



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0220NC-1 for Johnston County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant presents reasonable information about the extent to which the LEA has a comprehensive and coherent reform.</p> <p>The applicant describes with a great detail that they address four core educational assurance areas: (1) they use the Common Core State Standards with North Carolina California Essential Standards, (2) they use various data systems such as ACT series, and Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress so that they formatively assess and address student needs – it is impressive that the applicant uses formative data to identify at-risk students and low-performing schools – (3) the applicant currently uses Title 1 funding for 17 low-performing schools to hire Curriculum Coaches and start AVID programs; and At Risk Director and Dropout Prevention Director work directly with at-risk schools and formulate ways to improve and facilitate growth, and (4) the applicant provides professional development opportunities for administrators. Support for beginning teachers includes Beginning Teacher (BT) training and signing bonuses for teachers in the areas of high need. However, the proposal was not clear about how the applicant defines their areas of high need and specific ways to recruit effective administrators in hard-to-staff schools.</p> <p>The applicant offers details and examples as to how they plan to achieve personalized learning environments. The applicant describes that the last two years the LEA has implemented Google services that transformed how information is delivered to students, collect data, and promote collaboration and creativity. With the RTT-D funding, the applicant plans to have transformation coach (TC) to support digital integration strategies for classroom teachers. The applicant asserts that TCs will help teachers develop the teaching for understanding, which in turn can lead to autonomous learning, and that teachers in collaboration with TCs will see how to differentiate for each child and personalize for each child. The applicant’s interest in innovative approaches of teaching with use of technology is commendable. However, the applicant’s narrative is not thorough in describing how they plan to achieve to process the intricate world of personalized learning which includes “accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests”. Further, the applicant explains that transformational coaches will act as change agents in implementing a reconstructed approach in how teachers deliver instruction and how students learn. However, given the gravity of their responsibility, the narrative does not provide much detail about their job descriptions including education and experience.</p> <p>The applicant describes what the classroom experience of personalized learning environment would be like. The part of it is that with the appropriate support amid a meaningful culture shift, their teachers provide differentiated instruction that enables meaningful use of the learning device to transform student learning. It is impressive that the applicant articulates their reform vision with a balanced perspective. Still, the narrative lacks some details about what the classroom experience will be like for <i>students</i> in personalized learning environments.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states that the LEA will use their RTT-D funds for a 1:1 initiative in grades 3-12 transform the learning environment. A significant part of the plan is to have all students be equipped with a Chromebook and their groundwork includes the wireless infrastructure and revising board policies so that the district can move forward in an all-inclusive 1:1 rollout if funds were available. The applicant’s data indicate a list of the schools that will participate in grant activities, the total number of students, students from low-income families, and high-need students. In addition, the applicant indicates that they administered a district-wide survey in which all forty-four</p>		

schools expressed an intense interest in participating in the rollout of Chromebooks. However, the survey questions and results are not clearly provided. It also remains unclear in their narrative about the reasons why the LEA wanted devices for all students and all schools in the LEA. Other concerns include: some participating schools do not provide the number of participating educators; and the applicant's data shows a number of schools do not meet the eligibility requirements with the number of participating students from low-income families below the 40% level.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The application states that they use a theory of change in which they examine elements such as implementation, substance, staff, setting, and leadership attending to the practical sensibility and the wellbeing of the individual. The bulk of the narrative is about unpacking the multiple stages of the model as their reform becomes scaled up and translate into a meaningful reform beyond the participating schools. For example, throughout the training in the model, their instructional technologist incorporates constructivist principles so that school personnel can make new meaning using existing knowledge about effective communication. However, the application is not yet in-depth enough to describe the high-quality plan as it lacks details about activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, and the deliverables. The applicant makes a great argument that a meaningful change in the LEA takes multiple stages and invites a plethora of stakeholders' reactions and interactions, but what remains unclear in the reform proposal is some relevant details of precisely how their plan helps to achieve its outcome goals in their theory of change to improve student learning.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's data indicates that they use summative assessments such as NC end-of-grade percent proficiency and Value Added Growth to set the goals for student performance and decreasing achievement gaps. It is impressive that the applicant is thorough in categorizing subgroups. However, (1) a description of how these targets were decided (i.e., methodology) is not presented and is lacking important details on the information that helps to evaluate whether/how the goals are ambitious yet achievable. It is understandable (as explained by the applicant) that NC has begun a new end-of-year assessment process and the data will not be available until November 2013 so that the applicant wishes to define their targets after November 2013. Still, there is insufficient explanation about what constitutes significant gains in student outcomes, and their goals on graduation rates and college enrollment are not provided. In conclusion, it is difficult to make sense of the baseline goals and evaluate the extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to cause improved student learning and performance and increased equity.

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

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates some track record of success. The applicant states that the 2011 North Carolina ABCs Accountability Program data for the LEA indicated 21 schools in the LEA were designated as Schools of Distinction and eight schools as Schools of Excellence. Other claims on their success include the district's 2010 SAT average is 1022; 24 out of 42 schools showed an increase in their performance composite ranging from 0.1% to 9.1%; and proficiency continues to trend above the State average in all areas tested. Although the narrative shows some snapshot of the success the applicant was able to achieve, it is unclear how the applicant has addressed raising high school graduation rates, college enrollment and reforms in low-achieving schools. Further, there is limited evidence as to the extent of the improved student learning outcomes and closing achievement gaps in the past four years when the narrative does not provide clear information on their track record of success in all of the years leading up to 2013 and the sources/methodology of their performance. Lastly, the narrative is not clearly addressing how the applicant is making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

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

The applicant shows some evidence of transparency and establishes trust among the stakeholders in education. For example, the applicant posts the board of education monthly meeting videos and agendas available online. It is also impressive that the applicant earned a Sunny Award from the Sunshine Review, a nonprofit organization to address government transparency. The recognition letter states that the applicant has high transparency on items such as budgets, meetings, lobbying, financial audits, contracts, public records, and taxes. However, this section is almost non-responsive to the required components such as a description of how the applicant makes available financial information including the four categories of school-level expenditures to demonstrate their commitment to high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments.

