



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0055TN-1 for McMinn County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The McMinn County Public Schools demonstrates evidence in the four educational areas:

(1) *Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.* The district has a number of standards and assessments in place (e.g., PARCC assessments, Common Core standards, Tennessee Value Added Assessment System, American Diploma Standards, the Tennessee Educator Advancement Model). This is important support for the student and teacher evaluation that is essential to this plan.

(2) *Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction.* The district builds upon the Tennessee Educator Advancement Model (TEAM) to provide the disaggregated student data that educators plan to use in their professional learning communities to provide a personalized learning system for each student.

(3) *Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals especially where they are needed most.* The Teacher Incentive Fund (TCF) is being used for a number of educational supports such as a system-wide data coach, instructional coaches, lead teachers and staff development and best practices programs in order to “personalize” each teachers growth. PLC’s are supported by this grant. The RTTT-D grant will expand this important means of improving classroom instruction. This support is a highly important element of the plan and does not leave teachers to “go it alone.”

(4) *Turning around lowest-achieving schools.* The district does not have any Turnaround schools, but does have one high school (the Career and Technical Education Center) that lags behind the other schools and would focus much of the RTTT-D grant resources there.

The proposal would build on teacher/student collaboration and changes the classroom experience from a recipient of teacher lectures to responsibility for their own individual learning plans. It further describes the need to incorporate Problem-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning and Place-Based Learning that is based around common and individual tasks. Equipment and staff development are targeted to create a state-of-the-art foundation to deepen the student experience.

One of the strong points of this presentation is how it lays out the role that students and teachers play for a successful educational experience. For instance, they point to students:

- Developing consistent practice using the engineering process and problem-solving skills.
- Regular use of technology in and out of the classroom for academic purposes.
- Ability to use the five C’s: Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking and Choice.
- Improve social skills and establish a love for life-long learning.
- Graduating college and career ready.

For teachers, the proposal looks to Teachers:

- Serving classroom facilitators.
- Proficiency in using technology.
- Developing relevant lesson plans.
- Establishing relationships with students so that personalized learning can take place.
- Working with other teachers on Problem Based Learning.

These are the basis for a successful student/teacher interaction and together with data collection and its application in designing a personalized educational program for each student accelerating student learning is well within reach. While the proposal has some explicit information about what will be achieved, it would be helpful to learn what steps will be taken to personalize instruction. We do know that the lessons will deal in a general way with student interests. It would be helpful to see how this vision works in practice and how the personalized classroom will evolve. Additionally, it is not clear how this plan will lead to an acceleration in student achievement, deepening student learning and increasing equity. The vision is not clearly described.

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

10

7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The school district has chosen to involve all students in its PK-12 schools and lists all 9 schools by name. The number of students that would be served by this project are reported as approximately 5700. Three thousand four hundred and sixty-five of these students have been identified as coming from low-income families as identified by the district's free/reduced population figures, and it is estimated that 3,984 students have been identified as "high need." Four hundred and seven teachers will participate in this project. The district is asking for 20 million dollars to carryout this program. The number of students involved falls within the range of 5,001-10,000 students.

The district proposes to implement the proposal in stages. This is a reasonable approach since an important component of the plan is the installation of the infrastructure and technology plus the training of personnel in the use of technology in the classroom. This will need to be introduced in stages rather than all at once. The reform proposal is very dependent on technology and the data it brings to the classroom to guage student progress and design or redesign teaching strategies to meet student needs.

The description of the process to be used in the selection of schools relies only on a statement that..."our leadership team believes that the entire system would benefit from the grant award." From the reform vision presented in A1, it is clear that the inclusion of all schools would be of benefit by having the district rather than individual schools singled out. Not to include these schools would leave a good portion of the district without the benefit of a high-quality data system. Many students would not have access to the internet or other benefits of the proposal. It would be helpful if the district identified specific school needs that would be addressed by their inclusion within the plan rather than simply saying they will benefit. In selecting these schools, a rationale must be offered to justify the inclusion of schools.

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

10

5

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

This section asks for several things including an LEA-wide reform and change plan. The proposal is to be applied districtwide. The applicant intends to serve all schools and all students. However, this section does require a high-quality plan. None has been presented in this section. From other sections, the narrative does show some elements of a plan.

For instance, the three year timeline for implementation of technology is a good strategy to ease the district into the implementation phase. It is also clear from the narrative that the plan they have proposed would involve a tremendous enhancement of their technological hardware and development of their human capital around staff development in the technological delivery of a personalized learning environment. The proposal identifies this as **meaningful reform** that will be scaled up and applied throughout the school district. It will help the applicant reach its goals and outcomes through its training of teachers whose growth plan will be personalized. This last piece is particularly important, since the grant needs to address how the proposal will crate a **personalized learning environments** for **both** teachers and students in the participating schools as well as accelerating academic achievement.

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

10

7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant has provided performance baselines for S/Y 2012-2013 regarding proficiency status and growth on summative assessments through S/Y 2016-2017. In this case, these assessments are based on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Plan (TCAP) in reading and math and Algebra I and English II. This information provides information on those students that are proficient and above. Figures for the S/Y 2012-13 show performance levels between 30 to 40 percent and an increase of 10-12 percent by the end of the project. These are reasonable increases, but given that 60% of the participants are from low income families, these may be difficult to reach even within a four year program.

(b) Measured against a comparison group, the proposal seeks to decrease the achievement gap between subgroups by half in 8 years. Subgroups in this instance include 1) Black/Hispanic/Native American; 2) economically disadvantaged; 3) students with disabilities; and 4) limited English proficient. This averages around a 4 or 5% reduction in the gap over the four years period. These appear to be reasonable reductions and achievable within this time period.

