



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0007MN-1 for Fridley 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>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal sets forth a holistic consortium vision (Fridley School District and South St. Paul School District both in Minnesota) offering personalized learning for each student in each district. It is envisioned that classrooms will be transformed by the inclusion of International Baccalaureate (IB) pedagogy and content, AVID standards and methodologies, Science House professional development and the integration of data rich systems.</p> <p>The applicant provides documentation of its current status in relation to the four core educational assurance areas and convincingly describes how the consortium will achieve next steps. A credible and ambitious focus and approach to the reform goals is delineated and convincing rationale are provided for each of the components of the plan. The description of the student and teacher classroom experience tends toward hyperbole and provides only a vague sense of what a classroom experience will look like for teacher and student. However, using the proposed components holistically in every class in both districts (particularly the introduction of IB tenets at pre-K and their application throughout the K-12 continuum) should have a strong, positive impact, inclusive of creating a personalized learning environment for the students in those classes.</p> <p>Attention to principals' evaluation and development, both in the past and going forward, lags behind the other core areas and is insufficiently discussed throughout this section.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>All schools and all students in all content areas of both districts will be participants in the proposed program - nine (9) schools, 6,300 (approximately) students with collectively nearly 50% on free or reduced lunch.</p> <p>A well crafted plan of tiered engagement over the length of the grant is proposed. The tiered approach is responsive to need, readiness and grade. Specific elements of the plan are geared for low performing schools and subgroups but the intent is to touch every student, teacher and parent in the consortium.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>How the plan will be introduced and scaled up is presented in this section and meaningful goals (e.g. electronic personalized learning plans, changed "mindsets" as relates to who can learn) are conceptually presented. The theory of change presented centers on LEA-wide reform. Absent however is how this ambitious change will all be accomplished. One bullet in this section gives a nod to building "capacity" in students and staff but specific activities to be undertaken, persons responsible and a time frame over the life of the grant and beyond are not provided. A high-quality plan, as defined in the RFP, is not presented in this section or in the proposal overall.</p>		
<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>

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

The consortium vision as presented in this proposal is to improve student learning and performance and increase equity. Annual goals appear reasonable and achievable with a target goal of reducing, by 50%, the gap between subgroups and the highest achievers by 2016-17 (p. 39), as per waiver agreements with the MDE. The plan projects that graduation rates will be at 95% in both districts with college enrollment and post secondary degree attainment will rise substantially. The context is significant and despite many similarities the two districts comprising this consortium do have differences. There is no rationale and/or approach given to explain the reasons one district projects slightly over 20% improvement in postsecondary degree attainment while the other anticipates just a 9% gain. Inadequately explained, even in the face of the math MCA and the reading assessment having changed, is the significant decline of English Learner's in Mathematics and Overall Reading in Fridley, as example, between 2011-12 and 2012-13.

**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>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant states that the two districts that comprise the consortium have “demonstrated a strong and clear record of success over the past several years” and that systemic improvements have been implemented and resulted in “incremental but steady progress being seen in many different student achievement areas.” Charts found in the appendix denote both up and down trends on various benchmarks for different subgroups (e.g. Fridley’s College Readiness Benchmark from 2012-2013 ticks up in science and down in English and math; in South St. Paul the % of students failing one or more class goes up and down by grade and year.) However, tests have changed and comparisons over five years are challenging and may account for the drop in scores noted in several categories. There is a frequent decline in progress noted on various assessments in both districts at the sixth grade level. The proposal appropriately recognizes this and there appears to be adequate attention to this grade and grade band in the proposal. Fridley, as example, began its IB with the middle grades, as its middle school achievement data indicated the greatest need for improvement and the AVID curriculum for 6<sup>th</sup> grade is highlighted in the appendix. Enrollment in both districts is on the rise and this qualitative data is a strong indicator of district success/improvement.</p> <p>In Section A the applicant notes that there are specific and additional interventions and strategies planned for one low-performing AYP school in the consortium. MDE required the district to develop a school improvement plan that directly addresses the poor performance within subgroups in this school and this plan outlines interventions which are generally described in section A1(a). There is no pre and post data to show that the achievement gaps in this school are closing.</p> <p>Minnesota law requires the open sharing of all school related information and “student performance data is readily available to all stakeholders, including the public,” with the primary vehicle for access being the districts’ student management system which can be accessed at anytime through a parent portal. Appropriately district websites, inclusive of achievement data, offer information in multiple languages. It is unclear in this section of the proposal whether assistance/support is offered to system users or what the availability of access is for external stakeholders.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>In section B 2 of the proposal there is a comprehensive description of Minnesota’s open sharing law including reference to state statues (included in the appendix) and the requirements to make all local district information available annually. Appropriate information, as per this RFP, can be found on the MDE website. The appendix includes a screen shot of typical information which provides evidence of a high level of transparency concerning the communication of all pertinent data.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		

Consortium members have noted legal, statutory and regulatory state and local requirements that are permissive allowing the various approaches outlined in the proposal to go forward. The Governor of the state and the Education Commissioner have written letters in support which convincingly demonstrates successful conditions for plan implementation. The appendix (attachment #24) includes a state plan for improving student outcomes that the writer notes is "directly aligned with this proposal." Successful conditions and sufficient autonomy are shown to exist in the State in support of the proposed consortium plans.

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

**15**

**10**

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

Multiple organizational meetings, inclusion of a variety of stakeholders, commendably student leaders were involved, are attested to in this section of the proposal. Notable is that "Fridley and South St. Paul School teachers and leaders, in partnership with Science House, completed a comprehensive review process, prior to beginning efforts, to determine if they should submit a proposal for the 2013 RTTT-D application." There is evidence that this process engaged a significant number of individuals and groups as attested to in the Letters of Support provided in the appendix. While the MOU bears all the appropriate signatures, there is no letter of support from either district's union/association president which is confusing and potentially suggests less than enthusiastic support by the legal entity representing the teachers/administrators. Based on the documentation there is insufficient evidence of the prompt's preferred level of teacher support from participating schools which is a significant factor for the mid- score entered.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>

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

The consortium's proposal effectively presents a detailed and well explicated conceptual plan for improving learning and teaching through a personalized approach. Utilizing a three pronged system for all schools in the consortium, all students and all teachers in:

- a. Expansion of IB frameworks
- b. AVID strategies
- c. Science House mindsets – a professional development approach

IB and AVID have a high success rate in the district, as noted in the application, improving student motivation and academic progress. The narrative provided in the proposal states that the Science House professional development approach raises educators' awareness of issues of equity in both teaching and learning and the resultant "changes in attitudes, mindsets and beliefs... improve(s) classroom experiences for students and teachers." While it is difficult to determine, based on the data provided, if performance assessments quantitatively reflect this scenario, it is reasonable to assume that professional development focused on issues of equity has a positive effect on the classroom environment.

Learning foci identified throughout this section speak clearly to high quality content /academic knowledge based in standards, meta-cognitive learning, and "soft skills" such as social awareness and self-management which are broadly accepted as significant for college and career readiness.

