databases is to be provided to students, parents, and educators through various channels (such as community meetings, community learning centers, extended-day programming, summer programming, and Parent University) but, again, specific methods or strategies for the technical support are not addressed.

For another criterion in this section, the applicants provides more specific information about how the project will provide infrastructure support to stakeholders:

- Parents and students will be able to export their information in an open data format through the district's new Home Base portal, which provides access to multiple information platforms while simultaneously using data in other electronic systems. In addition, Google Apps for Education will be used to bring students, teachers, and teams together to share information and engage in collaborative decision-making online. Using Google Docs, a group of students and/or adults at a distance can work together on an assignment, project, report, or other shared activity while seeing changes (and exchanges) in real time rather than waiting for communication via hard copy, email, or some other separate electronic communication.

*No specific examples or other information was provided for ensuring that the district and schools use interoperable data systems, particularly with regard to human resources data and budget data.*

A middle score is awarded this section because two of four criteria were somewhat sufficiently addressed, one was adequately addressed, and one was not addressed at all.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The applicant provides some selected evidence that it practices continuous improvement, including:

- Ongoing use of newly developed staff, student, and parent surveys, to be administered annually and feedback results to be used in making corrections and improvement in the district culture.
- Alignment of operating procedures in every department to reflect high expectations.
- Lesson plans reviewed systematically to verify alignment with CCSS and district guides.
- A standard walkthrough form used by school administrators to monitor less plan implementation and provide

immediate descriptive feedback to teachers.

The applicant also provides a graphic titled “Continuous Improvement Logic Model.” [This graphic was the same one used to illustrate the applicant’s “theory of change.”]. The main strength of this graphic is that it illustrates an overall framework for continuous improvement in the project as a whole with examples of resources, activities, products, short-term goals, and long-term goals connected to one another in a linear fashion. The main weakness of this graphic is that it lacks specificity regarding how changes would be made for project improvements.]

A low score is awarded this section because (a) there is not a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and person(s) responsible) for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regularly feedback on project goals for ongoing corrections and improvement, and (b) there is no specific information about how RTTD investments will be monitored, measured, and publicly shared (e.g., investments in professional development, technology, and staff).

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
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**(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

No points are awarded for this section because the applicant did not provide a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and person(s) responsible) for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

With regard to required and proposed performance measures, the following observations describe the reviewers perceptions of what is provided and not provided:

- The required performance measures for “highly effective” and “effective” teachers and principals were not completed by the applicant with a note that, according to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) in citing the Race to the Top state plan and ESEA waiver, no teacher in the state will receive a status of effective or highly effectiveness until the start of the 2015-16 school year. Following the NCDPI advice, all cells in both tables are marked NA, Not Available or Not Applicable.
- The required age-appropriate measures of students’ academic growth were partially provided for **PreK-3** (only by grade level not by student subgroup)
- The required measure for number and percentage of participating students who are on track for college- and career-readiness was provided for all student subgroups except English learners for **grades 3-8** (reading and math composite EOG) for grades 5 and 8 (science composite EOG), and Algebra I (EOC).
- The required measures for grades 9-12 were not completed.
- None of the performance measures include ones proposed by the applicant.
- In total, the applicant presented five performance measures, not including the partial measure for ACT results for 11<sup>th</sup> graders in one incomplete table.
- Tables for both “decreasing achievement gaps” and “graduation rates are included in the application, however no reference is made to the comparison group for assessing if the goals are ambitious yet attainable and English learners are omitted.