(c) The student graduation rate for all subgroups as well as English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged and Special Education demonstrate goals that are reachable. The current overall graduation rate for S/Y 2012-2013 is 92.3%. Given that the graduation rate for S/Y 2011-2012 was 91.5%, the goal overall of 94.3% has every appearance of being reachable. The Special Education graduation rate currently of 75.4% but 87.4% in S/Y 2016-17, while ambitious, does not seem attainable when compared to S/Y 2011-12 and S/Y 2012-13 which was a negative 2.7%.

(d) The college enrollment goal for all subgroups is reported as 51.4% in 2011-12. The goal for 2015-16 has been set at 57%. A nearly 6% increase is not unrealistic but not very ambitious. Subgroups averaged a 2.8 increase between 2010-11 and 2011-12.

The applicant did not chose the optional question. With the exceptions noted above, the performance goals seem ambitious and achievable. One major factor that is missing from the vision is the lack of a high-quality plan in previous sections that would result in the achievement goals noted above. It is difficult to see substantial changes in student academic growth without providing a strong plan that would achieve these gains.

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	8

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This section requires a record of success during the past four years. The applicant has presented only 2011-12 and 2012-13 as evidence of success. Tables in (A) (4) were submitted and demonstrate an improvement in student learning outcomes and lowering achievement gap rates. Information pertaining to high school graduation rates and college enrollment is found in this same section, but as with other information, it is limited to two years and not four as required. Through the formative and summative data collected by the district and being increased through the plan, student performance data will be available to educators in multiple formats. The narrative indicates growth shown by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System and substantial improvement as shown by the TCAP in elementary reading and math. However, we have not been provided with any reliable evidence to support these statements.

The district has no low-performing schools. One school, Niota Elementary School, was a Title I school and through district action became a Tennessee Reward School. This change suggests some meaningful activities were taking place apart from the replacement of the principal. It would have been helpful to understand how those changes are reflected in the plan being put forth.

Specific initiatives to advance student learning and achievement and increase equity in learning and teaching include:

- Increased availability of technology;
- Assignment of instructional coaches to each of the nine schools;
- Implementation of the Response to Intervention program in both elementary and high schools;
- On-going formative assessments used to formulate effective instructional practices;
- Academic Interventions and Graduation Coaches;
- Increased dual enrollment offerings;
- Reclassification of special education services as Tier IV interventions;
- Departmentalization of the middle school grades;

- Implementation of Professional Learning Communities;
- Focus on STEM activities;
- Teacher reward system;
- Adoption of Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model; and
- Family engagement and four week progress reports to parents.

The current percentage of students served by an effective or highly effective teacher is stated as 95%. One hundred percent of the students are served by an effective or highly effective principal. The applicant has set a goal of 100% of the students being served by a highly effective teacher by S/Y 2016-17.

One plan requirement of (B) (1) (c) deals with making student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction and services. Some information has been made available in (D) (2) which indicates that the Family Resource Centers are equipped with technology that allows stakeholders to access necessary content, tools and learning resources. In (C) (1) we learn that technology will be available and used by students. Other than this, it is not clear that parents and students have access to student performance data.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------	----------

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The reader has been referred to McMinn County Schools' web site for information regarding School Board Policies, professional salary schedules and non-professional salaries. The application makes available personnel salaries and non-personnel expenditures by school level through the McMinn County Finance Office. This does not give the appearance of being a high-level of transparency. Nothing seems to be available without some effort by the citizens to find information about the school and district. Information such as this should be easier to access.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	----------

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides no state legal, statutory and regulatory requirements that demonstrate that they have the autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant's proposal. Information would be helpful if the applicant provided some actual authority granted to them by the Tennessee State Department of Education or the State Legislature. They do point to some interaction with the Tennessee Department of Education. What they offer here falls short of what is required for evidence pertaining to implementing personalized learning environments. The narrative does discuss the district's ability to offer a competency-based credit system, dual credit courses, allowing elementary students to take high school courses and the implementation of the Teacher Incentive Fund within the district. This does imply that conditions exist that may support the development of personalized learning.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	3
--------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	----------

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that students, families, teachers and principals in the nine participating schools have been engaged in the development of this proposal from the beginning. No evidence is offered to substantiate that claim (i.e., dates of meetings, agendas, reports) and the number of individuals that were engaged is not provided.

Tennessee is not a negotiating state with Teacher's Unions although the applicant states that they wanted the local association's support. The narrative does not provide evidence informing the reader that 70 percent of the teachers from participating schools support the proposal.

Information has not been provided regarding the revision of the proposal as a result of parent, student, teacher and principal input. As evidence of community support, the proposal offers 16 letters from businesses in the community. No letters were received from parents and parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, tribes, 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	3

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(C) (1) (a) Information has not been provided as to what students will learn that will be rigorous and prepare them for a college or career. It is clear that they will place technology in the hands of students and prepare teachers to use and design lessons around this technology. While the expansion of the infrastructure and technology are important to the learning goals of the program, more information is needed that provides a high-quality plan for the implementation of the program the applicant proposes. The key goals of this plan are missing. While the narrative lists a number of activities related to technology, much of this is a repeat of information found in (A) (1). Large parts of this section have not received treatment. For instance, responses regarding an approach to learning that engages and empowers all learners, especially high-need learners has not been provided for the following:

- (i) *Understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals;*
- (ii) *Can identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college and career-ready standards;*
- (iii) *Are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest;*
- (iv) *Have access to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives;*
- (v) *Can master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity and problem-solving.*

It is insufficient to indicate that technology will be placed in a student's hands without showing why that is important and how teachers and students will put it to good use. That has not happened in section (a).