While technology is anticipated to be used to differentiate teaching and a conceptual outline of technology use is provided, (e.g. "for the purpose of high quality classroom teaching and learning experience"), there is little reference in this section to the utilization of student data or accommodations for high need students although it is possible to infer that the development of personalized learning platforms and eportfolios will address these needs. There is inadequate discussion of what will be included and assessed vis-a- vis the eportfolio and how a post-hoc analysis of the eportfolio will inform classroom instruction and curriculum development.

Sound practice is suggested by the provision of PLE specialists to deliver direct service to students and parents in utilization of the data systems.

This section does not present a complete "high-quality plan" as defined by the RFP for RTTT. That is, the narrative is conceptually fluent and speaks to activities to be undertaken but absent timelines, persons responsible for implementation and only vaguely presented deliverables, this is not considered a complete plan.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has a vision for improving learning and teaching. The Consortium’s proposal for personalizing learning is comprehensive, spanning all grades and engaging all students and teachers, and holistic focusing on students' social/emotional growth as well as the academic is valuable and ambitious.

Professional development/training for staff will be differentiated (based on need) and provided through a combination of internal training and external IB trainings. The proposal clearly defines the type and frequency of these PD opportunities and appears to be based on staff need, subject and grade level. The content of the PD that has been explicated (e.g. tools related to eportfolios; equitable pedagogy, etc.) appears appropriate given the focus of the initiative. Less clear is how the training is differentiated for administrators. Given their new role requirements this gap is inconsistent with a holistic approach to professional development.

While principals and “leaders” are mentioned in this section, and the evaluation format for administrators is included in the Appendix, focused attention to "leaders" specific needs, especially those of principals, as noted above, is not detailed. Recognition of the unique requirements placed on administrators during and after the roll-out of new practices needs to be conceptually and specifically addressed.

Throughout Section C the proposal clearly references high-quality learning resources for students and educators including technology and data, as well as significant efforts to personalize the learning environment and develop “college -ready plans for each grade level”. Appropriately, staff will be trained in the use of specific tools and resources and approaches with which to structure an effective learning environment, inclusive of digital access as needed for implementation of PLE efforts and eportfolios. The current teacher evaluation-professional development system, which exists in both districts and is known as the Quality Compensation Program (Q Comp), is relevant to and supportive of these plans as training and compensation are tied to evaluation outcomes which is known to encourage growth and development.

There are many new expectations being placed on teachers (and administrators) in relation to the initiatives proposed. Educators' capacity to consistently and continuously meet these new requirements is not addressed beyond a mention of their high level of professionalism and skill. There is little discussion of the balance between expectations and what can additionally and realistically be required or the activities that follow the determination of a teacher in need. A provision for differentiated compensation is commendable. Limiting class load, providing in class aides, career counseling and additional administrative assistance in buildings is not discussed here.

As noted above, in the absence of attention to timelines, responsibilities, deliverables, etc, this cannot be considered a complete, high-quality plan.

**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>12</b>

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

The consortium’s proposal suggests that the two districts have sufficient autonomy and flexibility under MN statute and “strong district and building level support systems” for implementation of the proposed initiative and to ensure students special needs are addressed. This support and leadership will be provided by district staff in several areas including curriculum development, PD and instruction. IB directors at the district level will also provide support and services to all participating schools. Building level AVID support is provided for as well. Additionally, an RTTT consortium Oversight Committee will be formed and a Consortium Transformation Coordinator will be responsible for working with both districts as they execute the plan. There is,

generically, sufficient evidence to suggest structural support for the initiative. However, the governance, communication and training plans, etc. as determined between the two districts is not detailed.

Student opportunities to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery or alternatively remediation and exemption opportunities are available in both districts and Board Policies concerning these provisions are found in the appendix.

The proposal clearly details the support and services provided to each school. The consortium governance structure appears to be a work in progress although in Section E it is noted that the Board in each district has approved the development of the consortium.

Here again, description of a high-quality plan inclusive of the components enunciated in the definition included in the RFP is ambiguously announced.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The current infrastructure and proposed improvements appear poised to meet the plans to personalize learning as put forth in this proposal. All stakeholders will have access to the content, tools and data systems as well as to relevant supportive resources needed to ensure personalized learning can occur. The current infrastructure, as related to technology “meets the needs of the (newly formed) consortium.” Internet high speed access is available in all classrooms and buildings and bandwidth is suggested to be adequate. LAN is being upgraded though local funds. An inequity of access to technology is candidly noted in the proposal but appears to be only generally addressed in the plan submitted.

Additionally, there is strong indication that the consortium has and will add necessary technical support. All four components of the current and proposed system - IB (especially an extension to pre-K), AVID, Science House and technology use – are discussed in terms of stakeholder needs and the narrative addresses these needs. This includes, as example, hiring IB Coordinators for the implementation of the 3-4 year old program and ensuring technical support in multiple languages to enable non-English speaking parents and guardians ease of access to the existing and proposed systems. Information from student management systems and a data warehouse will be tied together in an “easily accessible platform” and staff, students and parents will be trained to understand and use them. Sufficient detail is provided as to how this training will be delivered and descriptors of activities appear appropriate for the different audiences.

This section ends with the statement that “the systems...have the capacity for interoperability.” While current "capacity" appears to exist there is little information concerning timelines, responsibilities and processes for ensuring this occurs.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>

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

The applicant has detailed multiple methods that are rigorous and continuous for assuring feedback on progress toward project goals and, as needed, for initiating corrections and improvements during the term of the grant. It is less clear how the project will continue after the grant period.

The Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota will provide ongoing evaluation and “continuous implementation feedback” for all phases of the project. The CAREI logic model for evaluation, included in section E 1, is convincing in terms of its depth and breadth. Internal evaluation will appropriately be utilized as well to analyze progress and determine the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top. The plan to capture pre and post implementation data to “inform future partnership initiatives” suggests forward looking intentions for this initiative.

So too the fact that, as noted in this section, components of this project are embedded in both districts “with ongoing staff positions and resources designated.”

A communication plan itself is not included here but is projected for the future, with CAREI being tasked with this responsibility (as noted in E2). There is only a vague suggestion of how, beyond usual means (e.g. media), information will be publicly shared. An overall plan, inclusive of key communication goals, activities timelines, etc. is absent from this proposal.

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

**5**

**3**

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

Each district in the consortium has adequate and routine communication patterns and the narrative notes efforts to be undertaken to insure that ongoing communication with all stakeholders in this project will occur. CAREI will have responsibilities, the applicant notes, in creating and implementing a communication plan for the RTTT- project.

The Fridley and South St. Paul Boards passed resolutions (entered in the Appendix) approving the consortium and allowing for open internal communication concerning this grant and its implementation. This sufficiently describes intent, at least as per educators/professionals in the consortium. It is a positive demonstration of interest in ongoing communication. There is brief suggestion in the narrative that an overall communication plan will be developed. Sharing information at a variety of meetings and the creating of a web site designated to the RT project are planned but these do not demonstrate a creative or comprehensive approach to outreach.