The applicant does not provide for any of the performance measures (a) its rationale for selecting that measure, (b) how the measure will provide rigorous, time, and formative information, or (c) how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant states that the grant development team, by following the “Continuous Improvement Logic Model,” created a high-quality evaluation plan. However, a low score is awarded this section because an evaluation plan is not found in the proposal narrative or appendix. The only specific information provided is that an external evaluator will work with district staff to ensure all goals are monitored and assessed using multiple measures throughout the term of the project.</p>		

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

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

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

The extent to which the applicant addresses criteria related to the budget narrative and tables is evaluated with the following evidence:

- a. All of the funds that will support the project are identified (100% RTTD, with the possibility that some additional professional development may be supported with Title I and Title II funding).
- b. The applicant states that the requested budget for the project is reasonable because the district is already invested (through state and local funding sources) in digital learning and a 1 to 1 technology initiative, but these components of district investments are not integrated in the description of the proposed project.
- c. Regarding a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities,
  - i. Each budget item has an explanation that justifies its request and, according to the applicant, all facets of the proposed project, including the budget request, are aligned with the district strategic plan.
  - ii. One-time investments are not identified separately from ongoing operational costs incurred both during and after the grant period.

A middle score is awarded this section because specific evidence in the application indicates that only two of the four criteria have been sufficiently addressed.

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

Among the reasons for the sustainability of project goals after the grant, the applicant provides the following:

- The leadership capacity of teachers, school-level building administrators, and central office support will be increased.
- Accelerated student achievement rates will be sustained through the established personalized learning environments.
- The district will maintain ongoing business and industry partners who support school events, participate in career days, and provide guest speakers.
- Increased college- and career-readiness of students will enhance the connections to business and industry through internships.

A low score is awarded this section because (a) there is not a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and person(s) responsible) for sustainability of the project’s goals after the term of the grant, and (b) the applicant does not address how investments in the project will be evaluated or expectations for post-grant funding from district, state, and other sources.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

No points are allowed for this section because the applicant did not provide sufficient details for how it will integrate public or private resources in a *partnership* designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports that address the *social, emotional, or behavioral needs* of the participating students.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant's guiding vision is to provide its students with a global education through personalized learning environments that allow students the opportunity to escape poverty and flourish as citizens. In seeking funding support, the applicant's appeal is to enable them to provide students in the district with the opportunity to pursue *their* American dream. All of the district's 14 schools, 6,750 students (76% low income), and 436 educators would participate in the proposed project. The applicant intends to improve the graduation rate overall by 15% and help close the achievement gap with greater gains in graduation rate for Hispanic students (25%), students from low-income families (23%), and students with disabilities (20%).

The applicant describes how the four core educational assurance areas will be built on to advance the district's core values and goals for developing and sustaining comprehensive school reform by: communicating effectively and actively engaging with all stakeholders; embracing positive relationships with all stakeholders; providing safe, orderly, and caring environments that promote student success; building and sustaining a culture based on high expectations and continuous improvement; and, developing and implementing rigorous curriculum and instruction.

The applicant explains that, currently, students who have been tested for learning disabilities and have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) receive exceptional student services. In the proposal project all students in the district would have a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) that addresses their learning needs, learning goals, and learning style. The student's PLP would be implemented, monitored, and adjusted to meet the needs of each individual student, including the pace at which the student progresses in meeting college- and career-ready standards. Working with an academic team, students would have the opportunity to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery rather than amount of time spent on a topic and to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways.

The proposed project also would provide educators with information, tools, and supports that enable them to meet the needs of each student and to accelerate and deepen each student's learning. Students would be helped to identify and pursue their personal academic interests while mastering critical knowledge and skills linked to college- and career-ready standards.

Similar to students, each teacher also would have a personalized learning plan (PLP) for their continuing professional development. In addition, an Educational Leadership Plan would be developed and implemented to ensure that student growth and improvement is the central focus for educational leadership.



Total	210	83
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

### Application #0140NC-3 for Edgecombe County Public Schools

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

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

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

The Edgecombe County Public Schools has set forth a reform vision which builds on its work in four core educational assurance areas by submitting a program entitled *EDGE (Educating the Digital Generation for Excellence)*. The program, is intended to provide *all* of the district's students (6,100 students in 14 schools), with a global education through personalized learning environments. Situated in a rural low-wealth Eastern North Carolina community, 79.87% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The district's unemployment rate is 14.5% (state's unemployment rate is 8.8%).

