



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0095FL-1 for Hillsborough County Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points) | 10 | 9 |

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Hillsborough County School District provides a comprehensive plan for 12,000 students within 13 middle schools (6% of their total population) that is part of a larger reform plan within the district. The district has taken a proactive role in both national and state efforts to strengthen academic standards and prepare students for the rigors of college and career expectations through its work with the College Board, and active participation in Florida's transition from their current state standards to the Common Core State Standards and pilot work with the Aspen Center on that same work. The proposal provides specific examples of HCPS's leadership within their state; for example, the district was the author of end-of-course examinations for disciplines not covered by state assessment standards.

The proposal addresses each of the four core assurance areas in turn, providing relevant details that show clear alignment to the project vision. Data systems are available to teachers, students, and parents, for communications, tracking, and customized instruction. The application does not fully address the issue of data systems that measure student growth and the full complement of opportunities that this specific measure can provide for teachers and counselors when addressing parents or developing individualized curriculum. The data systems, for example, focus on information and access to that information with no discussion of measuring actual student achievement growth within a specific period of time - data that could inform teacher and principal decision making.

HCPS has been at the forefront of Performance Based Compensation Systems since 2005 and currently part of the State's Race to the Top (State) effort that includes a teacher effectiveness reform initiative as well as a Gates Foundation partnership focusing on teacher recruitment. Evaluations for both teachers and principals include student achievement components. The district has done impressive work identifying specific areas of teacher weakness through teacher observations, recognizing that the fulcrum of these weaknesses sits squarely on personalized learning. Armed with that documented knowledge, the RISE UP plan allocates time and resources into professional development to make an impact on current practice.

While the narrative addresses the district's commitment to turning around the lowest-achieving schools, neither of the schools mentioned are among the 13 participating in the RISE UP project. Significant gains in achievement were noted for the low-performing schools following an infusion of support, interventions, coaches, extra planning time for teachers, and more professional development time. The narrative does not address if, after the academic scores rose, the same level of support continued.

RISE UP will address personalized learning through middle school science, dramatically shifting the current 6th through 8th integrated domains of Life, Physical, and Earth/Space Science to student options of where to start and the pathway to continue in order to meet completion of all modules of all three sets of standards by the end of 8th grade. The approach is well planned, to include significant professional development for teachers and family involvement. Technology is a critical cornerstone, providing each student with a personal tablet and the district with an interactive Learning Management System. While the project is innovative and the description of a student's experience in the following section provides deeper insight, the availability of 12,000 personal tablets opens the possibility of other possibilities, including presentations, communications across the nation and world, and other uses for student learning that are not included.

The narrative provides a useful and descriptive tour of a middle student's science experience in the new curriculum. The details and examples are specific, clarifying options and opportunities that might be available during the school day and beyond. The budget narrative includes much more equipment than is available to the student in this scenario. The document camera, the projector for presentations, micro-centrifuge, incubator, high-powered microscopes - each of these 13 schools are well equipped.

While there are a few rough edges, the applicant provides a comprehensive and coherent description of the district's reform vision that will be serve the project well. It is well conceived and the proposal includes good supporting details

throughout to warrant a high rating.

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

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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Hillsborough County selected 13 out of a total of 46 district middle schools to participate in the RISE UP project. Schools were selected based on a series of criteria including income, academic success on state assessments, and percent of students who were minority, ELL, and those with disabilities. The proposal provides documentation to support the choice based on these criteria, showing comparison figures between the 13 schools and the remaining 33 middle schools. Using these criteria, the selected schools meet the competition's eligibility requirements. The methodology for school selection is well documented with clear data providing supportive evidence.

It is not clear from the proposal why the number of participating schools was limited to 13. No reference was made to a natural gap between these 13 and the remaining 33 or if the test scores and other criteria of these particular 13 sites was in some other way unique; a deeper explanation on selection focusing on this issue would be helpful. This is of particular interest due to the quantity of financial, human, and material resources the project would provide to 13 schools and under 12,000 students - and primarily in only one content area - over the length of the federal funding and the further commitment of the district.

The narrative notes that only 14% of the science teachers within the participant middle schools were rated as "highly effective" as opposed to 37% of the teachers for the remaining middle schools. Charts later in the proposal show the remaining percentage of teachers rated as "effective." As defined by the US Department of Education, these teachers would be moving every student at least one full grade level each year; with 14% of the teachers moving students a grade and a half. This is inconsistent with the student achievement data provided in this criterion response.

The proposal provides a complete list of the participant schools. The % of students from low-income families (at 86%) is significantly higher than the figure provided for the same population (free/reduced lunch at 80.9%). If these are different measures, a note of explanation would be useful in the text.

The response to this criterion is good. A description of the process to identify eligible schools is reasonable and the resultant participant schools (all listed) are eligible for inclusion in the project. The required chart quantifies the number of participant students as well as the number of students who qualify as high-need and low-income. The weaknesses that are identified are not major problems that call any of the applicant's final decisions into question.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal includes a detailed description of the proposed RISE UP plan as part of the appendix, closely following the structure of the application itself. This is helpful in following the goals and activities of the project. Consistent with a high-quality plan, the submission includes a clear and logical timeline, indication of the responsible party, the deliverables, and the rationale for the activity. Activities are directly linked to project goals and the timeline is divided by quarters throughout each program year, providing a very reasonable view of expected completion dates and time spans. A separate timeline covers the three years after federal funding, illustrating the period of district continued obligation; this addition indicates long-term planning on the part of the project design team. Significant detail is provided.

The RISE UP plan does not clearly indicate the role of feedback from stakeholders or any constituent group or from the results of any data gathered, and what revisions in programming, training, or any other facet of the project such feedback might require. The column for "Deliverables" are primarily operational with no element of qualitative assessment. Even with a review of the evaluation and performance measure response sections of the proposal, it is not clear how progress towards success in meeting project goals, as viewed through the activities included within each, will be measured.

The plan addresses scaling up the reform proposal from the initial 13 middle schools to all 46 district middle schools, but does not provide an in-depth description of how this will occur. Demonstration sites will be identified, which should be of value, but there is no indication that the plan involves the participation of science teachers or even administrators at the other school sites. The proposal does not address the funding resources necessary, other than district technology re-refresh support, to provide additional middle schools with the same level of classroom technology during the scale up phases. The remaining middle schools will be added to RISE UP in five annual waves; this gradual move will increase the opportunities for technology to be ready for each new set of schools and revisions to the curriculum made as needed.

In addition to expanding the personalized science-based program initiated by RISE UP to the other middle schools, the program intends to move the original 13 middle schools beyond science and into other academic disciplines. This work is depicted through the Theory of Change Model, graphically presented within the proposal. Expansion to all middle schools and other academic disciplines is ambitious and yet doable; Hillsborough's proposal demonstrates considerable thought and planning towards this work. The results for students should improve academic outcomes.

The strength of the important element of this criterion - the high caliber of it's plan - earns the response a high rating, even in light of the few weaknesses noted.

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| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 6 |
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Hillsborough County's proposal includes expectations for student performance on summative assessments in reading, math, science, and writing through the 2017-2018 school year (post grant). In each case, assessment figures are not limited to just the middle school years (example: reading proficiency for grades 3-10; mathematics, grades 3-8). It is unclear if the figures provided represent just the middle school years, despite the broader range of the descriptor, or if more latitude should be allowed for interpretation if more grade levels are actually included in the results.

Subgroups include the primary racial and ethnic groups within the district as well as other key demographic groups; this number of student groups is consistent with a thoroughly-considered plan. While a bit unwieldy, the consistent target to reduce the percent of non-proficient students in each group by 50% or more within the grant period is reasonable; it does not, however, provide a final status for the percentage of students expected to be proficient in each respective content area. This information would be a useful indicator of the pace of academic progress for students.

The proposal addresses achievement gaps in both Reading and Mathematics, using, as a comparison subgroup for both, the State Asian student population. For both reading and math, the school district's own Asian subgroup outscored the State Asian subgroup and would have been a more local and useful comparison group. In its efforts to decrease the achievement gap for all groups by 5% each year, program planners additionally eliminated the academic advantage the Hillsborough Asian students had over the State Asian students (by 4% in reading and 5% in math). Aside from the Asian student subgroup, the slow pace of an annual 5% reduction of the achievement gap maintains a gap in every program year and into post-grant years. The pace of the reduction of the gap is insufficient to be considered successful for students.

Similarly, it is difficult to interpret improvement in graduation rates as described on Table (A)(4)(c). The figures following the baseline rates represent a reduction in the percent of non-graduates by half by 2017-2018. For Asian students, for example, a student cohort of 500 students would show 90% (450) graduating and the remaining 10% (50) not graduating. To reduce the percent of non-graduates (the 50) by half (to 25) by 2018. The percentage figures are not consistent with these descriptors. If the graduation rates are, in fact, expectations for students through 2018, they appear to be reasonable and consistent with the RISE UP program.

The application includes calculations on expected college enrollments, as well as baseline data, for multiple subgroups. The expectations after four years of funding are ambitious. There is some inconsistency in the expected rates of improved enrollments, particularly between White and Overall groups and students with the ELL, Students with Disabilities, Economically Disadvantaged subgroups. While the former increase approximately 13 percentage points over the course of grant support, the latter groups average approximately 23 percentage points. The narrative would benefit from a more complete explanation of the development of these goals.

The proposal includes a lot of information, most of it solid and useful. There are areas, noted above, that need additional explanation, further documentation, or appear inconsistent. The response scores in the mid-range.

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

| | Available | Score |
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| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points) | 15 | 13 |

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

HCPS provides ample and reasonable evidence to support a four-year track record of success in improving student learning outcomes. Although barely half of the middle schools rated an A or B grade from the State, 85% of the district's high schools did so, indicating an increase in learning as measured on the state assessments. A successful partnership

with the College Board and the implementation of their EXCEerator model led to national recognition with the largest annual increase in AP exam passing rates. Paired with impressive gains in the number of African American and Hispanic students both taking AP classes and successfully passing AP exams, every indication exists that the district is making great headway into advancing rigor into the high school curriculum and that students are taking full advantage of the opportunity to excel. This speaks highly of program preparation, teacher training, and the partnership with the College Board.

During this same period of time, since 2006 and 2007, both the high school graduate rate and the rate at which students entered college following graduation increased annually. Even at a moderate pace, the trend is positive over several years and should expect to grow with the support of federal funding.

The proposal highlights two schools, one high school and one middle school, that have each made significant progress in moving from low to high performing. Strong evidence is provided to document the selection and the improvement of both sites (i.e., percentages of bottom quartile students with gains in reading). The middle school will be a RISE UP project participant, building on the recent successes in academic scores. A strength of the project is its capacity to recognize and learn from successes within its own schools, demonstrated by the use of strategies and interventions that helped the high school make a difference with students adopted by the middle school to adapt for their own use on their own campus.

The applicant describes in detail various components of interoperable data systems that house student information and that can be structured and formatted and made available back to end users, including students, their parents, teachers, and school administrators. The narrative provides adequate details of the student information and data that will be available through these systems, including student work in the way of presentations and assignments, as well as the more standard test scores, grades, and attendance data. The discussion on how these various components are and will be used to inform and improve participation, instruction, and services is not fully addressed. While it may be a useful tool that allows professional development options to be generated based on student performance, there is no indication that the system is sensitive to the possibility that a given student may have experienced significant academic growth during the year under the guidance of the teacher and yet still be performing below his or her peer group.

It is not clear if the Personalized Learning Plan is a tool for student use or technical use by the management system.

The data systems included in the plan are good and should be expected to work together successfully to provide useful data to teachers, parents, students, and administrators. The response would benefit from additional clarity and detail.

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

The proposal addresses all of the criteria within this area thoroughly, providing details on where the data is sent, where it is publicly available, and where it is published both in written and online form. Each classification (teachers, instructional staff, and non-personnel expenditures) is included in the response. The appendix provides both a Florida State Staff and Salary Analysis Report Summary, a similar report for the Hillsborough district, and a third as a sample of a middle school in the RISE UP program.

The response is thorough and well documented.

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| (B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points) | 10 | 9 |
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides several strong examples illustrating their school district's active level of involvement both with and in the Florida State Department of Education, including the district's work leading professional development and Hard-to-Measure course evaluations within the state's Race to the Top project. The State granted a set of waivers to the district related to performance evaluations based, in part, on the district's significant lead in this area within the state.

The proposal carefully details the partnership in existence between Hillsborough and FLDOE and the degree of trust that allows the DOE to allow the district to continue to pursue increased opportunities for success in and around the classroom, for students and their teachers, with their full support.