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

**5**

**3**

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

In this section of the proposal overall performance measures as well as targeted grade level measures are described. Reasonable rationale for why the measures were chosen is provided and the presentation appears thorough. Ten(10) measures were noted in all . An outline concerning each measure is provided and clearly justified. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) are currently used for all students in the consortium and they are part of the Q Comp teacher evaluation program. They will be a primary measurement instrument going forward. The intended measures are comprehensive and demonstrate appropriate commitment to students’ academic as well as social/emotional growth.

The anticipated use of *Five Essential*, a “system designed to drive school improvement” is convincingly described as an instrument that will gauge implementation progress, provide actionable reports to all stakeholders, and guide training for educators in support of better outcomes.

The tables provided in the proposal reflect the different approaches of Fridley and South St. Paul Districts. Fridley describes eight (8) subgroups while South St. Paul details five (5) sub groups. An explanation for this difference would clarify the presentation. The details provided are not always consistent. As example, cells in the charts, at various different points (e.g.Target for Total Participating students over time) are left blank in the charts of one district and are populated in the other district’s charts. The presentation made it difficult to discern if the same measures were being used in both districts at the appropriate grade level. And while the target goals for some measures are the same for each district, in other cases the targets are different. Here again, context, a justification for the differences, is not sufficiently described and could provide proposal clarification.

The targets generally appear ambitious and achievable (e.g.. on MAP Fridley projects incremental percent gains ranging from 2% in Year One to 6% five years out). However, several of the proposed instruments have not been utilized by the two districts that comprise the consortium and therefore there is insufficient information to support the projections. Relevant, as noted in (A) (4) and (B) (1) the data is ambiguous in terms of trends charted.

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

**5**

**4**

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

The evaluation plan proposed includes formative and summative activities over a three year period with both qualitative and quantitative data being collected. Appropriately, value- added is the focus of the summative evaluation. The plan is of high-quality and rigor and appears to be comprehensive.

CAREI is responsible for a major portion of the evaluation and their “bona-fides” are presented in this section of the proposal. While the staff and their work appear qualified and strong, the documentation concerning this research center is very limited. Evidence, including vitae, attestations, etc. to support the choice of this group, to whom much will be entrusted, are not included .

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The budget for the project is noted as approximately \$14.3 million and plan components that currently exist as well as new components are accounted for in this section and in the budget documents included in the proposal. Revenue sources are delineated for each prong of the initiative. Rationale for expenditures establishes the expenses anticipated as reasonable and sufficient to support the applicant's proposal. The narrative identifies funds as one-time investments for the duration of the grant period. Funds for PLE are noted as "one-time costs" for the duration of the grant and, despite the statements of commitment to long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments, absent a "plan" the score is mid-range.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant suggests several reasons that sustainability is assured. It is noted that the proposed plan integrates and expands upon many existing systems that have been embraced by stakeholders, and for which revenue sources are consistent (e.g. the local LEAs, State funding sources). The implication is these systems will be sustained even after the grant is concluded. The goal of revenue growth through an increase in non-resident students is also suggested and the assumption concerning an up-tick in student enrollment is supported by current data provided in the proposal. However, while these additional students do bring resources to the districts there are concomitant costs which are not addressed in this narrative.</p> <p>No budget or defined plan for post-grant sustainability is presented and not addressing the prompt negatively effects the score in this section. It appears unrealistic to assume, as the proposal writer suggests, that "there really is not a choice to not sustain them (the reforms)." Absent a plan to encourage support from a range of funders and a projected budget, the argument for sustainability is inadequate.</p>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant describes several partnerships, many long-term, designed to augment the consortium schools' resources. That these provide additional student and family supports to schools and that these address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students is unambiguous. The partnerships described directly relate to and are supportive of the plan described in Absolute Priority 1. Appropriate population targets are identified and desired results are described in a generic way. Some partners, such as the Community Colleges mentioned in this section, add a new positive dimension to the discussion. Indicators used to track progress are the same as those measures delineated in the proposal, specifically in Section E 3, although the performance measures noted here are ambiguous.</p> <p>There is also an incomplete discussion of infrastructure to address details of these partnerships including but not limited to how decision making occurs, how students are selected for involvement in the programs, and what efforts are made on insure parent voice is secured, etc. Nor are strategies for scale and sustainability of these relationships explicated. As a result of the lack of information, the score is mid-range.</p>		

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The Consortium proposal shows clear evidence throughout that the applicant will focus on creating learning environments designed to improve teaching and learning through the development of, among other things, personalized strategies of learning that support students reaching college and career requirements and educators expanding the skills needed to support student progress across all subgroups.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>156</b>



## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0007MN-2 for Fridley 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>
<b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Overall, this application presents a reasonable and comprehensive vision of how the applicant wants to improve education in the two districts. It is based primarily on three components -- the IB, AVID and the Science House -- that the applicants have been using for several years with some success. The four "core educational assurance areas" are addressed (and will be addressed more fully in later sections of the application). In particular, special effort is to be devoted to the lowest-performing school (Lincoln Elementary).</p> <p>There are some weaknesses in the plan, however: (1) The applicant's approach to the goals of subcriterion (b) is not completely clear. The Venn diagram at the beginning of section A(1) (Figure A1), is apparently intended to show the relationships among the various components. However, the diagram conveys nothing more than some vague notion of a connection among teachers, students and leaders (which might mean administrative staff) that somehow influences what students are exposed to, all within a context of IB, AVID and Science House. The connections are not explicit, even in the subsequent text.</p> <p>(2) The applicant provides very little specific information, beyond generalities, about what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers as a result of the activities they are planning. The applicant states that "electronic personal learning plans" and "e-portfolios" will be part of the students' experience, but the applicant provides no indication of what these consist of, how they will affect what the student does, or how they will contribute to each student's "personal academic interests."</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

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

No weaknesses were found in this section; this is a strong part of the application. All the schools in both districts will participate, and all students within those schools. A substantial percentage of the students are from low-income backgrounds (56% and 43% free and reduced lunch in the two participating districts). The fact that everyone will be involved indicates that the buy-in is system-wide, which increases the likelihood of positive change because everyone will be fully engaged in the project.

The idea of implementing the three components over all grades of the two LEAs seems to be very strong, and it relates directly to this criterion's call for high-quality school-level implementation. The applicant will be implementing the three components (EB, SH and AVID) on a staggered basis, year by year, and over the three broad grade bands (elementary, middle and secondary) in a way that makes logical and programmatic sense. All three components will be introduced each year, but at different grade bands; that means that no component is overloaded on any given year. Even when one looks at what the experience will be like of a student who is at the end of the elementary years and will be going into the middle school, one sees that in the second year that student will have a different component emphasized. In other words, a student who graduates from one school to the next will not get a double dose of SH, for example.