EDGE is not a stand alone project, but is aligned with the district's 3 year strategic plan (included both in the narratives and within the appendices), and with the four core comprehensive themes (assurance areas):

- College and career standards
- Data systems to guide teaching and learning
- Evaluate and support teachers and school leaders
- Turnaround the lowest performing schools.

The applicant provides descriptions for the assurance area's alignment to EDGE.

The EDGE classroom experience is proposed to include a collaborative setting where inquiry-based learning, is built on a repository of exemplary lessons aligned to standards and infused with higher order thinking skills. Students have individual learning plans which target their strengths and interests. Personalized devices assist in dispensing information by engaging students individually or collaboratively using 21st century technological tools.

College and career readiness will be enhanced through connections to business and industry through EDGE internships.

A career academy will highlight the career readiness element of this application in that it will combine classroom learning with workplace learning experiences, guidance in careers for students beginning in the middle school, and a keen focus on labor market demands. An advanced manufacturing academy will assist students whose interests lie in pursuing manufacturing careers.

In order to establish support for global awareness and language learning programs, a partnership with VIF (Visiting International Faculty) will result in a Global Elementary School being established in Edgecombe County Public Schools.

In addition, the VIF partnership will establish the first dual immersion program in the Edgecombe school system.

The district accesses student demographic and academic data through a state sponsored SIS. An on-line assessment system enables teachers to build assessments and monitor student and class performance on the Common Core Standards and the North Carolina Essential Standards objectives.

EDGE will provide professional development training in technology and pedagogy, differentiated learning, research-based pedagogy, 21st century strategies, tools and resources.

The applicant has set forth a comprehensive vision, but in the instance of EDGE, this vision fails to be coherent because of the complexity of offerings. There are so many program components proposed in this Selection Criterion with little or no explanation to deepen the reader's understanding. Upon review of the narrative for Selection Criterion A1, the following EDGE program components have been identified:

- Identify root causes and key leverage points
- Build capacities of teachers
- Support development of healthy families
- Sustain educational improvements
- Support collective impact of improvements on community
- Incorporate 21st century digital classrooms
- Expand learning opportunities through various delivery methods
- Make available online advanced placement coursework
- Allow district to meet and exceed vision
- Increase student retention and on time graduation rates
- Create a technologically literate work force
- Build a fast paced data system
- Develop business internships
- Develop a career academy
- Develop an advanced manufacturing academy
- Implement an extended day program
- Implement a dual language program
- Create a Global Elementary School
- Implement professional learning communities
- Implement a Dual Language Immersion program

The definition of “Personalized Learning Systems” in this proposal appears to be synonymous with “personalized education plans”. The applicant’s reference to North Carolina’s General Statute 115c-105.41 indicates that the district believes that personalized learning systems are individual education plans (IEPs) for students who are not successfully progressing toward grade promotion and graduation as in a special education environment. The proposal offers no specific personalized learning strategy for regular or gifted students.

The applicant provides a sketchy description of an EDGE program’s influence within a middle school (career academies), or high school (business internships), but nothing specific is mentioned for elementary or PK-K classrooms.

The Goals identified in the narrative are those identified as the District’s Goals and Core Values. Goals specific to the EDGE program have not been identified within this Selection Criterion, so it will be difficult to gauge the success of this project.

The North Carolina Student Information System houses aspects of student data including demographics, grades, and attendance and the Parent Portal module gives parents and students access to grades and teacher assignments. The available features of the SIS appears to provide a very limited menu of student data; and, if not enhanced through a supplemental district system, sorely lacks the potential for collecting and accessing data to support a 21st Century Technology-based program.

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

Because of the district’s poor performance in reading ( Overall Gr. 3 reading for Edgecombe is 50.4% as determined by the North Carolina End-of-Grade assessment. Only 40.1% of low SES students demonstrate grade level proficiency in both reading and mathematics), and because of recent state legislation which mandates that students who fail to reach reading proficiency by 3rd grade be retained, EDGE will focus on improving reading performance.

EDGE will impact 6,100 students across the PK-12 spectrum in all district elementary, middle and high schools. A chart including names of schools and corresponding grade levels was included. Total numbers of participating students from low-income families, and numbers of high needs students district-wide were included. There are 436 teachers employed within the district.