The proposal notes that the State of Florida's Technology Plan granted the district a waiver to introduce the 1:1 device paradigm into the participant schools and, following federal funding, other middle schools according to the planned schedule. The Technology Plan is not included in the application and it is not clear why a waiver for digital devices would be needed within a school or district; some clarification would be useful.

The response provides clear evidence that the State of Florida supports the work of the applicant. Two separate subgrants of the state Race to the Top grant, one bringing over \$26.5 million into the district in four years and overlapping with the potential district Race to the Top funds, and a second for an unknown contractual amount. Regardless of the amount,

Florida shows, through these awards, confidence in the capacity and results achieved in Hillsborough.

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

15

13

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The description of the initial development of RISE UP includes job titles of district-level leaders reviewing data to establish a baseline for the project. Even at the following step, district administrators are in conversations, but no principals are yet at the table. The narrative similarly does not address a review of data that would inform planners of the need for the project at the middle school level and the wisdom of beginning with science. When the more complete roster of stakeholders is brought to the table, the sites had been identified allowing representatives to give voice and feedback. The application includes evidence of meetings with parents, teachers, counselors, and principals as well as a detailed reporting of questions and feedback from meetings. The reporting does not provide, however, any indication if the feedback was used to make revisions into the proposal.

Of significant interest is the strong feedback from parents regarding a key component of the personalized science model as illustrated earlier in the proposal. The narrative states that, in response to this feedback, the change was made to revise the model and limit the flexibility in class choice to only students in grades 7 and 8; students in grade 6 would remain with their cohort with a consistent science curriculum throughout the year. This agreed-upon change is not reflected as a change in the model. The model does allow for the original plan in the case of unusual exceptions.

The proposal provides a listing of stakeholder input that resulted in changes within the final narrative; the change for the grade bands and science model is not among them.

The district does have collective bargaining representation. To confirm their direct engagement and program support, the proposal includes signed rosters attesting to teachers' participation and feedback. Additional communications from teachers in the appendix provides evidence of strong support for the project. This level of documentation is both solid and convincing.

Letters of support are significant. Three different mayors are in strong support of the project. Both the Classroom Teachers Association and all of the participant schools are represented with strong support. Key stakeholders, including higher education, parents, and the National Science Foundation, offered information on how their various agencies would be able to support the project throughout and beyond the period of federal funding.

The response to this criterion was strong.

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

| | Available | Score |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points) | 20 | 18 |

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The approach to learning as envisioned through RISE UP features a shift from the status quo to an individualized - personalized - curriculum with a student-determined pace, sequence, and set of resources. The proposal presents a clear impression of how this new approach with different activities would look within a renovated classroom. It is not clear, however, if there is any anticipated change in the structure of the more traditional class, for example, a group of 25-35 students with a single teacher. A more comprehensive view of the final science work groups of students would be useful to understand how teachers, parents, and students effectively use the Learning Management System, stay in contact with each other in order to positively impact student learning, and, for teachers, access and make available to students the quantity of external resources available to them to support a science curriculum.

The grid displaying system interoperability is clear and includes all key elements; it is very useful in providing a visual for the systems that impact the LMS.

RISE UP appropriately includes parents throughout. Parents are provided with access to student data to maintain open communication with their children and are able to communicate directly with teachers. The inclusion of parents in this work is important and critical to the success of the students. The system is available in three languages, addressing the need of families still transitioning into English; this is excellent. There is no indication that parents receive training on the devices that their children will be using or on the LMS itself, although there is a reference to families accessing online information from home. With a high percentage of the participant students from low-income families, information on how parents can access this information would be useful.

RISE UP focuses on science; the modules that will be prepared for students center on middle-school science curriculum areas of Life, Physical, and Earth/Space Sciences. Deep-learning experiences available to students would be limited to resources supporting these three areas rather than other areas of scientific inquiry that may be of higher interest to a student. Students do have access to after-school STEM activities for specific areas of interest.

The middle school students will approach their science work primarily by completing modules using their devices. Although there are references to student experiments, they are not discussed as class or even group projects. It is unclear from the narrative how students would gain access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives from an educational strategy that appears to be primarily solitary in its individualistic and personalized nature. The proposal does not include examples of how a student- or teacher-led discussion or student presentation might provoke research or further inquiry by other students or that students meet in teams for any educational purpose. This kind of collaborative work is critical for successful problem solving in the work place.

Proceeding through the modules in each of the three science areas at a self-selected pace and with the ability to choose the order of the subtexts, provides an opportunity for students to increase their capacity as directors of their own learning. For some students in the 6th grade, there may be some unlearning of habits that precedes successful work through the modules. The end result will serve students better as they move into and beyond high school, prepared for college and careers.

(b) Within RISE UP, each participant middle school student has access to a sequence of instructional content in science that is self chosen. The 1:1 technology and use of the learning management system and the personalized learning plan all contribute to a technologically personalized educational experience. The proposal, however, does not describe a system that appears personalized for the student in the way of people and hands-on support to extend the benefit of the new technologies. As each student in a classroom pursues individual goals and modules within three different science curricula, the personalized learning is generally limited to the relationship between the student and the device. The proposal would be strengthened by a more comprehensive view of the project to fill in these gaps, illustrating the full level of school-level support and school and classroom environment in which RISE UP will grow. The narrative does address this in part for high-need students, with classroom designs and with opportunities for extra-curricular activities; this is good. The camaraderie exhibited during after-school opportunities would be an excellent model for the daily classroom.

The LMS will be able to provide both updated student information and personalized learning recommendations for students. This system will be very useful to teachers and parents as well as to students, enabling a degree of communication and information sharing that should support student success. The response does not provide any specifics as to how frequently the individual student information is updated. The narrative provides additional examples of ongoing and regular feedback (i.e.. progress towards meeting goals, feedback on module activities, acquisition of college and career ready skills); these additions provide strength to the proposal.

High-need students will have the benefit of specified interventions during the project that can be monitored for effectiveness by the teacher. While some interventions are technology-based, others include supporting staff such as ELL specialists who are available to work with individual students on a case by case basis. The application offers a full and appropriate response to this portion of the criterion, describing the support for students to ensure that they will be able to track and manage their learning.

The full response to this criterion is very strong, with details on the plan and examples. The weaknesses described are worthy of note and possible correction within the plan, but do not significantly diminish from the strength of the total response.

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

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16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) Hillsborough's RISE UP includes significant attention to professional development for teachers, administrators, and staff before and throughout the project to ensure that the personalized learning environment is well understood, supported, and implemented and that all students can succeed within this new environment prepared for college and career. Examples include three-week Personalized Learning Summits for all participating teachers and coaches from all schools prior to implementation and each year thereafter as well as an additional two-week Summit just for the 13 Lead Teachers. The district recognizes the limits of their own current capacity, bringing in consultants to lead these efforts then employing a train-the-trainer model when appropriate; this model allows external expertise and internal growth, both of which will be program strengths.

Ongoing professional development takes the form of conference opportunities for science teachers, strong and ongoing PLCs for teachers, coaching from consultants on maximizing the use of the learning management system, and the involvement of the Supervisor for Middle School Science. The supports for the 122 educators is more than sufficient, as each school site (with from 6-14 science teacher) will have their own Technology Specialist who report to a district-level

Technology Specialist dedicated solely to RISE UP.

The project planners recognize that the shift to personalized learning beginning in science must be supported by the school administration, thus provides training at that level as well. There is no indication if this, or any, training is required of administrators or other participants. The application includes a letter of support that indicates a commitment to the work involved, but the time does not appear to be a requirement within the employment contracts.

Participating teachers will be provided training, capacity, and opportunities to frequently measure student progress towards meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements, although there are no failsafe strategies to ensure that they do so. RISE UP offers training on the Personalized Learning Plan and learning management system, both of which would allow teachers access to key data to assist students. While it is likely that all science teachers will be eager to measure student progress to facilitate success into and beyond high school, confirmation of participation would be affirming.

The proposal includes a detailed description of the district's instructional evaluation instrument for teachers and that for principals. To accommodate the differences that a personalized learning environment as envisioned through RISE UP will bring to science classrooms, some individuals charged with observing the classroom environment and ongoing pedagogy will be specifically trained in this approach to learning. This additional training will occur for those involved in the evaluation process at both the teacher/classroom level and principal level to ensure full understanding of this shift in approach. This additional element to the evaluation process could be critical and indicates significant planning and forethought, ensuring that teachers and principals will not be burdened by evaluation expectations that may not be a good fit for their schools.

The proposal is not fully responsive regarding the use of frequent feedback from these evaluations, other recommendations, or interventions, that can improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness. More detail is needed as to how information, data, and conclusions from these sources will be used on a regular or frequent basis to improve the work of these professionals that will, in turn, assist students in meeting their goals.

(b) Key sources of information and student data that will assist educators throughout RISE UP are the PLP and the Learning management system. Throughout the proposal descriptors of these systems and how the information within them can be accessed is clear and compelling.

Examples of high-quality learning resources for participating educators and the tools to create and share new resources are weak, limited to the vendor-created science modules that form the new science curriculum, the potential for vendor-supplied web-based resources or resources produced by district personnel, and access to ASCD titles and technology titles. A more complete and comprehensive listing of learning resources, including science resources, links to scientific organizations and studies, and higher education, would strengthen the proposal.

(c) The proposal clearly identifies sources of information available and used by school leaders and leadership teams to assess and improve individual educator and school wide success for students. Evidence of this data includes the teacher evaluation, regular classroom observations, and the TELL Survey from the New Teacher Center. Analysis of this data informs personnel decisions as well as focused professional development; it is put to good use. Annual School Improvement Plans provide disaggregated data that can identify student achievement by teacher and classroom; another opportunity for school leaders to recognize areas that may require change.

To its credit, the district has changed its access to professional development from teacher choice to data-driven and need-based. The revised system includes follow up as well as both accountability to complete the work and a mechanism to measure the impact on students and the classroom. This far superior approach to professional development would be expected to have a greater influence on instruction and student success.

(d) An effective teacher, as defined in the notice, is one whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g.. at least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth (as defined in the district's teacher evaluation system); a high-effective teacher's students progress at a rate of one and a half grade levels a year. Hillsborough's proposal uses a definition for both effective and highly-effective teacher and effective and highly-effective principal that differs from this definition. This misinterpretation colors both the discussion within this criterion and the responses for Performance Measures later in the proposal.

The plan for increasing the number of highly effective teachers and principals includes several strong points, such as an examination of which teacher preparation programs produce the strongest novice teachers, a full-release mentor program for first- and second-year teachers, and collaborations with higher education to deepen the pool of qualified graduates, especially those who could be placed in hard-to-fill schools and subject areas. RISE UP funds will cover the cost for teachers to become dually certified in all levels of middle school science. Each of these approaches is useful in long-term hiring and recruitment and may lead to highly effective teachers, as defined by both the notice and the district.

The applicant's response is very good, with the few weaknesses noted.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
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| (D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points) | 15 | 13 |

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district's central office is poised to support the work in RISE UP. The proposal includes an organizational chart that includes two major areas led by Deputy Superintendents that impact the project; the graphic is a useful visual tool. Specific information is provided on the contributions of various departments, including Human Resources, Communications, and Assessment and Accountability. The narrative additionally outlines both the district- and site-level positions that will be grant funded: seven full-time staff at the district level and at least one per site. It is not clear throughout the narrative if the Lead Teacher at each of the 13 participant schools has teaching duties in addition to RISE UP responsibilities; the work of these professionals should be clarified.

In a discussion of support and service to RISE UP through the district's central office, no reference is made to budget support or oversight nor is any information offered regarding grant compliance, federal grant liaison, or assistance with fiscal management. As this is a large funding request, support from professionals within these central offices would be of value.

School Leadership Teams at the participant middle schools have some degree of flexibility and autonomy over practices and policies that facilitate personalized learning. The school principal, a member of the team, is given the authority to manage the schedule, hire and promote personnel, and manage school-level budgets, but all generally with district consultation. Limitations from the State of Florida (amount of instructional time) and the district (flexible schedule within the day) indicates systems that calculate instructional hours and seat time as equivalent to learning time. A deeper discussion of the use of a more flexible schedule or calendar would support the request why it would be needed.

Personalized learning is exemplified by the opportunities afforded students through the project's policies towards earning credit based on demonstrated mastery. As students progress through the three science areas they are eligible to both demonstrate mastery and, if successful, continue their studies in these fields through one of three options, including Hillsborough Virtual School. Advanced students may enroll in a credit-bearing course upon completion of the middle-school curriculum. These options personify a personalized learning environment, allowing students to direct the pace of their own learning; an excellent opportunity at the middle-school level.