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

**10**

**9**

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

Everyone in both LEAs will be participating, so there will be no need to "scale up" the effort once the grant period is complete. Nonetheless, several components of a "high-quality plan" for translating the proposal into meaningful reform are missing from the application. There is no specification of deliverables, what the timeline is, or exactly who is responsible for carrying out the effort. More detail on each of these appears in subsequent sections of the application, however.

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

**10**

**7**

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

Areas (a) through (d) are discussed in detail. Percents of students of the various subgroups that meet or exceed the Minnesota standards are presented in the tables. The goals for improvement are based on the assumption that the rate of improvement will increase as the grant activities are carried out. Those goals seem reasonable without being too ambitious. The goal for decreasing the gaps among subgroups conforms to the waiver for Minnesota (i.e., reducing the gaps by 50% by the 2016-17 school year).

Student performance will increase as a result of the implementation of the IB program in the Pre-K years, because earlier concentration on academic readiness is likely to prove beneficial. On the other hand, the short section on "electronic personalized learning plans" and "personal electronic portfolios" is insufficient to allow one to conclude that improved performance and equity will result from these e-portfolios.

The fact that the mathematics and reading assessments were changed (in 2011 and 2012) might explain the substantial drop in scores from the 2011-12 school year to the next year. However, this anomalous change makes it impossible, from the information provided, to determine how achievement is changing over the years. The applicant says that "comparing 2013 reading results should take that into consideration," but there's no guidance provided about exactly how that should be done.

**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>6</b>

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

The consortium has a long record of experience with the main components of the work they intend to do -- especially with the International Baccalaureate (IB), AVID and Science House (SH) efforts. The South Saint Paul (hereinafter SSP) decision to expand their IB program from the secondary level down to the middle and primary levels was due to the success with the Diploma Program (hereinafter DP) part. Similarly, Fridley started with the Middle Years Programme

(MYP) and later expanded to the DP and Primary Year Programme (PYP) levels, based on prior success with the MYP. The whole International Baccalaureate (IB) program, which is summarized in an appendix to the application, is an international enterprise with clear standards that must be met by participating schools if they are to remain in the program. The fact that both Fridley and SSP have been, and continue to be, qualified IB districts shows that the LEAs are meeting standards of excellence.

Another very strong indication that these LEAs are doing a good job is that the districts attract many more students from surrounding areas than they lose (Minnesota is an open enrollment state, so some districts, like both SSP and Fridley, are net gainers.) Parents want the best education for their children, and they are choosing to enroll their children in SSP and Fridley even if they don't live in either district. That fact demonstrates a track record of success, and clearly relates to this criterion.

It is not as clear that the applicant has made recent strides in improving performance, partly because the data presented go back only to the 2011-12 school year. For example, in the section headed "Prior Record of Success" the applicant claims that "High school graduation rates are another indicator of success. Both districts have seen a gradual climb in graduation rates over the past four years. These are outlined in Table A(4)(c)." But in fact that table (Table A(4)(c)) has data for only two years, and it shows a slight *drop* in graduation rates from the earlier year to the present.

Separate data for the focus school, Lincoln Elementary, a low-performing school, are not provided, so it is unclear if the applicant has the ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms in that school.

The applicant does not address criterion (B)(1)(c) in this section.

<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:**

All of this appears to be readily available, to the extent allowed by Minnesota law. Attachments 21 and 22 present the bargaining agreements for Fridley and SSP, respectively, and those include the salary schedules. Individual salaries for individual teachers are not included in this application nor on the Minnesota Department of Education web site, in accordance with Minnesota state law. The other information is available on the MDE web site.

Additionally, information is made available through written materials, mailings to residents, and open meetings. Also, according to Minnesota law, all school-related information (except individual salary information and other private data) are available to anyone who asks for it. Thus criterion (B)(2)(c) is fully met.

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

There is not any apparent conflict between what the consortium is planning to do and any state laws or mandates. In fact, the Minnesota governor's "Seven Point Plan" is in harmony with the Fridley-SSP proposal -- especially the emphasis on pre-K education (F-SSP is going to extend the IB program to 3- and 4-year-olds). Further, the Minnesota Department of Education's Commissioner Brenda Cassellius has written a letter dated September 25, 2013, to superintendents Webb and Flathmann of the SSP and Fridley schools, respectively, in which she explicitly endorses the application.

Further, in Minnesota's state "Education Code" (section 120.A.03) is very closely aligned with the Fridley-SSP application, and refers specifically to "personalized learning environments" that are to be part of the "mission of public education in Minnesota."

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has appended letters of support from parents, teachers, and administrators, and others associated with relevant stakeholders. The letters include ones from people who have collaborated with the SSP and Fridley districts in the creation of their programs, as representatives of the IB state-wide organization, the AVID program, the Integration School District (which is a consortium of eight districts that provides additional educational support), and state-wide colleges and universities. However it is not clear whether the letters from parents and students are all of the ones they got, or merely a sample of them. Nonetheless, all of this attests to a level of support of the plan.

Regrettably, however, there is little evidence of *direct involvement* of the various stakeholder groups in the development of *this* proposal -- for example if the groups had an opportunity to provide input into the application *as it was being prepared*, and how, if at all, the application was revised on the basis of such input. Nor is there a letter from the teachers' union(s) supporting the proposal.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Strengths: The IB system addresses all the items in C(1)(a) very thoroughly. A complete description of the IB program is contained in the official publication "Programme standards and practices," written by the International Baccalaureate Organization and attached to the application as an appendix. Also SH and AVID (again with descriptive information supplied in the appendices) are closely related to those subcriteria.</p> <p>Weaknesses: (1) A major component of the plan is what the applicant calls "e-portfolios." Exactly what these are is not specified. One would expect a much more detailed description of what these e-portfolios are supposed to be and how they are to be organized and managed: what they include, how the students can add or delete items, and how often. There is no information on any schedule that teachers use to examine the contents of the e-portfolios, nor on what they would do with their findings. No information is given about how frequently teachers will provide feedback to students based on the content of the e-portfolios. Further, it is not clear if there are any parts of the e-portfolios that are to be aggregated across classes or schools, how that is to be done, and for what purpose(s), etc. Because the e-portfolios are such an important part of the applicant's plan, and because the e-portfolios are clearly connected with the "personalized learning environments," the fact that the e-portfolios are so incompletely described is a serious weakness.</p> <p>(2) Not much detail is provided about the academic content. Presumably F-SSP will be using the Common Core standards; these are fully endorsed by the IB organization. Later in the proposal the applicant states that Algebra I in eighth grade is a "gateway" course, but there is no discussion of the issues surrounding this assertion -- Algebra I can mean lots of different things, and there is some concern (at least in the US) that Algebra I may not be appropriate for some students. In other words, the emphasis on Algebra I suggests a rigidity that would be inconsistent with the notion of the "personalized learning environments" that the criterion specifies: some students may be ready for more advanced coursework, and some for less advanced. Mathematics is just one subject, but there is not any detail about any other subject either.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Overall, parts (a)-(c) of these criteria are adequately addressed. The applicants have had success in the past with implementing PD around the three major components (IB, AVID, and SH), as evidenced by the fact that the districts are official IB providers, and they will continue to implement PD as needed. The applicant will provide systematic professional development in AVID and Science House as well. IB professional development activities will be individualized according to teachers' grade levels, content areas, and the prior training the teachers have received in the IB program. The teachers will receive support in effective implementation of "personalized learning environments" and strategies that meet each student's academic needs. The teachers will learn how to adapt content and instruction in response to students' academic needs and interests, for example by using discussion and collaborative work, project-based learning, videos, audio, manipulatives, and so on. Also, teachers will learn how to use data to promote student progress. Finally, the applicant will use data on teacher and principal evaluation systems (particularly in conjunction with the AVID program) to reduce achievement gaps. The applicant will use principal and superintendent evaluation systems mandated by the state of Minnesota to provide recommendations and interventions, if needed, for improvement.</p> <p>Particularly interesting is the discussion of reconstructing the nature and culture of disciplinary knowledge -- that mathematics, for example, is not necessarily completely objective and culturally neutral. The two PD modules that are described seem engaging and potentially helpful in strengthening teachers' and students' identities as learners and producers of knowledge.</p> <p>One part that is not completely clear, however, is what guidance teachers will have in the process of designing assessments for individual units of instructional material. Little information is provided about who is going to be overseeing this process, how long it will take, how results are going to be measured, and exactly how the feedback from assessments</p>		