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

10

3

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that their vision is to empower all students to become successful in a global society. The applicant explains that the Board of Education approved four goals, which will be guided by clear principles. Indeed, the goals call for a safe learning environments for all students, promote academic growth, and invite various stakeholders in educating our children. This could serve as evidence for a favorable condition to implement personalized learning environments. The applicant states that they implemented new state guidelines and regulations from the Ready initiative, but they do not provide further explanation about what Ready initiative is. Equally important to articulate is how State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements ensure successful conditions and sufficient autonomy in order to successfully implement the personalized learning environments, which is not thoroughly addressed in the narrative.

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

15

1

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides limited evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement. The applicant states that they had strategic planning sessions for formulating goals, core values, vision, and mission of the LEA and invited various stakeholders including parents, students, businesses, local government leaders, senior leadership, principals, teachers, and classified staff. This does not clearly demonstrate part of the applicant’s commitment to achieving meaningful stakeholder engagement. Also, the applicant’s narrative is non-responsive to the required criteria of describing how their RTT-D proposal was revised based on stakeholder engagement and feedback. In addition, the applicant provides no letters of support from key stakeholders such as teachers, parents, student organizations, early learning programs, tribes, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that their plan can allow students to pursue learning with college- and career- ready standards, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals. For example, the applicant currently has dual enrollment programs with junior colleges and students can have a high school diploma and an associate’s degree or two years of college transfer credit toward a bachelor’s degree. In addition, the applicant provides parent/community information sessions so that both students and parents learn various pathways for college- and career-ready programs. It is also impressive that the applicant offers differentiated tracks for students through the Career and Technical Education course of study and implements AVID (advancement via individual determination) in which students learn to take ownership of their learning, become more exposed to college learning and become better prepared with regards to organization and literacy. This also implies that the applicant ensures that their students have access to a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career- ready. Additionally, the applicant provides evidence that each student has access to a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments. For example, the applicant provides workshops to increase teacher’s knowledge in the use of Google applications and Web 2.0 strategies. The applicant asserts that these workshops facilitate teachers’ learning to increase their knowledge as it pertains to the different economic classes and how students from those backgrounds learn.

However, the applicant provides limited evidence to support their approach to implementing instructional strategies for all students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and accelerate his/her learning through appropriate support. Their narrative provides weak description with regard to how the high-need students in the LEA (1) understand that what they are learning is key to accomplishing their goals; (2) are involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest; (3) have exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning; (4) learn to develop traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving; and (5) have access to ongoing and regular feedback to determine progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards. It is noticeable that the applicant recognizes powerful ways to use innovative digital tools in students' personalized learning. However, there is insufficient explanation for (1) how the applicant ensures that mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to not only the teachers but also *students* so that they can understand how to use the tools and resources; and (2) how the applicant's high-quality content, including digital learning content, are aligned with college- and career- ready standards.

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

20

5

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides limited evidence as for their high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by providing opportunities to increase their educators' capacity for implementing personalized instruction and to have access to data and tools for improving student learning.

The applicant states that the District Continuous Improvement Plan is evaluated annually and their results are analyzed by the Senior Leadership Team against the four goals and the strategies developed the year before. With respect to measuring student progress, the applicant indicates that academic achievement data, dropout/graduation data, and Safe and Orderly Schools data are examples of data used to determine the progress of student learning in the LEA and to set priorities for the district. Other supports for educators include yearlong professional development opportunities, training provided by lifetime certified poverty trainers, and Beginning Teacher support programs. These opportunities are designed to provide information on poverty, induction, and mentorships, and the topics relative to student achievement data. The applicant also mentions that their Assistant Principal Institute provides opportunities for educators to discuss how they play a role in assisting teachers in the review of data obtained from various assessments so that administrators can drive instruction and work with their teachers to increase student achievement.

Overall, it is convincing that the applicant has a plan for improving learning and teaching. However, the narrative does not provide the required elements of a high quality plan as defined in this notice including key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities. In addition, what remains unclear in the narrative is (1) how the applicant exactly ensures that their educators have access to actionable information to identify optimal learning approaches, (2) how the applicant supports teachers to provide opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests, and optimal learning approaches, such as discussion and collaborative work, project-based learning, videos, audio, and manipulatives, (3) how their investment in the technology infrastructure remains relevant to college- and career-ready standards and how the applicant prepares multiple layers of using technology in instruction in response to different needs of each content area, and (4) how the applicant ensures that school leadership teams have support for policies, tools, and resources. Other concerns include the applicant do not provide clear evidence as for placing effective teachers and principals in hard-to-staff schools, math and science, and special education.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	3

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides limited evidence that they have a high quality plan to support project implementatio, and the applicant's narrative is not thorough in describing their practices, policies and rules in support of personalized learning. The applicant states that the LEA has a policy committee to evaluate and recommend policies to the Board of Education, and their stakeholder group includes principals, teacher advisory councils, students and others if needed. However, the applicant' narrative is mostly non-responsive to all of the required criteria in this

section regarding how their practices, policies, and rules facilitate personalized learning. For example, no detail is provided as to how the applicant ensures that each school in the LEA has sufficient flexibility and autonomy over school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions, and staffing models; students have the opportunity to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic; students have the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways; and students with disabilities and English learners have access to learning resources and differentiated instruction.