In Section (C) (1) (b), a response is needed but was not found to indicate that students receive support from parents and educators to provide access to:

- (i) *A personalized sequence instructional content and skill development;*
- (ii) *A variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments;*
- (iii) *High-quality content;*
- (iv) *Ongoing and regular feedback; and*
- (v) *Accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-needs students.*

We learn in C1 that "technology will be available and used by all students." Although information in this section suggests that student's will work with businesses to expand problem-based learning, take virtual field trips, create and maintain individual portfolios and engage in self-directed learning, a description is needed to clearly define the dynamic learning environment referred to by the applicant. How these activities will enable them to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career ready standards and college- and career ready graduation requirements is not addressed.

Given the number and complexity of the questions in this section, the information provided has not specifically dealt with the criteria established for it. The narrative does not present a timeline, the deliverables and the parties responsible for implementing the activities. This does not provide a credible plan leading to the acceleration of student learning for students and lacks information relating to high-needs students.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	4
------------------------------------------------	-----------	----------

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section requires a high-quality plan for improving teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment. There is no high-quality plan. Missing from this section are key goals, the timeline for implementation and the overall credibility of the plan. It is true that in (C) (2) (a) that teachers will engage in training for PLCs (where they are not now established), in personalized learning and computerized learning in general. This is not presented in any depth. While the narrative refers to Professional Learning Communities already established throughout district schools, the narrative does not reflect on how this covers improving instruction.

- (i) The central focus of this presentation is placed upon Professional Development dealing with implementing the concepts of personalized learning for each student. Included in this focus is computerized instruction and problem-based learning as well as portfolio-based assessments and developing effective methods for project-based learning.
- (ii) How they will actually adapt instruction to the academic needs of students is not discussed.
- (iii) The electronic portfolios are a good means of providing a student data base that contains common formative assessments as well as competency based assessments. These will be helpful guides to personalizing instruction. How frequently these measure will take place is not noted.
- (iv) The teacher and principal evaluations provide useful information to coaches for the purpose of training both groups in effective practices.

(B) Teachers will have access to the TVAAS website which includes training videos, the NIET best practices website and the TDOE websites as aides to enhance instruction. Unfortunately, this presentation lacks depth and their actual use by teachers and principals is unclear. Additional training will be supplied to teachers and school leaders in the utilization of TVAAS data to allow educators to identify individual students within each subgroup and provide projections of individual mastery skills in both core-assessed areas as well as project ACT tests.

(i) The actionable information referred to in this section refers back to item (a) (iv) related to the feedback that is received from teacher and principal evaluations.

Section (ii) lacks evidence that would show that high-quality resources will be available to teachers although laptops, iPads, electronic portfolios and Kindles which will be purchased under this grant may qualify in this instance.

Section (C) deals with the need to improve the number of highly effective teachers. To that end, instructional coaches have been placed in the elementary schools and multiple coaches have been placed in the secondary schools. This is accompanied by teacher bonuses as an incentive for those who excel. Information needs to be provided regarding how coaches will affect the development and implementation of the Personalized Learning Environment.

Section (D) lacks information regarding the presence of a high-quality plan to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals including in hard-to-staff schools and subjects. It has not shown how distance learning will result in an increase of students receiving instruction from highly-effective teachers nor the role being played by instructional coaches.

This section would be much stronger if the narrative had provided some depth of information concerning the frequent measure of student progress and information about how educators could use this information to accelerate student progress. Additional information is needed regarding the high-quality resources (e.g., instructional content and assessments) that are aligned with college and career-ready standards.

The lack of completeness in (C) (2) is a major problem and prevents the reader from seeing the development of a high-quality plan that will lead to successful student outcomes.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	7

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) It would be helpful to understand what experience the Project Director will bring to this position as well as the Central Office staffing that will assist him/her in the day-to-day tasks associated with this grant. The brevity of the narrative provides insufficient evidence to judge the role of the Central Office in supporting the proposal.

(b) The answer to this question is not responsive. The school leadership team as defined in the notice may consist of a number of individuals including the principal, lead teachers, academic coaches and other individuals. The narrative states: *All district schools have leadership teams. The Board of Education and the Director of Schools agree to provide these leadership teams with the flexibility and autonomy required for the full implementation of the grant.* The response in this question does not identify these individuals nor does it indicate that the team has sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions, staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, and school level budgets. The criterion requires more than has been provided.

(c) This section is directed toward giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic. The narrative indicates that the district will have to “ease into this model” by

creating pilot projects to test the procedures and results. The response suggests a course of action without fully committing to this concept. The intent of the question here is to accelerate student development. The response indicates acceleration in this instance may not take place.

(d) Students will have the opportunity to demonstrate the mastery of standards through formative and summative testing. Several instances of this are found throughout earlier sections of the grant proposal.

(e) This section deals with providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners. The narrative in this section deals with the Family Resource Center and a family engagement coordinator. Through the Family Resource Center, stakeholders are provided with access to necessary content, tools and learning resources to support the implementation of the grant. Through the current technology, stakeholders have access to lesson plans and track the growth of students. With grant assistance, the applicant will set up labs that will be used to train parents on the technologies available to them and their students.

The district provides information on an interoperable data system which provides student information data. The district plans to expand this system to include human resource data, budget data and instructional improvement data.