will help to refine the whole process. These are important components of a high-quality plan and should be specified.

Also, it's not completely clear how point (d) is addressed, especially with regard to the hard-to-staff schools (presumably the Lincoln or Lincoln Center school) or subjects like STEM. While the "disparities and inequities lens" discussion demonstrates that the applicants are well aware of the issues surrounding race and class in connection with academic achievement and engagement, nonetheless the plan does not include specific timelines, schedules, or deliverables.

#### 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>10</b>

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

There is no conflict between existing organizational structures or rules at the LEA central office level and the goal of implementing personalized learning. There is adequate flexibility of schedules and allocation of resources so that, for example, students who may need additional time can be provided with the tutoring or other help that they might need.

The idea of adding an Office of Transformation to coordinate all the various facets of the plan seems especially appropriate. This is a complex project, with many programs and individual offices involved, so the creation of a central overseeing body makes sense. Similarly, the proposal that each district will be headed up by a District Transformational Coordinator is sound.

With respect to criterion (c), both districts already have policies in effect that allow for students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of material; these policies are appended to the application.

On the other hand, it is not clear how the roles of the Personalized Learning Specialists will intersect with those of the two literacy coordinators and mathematics coordinators. If, for example, the Personalized Learning Specialists are responsible for delivering training and support "as needed," it is not clear how a mathematics coordinator will be involved if the training or support happens to involve mathematics specifically. Without a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities there is a danger of duplication or omission. It is not clear if the school leadership teams will have the flexibility to organize the specialists and coordinators as a team to promote effective instruction.

Further, the role of the Community Learning Centers is not apparent -- in particular, how they interact with the regular academic program in the applicant's schools. According to the applicant, "These programs provide . . . state-of-the-art technology for instruction . . .," but no information is provided about how this instruction relates to the "personalized learning environments" in the regular schools, or how it is incorporated into the e-portfolios (if at all), or who is responsible for making the necessary connections between learning at the Community Learning Centers and learning in the regular schools. If the Community Learning Centers are partly responsible for educating the students in the F-SSP communities, then the LEA central office must have comprehensive policies and an infrastructure that support the involvement of the Community Learning Centers. These are not specified.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

**Strengths:** It is important that the LANs are being upgraded to meet the projected needs of this project. A very large number of additional "devices" are going to be added to the system, and a sufficiently robust area network will be essential.

**Weaknesses:** The section on the inequity of access to technology leaves many questions unanswered, however, and the budget does not provide any help. In particular, it is not clear what "devices" that are going to be provided, how many of them, what criteria will be used to distribute them, and who is going to maintain them. Similarly, the "hotspot" devices are not specified, nor how many will there be, what the geographic distribution of them will be (and how that relates to the geographic distribution of the high-poverty users), how they are going to be maintained and by whom, what security protocols, if any, will be in place, and so forth. The budget indicates that \$20,000 per year will be spent on "out of school internet access points"; this would seem to indicate that after the first year, for example, only one fourth of the needed access points will have been provided. Three fourths of the 1000 students who need them will not get them until the second, third, or fourth years. This does not support the applicant's claim to be ameliorating inequities in access to technology. This relates directly to the criterion that the applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.

More generally, the relationships among the various technologies are not well explained. How “this major infrastructure upgrade” will be created should be specified. The question of interoperability is not adequately addressed, and there is little detail on how a student’s work at home (or in community “hot spots”) will be connected with his or her work at school. Also missing is a discussion of how parents or other school personnel (like tutors, for example – electronic or human) will have access to the work that students are doing.

Similarly there is no description of what the 3000 “mobile devices” for use in classrooms are. This will be a major acquisition, so much more detail should be provided. Further, it is not clear what role these mobile devices will play in the overall plan.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The involvement of the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota is a real asset. It will be a substantial benefit to have a continuing, independent evaluator looking at this entire project as it progresses. Unfortunately, however, little detail is provided about exactly how this will take place. Unspecified is any kind of timeline for these evaluations, how frequently they will take place, how the results of the evaluations will be used to guide further practice, and how often the results will be shared with the public. These are all important parts of a high-quality plan, and should be included.</p> <p>Table E1, the table that is supposed to show the five levels of evaluation, is apparently missing. Its data would be essential to a full understanding of the relationships among the “levels” and the specific questions to be addressed at each level.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Clearly the applicant understands the importance of communication among the various parts of the project, and has described some mechanisms to make this happen. The applicant is already part of ongoing communication structures; for example the IB Minnesota and IB North America networks, the AVID networks for Minnesota and for the mid-west, and regular meetings with Science House personnel. Further, it is a positive sign that the two districts have already taken formal steps to allow for sharing data.</p> <p>The details of exactly how the desired levels of communication will be accomplished are sparse, however. For example, the plan is for CAREI to “take a lead role in the dissemination of customized messages to address stakeholder concerns and questions,” but no specific information is provided about how and how often this is going to be done. What these “customized messages” are and how they will be structured to answer stakeholders’ questions are left unidentified.</p> <p>As another example, the applicant states that “Internal communication is planned by using district and building leadership meetings, professional learning community groups, IB Coordinator meetings, and the use of each district’s internal network.” No mention is made of how often these meetings are going to occur, who is going to be presenting information, and what provision will be made for gathering and acting on feedback from the various groups.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has listed the required performance measures. In each case the goals are ambitious and achievable.</p> <p>The 7Cs instrument is not a standard one, and there is no information given about who Ronald Ferguson is, or what “Cambridge Education” is. Thus it is difficult to ascertain the rationale for the choice of that instrument and how rigorous and timely its data will be.</p> <p>The use of IGDIs (Individual Growth and Development Indicators) at the pre-school level is appropriate. Similarly, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire appears to be a good choice to monitor social and emotional growth, and will afford a productive opportunity to communicate with parents.</p>		