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

10

7

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant identifies their infrastructure that supports personalized learning. For example, the applicant has adopted Google Docs for education, Gmail to facilitate access to online resources in and out of the school district, and a metro Ethernet connection and other fee-based services and software programs to manage effective information technology systems. The applicant also indicates that they are committed to providing professional development that uses learning sciences—including cognitive science, neuroscience, education, and social science and adopts the North Carolina Learning Technology Initiative (NCLTI). The NCLTI framework includes infrastructures and tools to facilitate planning, communicating, implementing, providing professional development, and evaluating the RTT-D implementation. Also clear in the narrative is that the applicant remains committed to providing appropriate levels of technical support by developing the program of Digital Learning Coach (DLC). It is impressive that the applicant develops school-based teacher leaders who integrate technology into instruction and model effective integration for their peers. Other evidence for their strong information technology systems includes the applicant's use of a learning management system (Moodle) and Homebase, an interoperable data system that combines an instructional improvement system (IIS), a student information system (SIS), and a NC Educator evaluation system. The applicant explains that Home Base serves as online portals for students, teachers, parents, and administrators to access data and resources to inform instruction, assessment, and career and college goals.

Overall, the applicant provides adequate description about their infrastructure that supports personalized learning. However, the narrative lacks additional details about their high-quality plan addressing key goals, specific activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities along with timeline and deliverables, and responsible personnel for implementing the activities. What also remains unclear is how exactly the applicant ensures that parents and students manage information in an open data format – electronic documents are saved and opened regardless of operation system or software. This is implicit in their plan to use Google services, but it is not clear in their narrative.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	5
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant states that they have the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in place, and that school-leadership teams meet regularly and have the opportunity to review and make suggested revisions to the plan. The applicant's assessment data to inform the progress of the implementation include formative assessments, classroom assessments, district quarterly assessments, surveys, and end-of-grade tests/end-of-course tests. The technology lead teachers, Testing & Accountability, and Curriculum & Instruction lead teachers will be responsible for managing the data. Further, the applicant indicates that their data analysis will enable schools to develop strategies that address the needs of all stakeholders in the system and help assess the effectiveness of the strategies to be consequential in changes/modifications, additions, and deletions in the plan.</p> <p>Although it seems that the applicant is dedicated to achieving a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for corrections and improvements during the term of the grant; the general lack of timeline and specific and measurable deliverables in their narrative adds little to demonstrate the applicant's high quality plan. In addition, it is also unclear how the applicant plans to conduct an improvement process that provides feedback on progress for corrections and improvements <i>after</i> the term of the grant.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. It is noticeable that the applicant implements mylearningplan.com as a professional development management tool that helps manage registrations and have access to reports on the progress of the LEA priorities, and that the applicant provides a strong infrastructure on technology and related training and support. The applicant also mentions that they plan to have student and staff emails and websites for communication. However, the bulk of the strategies does not seem to directly address their goal of achieving ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Indeed, their plan to build a strong system of tools and resources related to assessment and analysis is impressive. However, it is unclear whom the applicants identifies as internal and external stakeholders and precisely what kind of events, meetings, and other activities pertain to communication and to engagement. Overall, the applicant does not provide a high-quality plan as defined in the notice.

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

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides tables with subgroups identified along with baseline data. However, their annual targets are not provided. Also missing in the narrative includes describing their rationale for selecting measures, the ways the measures provide information on the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and how the applicant will review and improve the measures over time. The applicant states that North Carolina has developed a performance measure for effective teachers and principals and that the rating is based on a three-year average. As a result, the applicant indicates that their baseline data is not appropriate and they intend to set their targets once this data is in place. Still, there is no other evidence to demonstrate the applicant's use of ambitious yet achievable performance measures.

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

5

2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that during the second year of the two-year cycle, each school will provide a summative feedback to the original RTT-D plan to guide their work for improvement in the next school year. In addition, the applicant proposes the goal teams part of their School Improvement Team, which will review progress, identify successes, and discuss challenges, and that the School Improvement Plans are accessible on both the district and school level websites available for stakeholders. However, the narrative does not provide clear information as to most elements of the high-quality plan such as key goals, activities, the rationale for the activities accompanied by the timeline and the deliverables from implementing the activities. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the feasibility of the ways how applicant conducts the *rigorous* evaluation of the effectiveness of RTT-D activities.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant's budget is sufficiently detailed in identifying all funds and seems reasonable to support the development and implementation of the proposal. The applicant also provides a description of all of the funds. However, the narrative does not provide clear description about how to identify one-time investments versus ongoing operational costs. The rationale for investments on project year 1 through 4 is clear. However, the narrative is not thorough in describing specific strategies that ensure the long-term sustainability of the implementation.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant states that the LEA has experience with non-recurring funding sources, their proposal is focused on the sustainability of the project. Thanks to their hard work on building a solid technology infrastructure which will be fully operational by November 2013, the applicant asserts that their current operating budget has enough capitals for growth and maintenance of the technology infrastructure. Also, it is clear that the applicant is budget</p>		

conscious in their operation of the RTT-D implementations. For example, they plan to develop “teachers on loan” or “transformation coaches” within the LEA so that they can have the continuum in work after the grant expires. It seems also thoughtful that the applicant plans to purchase ChromeBooks in year one for all students in grades 3 through 8 and the 40% of the population of the high school students, plus a 20% refresh/maintenance rate in subsequent years. The applicant explains that the 40% rate was the same as their current free and reduced lunch rates, implying that the other 60% of the high school students could probably afford to bring their own technology to school. However, the applicant does not provide supporting information that purports that the majority of high school students in the LEA has a digital learning tool equivalent to ChromeBooks.