Like the other sections we have addressed previously, Section (D) (1) does not provide sufficient information to understand exactly what they intend to do. Because this section lacks a high-quality plan and a greater depth of treatment, it is difficult to see what direction this proposal will take should it be funded.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
---------------------------------------------------------	-----------	----------

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Section D2 is missing from the proposal. However, the previous section does contain information useful to this section. This follows:

(a) The schools have a Family Resource Center and a Family Engagement Coordinator. The centers are equipped with technology that allows stakeholders to access necessary content, tools and learning resources. Information has not been supplied dealing with the use of this technology outside of the school. (See section D1, (e) for a more complete description.

(b) Students and teachers receive training and local support from the technology coaches. Plans are in the development stage, should this proposal be funded, in setting up a lab to train parents on the technologies available to them and their students. Such resources as this are available after hours to insure parent access.

(c) (D) (2) does not provide information about technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in machine readable formats; however, data provided in earlier sections indicates that open data formats are part of the electronic system available to students, teachers and parents.

(d) The district does indicate that they currently use an interoperable data system. This system does not include human resource data, budget data and instructional improvement data. Funding under this grant would upgrade this system to include that information.

The applicant does not provide a high quality plan for this section that supports implementation.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	3

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The criteria for Section (E) (1) requires:

(a) **A high-quality plan.** A high-quality plan has not been provided for this section. The applicant will rely solely on surveys of internal and external stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, principals, community members) regarding the grant's current status. What the actual surveys entail is not addressed. It is only after the surveys are administered that a high-quality plan will be developed to phase in steps to improvement. Improvement in teaching and learning are not addressed here. Some indication of what the high-quality plan they mention consists of needs to be indicated. There is no evidence provided as to how this will be developed from the surveys. Follow up for the targeted improvement process is said to be accomplished through regular classroom visits by instructional coaches, administrators and/or Central Office.

What the criteria is for successful improvement of teaching and learning is left out. The future plan will include a professional development needs assessment. Input for developing professional development will include actual student learning growth versus

educational goals and actual staff skill/competency levels. This is designed to identify teacher gaps so that they can assist students in meeting their educational goals. In addition, this will help focus professional development goals for individuals and groups.

(b) **An improvement process that that is timely.** It would be helpful to provide information as to the frequency of these proposed surveys. Some timeline should be indicated and the person or persons that are responsible for administering and analyzing the results of the survey. This would apply to the student gap as well.

(c) **Provides regular feedback on project goals.** Regular feedback is not identified. It is more a case of responding to the surveys or observing student progress that leads to professional development.

(d) **Provides opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant.** No opportunities for ongoing corrections have been noted here. This is a very weak area, since information about monitoring, measuring and public sharing of information on the quality of its investments has been omitted. Lacking a high-quality plan as well as a more lengthy description of what is planned for the future, it is very difficult to assess the continuous development process based upon such little information in this section.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district will use traditional district resources for communication (e.g., school newsletters, PTA meetings and newsletters, open forums, press releases, open presentations, school calling system, special celebration events throughout the year, letters and memos to parents, parent conferences, end-of-year events to celebrate year long efforts, e-mail updates, district calendars, local programs and school/district web pages) between the district and all stakeholders--both external and internal. It would be helpful if the plan addressed a timetable and assigned the responsibility for communication to an individual. The communication resources appear adequate, but are for the most part a one-way communication issued from the top down. It would be helpful to see the parents role and other stakeholders involvement in the communication process.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a rationale for selecting the particular performance measures for this proposal. It is not clear how these measures will inform the planned implementation, nor do they indicate how these performance measures will be reviewed and improved. The performance measures are ambitious yet achievable. Information regarding one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan for grades 9-12, 4-8 and PK-3 was not found.

The district has submitted 12 performance measures:

1. Performance Measure (All Applicants-a) reflects the number and percentage of student whose teacher of record and principal have a highly effective status.
2. Performance Measure (All applicants-b) reflects the number and percentage of students whose teacher of record and principal have an effective status.
3. Performance Measure (All applicants-c) reflects the TVAAS System Level Evaluation Composites.
4. Performance Measure (Grades PK-3-a,b) reflects the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program reading and math Annual Measurable Objectives and attendance.
5. Performance Measure Grades PK-3-c) reflects the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program reading and math Annual Measurable Objectives and attendance.
6. Performance Measure (Grades 4-8-a) reflects Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program reading and math Annual Measurable Objectives and attendance.
7. Performance Measure (Grades 4-8-b) reflects Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program reading and math Annual Measurable Objectives and attendance.
8. Performance Measure (Grades 4-8-c) reflects Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program reading and Math Annual Measurable Objectives and attendance.
9. Performance Measure (Grades 9-12-a) reflects the number and percentage of participating students who completed

the Free Application for Federal Student Aid applications.

- 10. Performance Measure (Grades 9-12-b) reflects the planned test that is administered to 10th grade students in assessing English, math, reading and science.
- 11. Performance Measure (Grades 9-12-c) reflects 12th grade Career and Technical Education graduation rate.
- 12. Performance Measure (Grades 9-12-d,e) reflects End-of-Course Algebra I, English II AMOs and graduation rate.

The populations, depending on the test, involve White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indian (Native American), Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, Males and Females. The percentage increases in the performance measures for all students varies depending on the test. TCAP Math targets seem overly ambitious for grades 4-8 if not impossible to reach given previous results as a baseline. For instance, from 2011-12 to 2016-17 Hispanic students are seen as improving from 40% to 60% on the TCAP math test.