Unfortunately, the applicant’s proposal fails to adequately support high-quality district and school-level implementation.

The applicant provides a narrative describing the Edgecombe County Public Schools System demographics, location, and economic status as a backdrop for the district’s inclusion of all students in all schools in the EDGE application. However, it is not uncommon for schools located within depressed regions to “Beat the Odds” and demonstrate stellar academic performance. The Edgecombe’s proposal does not provide a specific reason for inclusion of each of the 14 district schools.

The applicant provides a sketchy description of an EDGE program’s influence within a middle school (career academies),

or high school (business internships), but nothing specific is mentioned for elementary or PK-K classrooms.

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

**10**

**1**

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

The applicant failed to appropriately respond to the Selection Criteria's prompt regarding "scale". The applicant instead submitted what was labeled as the district's logic model for continuous improvement. The "model" entails a series of questions designed to arrive at sustained measures of success as they relate to student achievement. The applicant failed to provide responses to the questions listed:

- What resources are available to achieve the activities and processes necessary to produce outputs related to EDGE outcomes?
- What activities or processes are needed to produce outputs to reach EDGE outcomes?
- What products should be gathered that can be counted as evidence of meeting EDGE outcomes?
- What short term outcomes does ECPS want to achieve with EDGE?
- What long term outcomes does ECPS want to achieve with EDGE?

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

**10**

**2**

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

The applicant failed to accurately complete the charts necessary to fulfill the requirements of Selection Criteria A4. Since the program has identified that all grade levels would be included. Data for each subgroup (Overall, Black, White, Hispanic, SWD, Economically Disadvantaged) tested in each of the subject areas tested and at each grade level tested, was to have been entered and submitted. The applicant included information for the academic areas of Algebra I, and Reading only, and submitted only composite, not individual grade level. Individual grade level scores for grades 3-8 grade for the reading component were omitted, as were data reflecting math, and science (at a minimum). A narrative describing the methodology for completion of this chart was not evident.

Similar errors were submitted to satisfy the requirements for the Decreasing Achievement Gaps charts. Composite student scores instead of grade level scores were used to compare Black, SWD, and Economically Disadvantaged students to white students' scores. A narrative describing the methodology for completion of this chart was not evident.

The chart depicting Graduation Rates was completed. A narrative describing the methodology for completion of this chart was not evident.

The chart depicting College Enrollment rates was not completed. A narrative describing the reason for failing to complete this chart was not evident.

The applicant provided no narrative information, and since there does not appear to be a pattern in the district's methodology for determining status or growth or an achievement gap in any area, it is impossible to discern the rationale used to complete these charts.

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

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

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

The applicant attempts to make a strong case toward its attempts at advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching over the last four years. Unfortunately, the district has met with only marginal success. Academically, the school district has been marked by years of underperformance. The district lags behind state averages in reading, math and science. Overall Gr. 3 reading for Edgecombe is 50.4% as determined by the North Carolina End-of-Grade assessment. Only 40.1% of low SES students demonstrate grade level proficiency in both reading and mathematics.

The district administers Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) reading assessments in grades K through 5. The applicant claims increases in reading proficiency at these grade levels, and for K students, the chart submitted appears to validate that victory. DIBELS, however is a formative assessment, where students demonstrate their abilities in areas such as oral fluency, phonemic awareness, and comprehension etc., rather than demonstrating a grade level "proficiency"

in reading as a whole. But, even taking this into account, the same levels of success evidenced by the kindergarten class as a grade level and over time, does not hold true for other grade levels being assessed using DIBELS.

The applicant applies composite scores for End-of-year state mandated tests for its claim that reading proficiency has risen 9% and math proficiency has risen 10% over the last four years. Yet upon review of the 4 Year Overview charts listing scores by grade level, reading scores have demonstrated very minor improvement. The achievement gap comparing white students to African American, and Hispanic students also shows minor improvements in closing the gaps. Information for English learners is not recorded. Graduation rates have increased at each of the district's high schools over the four year period.