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The evaluation activities are mainly to be carried out by CAREI, in collaboration with district staff (in particular, with the Transformation Office). CAREI is a major research center at the University of Minnesota, with experienced full-time evaluators on staff. Having an independent evaluation organization working in collaboration with the Transformation Office has the potential to provide the needed flexibility to respond to changing conditions in a timely way..</p> <p>Details are missing about exactly how it is to be accomplished, however. For instance, the formative evaluation plan “will generate information that will highlight project strengths and weaknesses and assist key personnel to make program improvements.” But it is not clear what information is to be collected or generated, how strengths and weaknesses will be determined, and how that will “assist” key personnel in improving the program. These details are all important components of a high-quality plan.</p> <p>The evaluation is going to be implemented in both Fridley and in South St. Paul. CAREI will have access to the districts by “working collaboratively with SMM and district staff.” What this actually means is unclear because the meaning of “SMM” is unspecified.</p> <p>There is a missing table (Table E2) that seems critical to understanding the entire plan. It is supposed to give "the rationale for data collection and analysis for the RTTT-D evaluation questions." Its omission prevents a determination of how the applicant will continuously improve its plans.</p>		

**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>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Strengths: 1. The person who will fill the slot of Office of Transformation Director will have to be extraordinarily well qualified, so it is good to see a salary that's in keeping with the responsibilities. It is higher than the top bracket on the teachers' salary schedule. The same is true of the two district coordinators.</p> <p>2. Many of the other components of the budget seem to be reasonable and appropriate -- the coordinators, the coaches, the PLE specialists, and the travel to IB workshops.</p> <p>Weaknesses: 1. It is not clear what the “Student PLE Resources” are. The concept of “personalized learning environments” is central to the whole project, and hence it is important to describe and justify these “Student PLE Resources.” Whatever they are, their acquisition is straight-lined across the years of the grant period (with the same \$100,000 expenditure every year for four years). No rationale for this acquisition schedule is provided, and it is not clear how this expenditure is reasonable and sufficient to support the development of the project.</p> <p>2. Insufficient detail has been provided about the "out of school Internet access points" (which presumably are what were referred to earlier as "hotspots"). The reasons behind the same amount being spent each year (as opposed to front-loading the cost) are not presented, so it is difficult to determine if the expenditure is a reasonable way to implement the project.</p> <p>3. The AVID tutors are to be paid \$12/hour, which is unlikely to attract educators with the qualifications and backgrounds needed for effective tutoring, and subsequently the AVID part of the program is likely to suffer. The applicant offers no rationale for paying the tutors little more than the minimum wage. Since AVID is one of the key components of the whole project, more detail is needed about who the tutors are and how they are qualified to fulfill an important role in the project.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The application contains little information about criterion (F)(2); there is no explicit plan of any sort to sustain the project's goals after the grant ends. Following the description of each of the classifications of personnel (e.g. district transformation coordinators or literacy coaches) there is an indication of whether that position is a one-time investment for the duration of the grant period or whether it will be continued beyond the grant, but no rationale is provided for the decision in each case. For example, the “personal learning environment specialists” will not be continued beyond the grant period, but no</p>		

explanation is given for why these positions can be eliminated without affecting the gains that have resulted from the four prior years of grant activities.

The applicant has provided no "estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds."

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

Some of these partnerships have been well described earlier. The most prominent among the outside groups is the Science House, which is part of the Science Museum of Minnesota; this non-school organization is deeply and broadly involved in the grant activities. There are also long-time relationships with the Fridley Community Center, the South Saint Paul community education center, and the Springbrook Nature Center.

Both districts are part of a larger regional "integration school district," which supports districts, school, staff, students, and families. The AVID program, which is a significant component of this application, comes from the integration school district.

One item that hasn't appeared before is the partnership that the applicant has with several institutions of higher education (IHEs). A couple of them (Anoka Ramsey Community College and Inver Hills CC) may award an AA degree to any student who graduates from high school with a full IB diploma. That's one very good way to get students into a 4-year college. Additionally, some of the local colleges place student teachers in the applicant's schools, which creates a bond between the applicant and the IHEs.

Another example of a connection is the one between F-SSP and some health and wellness organizations. For example, Headway Mental Health Services has placed mental health specialists in each of the SSP schools at no cost to the district. Similarly, the North Metro Pediatric Clinic provides free physical exams for low-income Fridley students.

In much of this discussion, however, it is not clear exactly how the partners will track the results of whatever the partnership is doing and use those results to refine their efforts. While, for example, the mental health specialists that Headway is providing may have a beneficial effect on the results of the MN Student Survey (which surveys student mental health) there is no explanation of how those results might be used to improve the services that Headway provides.

Furthermore, there is little information provided about how these partnerships will build the capacities of staff in the schools to undertake the tasks outlined in criterion (5).

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has addressed all components of this criterion. In particular, the applicant has proposed to (1) create "personalized learning environments" that are designed to improve learning and teaching significantly through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements; (2) accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting students' academic needs through these personalized learning environments; (3) increase the effectiveness of educators through a variety of professional development initiatives; (4) decrease gaps in achievement across student groups; and (5) increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>129</b>
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0007MN-3 for Fridley 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>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant presents a comprehensive and reasoned reform vision that builds on previous work in all four core educational assurance areas. The applicant's vision includes the International Baccalaureate (IB) Continuum, a program known internationally for its rigor, as a framework to support existing state content and Common Core standards. The applicant describes as an additional component the use of AVID strategies as a means to improve student learning and achievement through improved teaching strategies. A third component would focus on changing student attitudes and approaches toward learning. The applicant presents a convincing argument that the combination of the components which make up their vision, when enhanced by technology, will lead to lead to personalized learning environments where learning will be accelerated for all students, achievement gaps will be reduced, college and career readiness among students will increase, and an increased number of students will be taught by effective teachers.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant outlined a strategic process for implementing the reform effort that is meant to ensure that components of the plan are initiated at grade levels across participating schools where they will have the most benefit for students. At the same time the applicant ensures that the specific teaching and learning needs of students at the one low performing school will be taken into consideration, when initiating components of the plan at that location. The applicant presents a detailed list of schools, with appropriate demographic information for each.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant's plan for reform and change will be applied to all district participants (i.e., all students, parents, teachers, and leaders). The structure of the plan is clearly presented and all components that inform the applicant's theory of change are clearly identified and succinctly defined. A clear discussion of the role of each component in the applicant's theory of change is presented. While the applicant includes some activities with accompanying rationales that are a part of their plan for reform and change, the applicant does not explicitly include all elements of a high quality plan in their discussion. Key goals, timelines, deliverables, and parties responsible are lacking in the applicant's plan for reform and change.</p> <p>The lack of key goals makes it difficult to determine how the applicant views the selected activities as instrumental to goals that inform the reform effort. The lack of a timeline and persons responsible for activities prevent the applicant from ensuring that activities will be implemented in a timely manner and that they have selected persons responsible for doing so. It is unclear how the applicant will determine that goals have been met, if they have not presented clearly articulated deliverables expected as a result of initiation of activities described.</p>		