The information contained in this section does not provide a high-quality approach toward showing how it will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action, nor does it provide the reader with information surrounding how it will review and improve the performance measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

5

1

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

While the applicant states in this section that a key goal is to move 75% of its teachers to a personalized learning environment, it does not provide the evaluation tool to be used to determine if 1) this goal has been met and 2) what action would be taken if the goal is not met. This appears to be the only key goal in the proposal. This section requires a means to evaluate the effectiveness of RTTT-D funded activities. This has not happened. The applicant has indicated instead that professional development will be offered through instructional coaches and education technology lead teachers/coaches, but offers no rigorous evaluation of this activity. The timeline in this section sets goals for a teacher four tier incentive program rather than a timeline to evaluate RTTT-D.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has presented a meaningful and clear budget that identifies all funds supporting the project including LEA, State and other Federal funds. The budget is detailed and reasonable and sufficient to support the proposal. The reader is provided with extensive descriptions through the budget and budget narrative of those investments which are one-time and others that are dedicated to the continuing costs of operation.

For instance, the largest expenditures in this budget are for equipment (41%) and personnel (25%).

Included in personnel is a Project Director, Technology/STEM Coordinator, Data Analyst, Project Secretary, Finance Coordinator, Management/Scheduling Coordinator, 12 Technology Coaches (7 elementary schools, 2 at each of the two high schools and 1 at the Career Technical Education Center), Criminal Justice Teachers and Teacher Stipends. These are reasonable expenses amounting to \$5,201,630 by the end of the grant. These are all grant related positions needed to carry out the goals of the project.

The cost of the infrastructure (a one-time purchase) amounts to \$1,024,000. The technology goal of placing a device in each student's hand will, together with the infrastructure cost, amount to \$8,562,364. It is necessary to carry out the applicants emphasis on technology.

Other expenses amount to \$11,995,816. These include management software to create electronic portfolios, indirect costs and the Differentiated Pay program.

All of these expenses are clearly explained within the narrative of the grant.

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

10

6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a plan for sustaining the project goals when the grant ends. However, no state or government leaders have written in support of this project nor have they proposed any financial assistance at the conclusion of the grant period. There are no descriptions of how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments or use this information to inform future investments. Lacking is a high-quality plan to evaluate the program and its outcomes that could be used to inform future investments.

The applicant at the end of the program proposes to do the following:

1. Grant hirings will be terminated at the end of the grant period.
2. There will be a systematic renewal program that will be assumed through a combination of state, federal and local funds.
3. The capacity of teachers will have been increased to the point that further training can be taken over by school personnel. While professional development will be ongoing, the big ticket items will not be needed.
4. Like the teachers, need for training students will diminish and will be taken over by district staff.
5. The instructional coaches are already in place and will continue at the conclusion of the grant through local, state and federal funding.
6. The Teacher Tier Program that allows teachers to be trained and provides stipends and bonuses for teachers will no longer be needed.
7. The infrastructure will be in place as a result of RTTT-D

Most of these expenditures are one-time rather than ongoing. This will allow a smooth transition from RTTT-D and continuation of the proposed program.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	7

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has described several partnerships--Tennessee Technology Center, Elite Behavior Analysis, Hiwassee Mental Health, local colleges and businesses--that would support non-educational needs of students. Especially important to this is the McMinn Educational Foundation that has been instrumental in establishing partnerships between the school and community. The Cherokee Health Organization partnership contributes to the mental well being of students as does the Hiwassee Mental Health organization.

Seven population-level desired results have been offered dealing with increasing proficiency rates in 3rd grade reading and math in grades 4-8 reading and math. At the secondary level increased proficiency rates are the focus of Algebra I and English II. The applicant seeks to improve the attendance and graduation rate of students.

The results for the selected indicators are monitored through benchmarks correlated with the Annual Measurable Objectives. This is tied directly to the performance measures presented earlier. Through a comprehensive assessment conducted to examine multiple sources of data in order to identify the most important needs within the schools, the district will assist in gathering data in specific areas such as: student achievement, curriculum instruction, professional development, physical and mental well-being, parental and community involvement and school perspective and organization. The data will be evaluated to prioritize the most pressing needs of the school. Data will be disaggregated based on gender, race, economically disadvantaged and limited English proficiency in order to compare the achievement among subgroups. Data will be examined across multiple years, grade levels or schools to identify patterns and trends which need to be addressed.

Since all students in this district are participating students, the district has not offered any strategy to scale the model beyond participating students other than to devise a staggered implementation of the program.

The district has developed a program to incorporate student health care on site as well as a breakfast program and mental health care. The STEM Hub supplements the math, science, technology and engineering program at these schools.

This section needs to clearly define how these agencies (partnerships) are aligned with the goals of the program for improving education.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has addressed the four core educational assurance areas. They have adopted both standards and assessments that could lead to preparing students to succeed in college and careers. While they have provided some information about assessing student progress and designing a personalized course of study leading to individual student success at times the narrative seems to end abruptly. Through the Teacher Tier Program, they provide a means of rewarding teachers but little is present regarding the retention of teachers. A strong emphasis has been placed on Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities to positively affect teacher improvement in the classroom but the information requires an indepth treatment. Goals for this program include providing greater numbers of students with effective and highly-effective teachers and principals and decreasing the achievement gaps. Performance measures emphasize an increase in student graduation rates.