Overall, it is clear that the applicant is thinking about the financials for the years after the grant expires. However, their narrative is not strong enough to demonstrate a high-quality plan. For example: Although the applicant claims that their long term goal is to partner with the individual towns and communities within the district in response to the need of a more widely available wireless network for students and other community members, there is no description about support from State and local government leaders and their financial support; and about how the applicant will evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant (for the three years after the term of the grant) budget.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides no response.		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: Overall, the applicant does not meet Absolute Priority 1 based on the application. Their narrative is not coherently and comprehensively addressing their plan to achieve the RTT-D reform efforts through personalized learning for all students. For example, their overall plan is about providing personalized learning environments and strategies with the use of technology in instruction; however, the applicant's strategies and tools are not aligned with college and career-ready standards and are not strongly designed to impact graduation rates, student achievement and decreasing achievement gaps. Their commitment to a strong data system and the abundant PD opportunities for teachers are commendable. However, the teachers' learning to impact student learning is not clearly articulated, and the strong data system does not seem to be clearly connected to informing and improving personalized learning. In conclusion, the applicant does not present a plan that demonstrates Absolute Priority 1.		

Total	210	68
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0220NC-2 for Johnston County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's reform vision falls short of "comprehensive and coherent." Instead of a clear approach to accomplishing the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support, the applicant cites random activities and initiatives currently in place in the district without evidence or impact data. Positive results from the "AdvancEd Quality Assurance Review" are cited as evidence the district is "highly functional," while providing no information about what the review entailed, who conducted it, or what the "five standards" are. Adoption of Common Core State Standards supplemented by North Carolina Essential Standards is not backed by any evidence of teacher training or adjustment of curriculum necessary to implement these new standards. Participation in the College and Career Readiness Program is not supported by success data. Multiple assessments are listed to provide formative and summative data to teachers, and various programs (RTI, curriculum coaches, and AVID programs) are alleged to be in place to meet the needs of at-risk students along with initiatives to attract, retain, and support quality teachers and administrators - all without evidence of their existence, pervasiveness, or impact. Changes already made in the district to support a 1:1 initiative in grades 3-12 are described along with haphazard initiatives to be supported by funding from this grant. The existing and suggested initiatives mentioned herein have the potential impact student learning in a positive way but were not presented in the comprehensive and coherent required by (A)(1).</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant describes "piloted pockets of 1:1 scenarios" and a 2-year study to determine the best student device to be purchased, and a district-wide survey to ascertain which schools wanted to participate in the 1:1 student/device project. No details, descriptions, survey documents, specific results, or other evidence of these was included. The required list of participating schools and the numbers of students and educators by designated categories are provided; totals were not calculated.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>(A)(3) calls for a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal would be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. All district schools are included in the applicant's proposal; thus scaling up is not discussed. Instead, the applicant's narrative describes proposed implementation in the district, but the characteristics of a high quality plan are not to be found. The illustrative chart provides inputs, general activities, outputs, and short/long term outcomes for initial implementation; measurable goals, detailed activities, rationale, timelines, and responsible parties are not included.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides for all students and for required subgroups baseline achievement data and four-year and beyond targets. The method employed for determining the targets was not found. The applicant states that baseline and target data for gap reduction could not be addressed because the state adopted new assessments in 2012-13; it is not clear why achievement data could be included, yet gap data could not. Except for baseline graduation percents, all required baseline and target graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and the optional post-secondary degree attainment rates were omitted.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	3
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

The applicant lists initiatives underway in the district to advance student learning, but no data is provided to substantiate the claims. Narrative addressing closing achievement gaps, achieving reform in lowest-achieving schools, and making student performance data available to students, educators, and parents was not found.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 (B)(2) is not adequately addressed by the applicant. A district website, a free television cable channel, and radio broadcasts are listed as means for disseminating information; but, except for Board meeting information, little detail was found about the information itself. In 2013 the district received a Sunny Award for the content included on its website; no information was provided in this proposal, however, to convey the significance of the award. None of the expected information regarding salaries and non-personnel expenditures was found.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	2
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant provides information about school construction to address population growth, the 2009-2010 strategic planning process engaged in by the district, and other opportunities it has implemented for students. Sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments is not mentioned.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	1
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:
 The applicant does not adequately address the requirements of (B)(4). No evidence of the superintendent's meetings with "internal and external stakeholders" or engagement with collective bargaining representation was provided; no letters of support were included.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 There is no evidence of any plan to address the requirements of section (C)(1). Instead of delineating a high-quality plan to meet the requirements of (C)(1), the applicant lists and briefly describes randomly-selected initiatives currently underway in the district - all stated to be already implemented.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	1
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:
 No high-quality plan is included to address the requirements of section (C)(2). Instead the applicant relates the district's continuous improvement process and recounts current initiatives and activities without evidence or supporting data. Subsections b, c, and d are not addressed at all.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

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

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:
 No high-quality plan is included to address the requirements of section (D)(1). A brief overview of the district's policy-

making process is included, but no attempt to address the subsections of (D)(1) was found.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	3
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: No high-quality plan is included to address the requirements of section (D)(2). The applicant states that all students and staff have access to technology tools; parent access is not discussed, and no evidence is provided regarding staff and student access. Professional development and technical assistance for teachers is referenced but not substantiated. Subsections c and d are not addressed. Some of the mentioned initiatives do seem promising.		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	1
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: No high-quality plan is included for section (E)(1). Instead the applicant describes the district's goals and continuous improvement process (without evidence) with explanation of how it would be applied to this proposal.		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: No high-quality plan is included for section (E)(1). Instead the applicant discusses professional development, school improvement endeavors, RTI, and "encouraging" schools to spend their funds on interactive technology.		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	0
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant includes no information pursuant to section (E)(3).		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
(E)(4) Reviewer Comments: The applicant includes no information pursuant to section (E)(4).		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: Total expenditures are listed, although it is unclear how they will be expended. The budget summary narrative doesn't mirror the text that appears in the preceding sections of the proposal and lumps all preceding initiatives into one overarching project, mentioned for the first time in the budget narrative. An attempt was made to describe the proposed expenditures by category, but the descriptions are vague and unspecific. Given the low quality of the proposal, it is not possible to determine if the applicant has identified all funds to support the project and whether it is reasonable and sufficient to support its development and implementation.		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: No high-quality plan is included for section (F)(2). Instead, the proposal cites past initiatives to build district infrastructure to		