While the applicant agrees that students will have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways, no specifics are provided as to how that would happen or what it would look like for students, teachers, or within the classroom. The proposal would be strengthened through examples of student demonstrations of standards mastery via state examination, grades, end-of-course tests, or other mechanism that specifically address standards. The response is vague (i.e. "using various academic software," and "a menu of evidence-based personalized treatments and methods of delivery") and would benefit from additional details and examples to determine if the criterion has been fully addressed.

Learning resources and instructional practices are both adaptable and accessible to students within the district, including those with disabilities and who are English Learners. The proposal provides specific examples of accommodations and supports to these two groups, including ELL liaisons, adaptive technologies, and the presence of advocates for these groups of students serving on the development teams for module construction. Earlier in the narrative, reference was made to translations of material into three languages for students and families. The district and RISE UP go beyond the level of basic compliance to assist these students to ensure a more personalized learning experience.

The applicant's response is strong for this criterion.

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| (D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points) | 10 | 8 |
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's response to this criterion is very good, including the availability of technology and technology support and the interoperability of data systems. Areas that could be improved are detailed below.

The content, tools, and other resources identified for RISE UP are primarily technology-based, including the curriculum, the LMS and PLP, and other web-based resources. While students, teachers and other located within the district will have access to these tools and sites during the day, the assurance that the low-income individuals represented within these

groups will retain that access after-school is not well established through the narrative. Over 80% of the students in the participant schools are considered low-income and, while the suggestion is made that many families have access to smart phones if not internet-access computers, there is no documentation that supports this suggestion. Even using a smart phone, should that be the available format, would make viewing student records and reviewing information on the web-based tools challenging. It is possible that parents, stakeholders, and even some educators would have limited, if any, access to key information after the school day.

The technical support that will be provided to parents, and as described, is thorough and comprehensive. Details are provided with a full understanding of the district- and sit-level support. Parent trainings will be available during days and evenings. There is no mention of parent training in any language other than English, however.

The proposal includes a full description of the interoperable data systems involved in RISE UP, such as Human Resources and the Student Information System, and how the use of purchased tools to integrate data and processes allows these functions to seamlessly support instructional improvement. End results for principals, students, teachers, and parents is simple and disaggregated data to use for future decision making. Budget data within this system appears to be limited to compensations within salary charts rather than to school site or even project or grant budgets. An expansion to include the latter would be of value if practical within the system.

The response is strong with the few weaknesses identified.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points) | 15 | 8 |
| (E)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>The continuous improvement process described within the application - the "plan, do, check, act" cycle - is linked directly to the district's Plan which is provided within an appendix. The plan is structured in alignment with the outline of the grant RFP, with a reference to one of three goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance educator effectiveness • accelerate student achievement, and • ready students for college and careers. <p>Neither the plan, the unreferenced Logic Model with two stated objectives for each of the three goals, nor the improvement process provide any measurable objectives. Without any expectations, benchmarks, or measurable objectives, the improvement plan becomes a document inadequate to produce timely or specific data towards meeting project goals.</p> <p>In response to this criterion, the proposal refers to their plan within the appendix. The timeline within the plan largely refers to operational functions rather than the implementation of a personalized learning environment and the measure of student performance or decrease in the achievement gap.</p> <p>The plan does address issues such as investment of professional development and technology, but a more comprehensive improvement process might consider a measurement of the impact on student achievement or teacher effectiveness rather than level of attendance.</p> <p>The proposal includes several strengths. The selected continuous improvement process is an effective choice. Data is assessed on a regular basis, allowing for corrections in pedagogy and other strategies. Many groups of stakeholders are appropriately involved in continuous improvement, including parents. The plan addresses the public sharing of information through newsletters.</p> <p>The narrative provides a chart illustrating the frequency of stakeholder components; it is reasonable and comprehensive.</p> <p>The response rates in mid-range.</p> | | |
| (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points) | 5 | 5 |
| (E)(2) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>RISE UP includes several examples of the communications and engagement with both internal and external stakeholders that will be implemented within the plan. They are logical and focus on two key constituent groups: teachers and administrators (internal), and parents (external). Particularly noteworthy for teachers is the innovative Live Feed</p> | | |

Roundtable, providing a live forum for teacher discussion on a particular topic. An e-mail address for RISE UP will be available for students and parents for suggestions or comments.

Recognizing their own limited capacity, the project intends to hire an external marketing firm to increase family engagement for the participant schools. They will be charged with analyzing strategies that will be effective with the target population and developing and implementing a marketing campaign to increase parent and family participation.

This is a full and complete response to the criterion; a very high quality plan that includes all key elements and several other excellent additions.

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

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal includes 12 performance measures; nine of their own choosing. A rationale for the self-selections was provided for enhancing educator effectiveness and preparing students for college and careers. The rationale for the latter ("all students must graduate from high school ready to succeed in postsecondary institutions and the workforce") is weak, however, and would benefit from additional support or evidence.

Two performance measures focused on the current baseline figures and projected figures for effective and highly-effective teachers and principals. The definitions for these terms came from the district's internal teacher and principal effectiveness ratings/evaluations rather than the definitions within the RFP notice. Taken together, 100% of the teachers and the principals are currently either effective or highly effective. Should funding occur, these measures would be of no value in determining an accurate rate for increasing the number and percent of effective and highly-effective teachers and principals.

The target figures provided for performance measures in reading, mathematics, science, and writing represent the percent of non-proficient students by half by the 2017-2018 (post-grant) year rather than the more typical target for improvement. This very cumbersome calculation does not permit a clear indication of the expectation for annual improvement for these content areas.

The applicant has selected a performance measure focusing on the increase of students, by subgroup, enrolling in a credit-bearing class. RISE UP specifically discussed one available science class, but the performance measure is not limited or specific to this class. As the effort is highlighted as a performance measure, an increase of 2% in year 1 and 10% after five years is a slower pace than would be expected. This is particularly true with subgroups. The number of ELL students, with a baseline of 11, is not expected to increase until 2015-16 when one student is added; it remains at 12 for the duration of the measurement. Asian students increase from 21 students to 23 students over five years. A straight percentage increase does not necessarily result in logical figures.

A similarly too-slow pace is observable with the socio-emotional indicator for decreasing unexcused absences. No data is provided for the percentage of students completing STEM-based modules. A different performance measure selection may have more data to offer.

The program provides a description of how it will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information on the measures that were self selected in the aggregate rather than as individual performance measures. This approach is used, as well, with the review and improvement of these performance measures over time. The general, rather than specific, discussions for both topics are unable to provide any detailed information on the individual performance measures, including the time schedule when they will be reviewed, what teams of professionals or stakeholders would be involved in such a review, and what process would be used to replace or significantly revise a performance measure that was not leading towards reaching one or more program goals.

Performance measures were not well conceived and were not associated with quality follow up and review.. The response, therefore, does not rate high.

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

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The evaluation plan is described within the narrative and is also included within the overall RISE UP plan. Within the RISE UP plan, all of the criteria for a high-quality plan are met, including timeline, activities, indicators of responsibility, and rationale to include activities.

The project will contract with an external evaluator to lead this critical effort. The three identified research questions are closely aligned to the project goals; this is excellent. The narrative addresses each of the three areas, providing rich details that add to understanding. Primary among the details are two key measurement activities: RISE UP Professional

Development and Implementation Fidelity, and Impact on Students and Teachers. In each case, the proposal includes documentation of the research involved in the work and the components gathered and analyzed,

The evaluation will involve quasi-experimental designs, matched student groups, and other methodologies within the evaluation. The evaluator will provide reports to the district quarterly to which context will be added for more public presentation.

The plan as described is thorough, aligned to the project goals, and will be led by a qualified evaluator with significant support from district and RISE UP leadership. The response is strong.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points) | 10 | 9 |
| (F)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>The applicant's budget is extensive, with significant details offered for each of the three programs based on the three strands of science inquiry for the middle grades. All of the funds that will support the project are identified, including other federal funds (both grants and entitlements), state funds, and other support sources. The primary sources are described in appropriate detail.</p> <p>The funding request, at \$25 million dollars, is sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal. The budget is generally reasonable but includes multiple instances of surplus generosity. Examples include four rooms for the 6th graders at each of the 13 school sites receiving 25 pneumatic chairs at a cost of almost \$300 per chair. Van Buren Middle School, with only six participating science educators, would be unlikely to be using four rooms for only sixth grade under any circumstance. The budget includes a considerable amount of classroom technology not addressed in the narrative.</p> <p>Primarily, however, the budget aligns to the projects and reflects the plan as described within the narrative; this alignment justifies its appearance within the budget.</p> <p>One-time investments are identified versus operational costs that will continue throughout and beyond the period of grant funding. Eighteen full-time positions fall within the category of one-time positions; these jobs will be eliminated as the grant funds end. It is unfortunate to have this many positions end with the cessation of grant funds; often schools or the district is able to re-envision these posts. The narrative does not address any involvement on the part of Human Resources to work with individuals after four years. Several of the positions are retained, however, as the project is scaled into additional middle schools and the need for Technical Specialists remains strong.</p> <p>The detail of the budget, the inclusion of the external funding, and identification of one-time investment funding support a strong rating for this response.</p> | | |
| (F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points) | 10 | 7 |

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The primary mechanism used by the project for the sustainability of it's goals is the successful scale up to additional middle schools during the final year of funding and the four following years. The expectation is that data collection and evaluation during Years 1-3 will support program investment in professional development, curriculum development, and technology, attracting additional external fiscal supports and preparing the first wave of five additional middle schools to join the RISE UP model. The narrative provides details on those budget elements that will be picked up by the district for long-term sustainability (technology) and those that will be supported through foundation grants such as the Gates Foundation (professional development, personalized learning).

Much work for the sustainability plan is left to the RISE UP Task Force; it is unclear if members of this group have access to or decision-making authority over, the level of funding that has been available to RISE UP during federal funding for any

segment of the project (i.e. personnel, costs for professional development Summits).

The narrative does not include sufficient information from which to draw conclusions for a post-grant budget for any period of time; this would be a useful tool to review budget assumptions and sources of income.

The response to this criterion is in the mid-level rating.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points) | 10 | 8 |

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The narrative provides a detailed and comprehensive description of the University of South Florida Louie de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI), an organization that serves as the district's ongoing and sustainable partner before and throughout the RISE UP project. The successful partnership of district and FMHI has already collaborative designed and been awarded two federal grants that serve the district's students. Evidence is offered within the proposal demonstrating the success of the partnership and its sustainability over time. Details are strong and supportive.

The applicant identified six population-level desired results for students aligned with the broader proposal. The performance measures charts for the two desired results listed for family and community support contain no data; only to be determined. With this lack of information, other selections might generate more useful data.

Appropriate levels of detail are provided illustrating the role played by FMHI in the schools and within RISE UP. With access to students and student data, professional staff will work effectively to implement positive behavior supports within program schools. The application provides a thorough response to each subsection of the criterion with details and examples, making for a strong response.

The performance measures are not ambitious. The increase of students having a 2.0 GPA in 6th grade moves from 87.4% to 88.6% in five years. As most students meet this low bar from the beginning, planners may consider a 3.0 GPA, but certainly a faster pace that is in evidence. This same far-too-slow pace is demonstrated throughout the performance measures, with unexcused absences and suspensions. Uncharacteristically, performance measures for unexcused absences does include a significant drop not during the period of grant funding, but the year immediately after funding ends, when it drops in half.

The detail and careful analysis provided in the narrative of this response are not consistent with these last performance measures, which demonstrate less thought.

The response is rated in the low range of the higher bracket.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

| | Available | Score |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | | Met |

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The application provides a coherent and comprehensive response to this criterion, building on each of the educational assurance areas to create a personalized learning environment for middle school students within the science curriculum. The proposal addresses each of the key areas as required to meet this absolute priority. The applicant presents a strong plan that incorporates personalized learning environments, and individually discusses college- and career-readiness for students and the effectiveness of teachers. The data systems that will be employed are interoperable, serving the needs of students, teachers, and families, and the the selection of the schools themselves addresses the importance of turning around low-achieving schools. The applicant meets this Absolute Priority.

| | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Total | 210 | 169 |
|--------------|------------|------------|



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0095FL-2 for Hillsborough County Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant is engaged in a comprehensive and coherent vision that meets all three areas of this section.