The district has 3 of their 14 schools which have long-term labels as "Turnaround" state priority schools. The district currently has three schools who are recipients of School Improvement Grants; grants that are made available to the states' lowest performing schools. The three SIG grant schools include: Coker-Wimberly, G.W. Bullock, and W.A. Patillo Schools. Despite the district's efforts in the schools' turnaround transformation model, these three schools still retain a label as "underperforming". The applicant claims that the district has implemented the transformative model of increasing teacher and leadership effectiveness and claims that "effective" teachers and leaders are now in place. Based on the Glossary of Definitions, An effective teacher "means a teacher whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g., at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth." The district provides no evidence to support its claim that "effective" teachers and leaders provide instruction or leadership in those schools.

The applicant claims that teachers coach students in the process of looking at their data to set realistic goals. It is unclear whether or not a formal goal setting process is undertaken. Traditional processes of conferences, IEPs rubrics, benchmark data , progress reports and report cards are listed. There doesn't appear to be an on-line data system for student access.

Teachers discuss data through monthly data-day discussions and grade level meetings. There does not appear to be an on-line data system for teacher use.

Parents only have access to student performance data through conferences, progress reports, report cards, curriculum nights, and State generated assessment reports.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant's narrative has demonstrated transparency in district investments. The district's budget and annual report are published on the district's website and shared at Board meetings. Appropriate personnel respond to requests for public information. The applicant states that Edgecombe routinely seeks input from stakeholders before making major expenditures. Staff compensation is based on a state salary schedule. All certified and non-certified staff are compensated at published rates. Salary data are reported to the US Census Bureau and compiled into a report by the National Center for Education Statistics.

<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant identifies several statutory and regulatory requirements that allow for sufficient autonomy for EDGE to be implemented. The application identifies the North Carolina General Statute 115C-105.41 which mandates early interventions for students. Quoting the statute, "Focused instructional supports and services, reading interventions, and accelerated activities should include evidence-based practices that meet the needs of students and may include coaching, mentoring, tutoring, summer school, Saturday school, and extended days.

North Carolina was a recipient of one the Race to the Top grants awarded by the Dept. of Education. Because of this award, the state now has embraced Common Core College and Career Ready Standards, has created an Educator Evaluation System with a student achievement component, and monetary incentives School Improvement Grants (SIG grants) for turnaround of "failing" schools. All three of these requirements provide a healthy climate for implementation of personalized learning environments.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant satisfactorily describes the process by which meaningful *district level* support was gathered for this proposal. The application was introduced to the Executive Cabinet; a grant development committee was formed; brainstorming sessions were held with district stakeholder teams; staff surveys were conducted; School and District Improvement Plans were resourced for implementation strategies; and school leadership teams' input was sought. An Executive Summary of the application was posted on the district's website. Letters of support were gathered from local government entities :Mayor, City Manager, Sheriff, and City and Town Managers; the Executive Director of the Strategic Twin-Counties Educational Partnership, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and President of Edgecombe Community College. However, the process does not appear to validate input from parents, students or the community at large. No meeting minutes, agendas, dates were provided to substantiate the district process described in the narrative.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant states that the district's goal is for all students to receive a personalized learning plan to assure that their educational needs are being met, and that learning opportunities "will be accessed through personalized learning plans, use of district online resources, digital learning, access to The Edge Community Learning Centers, Global and Dual Immersion language programs, and the Parent and Teacher University. The applicant; however, attempts to address this Selection Criterion by responding to prompts in both present and future tense In this regard, it is difficult to ascertain whether the narratives are referring to best practice concepts that teachers in the district are currently expected to do (according to an educational article read, a conference attended), or whether the proposed EDGE program will contain these elements.</p> <p>It was previously stated that the district had already developed curriculum maps and pacing guides. In this section, a district curriculum team <i>will develop</i>, not revise, curriculum maps and pacing guides based on the Common Core. Power Standards will be identified. That's a good idea, but the state will need to administer their new annual test which will assess the Common Core Standards before power standards can be identified.</p> <p>The applicant submitted a chart entitled Student Learning Plan of Action which identifies goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties which address Personalized Learning Plans, Language Development, and Parent and Teacher University. The identified activities commence in 2014. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not this chart references the EDGE program or simply identifies activities to be commenced by the district during the 2014 school year.</p> <p>The applicant states that "Each child's Personal Learning Plan will be drafted by an academic team composed of the teacher, a school administrator, and a coach". No grade level has been identified as to when this activity will commence. The position of "coach" has not been defined. For a "team" of three educators to develop 6,100 personalized learning plans, and review and revise these plans with <i>every student</i> every 12 weeks is unrealistic.</p> <p>The concept of transitioning an existing school to a Global School is admirable. The applicant did not identify the grade levels of the school to be reconstituted; whether this school will be selected because of its high achievement, or whether the district will make the transition because of its inability to turnaround a school doomed to state or federal takeover. Hopefully, the district's partnership with VIF International Education will result in a positive alliance for both parties.</p> <p>The applicant fails to discuss the percentage of English language learners being educated within the district, or the predominant language(s) of the ELLs. Likewise, the applicant does not identify the language which will be instructed in their Dual Language Immersion attempts. The district has and continues to struggle with increasing reading proficiency in the English language. It is hoped that the district will continue to research the positive and negative effects of a dual language immersion program before embarking on this concept in several schools.</p> <p>The Parent and Teacher University is an interesting concept which would benefit from further development within the narratives.</p> <p>The applicant failed to address C1(c): Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		