support a 1:1 environment and declares that its current operating budget contains "enough cushion for growth and maintenance of the technology infrastructure. Future human resource expenditures are purported to dissipate after the grant period because the proposed "teachers on loan" program which takes 42 teachers out of the classroom annually for five years would be discontinued. The impact of removing 42 teachers from classrooms on student learning was not discussed; nor was teacher mobility. The text regarding the maintenance and replacement of equipment that would be purchased through this grant was vague and displayed none of the characteristics of a high-quality plan.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: No Competitive Preference Priority is included in this proposal.		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: This proposal does not adequately address how the applicant will build on the core educational assurance areas (standards and assessments, data systems, effective teachers and principals, turning around lowest achieving schools) to meet Absolute Priority One. It contains excellent ideas and strategies that would likely, if implemented in a defined and organized way, contribute to the creation of a personalized learning environment that would meet the needs of all students, increase educator effectiveness and access, decrease achievement gaps, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. However, while the applicant's ideas are sound, there is no discernible plan, high-quality or otherwise, evident in the proposal. Rather, the applicant presents random thoughts and ideas either already established or that one would be hard-pressed to implement in any cohesive way. Goals, timelines, and responsible parties are often unclear or missing entirely. Activities are not specific enough to be implemented with fidelity. Evaluation and continuous improvement strategies are vague. The current proposal is more brainstorming than a plan. The applicant is encouraged to take the underdeveloped strands and ideas and weave them together into a fully developed plan complete with quality objectives, specific measurable goals, well-defined activities with rationale, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties; to create a roadmap that one could follow to achieve the goals of Absolute Priority One.		

Total	210	36
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**Race to the Top - District
Technical Review Form**

Application #0220NC-3 for Johnston County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score

(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The extent to which the applicant has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that—

(a) Builds on its work in four core educational assurance areas (as defined in this notice); All four core educational assurance areas are addressed. Area 1 – the district has adopted the Common Core standards as well as the North Carolina Essential Standards. Area 2 – the district utilizes several data sources to inform instruction including MAPS, Explore exams, and more. Area 3 – Teacher recruitment efforts and a principal institute and leadership academy are conducted. In addition, a beginning teacher program has been implemented. Area 4 – the project will support all schools in the district with special focus on the schools with the highest need. However, how this will be accomplished is not addressed.

(b) Articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests; and The applicant proposes to transform instruction through the implementation of full-time transformation coaches to mentor and support digital integration strategies for classroom teachers. The plan is vague but the theory is that these coaches will lead a digital conversion at the classroom level that will differentiate instruction for individual students.

(c) Describes what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments. There is little explanation of the individual classroom experience. There is mention that teachers will have the support of transformation coaches and access to appropriate technology. In addition, it is mentioned that the district has adopted Google Apps as a means to support collaboration between staff and students.

The applicant provides a snapshot of the current reality of the district with a vision for increased collaboration and digital learning. However, the narrative does not provide a comprehensive or coherent reform vision that articulates exactly what the proposed outcomes the project will deliver. As the narrative is general in nature, it only earns a mid-range score for this section.

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

(a) A description of the process that the applicant used or will use to select schools to participate. The process must ensure that the participating schools (as defined in this notice) collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements; The applicant indicated that a district-wide survey was conducted. In addition a two-year study of a 1:1 pilot project indicated the use of Chromebooks was the most sustainable product. There is no evidence to support the survey in the appendix. The table for this section does not include totals of students. The paragraph simply states that all schools wanted to be included in a 1:1 project if funding were available. There is not average of percentages so it cannot be ensured that all participating schools meet the eligibility requirements.

(b) A list of the schools that will participate in grant activities (as available); and A list of schools in included in table format. It includes all schools in the district.

(c) The total number of participating students (as defined in this notice), participating students (as defined in this notice) from low-income families, participating students (as defined in this notice) who are high-need students (as defined in this notice), and participating educators (as defined in this notice). If participating schools (as defined in this notice) have yet to be selected, the applicant may provide approximate numbers. Totals are not available in the table. They could be calculated but are not part of the original table.

The applicants approach to implementing the reform proposal is weak. While there was a two-year study of a pilot 1:1 project, the survey to support participation in the project simply states that all schools wished to participate in a 1:1 rollout if funding were available. There is no evidence that the survey addressed specific instructional strategies, assessment components, professional development, or other key areas of instruction that would support individualized education. The vagueness of the section and lack of supporting materials outline survey questions and results combined with the lack of data totals on the table earn this section a low-range score.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's logic model is developed through a combination of the work of Robert Evans and Virginia Satir. The plan is to infuse the Evans dimensions of change will placing emphasis on developing and maintaining school culture. An illustration is provided.

The plan appears to have three phases. The first phase is communication; the second is introduction of new forms of learning to staff. This phase will be supported with help desks, professional learning networks, and sharing of information.

While the plan seems reasonable, there is no evidence of a high-quality plan that includes specific implementation steps that articulate specific action plans or outcomes. There is also no indication of how the process will be implemented in terms of which schools will move forward first or if the entire district till scale up to a full 1:1 project the very first year. There is no prioritization of which schools need to move forward first. Because the plan is general in nature, it cannot be considered a high-quality plan and therefore only earns a low-mid range score.

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

10

4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There is little evidence that the project vision will result in improved student learning. The narrative indicates that problem-based learning will be incorporated but lacks a correlation of this model to student performance. No studies were cited or previous district experience with the model. Targets appear to be random with little or no evidence to support the projected growth.