The goals mentioned above are all good goals, but the applicant does not provide a high-quality plan in describing many of its proposed changes. The reader is left without a concrete and clear expression of where this proposal is going. In short, there are many things that are planned but are left unconnected or tied together. While it is fine to place technology in the hands of students or to build upon the infrastructure, it is more important to see exactly how this will provide for a personalized learning environment. We have been given no clear knowledge of how this investment will affect the teacher except to say that he/she will be provided with professional development. What this means to children and their use of technology must be clearly spelled out. The lack of a fully detailed narrative in many of these sections that would define the process of creating a personalized learning environment for both teachers and students is a major problem for this proposal.

Total	210	93
--------------	------------	-----------



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0055TN-3 for McMinn County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The core educational assurances are in place, as evidenced by implementing American Diploma standards, Common Core standards and planned implementation of PARCC assessments. The district is in its third year of implementing the Tennessee Educator Advancement Model that links evaluation with student growth and supports and rewards effective teachers and principals. The district does not have a designated turnaround school, but is cognizant of individual school's

needs and plans to commit resources to its lagging high school.

The application is clear in its vision for student traits and characteristics that result from personalized learning environments. It also clearly outlines the traits teachers must possess to develop this "new" student. The applicant presents a compelling description of its vision for the classroom experience and is successful in explaining how its plan for student and teacher development will lead to comprehensive reform.

The applicant approaches accelerated student learning by creating pathways of learning. A number of pathways are already in place. The proposal adds five additional pathways and an emphasis on STEM education through its Career and Technical Education program. All pathways are envisioned to include hands-on curriculum and collaborative projects.

The applicant describes classrooms as flexible, student-centered spaces with connectivity and technology. How students and teachers will interact differently is less clear, although there is an plan for collaborative, cross-curricular projects with small groups of students working with at least two teachers.

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

10

7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant will include all school in the reform proposal. The district free/reduced lunch rate of 68.7% makes all schools eligible.

All participating schools are listed; seven elementary schools, two high schools and a career and technical education center.

The number of all students, low-income students, high need students and the number of educators are listed in the application. The applicant referenced a "schools demographics" chart that is not found in the application. The intention is to phase in training and technology over a three year period.

Although the proposal states that all students and all teachers will participate in the reform plan, examples provided are geared to high school; examples of how elementary students and teachers will approach learning and teaching would strengthen the case for LEA-wide reform.

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

10

8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

LEA-wide reform and change are embedded in the proposal as the plan includes all schools from the onset. The applicant describes its vision of a personalized learning environment including a vision in four years' time of student and teacher attributes and changes to the way classrooms look and operate with an emphasis on learning anywhere, anytime. The applicant describes anticipated student activities that will be expected with the infusion of digital devices. The applicant details the professional development activities that are needed to transform the learning environment. The applicant provides timelines for each project that outline a three-year process for implementation. The plan includes anticipated deliverables that, if realized, reflect successful implementation and scaling: certificates of Tier Completion and training, observations and formal and informal evaluations, student portfolios.

If the timelines for professional development are met and if teachers embrace the vision of reform as described in the application, it is likely that the plan will lead to system-wide transformation.

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

10

9

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes baseline data and target goals for improvements in student achievement as measured by the TCAP assessments in math and reading grades 3-8 and End-of-Course assessments in Algebra I and English II. The target goals for all students and by subgroups assume an average 3% increase each year; achievable and moderately ambitious. Similarly, baseline data and target goals are provided for reducing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates and increasing college enrollment for all students. Reduction in gaps average 1% per year; achievable and moderately ambitious. Graduation rates already surpass the national average and .5% per year targets are achievable and ambitious. College enrollment targets are achievable and more ambitious than the other target areas with significant gains projected for Hispanic and Black students.

Baseline data is provided for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 and is evidence of the district's ability to improve student performance in most subgroups and most assessment areas.

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
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This criteria asks for a four-year record of success of improving student achievement and increasing equity.</p> <p>Evidence, such as student performance data, of a four-year track record of success is absent from the application.</p> <p>The applicant describes a variety of initiatives in place intended to improve student achievement and increase equity. These initiatives are not linked to evidence of improved student achievement or increased equity. These initiatives include the placement of Promethean Boards and Smart Boards in every classroom, Math Labs in each elementary school and one high school, instructional coaches in each school, RTI, ongoing formative assessments, professional learning communities, incentives for teachers, TEAM for educator evaluation and School Cast parent communication tool. No doubt these are good initiatives however, evidence that the district's initiatives have raised student achievement, improved graduation rates or increased college enrollment rates is not included in the application.</p> <p>One school is noted for its improvement as it moved from designation as a School Improvement I to a Reward School, indicating one year of student progress.</p> <p>Information is provided to parents to inform them of student progress. There is no evidence presented that notification of school activities inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant addresses this criteria by providing web locations, physical addresses and district policies that make salary schedules and expenditures transparent and available to the public. Regular School Board meetings are held at district schools. These meetings include a discussion of financial transactions and they are open to the public. The district is moving towards the implementation of an ePlan for all programs and all finances, which will make information even more accessible and transparent by linking expenditures and programs.</p> <p>Actual salaries for instructional staff, actual salaries for teachers and actual non-personnel expenditures are available but less accessible. There is a procedure for requesting the information. How that information is subsequently provided to the requester is not clear.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	6
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a description of a new State position, Director of Personalized Learning. The applicant has discussed competency-based credit with the State and there are no State restrictions that would deter that process. The applicant also discussed credit for MOOCs and how to include the scores of 7th and 8th graders who take Algebra at the high school with the State DOE.</p> <p>Sufficient evidence of State legal, statutory and regulatory requirements that would support or impede implementation is not described in the application.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	9
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Development of the proposal began with a visioning process that included a team of teachers, principals and central office personnel. The applicant explained that the committee came to consensus about what characteristics students, teachers and classrooms would have in five years time. The committee met with the local teacher association, and its representative assembly voted unanimously to approve the application. The committee used video-conferencing to meet with students, educators, parents from all nine participating schools (all schools in the district) and business people. It is</p>		