- Work around the four core educational assurance areas has begun.
 - The district has adopted and piloted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Florida Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). Its rollout of the standards has become a model for the nation for CCSS implementation. The school district is featured in the state department of education website demonstrating best practices for implementation.
 - The district is building upon work started by the state of Florida in its Race To The Top Award.
 - The district has designed and piloted rigorous assessments that align with the standards. Items included in the test bank include multiple choice and performance task items that have been proven to be reliable and valid. Currently, the district is involved in creating test item banks for content areas beyond English Language Arts and Math. Instructional curricular modules are being developed that are "task-centered, content based" and emphasize performance assessment. The modules are mastery-based, as opposed to time-in-seat units.
 - A data system that measures student growth and success and informs instruction is in place. "Teacher effectiveness data, including student achievement is linked to performance pay, career ladder opportunities professional development, and non-renewal". The project plans to include the ability to drill down to the student level in the classroom where "students and teachers can access student data frequently and formatively in a personalized learning environment to collaboratively customize instruction".
 - A data system that assists in the recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals is in place. The data system includes a value-added measure of student achievement, which comprises the largest component of the effectiveness score. It includes "Planning and Preparation (20%), Classroom Environment (20%), Instruction (40%) and Professional Responsibilities (20%)". The value added measure is combined with the observation component for an effectiveness score. Principals have been evaluated since 2011 with a student achievement component, along with a general score. The evaluation system for both teachers and administrators include components that are necessary for successful implementation of the CCSS. This includes communication with students, questioning and discussion techniques, student engagement, using assessments in instruction and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness.
 - A description is included on what was done to turn around the two lowest schools. One was closed and reopened as a Boys Preparatory Academy and the other used the "transformation model". Strategies that were put in place include job-embedded professional development, site-based content coaches, paid common planning time for the teachers, positive behavior plans, and technology-based interventions. A great deal of progress was shown with these strategies.
- The applicant articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating and personalizing student learning in science for all students.
 - "Middle school science will form the foundation of what will ultimately be a district-wide transformation to personalized learning".
 - All students will be provided an opportunity to move through rigorous science modules at their own pace, and of their own choice. Teachers, parents and students will collaborate to create personalized learning pathways. All students will be required to complete all modules before leaving middle school; students are able to proceed faster and continue advanced science courses on-line. Assessments will be administered both the monitor progress and to prove mastery of modules and benchmarks.

Learning environments and classrooms will look different. There will be online learning stations, hands-on learning activity stations and students will "use a personal tablet to support their learning choices." Teachers will receive extensive professional development through an interactive Learning Management System and time has been allowed through an early-release schedule for continuing collaboration and professional development.

- A description of what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers is included.
 - The students take responsibility for their learning. The teacher monitors every step and conferences with students as needed.
 - Many human resources are available for student assistance. These resources are monitored and requested by the teacher and include an ESOL Resource Teacher, Technology Specialist, and a STEM Competition Coach. The teacher provides additional on-line resources to students as needed.

The work described around the four core educational areas describes work around all subjects, for all students. The description of the approach to accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity through personalized support is described for science, strengthening STEM instruction and learning. Students are given the opportunity to deepen their learning through personalized selection of additional materials. This is a clear and credible approach that will increase equity through personalized learning and support and is grounded in common and individual tasks based on student interest. Equity is increased because the personalized learning allows all students, including those with learning differences, language and/or special needs the ability to approach learning in an accessible manner.

Students will be able to move at their own pace and also demonstrate learning by utilizing personalized assessments. The description of the classroom experience is thorough. This section is strong and complete. It is being assigned ten points.

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

10

10

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of the proposal.

- The process and thinking that the applicant used to select the 13 middle schools included in the project are described. A comparison of student achievement, teacher effectiveness and ethnicities are included. The schools selected to be included in the grant have lower student achievement and teacher effectiveness and have higher numbers of minorities and specialized populations that the other schools in the district. Focusing on low-achieving schools and then scaling up to the entire district will prove the effectiveness of the proposal. Higher achievement is expected through personalized learning experiences in science. It is expected that the academic improvement gained through the personalization of science will transfer to other subjects.
- A list of schools that will participate are included along with the number of participating educators, students, high-need students, low-income students and how these numbers compare to others in the district.

This section in the application is complete and addresses the requirements set forth. It is receiving ten points because the approach to implementing its proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of the proposal. The schools selected meet the competition's eligibility requirements. There is a list of schools selected and the reason selection. The number of participating students, students from low-income families, high need students and participating educators are included.

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

10

9

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

A high-quality plan is included in the appendix. It includes goals, activities, deliverables, timelines and the parties responsible. The inclusion of the rationale for each step provides credibility to the plan. The plan is thoughtful and includes activities for each step of the implementation process.

The description of how the district will scale up the proposal is included. It will begin in the fourth year of the grant. In addition to adding the STEM personalization throughout all middle schools, the Theory of Change will include personalization of other subjects in order to "scale up and scale out". Once the STEM personalization is in place and has been utilized, the scale up and out of the proposal should not be difficult. The scale up begins in the fourth year and will occur in "graduated segments". Experienced personnel and be able to train and lead the professional development for educators, administrators and students.

The application meets all the requirements of this section and is receiving nine points. There is a high-quality plan that describes how the proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change and will help the applicant reach its outcome goals. The proposal talks about how many schools will be included in each year's proposal to scale up but it does not address which schools will be selected each year nor does it address how the schools

will be selected each year.

| | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 7 |
|--|-----------|----------|

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity. Ambitious yet achievable annual goals are presented that are based on Florida's ESEA targets.

- Performance on summative assessments in all areas for all subgroups is included. The first year goals for science (the focus of the proposal) vary from a 2% to a 8% gain. These percentages are ambitious yet achievable.
- Goals for decreasing achievement gaps are included for district-wide reading and math achievement. The subgroups are compared to the state Asian group which is the highest achieving group in the state. There is no data included on decreasing achievement gaps in science.
- Goals are included to increase graduation rates for all subgroups.
- Goals are included to increase college enrollment for all subgroups.

The information that is required for this section is included . The applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity. Future growth of the district targets is based on Florida's ESEA targets. In a later table (E3), goals for science achievement are included but not referenced as part of closing the achievement gap data for science. Even though achievement gap data for science is not requested nor required, this should have been included because it would have tied the data into the vision. Without this information, there is no accountability for the proposal. There is narrative around increasing the achievement levels rather than closing the achievement gap.

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points) | 15 | 12 |

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has demonstrated evidence of a clear record of success in the past four years. A description, which includes data, is included along with charts.

- The state department of education assigns grades to schools and districts based on achievement data. During the last four years the district received two grades of A and two grades of B. The B grades were due to changes in the state accountability system. The majority of the elementary (62%), middle (52%) and senior high (85%) received a grade of A or B. The AP exam passing rates have increased. The number of Hispanic and African Americans taking and passing the AP exam with a score of 3+ has increased. Graduation rates and the number of graduates enrolling in college has also increased.
- Ambitious and significant reforms in the lowest achieving middle middles schools have taken place. Middleton MS raised two levels in the state grading system in one year. Sligh MS had significant gains in reading and math in the lowest quartile students, but still struggles with science.
- Student performance data is available to students, educators and parents. There are several data systems in place that are "interoperable" and provide data, planning tools, grades and assignments. Through the proposal, a Personalized Learning Plan will be created that will "provide families one access point for students' standardized test scores, interim progress reports, quarterly report cards and will link with a ... digital gradebook.. which gather students' grades on daily coursework and homework assignments." The district has demonstrated evidence of a clear record of success in the past four year in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching. Student achievement, high school graduation rates and college enrollment increased. Ambitious and significant reforms in it lowest-achieving middle schools are being addressed in the proposal. Student performance data will be available to students, educators and parents in ways that will inform and improve participation, instruction and services.

The narrative addresses student achievement, graduation rates and college enrollment as increasing. Much of the data provided was for high schools, not middle schools as is included in the proposal. The two middles schools included in the turnaround narrative experienced growth in reading and math but did not include any success in turning around science, which is the focus of the proposal. This section is receiving twelve points.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The District exhibits a high level of transparency by making public, by school, actual expenditures as required. Much of this information is included on the district website. The narrative describes the state, district, and school reporting practices. The appendix states that districts in Florida classify employees as instructional personnel, instructional support personnel and non-personal expenditures. This expenditure for each classification is provided on the school's financial report. This section is being assigned five points.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The state has been awarded a RTTT Phase 2 competition award. The district incorporates implementation of the state grant into the proposal and is focusing on the new teacher and principal evaluation system as well as personalization and common core implementation. Florida's legislative requirements include STEM accelerated courses in addition to a robust data system for monitoring student growth. STEM implementation, personalization and a robust data system are the focus of this proposal. The letters included in the appendix also provide evidence of the support throughout the state. The Florida Department of Education Technology Plan has given the district the flexibility to introduce the use of the tablet for personalization and curriculum. "Florida is the first state in the nation to offer virtual school and its resulting success demonstrates the effectiveness of statewide efforts to expand student learning opportunities through digital means". These conditions will provide success and autonomy to the proposal and to the district under the State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements.

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

15

15

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has demonstrated evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal. A description of how students, families, teachers, principals and district personnel were engaged in the development and revision of the proposal and focus group notes are included in the appendix. A letter from the Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association provides evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposal.

The narrative describes the support it will receive from stakeholders. Letters of support are included in the appendix from a senator, the mayors from the three cities involved in the school district, participating principals, the Classroom Teachers Association, four letters from the University of South Florida, one letter from the University of Tampa, Florida Advanced Technological Education Center, Florida High Tech Corridor Council President, Helios Education Foundation, Hillsborough County Council PTA, the Museum of Science and Industry, and The Florida Aquarium.

This section is being awarded 15 points because the applicant has demonstrated strong stakeholder engagement and support throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal.

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

| | Available | Score |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points) | 20 | 19 |

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. The plan, located in the appendix, includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and the parties responsible to support the proposal. The inclusion of the rationale for each step provides credibility to the plan.

The proposal considers an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students. The proposal includes 13 of the district's high-need middle schools. The proposal is based on research around differentiation and individualized learning to ensure that learning is personalized for each student. Classrooms will be revamped to include learning stations and activities to meet needs. Students will be able to decide how to demonstrate required mastery. "Learning activities will be designed to account for self-pacing, learning modality, and student interests, as well as the development of 21st Century transferable skills necessary to become successful in postsecondary and career attainment".

- Technology is being put into place that will help students understand that what they are learning is key to their success. Parents, students and educators will collaboratively select personalized learning pathways. Systems available on individual tablets will allow parents, students and educators to track performance and learning.
- The personalized system, the Learning Management System and the Personalized Learning Plan will help students identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards. Students and parents will be able to understand how to structure learning to achieve goals and how to measure progress towards the goals. The system will be available in several languages.
- Students will be allowed to select the domain to study and also the topic they wish to explore. The tablets and the teachers will provide many choices for learning experiences within the modules, including videos, tutorials, demonstrations and literary connections. All modules will require exit assessments that are aligned to the common core and Florida standards. Each module will include higher level and deeper learning experiences for students to explore, if they desire. Alternative assessments will be created for students with special needs. Students will be exposed to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives.
- Students have the ability to master critical academic content and are able to develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, perseverance, critical thinking and problem solving. Students will develop skills in communicating with others and working in teams.

Students will be supported by parents and educators to have access to a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve individual learning goals and ensure on time graduation with college- and career-ready skills.

- The district has developed and planned resources, technology, systems and a change in the infrastructure to make the personalized approach work. The use of tablets and the integrated data technology will support the implementation of the model.
- The plan provides for a variety of high-quality content and learning activities. The tablets will assist "with delivery of curriculum and assessment; blended learning; problem, project and place-based learning quests; engineering design challenges; real work application; individual and collaborative tasks/projects; exploratory tech zones and labs; and field experiences". "Students' learning experiences will be extended beyond the classroom through participation in rigorous competitions and field experiences."
- The high-quality content, including digital learning content is aligned with college- and career-ready standards.
- Ongoing and frequent, regular feedback will be provided by teachers and the online assessments and activities through the data systems. Students, parents and teachers will be able to monitor progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards.
- The data systems will assist educators with making personalized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills. Behavior and academic interventions will be viewed on the tablets.
- High-need students will benefit from the personalized environment. Instruction and assessments will help ensure that students with special needs, English Language Learners and high need students will be on track toward meeting college- and career-read standards. Behavioral interventions are included in the system. The personalized approach will allow flexible grouping according to needs.

Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students to understand how to use the tools provided to them to track and manage their learning. Extensive training will be provided in both the tablet use and how to manage learning and behavior, and how the data system will assist students in planning and tracking learning. Parents will also be trained and provided on-going help in understanding and using the system to help students manage the personalized learning environment.

This section has been answered completely and thoroughly. It is receiving 19 points, almost the maximum number available. The proposal has a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. It includes an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating student that enable participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements and accelerate learning through support of student needs. It does not address how and how often students will be grouped together to work collaboratively.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)**20****15****(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a high quality plan for Teaching and Leading that includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and the parties responsible. The inclusion of the rationale for each step provides credibility to the plan.