- a. **Performance on summative assessments (proficiency status and growth).** Assessments to be used are the NC end of grade reading presented in grades 3-8 combined and individual grades per subject. Baseline data for all grades indicate percentage of students scoring proficient in the ranges of 44.7% - 86.3% between sub-groups and a baseline percentage of 78.5 for all students. Target ranges include ranges of 72.3 – 92.9 with a target of 89.3% proficient for all students.

High school subjects included algebra, biology and English II. Again, baseline ranges varied from 59.2% - 89.5 for algebra with target ranges between 72.5 – 94.3. Biology baselines ranged from 42.6 – 95 with target ranges between 70.8 – 95. English II scores were not available.

- (b) **Decreasing achievement gaps (as defined in this notice).** Achievement gaps are reduced from a range of 40 points to a range of 20 points for grades 3-8 when looking at the first charts of the section. Additional charts in the section provide one year of baseline data with an explanation that additional baseline data is not yet available. There are no targets identified. The same is present in the high school data.

- (c) **Graduation rates (as defined in this notice).** Graduation rate baseline data ranged from 31.5 – 86.9. There were no targets identified.

- (d) **College enrollment (as defined in this notice) rates.** College enrollment rates were not provided in either baseline or target categories.

Optional: The extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals for each participating LEA in the following area:

- (e) Not addressed by the applicant.

The applicant's lack of articulating how the projected goals of the project will effect targets makes it difficult to determine if the targets seem appropriate. There appears to be conflicting information concerning decreasing of achievement gaps between two separate sets of tables. In addition, no targets were identified for graduation rates and no data was provided for college enrollment. The lack of this information earns this section a low- mid range score.

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	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district participates in the North Carolina ABC's Accountability Program. In 2011, 21 schools were designated as schools of distinction and eight schools as schools of excellence. State SAT averages exceed the state average. Proficiency rates on the state exams trend above state averages. However, none of this information is supported through tables in this section or in the appendix.

(a) Improve student learning outcomes and close achievement gaps (as defined in this notice), including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), and college enrollment (as defined in this notice) rates; The narrative makes no mention of closing achievement gaps between sub-groups nor does it provide supporting tables in the section or in the appendix to support the claims of higher than state scores. There is mention that increasing graduation rates is a focus of the district but does not provide any further information on how that is being addressed.

(b) Achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in this notice) or in its low-performing schools (as defined in this notice); and The narrative makes no mention of low achieving schools and what steps have been taken to improve those schools.

(c) Make student performance data (as defined in this notice) available to students, educators (as defined in this notice), and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. There is no mention aside from the state accountability program that information concerning the district's success record. There is no mention of how students and/or parents are informed of services.

While the applicant provides examples of success, the information is not supported through statistical evidence. There is no mention of schools that are not rated as schools of distinction or schools of excellence. There are no references to where information about school performance can be found by patrons and students. The generalness of the information earns this section a low-mid range score

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides very little tangible information concerning transparency in the LEA process. While several media outlets are mentioned, there is no information or supporting documentation in the appendix of this application. There is a notice of an award from Sunshine review, it also is general and vague.

(a) No information provided.

(b) No information provided.

(c) No information provided.

(d) No information provided.

The lack of specific information and supporting documents related to salaries, expenditures, and etc. other than to mention that the board is transparent result in a low-range score for this section.

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

The applicant provides a brief overview of a recent strategic planning process. However, the applicant fails to address the issue of autonomy under the state in terms of personalized learning environments.

The applicant does not explain if state rules concerning seat time, units of instruction, or content delivery models are governed by the state or if the district can set those parameters on its own. It appears as though the current method of delivery is teacher-centered with normal attendance and credit requirements of traditional schools. While there is an initiative to move to a problem based learning format, there is no evidence of changing the way instruction is provided or how the strategy will address personalized learning.

Information presented in this section does not seem to address the issue of autonomy for the district clearly enough to determine if there will be a significant change in the method of delivery of instruction or how students will be assigned credit. This section scores in the low range.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	1
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>a. A description of how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools (as defined in this notice) were engaged in the development of the proposal and, as appropriate, how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback, including—</p> <p>There is absolutely no evidence that any stakeholders were consulted or involved in the development of this project. The narrative refers to work done by the new superintendent during the 2009-10 school year. The applicant is claiming that goals set during that time were the foundation for this project.</p> <p>(i) For LEAs with collective bargaining representation, evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools (as defined in this notice); or There is a signature on the application first page indicating support of the district's teacher's association.</p> <p>(ii) For LEAs without collective bargaining representation, at a minimum, evidence that at least 70 percent of teachers from participating schools (as defined in this notice) support the proposal; and There is no evidence to support teacher support through signatures or letters of support.</p> <p>b. Letters of support from such key stakeholders as parents and parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, tribes, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education. There are no letters of support or involvement of any key organizations, colleges, or other groups to support this section or in the appendix of this application.</p> <p>The lack of any effort to include stakeholders, parents, or students in the preparation of this application prevents any score from being awarded for this section. The basis for the development of the project was based on work done in the 2009-10 school year. There is no evidence that the teacher's association was even consulted or involved in the project plans and there is no signature of the association's president to indicate teacher support of the plan.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	3
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant does an extremely poor job of addressing this portion of the application. While there were a few paragraphs outlining a dual credit partnership with the local community college, the remainder of the section was focused on professional development for administrators and teachers. There was little to no mention of student learning. There is no high-quality plan. There is no real evidence of any plan other than programs and supports that are already in place.</p> <p>(a) With the support of parents and educators, all students—</p> <p>(i) Understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals; No information addressing student understanding of learning and goals is mentioned.</p> <p>(ii) Identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice), understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals; While the section does outline a unique dual credit opportunity for students in two buildings and the implementation of the AVID program, it fails to address any further link to college and career –ready standards for the remaining forty plus buildings. It does not indicate if the AVID program is mandatory for all students in middle and high schools or what percentage of students participate in the program.</p>		

(iii) Are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest; No evidence was presented to address the learning experiences of the students. No academic subjects were highlighted or presented.