The applicant failed to address the prompts required for this Selection Criterion C-2: An approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements by enabling the full implementation of personalized learning and teaching for all students, in particular high-need students. The applicant's response to the Selection Criterion was "student" based and the focus not on teachers or leadership and the means by which the district would enhance their abilities in support of student success.

In response to "Enhancing existing data systems", rather than discussing implementation of a robust online data system which would enable the components of this Selection Criteria, the applicant's list of District Online Resources include commercial online products used to reinforce instruction, course recovery, and virtual classroom enrollment.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>

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

Other than stating that the Edgcombe central office's philosophy is "Servant leadership", the applicant failed to describe its organizational structure as it would relate to the EDGE proposal.

The applicant claims that school leadership teams exist at each school site and that they do enjoy autonomy over factors such as schedules, calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators and school level budgets. The degree to which the schools are afforded this autonomy has not been elaborated upon by the applicant.

Demonstrated mastery to earn credit was addressed as a potential outcome of the personalized learning paradigm which will be implemented pending the approval of this application. Since credits are not traditionally earned by elementary or middle school students the applicant's response was incomplete. There was no plan regarding the demonstration of standard mastery submitted, nor was there a satisfactory response provided to fulfill the requirements of resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students.

The applicant included a chart: "The EDGE: Continuous Improvement Logic Model", which, to this reviewer, bears no relevance to this Selection Criterion.

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

**10**

**1**

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

The applicant fails to demonstrate an understanding of the Selection Criterion requirements. Based on a list entitled "District Online Resources" (C2), the proposed district data resources will be comprised of curriculum maps, unit plan, pacing guides, lesson plans, manipulatives, rubrics, and assessments. The applicant does not include a reference to "infrastructure" or databases. In Section A, the applicant describes that the district and state partner with SAS EVAAS for K12 that identifies metrics and data systems that predict the probability of student success in such areas as academic achievement, high school graduation requirements and college success. No strategies for teaching students, parents and educators how to access this information are provided.

Although the applicant claims that parents and students are able to export information in an open data format through the Home Base portal and multiple modes of informational platforms while using the data in other electronic learning systems, previous narrative offerings such as the information provided in the (C2) do not support this statement. The applicant failed to provide a narrative describing their understanding of electronic learning systems. The references to Google apps for education reads as though it was cut directly from promotional material for that product .