The proposal outlines an approach to teaching and leaders that helps educators improve instruction and increase capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards.

- All participating educators will engage in professional development to support the effective implementation of the personalized learning environment. The training will include science teachers, science coaches, Lead Teachers, guidance counselors, Technology Specialists and Administrators. The narrative outlines differentiated professional development for each group of educators and covers all aspects of the proposal from what personalized learning looks like in the classroom, development of modules, classroom management, use of resources and on-line tools.
- The on-going professional development for all educators involved is also differentiated. Teachers will receive on going job-embedded professional development from science coaches and on-site coaching from consultants. Lead Teachers will attend professional development but also become a professional learning community where the Lead Teachers from all the involved middle schools can collaborate and learn from each other. Some topics that the Lead Teachers will become experts in are PLC Facilitation, Data Driven Instruction, Hard Conversations, Behavior Management and Transitions in the Science Classroom. The Lead Teachers will become the trainers for the rest of the district when the proposal is scaled up. They are expected to attend and present at national science conferences.
- The Guidance Counselors at each school are also being trained so that they understand the concept of personalized learning and how to create successful student schedules. They will be expected to support each student's learning pathway and will be trained on all aspects of the on-line tools. There is also training planned for the senior high guidance counselors to assist the students in the successful transition to high school.
- The Technology Specialist is key to the successful outcome of the proposal. There will be one specialist at each school and one specialist to monitor the program and coordinate the purchase and set up of the equipment. The school specialists will provide day-to-day differentiated support to teachers and students at their sites. All specialists will work together at each school site before the school year begins to ensure that resources will be in place. Training for them will include the use of the tablets and on-line data systems.
- The administrators will be provided with professional development on personalized learning, how to observe and provide feedback and alternate scheduling models to support teaming.
- Each of the above groups will be meeting periodically as professional learning communities.

Systems are in place for the educators to frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards. "Short-term goals will include progress toward mastering benchmarks in each module, maintaining a passing grade point average, and meeting state requirements for promotion. Long-term goals will be progress toward graduation, as well as whether students are on-track for meeting admission requirements for colleges or careers of interest."

- Teachers will be trained on the Learning Management System to monitor each student's progress through daily data collections. This daily data collection will inform the instruction of the teachers in order to meet individual student needs and "to examine how their practice influences student outcomes". The teachers will be trained on how to use the system to manage both student learning and behavior management.
- The administrators are "well-trained" in analyzing and using data to drive decision make for their sites. Administrators have data chats with teachers, teachers participate in professional learning communities where data is used to inform instructional decisions. Teachers will be trained to conduct data chats with students.

Feedback is used to improve teacher and principal practice and effectiveness. Both teachers and administrators are evaluated and provided feedback by trained observers. These observers will also be trained in personalized learning and how teachers can demonstrate effectiveness.

All participating educators will have access to and know how to use the tools, data and resources available to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready requirements.

- The on-line Learning Management System and the Personalized Learning Plan will contain the tools, data and

resources needed to accelerate student progress. The system will have student, school and district reports that will be available to the appropriate parties. All educators involved will be trained on the systems and how to use both together and separately to maximize learning.

- High-quality learning resources, instructional content and assessments that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards and the tools to create and share new resources are planned but are not in place.
- Personnel in the district have an extensive library of professional resources and have access to the ASCD Education Collection.

Participating school leader and teachers have training, policies, tools, data and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student academic needs and accelerates student progress for college- and career-ready standards.

- An extensive feedback system is in place. The performance ratings are described in a prior section and include a student achievement value added component for both teachers and administrators. The narrative of this section describes how this feedback is shared with teachers and administrators and how teachers and administrators are expected to use feedback to improve practice.
- Annual stakeholder surveys are used to assess the culture and climate at each site. Action plans are developed to address areas in need of improvement.
- Each school develops a yearly School Improvement Plan based on data from the previous year.
- Professional Learning Communities will provide on-going assessment of educator effectiveness. On going data analysis will improve the schools' progress toward the goal of increasing student performance and closing achievement gaps.

The narrative addresses the need to increase the number of effective and highly effective teachers and learners. The district is examining teacher preparation programs and the effectiveness of each. It plans to recruit science teachers from other schools in the district and beyond to participate in the proposal.

The approach to teaching and leading will help all educators involved to improve instruction and increase capacity to support student progress. The planned professional development will support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and strategies that meet each student's academic needs and help ensure all students can graduate on time and college- and career-ready. Topics included in the professional development have already been decided and are well-thought out to provide the maximum support to the educators.

This section is receiving fifteen points for the following reasons.

- The professional development plan seems to ask for a great deal to be accomplished in a very short time of three weeks. The first task of understanding personalization and what it looks like in a classroom is an enormous shift to many teachers who are used to being the "sage on the stage". In order for this shift to occur the training has to not only demonstrate what it looks like, but how the implementation should occur. Studies on teacher fidelity to implementation plans often talk about the first year of just scratching the surface. Even with ongoing coaching and professional learning communities meeting weekly, the knowledge and skills to be successful in the implementation of a plan of this size will take at least a year for teachers to be skilled and comfortable in the implementation of the personalization. This proposal starts on day one and expects that after three weeks of training that teachers will be comfortable and that skills will be in place for ambitious plan to be successful.
- Within the first three weeks of professional development, teachers need to become familiar with the Learning Management System and how to develop a Personalized Learning Plan. The difficulty of making these platforms user friendly seems enormous. Teachers need to be able to access the systems and also to add data, information, lessons, assessments, behavior and academic interventions. Three weeks might be needed just to feel comfortable on the systems.
- The high-quality learning resources that are assumed in the narrative have not yet been developed, nor have they been located by the district. The evaluation of vendor-made resources and how they may or may not align with the on-line platforms need to be in place. Even with a great deal of training and major recruitment, the district is relying on science teachers from under performing schools to develop rigorous modules that would contain differentiated content and assessments for each student. The initial three week professional development might not be enough time to develop modules that meet the goals of the plan. All modules need to be developed before school begins in order to give each student the choice of which science to start with and the order of which topics to study.
- The amount of time teachers will be spending looking at data, developing lessons and assessments might be overwhelming to many teachers. Although extra time is provided and compensated for, it might not be enough time to do all that this proposal sets out to do.
- The appendix does not include a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
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| (D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points) | 15 | 13 |

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. The plan contains goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and the responsible parties. The rationale that is included provides credibility to the plan.

- The LEA central office is organized to provide support and services to all participating schools. All central office personnel involved with the proposal will receive extensive training in order to provide appropriate support and services. At the school level, a Lead Teacher for each middle school will be hired through grant funds. An Advisory Council will be organized to provide periodic input to ensure success.
- School leadership teams at participating schools are provided flexibility and autonomy over school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions, roles and responsibilities, and school-level budgets. Principals and leadership teams will make decisions as appropriate for each school.
- Students will be given the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. Students, teachers and parents develop Personalized Learning Plans. Teachers use the Learning Management System to allow personalized learning. Teachers will be trained in multiple ways of instruction.
- The Personalized Learning Plan and the Learning Management System gives students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards in personalized manners.
- Learning resources and instructional practices are differentiated and adaptable. They are designed to be fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.

The applicant has practices, policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning at the class, school and district level. This section is being awarded thirteen points because the district is providing leadership and systems that should enable the successful implementation of the proposal. However, the leadership and the science teachers will be learning together. For a system like this to be truly successful the leadership needs to have a deeper understanding in order to provide credible feedback in order for change to occur.

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| (D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points) | 10 | 8 |
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. The plan contains goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and the parties responsible. The rationale provides credibility to the plan.

The LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning.

- Students, parents, educators and other stakeholder as appropriate will have access to students data through the Personalized Learning Plan. This on-line resource will include text messaging and email which will help students and parents monitor progress. The on-line system will be available in appropriate languages. Parents will be provided access to the system in multiple ways if no computer is available at home. Students will be provided tablets that will be used in the classroom environment. The tablets will be linked to the Learning Management System and all information, including grades, will be uploaded daily.
- Students, parents, educators and stakeholders will be provided technical support in several ways. Technology Specialists at each middle school will facilitate on-site training for students, parents and educators. Parent support will be provided both at schools and at different locations throughout the district throughout the year. Parent support will be on the on-line resources and will also include academic and support programs. Outreach for the parent trainings will be announced through various newsletters, and communication devices. Technical support for personalized learning will be provided throughout the project schools from day one of the project.
- The LEA and schools use interoperable data systems that connect and communicate with each other. The systems include human resources data, student information data, budget data and instructional improvement system data.

This section is receiving eight points. The applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure. The policies are well thought out. Providing daily technology support to teachers is the key to the successful implementation of the data systems. Having only one technology person at each school might not be enough support given the complexity of the on-line systems. Teachers will want immediate assistance when they get frustrated. It will be a timely task to monitor each student's progress daily.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
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| (E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points) | 15 | 10 |
| <p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process in the appendix that includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The plan includes rationale for each step which adds credibility to the plan.</p> <p>A continuous improvement process will provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle will be used to ensure ongoing monitoring and revisions. Data will be assessed weekly, quarterly and semi-annually by different stakeholder groups to allow for immediate and consistent course corrections at the school and district levels. • The plan addresses how the applicant will monitor, and publicly share its findings. The findings will be published quarterly as an e-newsletter that will be published on school and district websites. <p>Although the narrative addresses the continuous improvement process, it does not address how the regular feedback will be measured. The goals in the high-quality plan are operational goals. The lack of discussion around how the applicant will know whether the project is a success or not is bringing the score down to ten points.</p> | | |
| (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
| <p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is a high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The plan includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and the people responsible. The rationale creates credibility for the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district will be building upon approaches already in place to foster and maintain strong, collaborative relationships. Teachers and administrators have access to the on-line resources that include a platform to host virtual data chats, house videos, lesson plans, blogs and video chats. • Teachers from the various schools will be able to chat on line on a Live Feed Roundtable. • The Lead Teacher for Personalized Learning at each school will serve as a point of contact for parents and students. • An "external marketing firm will be employed to provide expertise in increasing engagement from the families of project school students as well to to galvanize support and buy-in among each site's instructional administrative entities." • Communication pathways between all stakeholders will be encouraged. <p>The high-quality plan and narrative support ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The plan is being awarded three points. Educators participating in this proposal will have many ways to communicate with families and stakeholders. Communication and input from every stakeholder group has been addressed throughout the proposal. The input will lead to reflection and continuous improvement. The Lead Teacher will be responsible for fielding questions from parents. There are anywhere from seven hundred to over one thousand students at each school. This will be a difficult task in addition to the Lead Teacher's other duties. Even with an external marketing firm, it will be difficult for many parents and community members to understand the shift in instruction and to find the time to monitor the instruction and to provide ongoing feedback.</p> | | |

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| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points) | 5 | 2 |
| <p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The goals to be examined annually include accelerating student achievement, increasing educator effectiveness and readying students for college and career. There are several measures that are included within each goal. The rationale for selecting each measure is included in the narrative. The rationales and measures to be included align with the proposal.</p> <p>Each measure was designed independently to ensure that it can be disaggregated and improved if it no longer provides meaningful information on the implementation process. Teams of stakeholders will meet regularly with the Project Director and Lead Teachers to review available data.</p> <p>The applicant included an adequate number of performance measures along with baseline data and goals for the following four years as part of the grant and one year post grant.</p> <p>This section is being assigned two points. It describes achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. Having only five goals in a plan as extensive as this seems like it is not enough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first performance measure related to the goal of accelerating student achievement includes two bullets that measure increasing the percentage of participating middle school students who take part in STEM related extracurricular clubs and activities and increasing the percentage of participating middle school students on track for completing the STEM science modules. These two bullet points are what the proposal is all about. Of course the participation rates will increase because all students in the 13 lowest achieving schools will be involved in STEM activities. • The goal of enhancing educator effectiveness seems not strong enough. Increasing the number of participating middle school students taught by an effective or highly effective teacher by only 2% does not seem enough. The teacher evaluation system and feedback is supposed to increase the effectiveness of the teachers. | | |

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| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points) | 5 | 4 |
| <p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>There is a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top - District funded activities in the appendix. The plan contains goals, activities, timelines and deliverables. The rationale creates credibility of the plan.</p> <p>The district will contract with an external evaluation consultant to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the proposal. Research questions for the consultant have been designed. The evaluator will be measuring and evaluating the professional development and the teacher's fidelity to the program by observation, interviews and examining data periodically. Teachers will also be surveyed through pre and post annual administrations to assess changes in science content knowledge. Formative teacher observation data, annual teacher value-add measure estimates and student use of the Personalized Learning Plans will be examined. The proposal's impact on students and teachers will also be examined.</p> <p>The section is receiving four points. This is not a typical system of instruction. Even though it is stated that the external evaluators will be attending all trainings, it may be very difficult for the evaluators to understand the shift of instruction to personalization and to provide evaluative feedback in all the areas being addressed.</p> | | |

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|------------------|--------------|
| (F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
| <p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget narrative and the tables included identifies all funds that will support the project. The total budget will be in excess of 68 million dollars. Grant funds requested are 25 million dollars. The additional 43+ million dollars will come from categorical funding, Title I and II funds, supplemental Academic Instruction funding, E-Rate funds and other grants including grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.</p> <p>The budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal. The bulk of the personnel funding will be used to train teachers to create the modules and build capacity for the shift to personalization.</p> <p>A thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities is included in the narrative. A description of the other funds that will be</p> | | |

used is explained in the narrative. The budget pages are easy to follow.