not clear how this process impacted the content of the proposal. The application included numerous letters of support from business, one health/behavior organizations, the teacher association and PTOs.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>In this section, the applicant presents a brief summary of their overall proposal. No evidence is presented that supports a high quality plan to engage students in their own learning experience. It is not clear how students will understand that learning K-12 is linked with their goals or college/career readiness. Missing is a discussion of how increased access to virtual field trips, Problem- Project- or Placed-based learning and/or digital devices will deepen learning and motivate students. Also missing are processes to encourage and master character skills such as teamwork, critical thinking or perseverance.</p> <p>There is mention of support to develop college/career goals based on individual interests using KUDER, a tool that assists students determine post high school pathways. There is hope that the use of multiple technologies will increase engagement by offering virtual trips and experiences outside the classroom, supported by fiber optic technology. .</p> <p>In this section, there is no discussion of a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development. The discussion of feedback is minimal, limited to a mention of student portfolios, student-created rubrics and peer critiques to determine progress.</p> <p>Also in this section, there is no mention of strategies or accommodations for high need students.</p> <p>There is a mention of a technology coach at each of the schools. How students will access technology support and how students will learn to use digital tools to manage their learning is unclear.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	12
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This section touches on the criteria and, taken alone, is not sufficient in details to be considered a high quality plan. The budget narrative does include a general description of training activities and timelines for teacher professional development.</p> <p>Details are missing that describe how teachers will gain skills and implement a personalized learning environment for all students. Overall, the applicant provides a weak response, more of an outline than an implementation plan.</p> <p>Professional development teams are in place in the participating schools. Access to information, resources and tools is available in multiple formats and in multiple ways. Information is accessible for continuous improvement through TVAAS (Tennessee Value Added Assessment System) and teachers receive extensive training on the utilization of data. A plan is in place for increasing the number of students with effective and highly effective teachers and principals.</p>		

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	10
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant plans to hire a Project Director to work with central office staff to fully implement the reforms.</p> <p>Each school has a school leadership team in place with autonomy and flexibility granted by the Board of Education and the Director of Schools. It is not stated how the leadership teams are structured or how the leadership team might support the implementation of the reform proposal.</p>		

The district has a long term goal of allowing students to earn credit based on mastery instead of seat time.

The applicant does not address demonstration of mastery at multiple times and ways.

The applicant states that its mission is to provide learning resources and instructional practices that are fully accessible to all students. How this is accomplished is not described.

Elements of a high-quality plan, such a timelines, deliverable and persons responsible, are missing from the response to this criteria.

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

10

5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This criteria is minimally addressed by the applicant.

Access to technology, content, tools and other learning resources is limited to school sites. Technical support for teachers will be provided by Technology Coaches in each school.

The use of information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems is not addressed.

An interoperable data system is available on the district website. There is stated a hope, not a plan, for expanding the system to include human resource data, budget data and instructional improvement data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes plans to administer and analyze a survey twice a year to assess stakeholders' view of the status of improvements. There is a plan to develop a high quality plan for continuous improvement based on the survey responses. Also planned is a professional development needs assessment to inform decisions about professional development. Already in place is the use of student and subgroup data to close learning gaps.

Few details are provided such as what information will be asked of stakeholders in a survey, what visitors to classrooms will be looking for and how their observations will consistently be applied to an improvement process, or how professional development will be monitored and measured. The applicant did not provide evidence of a high quality plan in this section. The discussion lacked detail of student achievement data with the exception of learning gap information. The discussion in this section did not include a plan to publicly share information about the continuous improvement process.