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite the applicant's insertion of a chart depicting The EDGE: Continuous Improvement Logic Model in their attempts to fulfill the requirements of this Selection Criterion, the district's responses to these prompts fail to provide sufficient evidence for a "strategy for implementing a rigorous, continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals." Many of the chart's elements are mislabeled. The chart itself provides very little insight into "Continuous Improvement".</li> </ul> <p>As mentioned in a previous review, the applicant's responses report what the district is doing currently (Ex. On-going use of student, staff, parent surveys), as opposed to what the district will do to evaluate the program for which they are writing this grant. Generalities such as "The feedback results are continually used to make corrections and improvements" weaken the narrative, because the applicant fails to describe that process.</p> <p>In referencing the EDGE project, the applicant claims that the district will employ:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Training all teachers and administrators in the Friday Institute TPAC learning initiative. The applicant fails to discuss what the district means by the TPAC learning initiative.</li> <li>2. Weekly collaborative teacher meeting(s) to improve the uniformity of the educational framework in Daily 5, CAFÉ' Strategies, Guided Reading, implementation. The applicant fails to define Daily 5 and CAFÉ' Strategies and declines to address the means by which these strategies fit into the master plan.</li> <li>3. "Quarterly reports and discussions between the Board , Superintendent, administrators and school principal(s) concerning student learning progress and next to developing focused strategies in middle and high school that provide quality educational experiences." This statement is confusing and hard to interpret. The applicant does not specify the contents of the quarterly report, why they are generated, or who the individual is who is responsible for compiling and generating this report.</li> </ol>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Despite the applicant's insertion of a chart depicting "The EDGE: Continuous Improvement Logic Model" in their attempts to fulfill the requirements of this Selection Criterion, the district's responses to these prompts fail to provide evidence for "a high quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders." Many of the chart's elements are mislabeled. The chart itself provides very little insight into "Continuous Improvement". The means by which this instrument would assist in streamlining an evaluation of this program or in revising project goals is unknown. It is also unclear how publishing this chart on the district's website will assist in communicating progress toward the goals of this project.</p> <p>The applicant fails to mention if a specific person will be named or hired to manage this project. A "grant development team" is identified as the body with whom an external evaluator will work, but the membership of the team is not specified, nor are the roles and responsibilities of the members.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant demonstrated neither achievable nor ambitious performance measures, overall or by subgroup. The applicant failed to include a total of 12-14 performance measures. The applicant completed all charts required for the Performance Measure segment of this proposal with NA; undoubtedly, because of a note embedded in the document referencing Educator Effectiveness as it relates to North Carolina Department of Education, stating: "THE NCDPI recommends that district list "NA" for the performance targets related to Educator Effectiveness until the 2014-2015 school year. This approach is in accordance with how the State reports performance measures on educator effectiveness in the Annual Performance Report for Race to the Top. Rather than following that directive, the applicant completed all subsequent years (2014 through 2017-2018) with NA as well; therefore no information was provided.</p> <p>The applicant completed the Pre-K 3 chart with some form of English Language Arts data (the assessment from which these data were reported is not noted). The PreK-3 information appeared to be superimposed on the chart meant for recording grades 4-8 data. No age appropriate health or social emotional indicators were identified for any grade</p>		

level. Fourth through eighth grade data was located further into the application, but scores were reported as a composite of demographics at the grade level rather than by grade, subject and demographic.

A chart representing a comparison between white students and other demographic populations was submitted, as was a chart listing Graduation rates. Their accuracy is not ascertained. No information regarding college enrollment was submitted.

The applicant failed to include a narrative describing a rationale for the information (or lack of information) submitted therefore it is difficult to discern the probability of success in achieving these targets.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The evaluation component of this proposal includes Table 1: Current Status and Planned Improvements, a chart listing three goal areas of Personalized Learning Plans, Language Development, Parent and Teacher University, their current status and the proposed revisions to be achieved through the EDGE proposal. This table had also been incorporated as an attempt to answer a previous Selection Criterion. Additionally, a chart listing goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible party has been submitted as the proposal's evaluation instrument. These charts and tables have no relevance to this Selection Criterion.