(iv) Have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning; and The narrative lacks any reference to diverse cultures or perspectives with the exception of the employment of two certified poverty trainers. The trainers were presented as a professional development asset.

(v) Master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving; The applicant did little to present specific tasks or activities related to goal-setting, teamwork, and etc. Persons with experience with the Avid program could argue that these items are addressed with the implementation of that program but without prior knowledge, there would be no way to gain that insight. The applicant did little to explain the program or the potential of the program when implemented with fidelity.

(b) With the support of parents and educators (as defined in this notice), each student has access to—

(i) A personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career-ready; There is absolutely no information regarding sequence of instruction or skill development. There is no reference or information concerning individualized learning goals.

(ii) A variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments; No instructional approaches were presented.

(iii) High-quality content, including digital learning content (as defined in this notice) as appropriate, aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice); No digital learning content was introduced or discussed.

(iv) Ongoing and regular feedback, including, at a minimum—

(A) Frequently updated individual student data that can be used to determine progress toward mastery of college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice), or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice); and There was no information concerning individual student data and how the data could be used to evaluate student progress.

(B) Personalized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills, college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice), and available content, instructional approaches, and supports; and Personalized learning was not addressed in this section. There was a remarkable lack of information regarding student activities and behaviors in the entire section.

(v) Accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students (as defined in this notice) to help ensure that they are on track toward meeting college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice); and Again, there was no information concerning accommodations or strategies for high-needs students other than the certified poverty trainers.

(c) Mechanisms are in place to provide training and support to students that will ensure that they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. There is no mention of training for students on how to use the tools in addition to no tools actually being identified.

This section was woefully void of any tangible information regarding specific learning opportunities for students. No resources were identified. No new or challenging strategies different than current classroom instructions were defined or presented. With the exception of two buildings involved in a five year-dual enrollment program with the community college, student learning was missing from this section. Because the specific elements necessary to support student learning were absent from this section, a very low score is given.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	3
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide evidence of a high-quality plan for this project. The information provided in this section is an overview of the district's overall continuous improvement process and while it provides input from stakeholders, it does not specifically address this specific project. It appears that much of the section is a copy and paste of the previous section.

(a) All participating educators (as defined in this notice) engage in training, and in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity to—

- (i) The professional development described is very generic and does not address specific strategies for the implementation of personalized learning environments.
- (ii) There is no information regarding any instructional content. Previous sections mention the use of Google Apps for collaboration but this section makes no reference to anything beyond a generic mention of 21st century skills and Web 2.0 tools.
- (iii) Again, no specific measures identified. The response is incredibly vague and generic.
- (iv) No teacher or principal evaluation systems are mentioned, nor are there any supporting documents in the appendix concerning effective teachers and administrators.

(b) All participating educators (as defined in this notice) have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice). Those resources must include—

- (i) Aside from a general reference to the professional development department and a beginning teachers support program, there is little information regarding support systems that identify optimal learning approaches.
- (ii) Again, the narrative is lacking any reference to specific tools, resources, or strategies to support this criteria.
- (iii) There is no mention, aside from the district improvement process, of what processes are in place or will be put in place concerning specific resources and approaches.

(c) All participating school leaders and school leadership teams (as defined in this notice) 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 through common and individual tasks toward meeting college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice) or college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice). The training, policies, tools, data, and resources must include:

- (i) The narrative does not address the teacher evaluation system.
- (ii) There is no mention of training or systems aside from the two licensed poverty trainers concerning closing of achievement gaps.

(d) The applicant has a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals (as defined in this notice), including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science), and specialty areas (such as special education).

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from highly-qualified teachers and principals. While professional development was mentioned, it was in a very vague and general way that did not address the specific goals and plans of this project. There is no mention of how hard-to-staff schools or subjects are supported. There is no teacher evaluation tool identified or are there any supporting documents in the appendix of this application. This lack of information and failure to develop an appropriate plan earn this section a low-range score.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
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(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	4
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(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning by—

The applicant does not have a high-quality plan to support project implementation nor does it have comprehensive policies and infrastructure. The practices and policies outlined in this section are generic and vague.

- (a) The applicant describes a traditional structure that involves a board of education and administration.
- (b) There is no explanation as to the structure of the organization outside of the school board and the term “senior leadership”. There is no discussion concerning flexibility or autonomy concerning school schedules or additional items mentioned in the criteria.
- (c) There is no information concerning how credit is assigned.
- (d) There is no information concerning how credit is assigned and how students demonstrate mastery.
- (e) There is no information addressing special populations.

The applicant fails to deliver a high-quality plan to support project implementation. The only information addressed in the section indicates that the board of education makes final policy decisions. The proposal fails to even mention how often policies are evaluated or changed. Because of the lack of information available in this section, the applicant earns a low score.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The extent to which the applicant has a high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator (as defined in this notice), and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed. This includes the extent to which—

While this section may likely be the strongest section of the entire proposal, it falls just short of being considered a high-quality plan. There are certain elements of the section that deserve mention, however, the fact that they seem to be mentioned in this isolated section make it difficult to understand how they fit into the entire scheme of the project.

The LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning by—

- (a) The applicant describes a multi-year investment in building out the district’s technology infrastructure to prepare for a 1:1 launch involving bring your own devices as well as school resources. The plan includes the purchase of several devices for students in grades 3-8 and up to 40% of the district’s high school students. This was based on the approximate number of high-need students that would not have access to BYOD devices. However, the plan does not address how the tools and learning resources will be accessed away from school.
- (b) The district is investing in technical support personnel as well as instructional support people to provide assistance in the implementation of the tools. However, there is no explanation of how those support people will be made available away from normal school hours or how parents can access the support.
- (c) The applicant recently deployed a data system called HomeBase as an on-line portal where students, educators, and parents can access a variety of student data. There is no explanation of how that data may be exported and in what formats.
- (d) The narrative indicates that all data systems are interoperable but does not specifically mention any industry standards to support the claim.