The narrative also identifies the funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs. It includes a focus on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments.

The budget, including the narrative and tables identified all funds and is reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the proposal. It includes a description of funds that will be used on-going and for one-time investments. This section is being awarded ten points because it addresses the questions thoroughly. It is well thought out and includes all expected expenses related to the proposal. It is broken out item by item which creates transparency and clarity of how funds are being spent.

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

10

9

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a high-quality plan for the four years after the term of the grant. It includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and the parties responsible. The inclusion of rationale provides overall credibility to the plan. The plan includes sources of funding.

The district will use the data gathered during the grant years to inform future investments in personalized learning and to scale up the project in order to ensure sustainability of the project. It is expected that grants and allocations from the Federal and State Departments of Education will continue to sustain personalization and scale up to the other middle schools not included in the original proposal. The Task Force will evaluate the effectiveness of the past investments and plan an ongoing expansion planning process. The district plans to scale up the initiative in five phases. The first phase of scale up will begin in year four of the grant with five more schools will utilize the district's personalization plan.

The narrative does not address support from State and local government leaders, but letters of support are included in the appendix so the support is implicit for future years. The section is receiving nine points because this was not clarified.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
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| Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points) | 10 | 9 |

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to integrate resources designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional or behavioral needs of students.

The district has ongoing partnerships with the University of South Florida and Louis del la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute (FMHI). Through the partnership the district has designed two successful U.S. ED *Integrating Schools and Mental Health Systems* grants that create links between the district and community support agencies. Protocols describe the relationships between service providers and school staffs, clearly identifying paths to accessing services and contain specific contact information about access to service. FMHI also support the district in its implementation of the Multi Tiered System of Support (MTSS) which is a Response to Instruction/Intervention Implementation Plan. The plan provides high-quality instruction and intervention matched to student needs. Each tier contains more intensive interventions. The FMHI will partner with the district on the Learning Management System and Personalized Learning Plan to create personalized interventions. FMHI will train all involved educators. *Check & Connect* will provide mentors as a comprehensive intervention designed to build student engagement at school and with relationship building, and problem solving strategies. Mentors work with both students and families.

In partnership with FMHI, the district will strive to promote educational equity through its multi-tiered intervention process.

Goals that are expected are: Increase percentage of students on-track to college and career, decrease the percentage of students with unexcused absences greater than 10% of days enrolled in school, decrease percentage of students suspended from school, decrease percentage of students with multiple suspensions for the same type of incident, increase number of successful outcomes from behavior interventions and increase the percent of students who demonstrate a positive change in pre/post results of the research-based Student Engagement Instrument. The first four measures result in educational outcomes and the last two are considered family and community support.

The FMHI will also partner with the district to track the selected indicators. The educational outcomes will be tracked by different types of data that will be on-line through the Learning Management System and Personalized Learning Plan. The FMHI is able to track interventions supported by both the school and community agencies. Students receiving mentoring services through *Check & Connect* will be administered a research-based Student Engagement Instrument both pre and post mentoring.

- The district uses a problem solving process that assesses student needs through ongoing academic monitoring and discipline referral data. The Problem Solving Leadership Team identifies and analyzes problems and designs and suggests interventions. Interventions tried first are through the district. If problems continue, outside sources are used.
- Progress monitoring will occur during the grant period. Using the FMHI data system and the district data system, results can be tracked in aggregate for all middle schools and by individual school, grade band, student subgroup, teacher, and individual student. Appropriate data will be shared with stakeholders. Formative adjustments will occur at the level needed to improve results.

The use of the Personalized Learning Plan and the MTSS are integrated. The MTSS system is designed to incorporate the problem solving process for both academic and behavior interventions. The resources provided through the FMHI collaboration provides integration with outside agencies that can support both academic and socio-emotional and behavioral needs along with the school district. With the personalized learning system, academic interventions will occur frequently within the classroom. The FMHI partnership provides the data and training framework that integrates the internal and external services to meet individual student need.

The project uses a system of student support that involves the systematic use of assessment data. Schools identify behavior and/or academic needs. This data is gathered in the MTSS problem solving process to determine if outside supports and or interventions are needed, and how to involve the families.

- A parent tool box can guide parents to appropriate community resources. As parents work with the agencies, FMHI is able to track the outcomes. The Learning Management System helps teachers identify student needs daily. The mentoring system of *Check & Connect* helps parents integrate district and community supports. FMHI provides training on the MTSS. Teachers are provided two hours per week planning time to collaboratively problem solve.
- The staff receives extensive data about student progress, even before the year begins. The proposal defines measures to indicate improvement in the social, emotional and behavioral supports for all participating students. Strengths and weaknesses will be analyzed and action plans for the Tier 1 universal interventions will be developed through teachers' PLCs. The communication plan will support staff to increase parent involvement. Administration and guidance staff will be trained on community supports available. All schools will use a Student Engagement Instrument to determine student needs and school areas of strength and weakness.
- There is a Problem Solving Leadership Team that meets regularly to review school-wide academic and behavior data. Lead Teachers will examine data weekly during their Professional Learning Communities. This is where Tier 2 interventions take place. Social workers and school psychologists work with guidance counselors to generate Tier 3 interventions. Parents will be involved with Tier 2 and Tier 3 Intervention decision making. A Child Study Team is also part of the process.
- Parents will be provided training on personalization, the data-driven problem solving process and the on-line tools used by students. The district would like parents to collaborate with school educators before problems arise. *Check & Connect* also provides connections with parents through mentoring.
- On going monitoring of all the systems by all stakeholder is included in the plan. The Advisory Council and Task Force will receive quarterly reports, administrators meet monthly to discuss project data, teams meet weekly, students review their academic progress through the Learning Management System and parents have access to all data concerning their child.

Ambitious yet achievable performance measures and target goals for each year are included based on the performance measures stated above in paragraph three. The goals are broken out for appropriate subgroups.

The proposal covers social, emotional and behavioral needs through partnerships already in place. The systems in place will provide a way to monitor needs. The complexity of the system might be a hinderance to monitor.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

| | Available | Score |
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|---|--|------------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | | Met |
| <p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create personalized learning environments in middle school science classes that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching.</p> <p>The proposal ambitiously revamps how science is taught in thirteen of its lowest middle schools. Its use of on-line tools, the Learning Management System and the Personalized Learning Plan allows teachers to become facilitators of student learning. Curriculum, lessons and assessments that are based on the Common Core and Florida's standards are written and available to students on 1:1 tablets. The way the plan is organized, the students are in charge of their own learning and the order that topics are learned.</p> <p>The data systems available on the on-line tools will measure growth, and success and also inform instruction. The data system also serves as a tool to analyze where weakness occur and whether interventions for behavior or academics are needed.</p> <p>The district is planning to recruit and train effective science teachers who will learn about personalized learning, develop lessons and eventually become demonstration teachers to the other schools in the district not included in the proposal. All other involved staff will be involved in the training so that they can effectively support the proposal. Parents will also be provided training at all opportunities on how to support their children.</p> <p>This proposal has the ability to turn around thirteen of the district's lowest achieving schools.</p> | | |

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| Total | 210 | 180 |
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Race to the Top - District Technical Review Form

Application #0095FL-3 for Hillsborough County Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points) | 10 | 8 |

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

a)The applicant demonstrates that the proposed project builds upon existing initiatives in the core education assurance areas. Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) is a statewide model for Common Core Standards implementation and the district was instrumental in developing the state's end-of-course test bank. Currently, teachers and principals have online access to student performance data that supports both instruction and academic interventions. HCPS uses student data in teacher and principal evaluation and rewards high-performing principals in high-need schools. HCPS has experience with turnaround models (i.e., magnet and transformation models) and has realized success in moving one underperforming school's grade from a D to a B.

b)HCPS describes a thoughtful approach to its RISE UP initiative. The intent to use individualized student assessments based on Item Response Theory, blended instruction, parent and student access to online performance data, personalized student learning plans, and teacher job-embedded training on individualized learning indicates a focus on impacting teaching and learning across participating schools. The HCPS's intent to use readily accessible instructional supports will also likely ensure that lag times between the identification of an academic deficiency and the assignment of an appropriate intervention is minimized. However, the proposal does not provide an adequate description of how accelerated learning

(i.e., standards mastery) will be supported for all students. If the benchmark for mastery is extremely high, the expected influx of students into advanced science courses may not be realized regardless of the proposed flexible course structure.

c)The narrative provides a focused description of how teachers will operate in the RISE UP classroom. The narrative notes that teachers will use existing data and assessment tools to assess and track student performance and share that data with students and parents. Professional development will be integrated throughout the school day and coaches/support staff will be available to assist with preparing and delivering lessons. The applicant does not, however, provide a comprehensive description of how teacher time will accommodate the massive workload described in the narrative. The engagement of teachers in appropriately structured PLC's, in-depth participation in training/coaching, and each teacher's assessment, assignment, modification, and evaluation of student progress will take an extraordinary amount of time to execute successfully. Even with two additional hours of paid planning time per week and embedded PLCs, the integration of activities and responsibilities at the advanced level described in the application may be a daunting task. The lack of details regarding how teachers will fit these labor intensive activities into the school day, may be further complicated by students entering and exiting these re-structured classrooms at various times and the low number of highly effective science teachers in project schools.

Based on evidence presented for this selection criterion, the applicant ranks in the high range. The narrative indicates that the HCPS has a history with reform in the core areas, has a clear vision for how the proposed project will advance its vision through personalized student learning and targeted professional development. Limited details regarding how instruction will look in the targeted middle schools weakens this section of the narrative.

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

a) The applicant provides a clear rationale for the selection of the project's 13 middle schools and science as a curriculum focus area. Selected schools serve at least one-third of the district's African American and Hispanic student population and schools serve mostly high-need students. The concentration of students from families with low income and evidence of discipline/behavioral problems further justify the selection of project schools. Trends in reading, math and science performance show that underperformance in project schools is consistent and increasing. Perhaps most notable, is the low number of highly effective science teachers in schools with depressed student performance. The cumulative affect of these indicators on target schools provides sound justification for the selection of these sites.

b) The narrative provides a list of all participating schools. Data is provided using the required table and all cells are populated with school data.

c) The narrative clearly indicates that the project will serve 11,796 students, 10,173 of whom are from low-income families and 10,569 of whom are identified as high-need. Approximately 122 teachers will be impacted by this project.

The applicant scores in the high range. All required information is clearly presented.

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| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points) | 10 | 8 |
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

HCPS presents a high-quality plan in appendix 4. The plan is structured to include project goals, activities with stated rationale, a timeline by project period and year, deliverables, and persons responsible for executing activities. Scale-up activities will be facilitated by the integration of personalized learning plans and instructional strategies in all district schools, expanded teacher use of the Learning Management System, technology infrastructure upgrades, and the creation of a project task force and advisory group. The logic model provided clearly indicates how the integration of student-focused and teacher-focused interventions will be merged to accomplish project goals. However, scale up to additional science classrooms in other district middle schools will not occur until the final year of the grant and scale out activities to other subject areas will not occur until the grant is closed. The narrative does not fully explain how scale-up will occur in additional sites without the resources available to project schools, or the process for prioritizing the addition of other science classrooms or other subject areas. With the majority of scale-up activities slated for the final year and after the grant ends, more detail regarding scale-up activities is needed.

Based on the evidence provided, the applicant scores in the high range. The placement of the majority of scale-up and scale-out activities at the end of the grant and the lack of details regarding how scale-up will occur weakens the argument regarding district reform and change.