The method of evaluation is entered as "The outside evaluator will work with district staff to ensure all goals are monitored and assessed using multiple measures throughout the term of the project". District staff are not identified. The means by which the goals will be evaluated has not been addressed. An Evaluation timeline has not been identified. Modification of the proposal based on evaluative findings has not been addressed.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The Budget section of this application makes a reasonable effort in attempting to identify key expenditures needed to support the implementation of this proposal. Unfortunately, the Budget Selection Criterion is the first time most of these positions, equipment, and expenditures are identified, and had the personnel, for example, been identified in Sections C or D, they might have provided a better understanding to the proposal. For example, the following positions are listed as a budget request, but mentioned nowhere else in this proposal: EDGE Director, Homebase Director, Data Coach, EDGE Community Center District Coordinator, 14 School Coordinators, 6 School Facilitators, 5 Global Academy Counselors, 14 Technology Facilitators, an EDGE Technology Coordinator, a Technology Engineer etc. Lesson plan writers and vetters are budgeted at \$205,000 over the course of the grant, but the number of writers or the amount paid per lesson plan is not included in the calculation. Transportation costs are not broken down by numbers of students, number of days, number of schools. Professional development costs, training stipends, contractual costs (external evaluator) are not enumerated. Google Chromebooks are listed, but the number of Chromebooks leased or purchased is not identified. The Budget facilitator did not identify the 1300 literacy devices product name.

The applicant did not address F1-(c)- (i): Identification of the funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during and after the grant period.

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

The applicant failed to describe a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The applicant's plan for sustainability included increasing the leadership capacity of teachers, school level administrators and Central Office support, but the means by which the district will increase leadership capacity is unnamed. The plan fails to demonstrate support from State and local government leaders and provides no means of evaluating the effectiveness of past investments or improvements in productivity.

The applicant states that sustainment efforts will be enhanced through the ECPS logic model, but this reviewer fails to understand what impact the model's inputs, outputs, outcomes will have on sustaining the project's goals in the absence of a comprehensive narrative detailing this process.

Because the EDGE will embed Common Core Standards, teacher knowledge of the Standards will be enhanced. The project's focus on Reading should enhance reading performance, and open dialogue between the schools and the community about the importance of literacy in determining student success.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant fails to address any of the narrative components of this Selection Criterion. It appears as if the applicant was responding to this criterion as it would to the Absolute Priority as opposed to the questions posed in the Competitive Priority. The applicant appeared to cut and paste this narrative from the proposal's response to A-1 "Vision". The only partnership mentioned was the district's partnership with VIF International Education with whom they plan on implementing a "global curriculum".

In order to fulfill the requirements of chart completion, the applicant cut and pasted their academic data from previous charts, again using composite demographic assessment data for grade levels.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Not Met</b>

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The Edgecombe County Public Schools had set forth a proposal which builds on its work in four core educational assurance areas by submitting a program entitled *EDGE (Educating the Digital Generation for Excellence)*. The program, is intended to provide *all* of the district's students (6,100 students in 14 schools), with a global education through personalized learning environments.

Despite a comprehensive and compelling vision set forth in Section A, the application fails in its attempts to provide even basic details of a coherent proposal. In the applicant's attempts at answering the Selection Criteria, responses were irrelevant, vague, disorganized and/or incomplete. The prompts which comprised the specific Selection Criteria were, by and large, simply not answered and directions provided within the application were not followed. For example, In Section (A)(3), the applicant failed to address "scale"; required charts depicting Performance Measures in Section (E)(3) were labeled NA; no evaluation component was submitted; no program management strategy was presented, among other deficiencies. Narrative pages were not numbered, and in several instances the same charts were submitted to answer questions in different Selection Criterion.

For these reasons, the essentials needed to respond to the Selection Criterion of Absolute Priority 1: creating learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching ; providing supports for students and educators that are aligned to college and career standards or graduation requirements; deepening student learning; increasing the effectiveness of educators, expanding student access to the most effective educators; decreasing achievement gaps across student groups; and increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers, are NOT MET.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>64</b>
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