Again, this section contains some of the most informative aspects of the entire project. However, the plan falls short of being considered high quality due to the fact that much of the information, including the use of the portal HomeBase, is first mentioned in this section. In addition, there continues to be a lack of specific action steps or identification of specific learning and digital resources aside from Google Apps for the delivery of content in a personalized format. This lack of information earns this section a mid range score.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	3
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>E(1)</p> <p>Because the applicant’s plans represent the best thinking at a point in time, and may require adjustments and revisions during implementation, it is vital that the applicant have a clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its plans. This will be determined by the extent to which the applicant has—</p> <p>A high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. The plan must address how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District, such as investments in professional development, technology, and staff;</p> <p>The applicant does have a district wide continuous improvement that is well established. The project would be governed by that same process, however, because of the lack of a clearly defined set of goals, objectives, and action items related to this project, there is no high-quality plan in regards to this project.</p> <p>There is no explanation of exactly how the applicant will be able to monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of the RTT-D fund investment.</p> <p>While the district seems to have a systematic approach to improvement, individual schools develop their own school improvement plans. With over 40 schools in the district, it will be difficult to identify the outcomes of the RTT-D investment in a systemic manner.</p> <p>Because of the vagueness of the overall project and lack of a high-quality plan for improvement this section scores in the low to mid-range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	0
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>A high-quality plan (as defined in this notice) for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders; and</p> <p>The applicant does not deliver a high-quality plan for communication. The narrative of this section focuses on professional development opportunities and does not address how project information will be shared with stakeholders. There is no mention of public forums, presentations during board meetings, web site highlights, or even a project blog or newsletter. The section does not address communication and therefore no points are awarded for this section.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	0
(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup (as defined in this notice), with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. For each applicant-proposed measure, the applicant must describe—</p> <p>This section cannot be scored. The applicant chose to not set any performance measures due to lack of baseline data.</p>		

The applicant is asking to wait to set performance measures until after new state performance measures are made available.

- (a) No measures are identified so no rationale is provided.
- (b) No performance measures are established.
- (c) No performance measures are established.

The applicant did not set performance measures in any of the categories required of the application. Lack of performance measures makes it impossible to score this section so no score can be awarded.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTT-D activities. The section focuses on the district's over-all continuous improvement process and does not address project specific goals or activities.

There are no specific activities associated with the evaluation of specific project goals and objectives. The section is a repeat of previous sections' description of the district's improvement process. Because the narrative is general in nature and not specific to the project, a low range score is given.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The project identifies district funds to support the positions of three technicians and one client services engineer. The remainder of project activities are to be supported with grant funds.

(b) The applicant proposes to use funds to purchase a large number of mobile computing devices for students and staff. This is the highest expense of the project in year one. The second highest expenditure is staffing of Transformation coaches. New coaches will be selected each year of the project and the previous year's coach will go back into the classroom. Other expenses are minimal in comparison to the initial equipment expenditure and on-going staffing costs.

(c) Clearly provides a thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities, including--

(i) only other funds aside from district funds for technology support personnel are the grant funds. No revenue is expected from the project.

(ii) The district is utilizing one-time investments for the initial purchase of mobile devices. There is an on-going expense in years two and three of the project for replacement and refreshing of devices but it is very minimal in comparison to the initial investment. The remaining funds are to be used for staffing, benefits, and minimal supplies and travel to local meetings and conferences.

The budget appears to be reasonable and supports the objective of placing mobile computing devices in the hands of all 3-8 students and up to 40% of students in grades 9-12. Staffing calculations are in line with the applicant's information concerning average teacher salaries for the district. There are no provisions for maximizing potential business or community partnerships that could be utilized to support the project budget. The district commits no additional funds, aside from four technology support people. No funds are dedicated to project management or evaluation strategies. No provisions have been made for yearly RTT-D meetings for project personnel. Due to these omissions, the budget scores in the mid to low range.

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

10

6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not have a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals. While the project is purposeful in

ensuring staffing needs are returned to classroom duty, there is no explanation of how technology supports will continue once all teachers have returned to the classroom and the transformation specialist positions are gone. Technology will continue to evolve and new tools and techniques will be emerging after the grant is completed.

The initial investment in year one creates a huge quandary at the end of the project. If the average refresh cycle for devices is every three years, sustainability will not be possible in year four when all 19,000 devices will need to be refreshed. Perhaps utilizing a scale-up process would be preferential to a full first year deployment in all 40 plus buildings. This would allow for the 20% refresh plan to be more effective beginning in year three of the project.

Due to these two major concerns, the project does not meet the requirement of a high-quality plan for sustainability and scores in the mid range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
The Competitive Preference Priority is not addressed. No points are awarded.		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>This applicant fails to meet absolute priority 1. This project does not provide a coherent or comprehensive plan built upon the core educational assurance areas.</p> <p>There is no articulated plan on how the project will provide individualized learning to students. There are no performance measures identified. There is a serious lack of identifiable resources and there is no proof that any stakeholders collaborated in the preparation or plans for the project.</p> <p>While the district seems to have a well-established continuous improvement process in place, it fails to define how the process identified the need to adopt a 1:1 environment. No specific goals, objectives, action steps or benchmarks were articulated. Aside from one mention of the goal to incorporate transitional coaches, there are no other specific goals identified in the proposal.</p> <p>The application was difficult to follow as charts and information were out of sequence and several pages of the application instructions were mixed in with the rest of the narrative. The appendix lacks any significant information and the signature pages in the beginning of the application do not include signatures of authorized representatives of the district or teacher's association. There does not appear to be any support documentation from the community or evidence that the city government was involved in the preparation of the project.</p>		

Total	210	56
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