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant presents information that shows annual growth on performance assessments, a decreasing achievement gap, improved overall graduation rates, and improved college enrollment overall and for all subgroups attending participating schools. The applicant presents a chart however where projections for annual growth are based on summative assessments that have been collapsed for all grades for which assessments are given –grades 3-11. It is unclear how the applicant plans to use these data to determine improved student outcomes. The applicant articulates a vision where identification of progress (or lack thereof) along a college ready continuum will be integral to reform efforts. It is difficult to determine how the data presented are meaningful as annual goals, when the applicant does not identify where (between grades 3-11) they anticipate growth to be taking place.</p> <p>The same concern applies for decreasing achievement gaps. Data for goals in the reduction of gaps by grade level or other cohort groups is not included. This portends an inability to apply interventions to ensure progress along the continuum, which appears to be important to the applicant’s vision.</p>		

**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>7</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Recent changes in state assessments make it difficult to compare student performance over a four-year period. Trend data however are mixed with no clear pattern of growth across all grades on some assessments. Performance fluctuated upward or downward from one year to the next. Trend data for college readiness assessments are also mixed with data from one measure showing an upward trend while data are more mixed on another measure. These data alone do not indicate a clear record of success in advancing student learning achievement. There is however other evidence of success in advancing student learning, to include increased percentages of students earning diplomas through the Diploma Programmes, and evidence of reduced percentages of students receiving failing grades in classes-both overall and among subgroups.</p> <p>While reforms were initiated at a lower achieving schools, evidence is not available in the form of trend data to indicate direct impact of implementation of those strategies on students’ performance.</p> <p>The applicant does not document how data are made available to parents, students, and educators.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant effectively uses a variety of means for the public to access information about processes, practices, and investments. Information reported to the state is posted on the state website, information is mailed to residents, and applicants conduct open meetings where they share information. Specific school-related information is made available if requested.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant satisfactorily demonstrates that they will have not only the autonomy to implement personalized learning environments in the state, but will have state support for their efforts as evidenced by a letter of support from the State Department of Education Commissioner. The applicant’s goal to develop and sustain personalized learning environments is also supported by the state’s mission for education where personalized learning environments are explicitly referenced as an educational goal. The applicants follow a state statute that allows for the member districts to apply for RTT-D funds as a consortium. State statutes and regulatory requirements in the state are permissive rather than restrictive, which provides</p>		

the applicant sufficient autonomy to implement planned personalized learning environments.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

While the applicant states that a variety of stakeholders were engaged in the decision to apply for the RTT-D grant, there is no evidence to describe the nature of their input into the development of the proposal, nor the extent to which they were engaged in a feedback process.

Signatures of the presidents of the local teachers unions for each district partner appears on an consortium Memorandum of Understanding, which includes a statement that each member of the Consortium will participate in all projects and activities of the Consortium. These signatures provide sufficient evidence of teacher support of the grant proposal.

Letters of support are included in the application from a variety of stakeholders, to include students, parents, teachers, post-secondary institutions, community representatives, and elected officials. All are highly supportive of the RTT-D grant application, and exhibit excitement about the possible benefits it would have to the community's schools.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>

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

The applicant does an admirable job of describing how learning will be supported through implementation of a vision that includes three components—IB curriculum, AVID strategies, and Science House mindsets for learning. Technology serves as an overarching element for all three components. The approach to learning proposed by the applicant lends itself to the mastery of critical academic content and the development of critical thinking skills, and dispositions that will support learning. The applicant refers to phases of the plan, but does not clearly delineate a timeline for the plan implementation.

A detailed description is presented of activities that will facilitate deep learning among students, and help students understand the importance of what they are learning. The applicant also describes a plan for helping students learn how to evaluate and self-regulate their learning and performance. Embedded in the curriculum are plans to help students develop skills that will lead to respect for other cultures and perspectives different from their own. The applicant discusses plans to train students and their families on how to use technologies that will support the personalized learning environment. These aspects of the applicant's approach to learning are focused on a set of experiences that will engage and empower all learners.

The applicant notes that teachers and leaders will support learners throughout the vision implementation. While it is clear what role educators will play, there is no mention of how parents will support students' learning. The applicant does not adequately articulate how parents will be involved in their approach as a support for improved student learning, as required by the criteria.

The applicant links learning and development to state and Common Core standards. The proposed curriculum addresses students' different intellectual and development needs, while at the same time accommodates students' interests. The applicant's approach to instruction pays attention to the different approaches to learning that exists among students. While the applicant clearly values inclusiveness and discusses changes in the IB curriculum that points to the importance of equity, the applicant's plan lacks high quality strategies to help ensure that high needs students are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards.

Overall, the applicant has a thoughtful plan for learning however some elements of a high quality plan as defined in this notice (e.g., key goals, timelines, and deliverables) are not well defined. The lack of clearly stated key goals and deliverables makes it difficult for the applicant to ensure that objectives of the plan have been met. Unclear timelines makes it difficult to determine how the applicant plans to implement various aspects of their plan.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant identifies key goals for teachers that will support their active involvement in the implementation of personalized teaching and learning in order to help students as they progress toward meeting college and career ready standards. Activities that are part of the applicant’s teaching and learning plan will be based on the grade/subject taught, teachers current needs, and skills/capacities they bring to the teaching/learning environment. The nature of training activities corresponds with specific components of the applicant’s vision. The applicant details support for improving teaching and learning by including activities that increase teachers’ capacity to meet students’ content needs, expose students to instructional strategies that enhance their learning, and support development of students’ attitudes toward learning that will support their ability to graduate college and career ready.

The applicant provides a timeline for some but not all activities. Professional development activities will be designed for teachers, teacher leaders, and both building and district administrators. The applicant plans for both face-to-face and online professional development. Activities will be delivered both individually and through groups, the latter of which enhances a sense of community among staff. The activities that are a part of the applicant's plan are feasible and focused on ensuring that educators are prepared to be instrumental in the personalized learning development process.

The applicant describes how teachers in teams will review subject matter and grade level aims, objectives, and assessments. A sound explanation is provided of how teachers will use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators are not included.

The program and evaluation tool for teachers currently used by the applicant should sufficiently serve their needs during the reform efforts. Data are collected and used to monitor and make suggestions for improvement for teachers. The applicant also describes the newly created evaluation process for principals which will ensure that their leadership activities are effective as part of the reform effort.