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

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a list of performance goals by ESEA subgroup and for all participating students. Noted increases are ambitious in year 1, with moderate increases in years 2-4 likely to sustain and advance achievement of subsequent cohorts of students. Target gains are both ambitious and likely achievable under the project as proposed. Annual projected increases represent equal increments from subgroup baseline data, which indicates that targets are near present performance levels and likely to be achieved. Supports built into the project (i.e., professional development, parent/student/teacher access to data, site-specific implementation plans) also speak to the likelihood of targets being reached in that supports are directly related to student performance and personalized learning. Gains are noted for math, science, reading and writing and address performance on state assessments, achievement gaps, graduation rates and college enrollment. It is clear that the applicant has considered the impact of the project on math, writing and reading achievement, all of which are interrelated to science performance. Students must be able to read with proficiency, write about experiments in science and use disparate math skills in science experiments. The inclusion of these performance targets and the intent to the model in other academic areas indicates a project that is holistic and has impact beyond science achievement.

The applicant provides a detailed set of goals and performance targets as required. The applicant scores in the high range.

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points) | 15 | 10 |
| (B)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>a)The applicant provides evidence that it has a track record of success in improving student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps. From school year (SY) 2008-09 to SY 2011-12, HCPS scored A or B on the state’s district report card. The number of students taking AP courses increased 19%. Substantial increases are also noted among African Americans and Hispanics scoring 3 or higher on an exam. Data charts indicate consistent increases in the district’s graduation rate and college enrollment rates. However, achievement gaps still exist in reading and math, with no consistent data to indicate a track record of success.</p> <p>b)HCPS does not provide a convincing argument that it has a history of ambitious and significant reforms in persistently lowest-achieving or lowest performing schools. The school noted in the narrative as having achieved gains is a high school (Middleton High School) and it is unclear if performance increases are replicable outside of a high school framework. The narratives notes that lessons learned from Middleton High were used in a priority middle school, but does not specify what lessons were translated or their impact. The data in the narrative provided on that priority middle school, shows gains from the lowest quartile students in reading and math, but does not provide trend data for science. The limited amount of data indicating that the applicant can turn around underperforming schools in this project’s grade span weakens this section of the narrative.</p> <p>c)The applicant provides ample evidence that students, parents and educators will be able to access performance data online. The ability of principals to assess real-time school, teacher and classroom performance data is a strength of the proposal. Similar unique access to data by teachers, parents and students will also likely increase the use of data to tailor daily instruction to meet students’ needs. Sharing data will also provide parents with feedback on how to support student performance and make students knowledgeable of and accountable for their academic performance.</p> <p>The applicant scores in the middle range. The lack of data regarding its proven ability to effect change in persistently underperforming middle schools or in middle school science weakens this section of the proposal.</p> | | |
| (B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
| (B)(2) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>The applicant demonstrates transparency in school expenditures through state and district web access to grade-level/program revenue and expenditures. The narrative notes that the district has received accolades for the level of transparency on its website. HCPS submits a number of state transparency reports that are subsequently available to the public, including reports to the Florida Department of Education and the Civil Rights Data Collection system. Data submitted to the Civil Rights Data Collection system contains actual school-level instructional staff salaries, teacher salaries and non-personnel expenditures. The applicant also notes that individual salary information for all employees is available through the website of a local newspaper. The narrative does not, however, clearly indicate its level of transparency regarding LEA processes and practices beyond investments. The lack of a focused discussion on transparency in non-investment related processes and practices weakens this section of the narrative.</p> | | |

Based on the lack of a focused discussion regarding its level of transparency for non-investment processes and practices, the response scores in the middle range.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

HCPS provides clear evidence that the proposed project is within the bounds of state legal, statutory and regulatory requirements. First, Florida is a leader in virtual learning, which is reflected in this project's commitment to technology infrastructure (i.e., interoperable systems), learning plans and blended learning. Available state and local expertise, resources, technology infrastructure and instructional supports for virtual/blended learning environments ensures that this project has the necessary resources upon which to build and expand the Rise UP initiative. The narrative also provides three state bills (i.e., Senate Bill 4, Senate Bill 736, House Bill 7059) that support the project's integration of technology-rich classrooms, student growth assessments and flexible course sequencing. A state waiver regarding HCPS's performance-based evaluation system components also supports the integration of performance-based evaluations in this project. Furthermore, the state's Technology Plan supports this project's use of student tablets in instruction. It is clear that the applicant has the authority to revise or create an instructional program that meets the needs of students in this project.

Based on the legal, statutory and regulatory support for this project's components, HCPS scores in the high range.

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

15

11

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative indicates that district stakeholders were involved in proposal development. District-level science content supervisors and science Subject Area Directors from each project site shared thoughts via a focus group and recorded feedback. Ten students from project sites were also interviewed, and evidence of their feedback is provided in Appendix 15. The narrative also documents that student grouping, peer mentor training and district financial support for additional certifications required were among revisions made to the proposal based on stakeholder input. Also, HCPS has a collective bargaining and a letter indicating union support is included in appendix 15 and a sign-in sheet indicating the representatives from the union participated in a work group. While the district's PTA submitted a letter of support for the project, only three parents signed a focus group participant sheet in appendix 15. It is not clear, therefore, how many parents in the large district were informed about the components of this proposal. While teachers were engaged through video conferences and a focus group, it is not clear when the focus groups were convened, what was discussed during the teacher focus groups, or the level of support from teachers. The focus group sign-in sheets asked whether they would serve on an advisory council and indicated they provided input. Actual support for what is proposed in the application, however, is not clearly indicated. More detail is needed.

b) Appendix 15 contains letters of support from the following cities: Plan City, FL; Temple Terrace, FL; and Tampa, FL. It is not clear, however, if other municipalities are within HCPS' attendance zone, as limited information is provided beyond cities referenced above. Each of the participating principals and HCPS' PTA/PTSA also submitted letters of support for the project. The Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association also pledged support for the project and its focus on personalized learning and teaching. There is documented support from a college partner, a Congressional member and several community organizations.

In that evidence regarding the level of teacher support for the project and the level of parental engagement is not clearly discussed in the narrative, the response scores in the middle range.

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

| | Available | Score |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points) | 20 | 16 |

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

HCPS presents evidence that the proposed project has a high-quality plan for providing a personalized learning environment capable of preparing students for college and various careers. Appendix four contains high quality plans that detail goals, activities with supportive rationales, timelines, deliverables and persons responsible for conducting project activities.

a) The plan for improving teaching and learning will involve a personalized learning plan that tracks student progress in mastering college and career ready science standards (i.e, CCSC science standards) and gauge progress toward satisfying college and career ready graduation requirements. Students will set short-term and long-term goals in the plan and parents, teachers and students will use the plan to regularly monitor performance based on the goals. Student and teacher use of the personalized learning plan in daily instruction and assessment will likely ensure that students are constantly aware of and take ownership of their progress. The project's intent to create unique learning paths, that allow student choice of activities and strand sequence, and to provide multiple resources and modalities of learning that reflect student interest, culture, and perspectives is a strength of the proposal. One-to-one tablet use and student-driven learning environments are also central to the project's development of student academic initiative, critical thinking, and inquiry-based problem solving. The communication graphic highlights resources available to students and depicts how parents and educators will support student progress in middle school science.

b) HCPS will provide each student with a tablet and access to its Learning Management System. Individualized student learning plans will be based on daily and weekly benchmarks. The Learning Management System will then guide students through individually-paced curriculum modules, assessments, and standards tied to three middle school science strands. The delivery of digital and face-to-face instruction through science curriculum modules will ensure that instruction aligns with student needs, that the learning environment is responsive and flexible, and that students experience and master the standards in ways that are meaningful to them and how they learn. Unique Learning Management System access points for ELL and SPED students, and connections to district and school support staff for these populations, indicate that the applicant has developed safeguards to ensure all students are able to take ownership of their learning. Teacher training will be delivered on both the modules and the digital tools intended for instruction. The amount of training planned for the project is appropriate in that it is content-specific, job-embedded and integrated throughout the year. Teacher training on instructional resource integration and interoperable systems (i.e., learning plans, Learning Management System, data dashboards) will ensure that daily instruction and assessment advance the project's purpose to provide an individualized learning environment for students in middle grades science.

c) Training will be provided for students at the beginning of the year to facilitate the transition from expectations associated with a traditional learning environment to expectations associated with the proposed flexible, individualized learning environment. The likelihood that the transition will be smooth is supported by the technology-rich environment students operate in outside of school. Student familiarity with hardware (i.e., tablets) and varying software (i.e., simulations, web-based resources, etc.) will improve the transition to the proposed reimagined science classrooms. Trained classroom teachers and supports from lead teachers will also facilitate student-use of tools and resources. The narrative discusses how the resources will be used for students engaged in extension and advancement activities, but does not fully describe how the environment will respond to students who struggle academically and may not respond to digital interventions. Data on student underperformance in science indicates that remediation will be a significant factor for students in the targeted high-need schools. While one-on-one instruction is referenced in the proposal, it is unclear how the project will support the demands of a fluid, differentiated classroom with multiple learning plans and varied activities and resources simultaneously in use. There is also limited information regarding student's familiarity with components of the proposed learning paradigm. For instance, sixth-grade students whose prior self-contained classroom experience in elementary school may find the proposed liberal instructional environment jarring, as the intended framework is the antithesis of traditional primary-grade instruction. The lack of information regarding student exposure to blended instruction in the primary grades, the level of student and parent access to performance data currently available and the level of teacher training in using varied instructional tools weakens this section of the proposal.

Based on the response, individualized learning environment proposed, the applicant scores in the high range.

| | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points) | 20 | 17 |
|--|-----------|-----------|

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes a high-quality plan for providing for the proposed project that delineates goals, activities with accompanying rationales, timelines, deliverables and persons responsible for project activities.

a) All key personnel associated with target schools and middle grades science will receive training on the proposed initiative. Science teachers, coaches, lead teachers, counselors, technology specialists and administrators will be engaged in the work and are included in the proposed training plan. A three-week summit on personalized learning will provide teachers with instructional strategies, STEM content knowledge, and pedagogical techniques needed for effective instruction in the proposed reimagined science classrooms. Lead teachers will receive training on leading in flexible, data-driven environments and counselors will receive training on how to create schedules that support the proposed framework. All educators will receive training on the personalized learning plan and the learning management system, in that practice across job categories will be impacted by these components. Common planning periods, team teaching, professional

learning community meetings and job-embedded coaching will assist teachers as they learn how to address varied learning needs through adaptive instruction. As student groupings and progress through science strands vary daily, teachers will be required to constantly assess and modify student interaction with resources and science content. Student-level and school-level data will drive instruction and teachers will use data from student learning plans and the learning management system to communicate academic progress to both students and parents. Moreover, the district's performance evaluation system will use feedback on student performance in both teacher and administrator evaluations. Evaluators will be trained to recalibrate expectations from routines and practices found in traditional classrooms to those associated with individualized learning. The combination of training and support provided for educators will build capacity in target sites.

b)Classroom teachers will be trained and receive support for use of instructional resources. Science teachers, coaches, lead teachers, counselors, technology specialists and administrators will be trained on how to integrate and use tools in the online personalized learning plan and instructional and assessment/planning tools embedded in the digital learning management system. Data retrieved from these sources will be interoperable with grade book, attendance, student information system, lesson plan and communication data systems. The ability to have all of these resources accessible through the learning management system is a strength of this proposal. Educators will be able to use this data in real-time as a guide to appropriate resources for learning and continual communication with parents students, and school/district-level personnel. The district-created curriculum modules will be created by teams and expanded throughout the grant period. However, the applicant does not clearly describe a process to select the ready-made curriculum modules slated for use during the initial stages of project implementation nor a clear discussion of the process slated for district-creation of additional science modules. Stating that the module development process will be modeled after another development process does not provide a comprehensive description of how materials will be developed under this project.

c) The proposed initiative focuses multiple areas of educator action on student achievement. School administrators, lead teachers and instructional support staff (i.e., science coaches, subject area leaders and teacher evaluators/observers) will be trained on personalized learning and how best to support teachers in instruction use of data. Feedback from teacher evaluation, which has a student performance component, will be used to make staffing, promotion, and compensation decisions. Additional training and coaching decisions will also be based on teacher evaluation feedback and strategies needed to improve student performance. The routine interaction of teachers, administrators, coaches, teacher leaders and parents related to improving student performance increases the likelihood that appropriate resources and supports are available for students. The interrelatedness of evaluation, student performance, and incentives is also strength of this proposal.

d)The project has identified 13 high-need schools and focuses activities on middle school science, an area of underperformance in the district. The selection of science as a focus area is evidence that the district intends to impact the level of science instruction available to high-need students. The dedication of training, resources, and supports for teachers in the target schools also evidences the applicant's desire to provide highly effective teachers and principals in high-need schools.