Although the applicant states that high quality teachers exist in both partner districts, a high quality plan to ensure that highly effective teachers work in hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science), and specialty areas (such as special education) is not included. Overall the plan for teaching and learning lacks elements of a high quality plan (e.g., persons responsible, timelines, and deliverables). There is no consistent indication of when the activities will be implemented; who will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the activities; or a clear statement of what the applicant anticipates will be the outcomes/deliverable of various activities.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant describes an existing structure with people in positions to provide support and services to schools that are part of the consortium. They also identify additional personnel that will be needed to carry out all aspects of the reform proposal.</p> <p>A description of the process that allows autonomy at the school level to use budgets allocated by School Boards is included in the application. While the applicant states that schools are able to respond to specific building needs and have autonomy with staffing and resources, there is no overt indication that schools have flexibility when it comes to other factors listed in the selection criteria, to include school schedules and calendars, staffing models, and roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators.</p> <p>The applicant describes the existing processes that allow students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, as well as the process that allows students to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple and comparable ways. They indicate that learning resources and instructional practices are adaptable and accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.</p> <p>The applicant however does not locate existing policies, practices, and rules, along with any proposed additions, within a comprehensive high quality plan with key goals; activities; rationale for activities; timelines; and deliverables directly related to the proposed reform proposal. The lack of these elements makes it difficult for the applicant to ensure that existing structures will support personalized learning environments as articulated in the reform plan or that the need for new structures have been evaluated as a means for implementing and supporting reform efforts.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

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

The applicant discusses the technology infrastructure that currently exists in each consortium district, along with their technology needs that would allow the consortium to fully to support a fully integrated personalized learning environment. Sufficient levels of technical support from tutors, AVID building coordinators, and IB coordinators are included in the plan, in order to ensure that students, teachers, and parents are able to use technologies available them.

The applicant states that they plan to continue to build technology capacity by upgrading systems and adding additional devices, and purchase devices that would increase access to high poverty students and families. There is no discussion of the applicant's plans to ensure that information technology systems will exist to allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format, or a clear discussion of how the applicant plans to ensure that the capacity for interoperability will be translated into interoperable data systems used by schools.

While the applicant discusses both the current status of technology and other learning resources existing within the consortium, and anticipated needs, these are not organized around elements of a high quality plan with key goals; activities; rationale for activities; timelines; deliverables, and parties responsible that would more clearly illustrate a comprehensive strategy for an infrastructure that supports personalized learning.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant sites key goals for a continuous improvement process, which encompasses evaluation of the major components of the reform project (e.g., infusing the IB continuum at all grade levels, using AVID strategies to improve teaching and learning and inserting Science House attitude toward learning). The applicant also presents a plan for evaluation of the professional development component of the reform effort, which is structured around a five level professional development framework, and will be conducted by an outside evaluator. Protocols for IB and AVID will be used for internal and external reviews, however elements of a high quality plan such as key goals, activities, and timelines associated with this process were not discussed.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant does not present a high quality plan for a rigorous continuous improvement process that allows them to monitor and determine progress toward project goals as whole. While the applicant the presents the “what” of the continuous improvement process (e.g., IB and AVID protocols, professional development framework used for evaluation of the professional development component), there is no clear and detailed discussion of the “how” of the continuous improvement process, which would be evidenced by the elements of a high quality plan.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant describes existing communication strategies that connect internal and external stakeholders across all components of the reform effort (e.g., IB, AVID, and Science House communication networks). The applicant plans to work with an external evaluation organization to identify other external stakeholders who may be interested in evaluation and outcomes of reform efforts. Internal communication will be accomplished through district and building leadership team meetings, professional learning community groups, IB Coordinator meetings, and the use of each district's internal network. While the applicant states that the external evaluation organization will create and implement a communication plan, the nature of that plan, with all of the elements of a high quality plan, is not included in the application as required by criterion E (2).</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The applicant presents 14 achievable performance measures with accompanying rationales to support their proposal continuous improvements. It is also unclear how some measures align with and/or inform the proposed plan and theory of action, based on IB frameworks, Science House mindsets, and AVID strategies. The applicant does not discuss how the measures will be reviewed and improved overtime, if they are insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

**5**

**4**

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

The applicant presents an adequate high quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of RTT-D funded activities. The plan includes a set of questions to guide evaluation of both short term and long term implications of the project's implementation. Qualifications of parties responsible for conducting the evaluation are included, along with activities that will be used to collect information and data on the ongoing activities and outcomes of the project. The applicant presents a plan where formative measures will be used to assess progress toward project goals and summative measures will be used to determine the impact of the consortium's project on teacher and student outcomes. A timeline is presented for implementation of the evaluation process, although it is not clear as to whether the evaluation will be conducted over a three or four year period (both are mentioned in the narrative).

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

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

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

The applicant clearly identifies all funding sources beyond RTT-D anticipated funds, and articulates the specific amounts expected from each. In addition to RTT-D funds, the applicant expects funds from the respective districts of each consortium partner, state aid, local levy, additional state support for special education instructional services, scholarship funds for pre-school enrollment of children living in poverty, Title I funds, and support from the AmeriCorps Program. The applicant presents a budget that is both reasonable and sufficient for the reform proposal. Rationales for expenditures are realistic. All funds will be used over the proposal period, with no one-time expenditures noted.

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

**10**

**2**

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

The applicant presents a statement, rather than a high quality plan for sustainability of project goals. The applicant enumerates existing funding sources and practices they anticipate will continue, which they expect to sustain reform efforts. A plan that evaluates improvement in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget, along with an estimated budget for the three years following the grant that would include budget assumptions, potential resources, and uses of funds is not included.

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

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

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant describes numerous agencies and organizations with which they collaborate, and which provide a number of resources to the consortium. Nine population level results are identified that support students and their families, and each is aligned with resources or services provided by an existing agency/organization partnership. Indicators that measure population level results are presented at the aggregate level, but not at the student level. The applicant identifies personnel responsible for analyzing the data, for improvements in specified areas.

Other requirements for the competitive preference priority are not addressed. These include a strategy to scale the model

beyond the participating students and families to other high need students and families over time. There is no description of how the applicant will build the capacity of faculty and staff so that they are able to assess the needs and assets of participating student that are aligned with the partnership's identified and goals for improving education and family and community supports.

The applicant also does not address the requirement that decision-making processes be created, along with an infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students. There is no discussion of the requirement that a process exists to engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time when addressing student, family, and school needs. There is no process presented for the applicant to routinely assess their progress in implementing the plan, in order to maximize the impact and resolve challenges and problems.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant has a theory of change that will potentially create learning environments that will significantly improve teaching and learning through personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college and career ready standards. A clear vision of integrating the IB continuum, AVID strategies, and Science House mindsets was articulated in the applicant's narrative. These three components represent essential elements (i.e., rigorous content, approach to teaching and learning, attitudes/dispositions toward teaching and learning) to any effort to improve student learning and performance. The potential exists for the applicant to meet the needs of each student, with the outcome of accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning, while at the same time reducing gaps in achievement that exist among students. Processes were delineated which would increase the capacity of educators to effectively implement the vision proposed, for the benefit of all students.</p>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>127</b>