The applicant's response to this selection criteria scores in the high range because supports are provided for teachers, project activities integrate evaluation, instruction and professional development, and a high-quality plan is in place to guide project implementation. The lack of detail regarding how pre-developed curriculum needed during initial implementaion will be chosen or a defined process for creating additional modules weakens this section of the narrative.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

a) The applicant provides evidence of district resources to provide services and supports to project schools. Thirteen targeted sites are HCPS schools and receive services from district office staff. Various offices within the district, including curriculum and instruction, assessment and accountability, communications and human resources will contribute services and resources to the project.

b)The applicant provides evidence that school leadership teams have autonomy and flexibility. HCPS currently provides school administrators with substantial flexibility over school budgets, operations, curriculum delivery, and scheduling. Class structures, teaching models, and daily schedules are set by principals and used to provide professional development, remediation/acceleration, and community engagement.

c)Florida's history with virtual schools and House Bill 7059 that provides for accelerated learning structures, flexible

grouping, curriculum compacting, and awarding credit based on end-of course test scores in lieu of enrollment provides ample evidence that the project has the authority to grant credit based on mastery and not time in class.

d)The proposed project’s focus on self-paced, individualized instruction clearly promotes standards mastery linked to individual student mastery and progress through the three middle school science strands. Under the proposal, students choose their path through the strands and can move from one strand to another prior to completing a strand. Assessments will be based on combinations of project-based , problem-based or place-based learning experiences.

e)Students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL) will benefit from shared Title III, IDEA and Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources Systems. ELL representatives will be included in science module development to ensure that accommodations are multiple access points are built into the curriculum. District personnel that currently serve students will continue to offer supports in science, which will further ensure equal access to high-quality instruction and resources.

Based on the level of support and resources provided by HCPS, the narrative scores in the high range.

| | | |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points) | 10 | 8 |
|---|-----------|----------|

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

a)There is no evidence in the narrative or appendices that students will be prohibited from participating in the project. Students will have access to a tablet to facilitate use of the personalized learning plan and the Learning Management System. The narrative does not clearly state if students will be able to take tablets home. The lack of internet access or access to hardware may prohibit some students and families from fully utilizing learning plan and progress tracking components of the project. Feedback noted in the Parent Focus Group Discussion tool (appendix 15) confirms this challenge and the difficulty some parents will have accessing community locations.

b) The applicant pledges support to provide on-site training for all stakeholders on hardware/software connected used to track and community student performance. The use of the district’s Parent University, designated training opportunities for various project components, online tutorials, information on the district website, and grant technology specialist will also provide supports for parents accessing the system. Supports will also be made available by the district PTA and through school websites and newsletters.

c)Parents, students, teachers, instructional support staff, and administrators will have access to import and export information under the proposed plan. Parents will be issued a single login that will provide access data on grades, the personalized learning plan and communications with science teachers. Parents will also have access to the learning management system to support student achievement in science.

d) The proposed project is heavily dependent upon various district data systems sharing information interchangeably. The interoperability of human resources, curriculum, communication, learning plan and learning resource management are planned and will allow for the export and import of secure student and teacher data.

The applicant’s plan for providing access to program components for all stakeholders is sound and scores in the high range. The availability of technical supports, open data formats and systems that share information ensure that barriers to access are addressed by in project design and implementation.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points) | 15 | 12 |

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The project’s plan for continuous improvement (i.e., adoption of a Plan-Do-Check-Act feedback cycle) is appropriate for a project involving multiple district sites and project components. The feedback loop will be facilitated by project and school staff. Use of site leaders (i.e., school leadership team members, lead teachers, project director, Advisory Council, PTA, teachers union, School Improvement Team) and formative feedback structures (i.e., PLC meetings, common science planning periods, e-suggestion box link, Open IDEAS System) provide ample opportunity for project improvement and feedback during and after the grant. Routine and consistent feedback from teachers, administrators and project staff will be easily garnered both electronically and face-to-face through the learning management system and professional development integrated noted in the applicant’s high-quality plan (appendix 4). The chart detailing communication strategies demonstrates the frequency and span of communication intended to inform project development and

implementation. Feedback from the parent focus group, however, noted that parent engagement may be an issue. While the project intends to hire an external marketing firm, as well as use district resources and staff, traditional outreach methods (i.e., website content, fliers, email announcements, face-to-face meetings) may not yield parent participation levels anticipated and necessary to ensure the success of high-need students in a fluid, personalized learning environment. Also, the narrative does not clearly indicate how project progress will be publicly communicated to school, district and community stakeholders. The narrative addresses the collection of feedback from participants and project awareness strategies (i.e., announcements/engagement opportunities/meeting notices/etc.), but clarity is needed regarding how feedback on the status of the project (i.e., successes, challenges, results, return-on-investment, etc.) will be shared.

Plans to measure the quality of its investments are, however, clearly stated and include pre/post tests to assess change in science content knowledge, formative teacher observation, feedback from use of personalized learning plans and climate data.

The applicant plans a thoughtful approach to data collection but clarity is needed regarding how feedback will be shared with stakeholders. The applicant's response to this criteria scores in the high range.

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

5

5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

HCPS's plan for transparency will be based on electronic structures for receiving feedback from school and district stakeholders. The OpenIDEAS platform's virtual data chats and blogging capability will facilitate sharing of information among instructional, administrative, and project staff. Feedback will be gathered from project partners and the community through the PTA, advisory council and the project's task force.

The response scores in the high range.

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

5

3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The performance measures included in the narrative are appropriate for the project. Annual anticipated increases are ambitious and achievable for a project intending to serve almost 12,000 students. Each measure reflects areas of focus for the project. However, the applicant does not clearly indicate performance targets for students on-pace to complete STEM-based modules by the end of middle school. Performance goals for on-pace module completion in section E-3 are noted as TBD. Based on the notation in the TBD chart, a baseline would be established in year two of the project and increases in the number of student completing modules would not be gauged until year three of the project (2016-17) when 2015-16 data is available. In that on-pace module completion is the foundational goal of the proposal, the absence of annual benchmarks and a three-year horizon for determining any progress toward meeting the project's goal weakens this section of the proposal.

Based on the lack of performance targets for on-pace science module completion, the applicant scores in the middle range.

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

5

5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The evaluation plan for the project is sound. It includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection from project stakeholders. Research questions reflect the purpose and design of the project and appropriate methodologies will be used to gather data (i.e., surveys, interview, observations, pre/post tests, focus group) and matched group comparison analyses will be used to assess project outcomes. The applicant provides evidence of activities slated for evaluation in the narrative, and a timeline, persons responsible for evaluation activities and rationale for evaluation activities in the appendix.

Based on the comprehensive evaluation plan described in the narrative and the appendix, the applicant scores in the high range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget narrative is comprehensive and reflects project priorities and activities stated in the narrative. Funds intended to support project activities are noted and are reasonable to support a project serving almost 12,000 students across 13 school sites. One-time expenditures are clearly indicated. Tables are complete and narratives provide descriptive support for proposed expenditures. Time periods are clearly delineated and additional funding sources are identified (i.e., Part I, Title I, Title II, Supplemental Academic Instruction, e-Rate, various discretionary grant funding sources). Each project budget is annotated to describe how costs were calculated and procurement guidance, is applicable. The activities slated in the budget reflect activities noted in the narrative. Per site/per unit costs further provide clarity regarding the reasonableness of costs and the ability of the project to justify each planned expenditure.

The applicant scores in the high range.

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

10

10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

HCPS provides evidence that it has considered various options for project sustainability. The project's intent is to scale-up to other district middle school science classrooms and scale-out to other disciplines. This sequential approach to expansion is logical and lessons learned from expansion to science classrooms can be applied to planned math classroom expansion. The changing of instructional roles within the school and certification upgrades will likely ensure that duties assigned to project staffers are absorbed into current teaching and administrative positions. Leveraged discretionary, entitlement and technology funding sources will be used to offset implementation in new sites and project development in initial project sites. The applicant intends to use feedback from the current project to guide expansion efforts. Absorbed duties by district and school-level staff also indicate that knowledge from the proposed project will inform subsequent phases of implementation. The applicant provides a high quality plan in the appendix that includes activities slated for sustainability, persons responsible, a timeline, deliverables and rationales for activities noted.

The applicant's response to this selection criteria scores in the high range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points) | 10 | 8 |

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1)The applicant proposes an expanded partnership with the Florida Mental Health Institute. The partnership will advance the state's Multi Tiered System of Support initiative and other in-school and out-of-school interventions in the partnership through the proposed Check & Connect mentoring program. Mentors would serve as a resource for a cohort of five students to meet goals set in the personalized learning plan and advance other goals set by the mentor/mentee partnership. In that strategies, interventions, and resources available to mentors would come from services available from the district and agencies connected to the Institute, the project is a reflection of goals set in the application and sustainable to the extent the partnership continues.

2)The partnership establishes six desired results that reflect educational and family/community support outcomes. Two of the six outcomes do not have numeric benchmarks, which weaken the applicant's ability to gauge progress.

3)The district/Institute partnership intends to track progress of the desired results using data in the Learning Management System and data collected by the Institute on student participation in community agency programs. Pre/post test scores from the Student Engagement Instrument will also help the partnership track student progress. Once needs are identified, mentors can access in-school and partnership resources (local charities, health services, shelters, government resources) to uniquely address the needs of targeted students. One strength of this partnership is that the lag time between data collection and allocation of resources is greatly reduced by immediate integration of resources by mentors. Programming, specifically related to behavior interventions, will be scaled up to other schools. Longitudinal results will be tracked by school, intervention and student. It is likely that the influx of such targeted, student-specific supports will lead to academic and socio-behavioral improvement. However, more details are needed regarding the expansion of Check & Connect to other schools.

4)It is reasonable that the Check & Connect mentors will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of services to students and the integration of mentor services with those provided by the school. The identification of resources through teachers/school staff and the Institute, as well as the assignment of those resources through the personalized learning plan

and mentor relationship, is a sound strategy for ensuring that multiple strategies and delivery streams are available to meet student needs.

5)The applicant’s description of how the partnership would build capacity of staff in schools is sounds. Staff will use the Learning Management System as a data dashboard to assess student learning/socio-emotional and family needs. Tutoring, mentoring and community resource options will all coalesce under the proposed partnership. The wraparound approach to support student learning both inside and out-of-school services is a strength of this proposal. The tiered approach to intervention, the existence of a current relationship between the district and the Florida Mental Health Institute, and the constant collection and assessment of data will likely ensure that students are exposed to needed services in real-time. The decision-making process in the partnership reflects that of the larger proposal. The goals set in the personalized learning plan, classroom interventions determined through PLCs, supports targeted by the Multi-Tiered System of Supports, mentoring through Check & Connect and other supports will likely ensure that decisions impacting students are logical, data-based and reflect a wealth of options and resources for addressing needs. Training and resources through the district’s PTA, access to student data through Edsby, access to community resources through the partnership’s Parent Tool Box and parent access to the personalized learning plan are sound strategies for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. The pairing of routine assessment of student data by multiple groups and a wealth of interventions and resources to address student needs will involve multiple partners communicating and delivering resources. Further oversight provided by the advisory council, task force, district/school administration, project staffs, community and parents will ensure that project progress is monitored.

6)The project sets several performance measures that are sound and support the overall project’s purpose. The measures relate to student college and career readiness, socio-emotional development, discipline and attendance. Performance goals have reasonable yet ambitious targets. However, the measure regarding successful outcomes from behavior interventions is not clearly defined (i.e., name of outcome measure, baseline target for performance, data set targeted, etc.). The measure regarding pre-post scores on the Student Engagement Instrument does not contain any numeric benchmarks. Rates of increase do not have to be predicated on feedback from the assessment; rather, they can be based on a global baseline for all students (i.e., 50% of students will show an increase from pre- to post-test results). Missing targets weaken this section.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

| | Available | Score |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | | Met |

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant meets absolute priority one in that the narrative provides a coherent and comprehensive description of how it builds upon the core assurance areas to improve learning and teaching through a personalized learning environment. The proposal deletes traditional middle school science courses and establishes a flexible learning environment where curriculum sequence is student-driven, data is available and used by students, teachers and parents, educator evaluation is linked to student performance. Core assurance areas are addressed through a focus on individualized assessments, interoperable data systems, training and supports for all educators associated with middle school science in the targeted schools, and the selection of 13 high-need middle schools as project sites. In that target sites are high-need middle schools, achievement gaps in science will likely be impacted by the individualized approach to student learning. Teaching will be impacted due to the amount and variation of training and job-embedded supports for science teachers in targeted high-need schools. Although this project’s focus is on middle school science, the foundation laid in middle school science will remove barriers to enrollment in honors/AP science courses for students that successfully complete three science strands in the 6th and 7th grades. Accelerated learning will likely occur for students who excel in the flexible learning environment.

| | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Total | 210 | 179 |
|--------------|------------|------------|