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

5

2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a list of communication tools that can be used to spread the word about grant goals and activities. Some are school-based, such a school newsletters, PTA meetings and parents conferences; some are central office-generated such as open forums, press releases and open presentations. Stated is the applicant's intention to maintain a two-way conversation through the development of a comprehensive communications plan. The applicant does not speak to a need for different messages or tools for internal and external stakeholders. A stronger plan would describe the rationale for communicating with various stakeholders, what the stakeholders may bring to the table to support the goals of the plan and how the district would process the input from a planned two-way conversation. While the intention to develop a plan is good, the response to the criteria is weak. A list of existing ways to reach stakeholders is not sufficient.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant proposes 15 Performance Measures. Performance Measures include an increase in the number of students with highly effective and effective teachers of record and principals. PreK-3 Performance Measures are 3rd grade TCAP reading assessment, TCAP math assessment. The non-cognitive Measure is attendance. A rationale for the assessment is included. Grades 4-8 Performance Measures are TCAP reading, math and attendance with the same rationale. Grades 9-12 Performance Measures include increasing the number of students completing and submitting the FAFSA, administration of the PLAN test to assess 10th grade readiness for college/career, increasing the percentage of 12th grade graduates from the CTE Program, increasing student performance on Algebra I tests and English II tests, increasing the 12th grade graduation rate and increasing high school attendance rates.</p> <p>All performance measures include targets for all students and by subgroup.</p> <p>The applicant explains how teachers and principals are rated highly effective or effective based on student growth.</p> <p>There is no discussion about reviewing or improving the measures over time, but since the measures are part of Tennessee's accountability program, the district may not be able to change or adapt the assessment.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The information provided by the applicant in this section supports, with more specific details, the district's vision of the anticipated effects of the reform by describing future student activities and educator professional development.</p> <p>The applicant did not describe a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of grant-funded activities. Instead of a plan for a rigorous evaluation of RTTD investments, there is an assumption that the planned professional development, the provision of digital devices and other technologies, the expansion of the Virtual Academy, the upgrades to wiring and wireless and expansion of Career and Technology Education will lead to attainment of the goals of the grant. The emphasis is on accomplishing the planned activities and projects without a mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the investments.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The budget is reasonable and sufficient to support the applicant's proposal. The district identifies local funds that will be used to support Technology Coaches and e-rate funds to support infrastructure. Equipment (digital devices, STEM modules and software) is considered a one-time investment although the purchases will be spread over four years.</p> <p>There is a very well-stated and thoughtful rationale for the proposal as a whole and for each project-level budget. Each project is designed to feed into the accomplishment of the overall goals of the reforms. All reform proposal funds are Race to the Top funds.</p> <p>With the exception of equipment, much of the funding is in salaries for new hires and incentives for teachers. This will be difficult to maintain after the grant period.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides descriptions of the overall plan and each project in terms of its sustainability. The budget for the plan includes one-time investments and builds on the district's work over the past several years. The applicant will absorb some costs of sustaining the reforms into state formula funds and plans to use a combination of anticipated local, state and federal funds to fill any gaps. The applicant includes a discussion of what costs are ongoing and what will require additional funds to sustain.</p> <p>In this Sustainability section, the applicant does not include a process to evaluate the effectiveness of past investments or an intention to use data to inform future investments. There is no evidence that state and local government leaders will</p>		

provide support for the goals of the project after the grant term. The applicant did not include an estimated budget for years after the grant term.

Sustainability plans are difficult to create with certainty; the applicant presents an adequate plan in the mid-range of scoring.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district has numerous partnerships already in place with higher education, health services providers, churches, libraries, government agencies and the county education foundation.

The value added from this proposal is the planned comprehensive needs assessment to gather and analyze data and align community resources with the needs of individual students, families and schools. The assessment will include student achievement, curriculum instruction, professional development, physical and mental well being, parental and community involvement and school perspective and organization. Data will be evaluated to prioritize needs and to assess the impact of educational, family and community supports. Interviews and surveys will be used for evaluation and improvement.

There is great potential for new and existing partnerships to have a significant impact if implemented within the context of the proposal and are maintained over time. The analysis of the needs assessment and subsequent deployment of community resources is reflected in a score in the high range.

The Performance Measures proposed are a subset of the Performance Measures from (E)(3) and will be tracked by the same personnel assigned by the district.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has met the Absolute Priority by building on the core educational assurance areas through the implementation of American Diploma standards, adoption of Common Core standards, the use of the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System for evaluation of educators, and the new Tennessee Educator Advancement Model. The district rewards effective teachers and principals and the proposal includes significant professional development opportunities and requirements for educators to learn to implement personalized learning environments for students of all ages. Resources will be directed to the lagging high school in the district. Technology will be deployed to accelerate student learning and a plan to implement competency-based credit will be facilitated through the state's new Director of Personalized Learning. The district is committed to using Professional Learning Communities to develop cross-curricular projects, and to personalization through electronic portfolios of students work, virtual classes and field trips and expanded learning pathways.

Total	210	130
--------------	------------	------------



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0055TN-4 for McMinn County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides for a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in the four core educational assurance areas. The first assurance area: adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy is met by focusing on the implementation of the common core standards, PARRC assessment measures and the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System. They continue this focus by deepening student learning through instructional coaching practices and response to intervention strategies.</p> <p>The second assurance area: building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction is met by personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests which are provided through problem based learning through one-to-one mobile technology devices.</p> <p>The third assurance area: recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed the most is supported through personalizing each teacher's growth plan. There are incentives that are given to recruit quality candidates in "hard to staff" areas of high schools and elementary schools but details are not provided of what they are.</p> <p>The fourth assurance area: turning around lowest achieving schools is addressed by replacing equipment and software. They also identify schools with the highest area of need based on student achievement.</p> <p>There is evidence of planning around personalized learning, but details of experiences of students who would be moving towards personalized learning environments are lacking. The selection criteria calls for a description of the classroom experiences for teachers participating in personalized learning environments. There is a lack of detail provided by the applicant to create a vision of what that plan entails.</p> <p>Although dialogue is provided of discussion with State representatives, it does not provide evidence that personal learning environments are a priority, nor does it create a vision of how the district plans to move forward with professional learning environments in a overall reform plan.</p> <p>The vision is established that sets up the implementation or moving forward into many reform areas as stated above. There is a lack of convincibility in linking these reform efforts into a vision of ambitious yet achievable goals set out in a ambitious yet achievable plan.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's approach to implementation supports a high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation plan. A description of the process that the applicant used to select the schools is provided by identifying all students in all schools that will be participating from the initial start of the grant.</p> <p>A list of the schools who will participate in the grant is provided.</p> <p>The student population is 5724 students with 3,465 students from low income families. The high need numbers are 3,984, while 407 teachers will be served.</p> <p>The percentage of students from low-income families is 78%.</p>		

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District provides information on providing instructional coaches, one to one technology devices, personalized learning plans, new levels of compensation and assessment, reteach and RTI, but what the LEA-wide reform lacks is details on how it will be scaled up and the evidence of how each reform translates into helping students reach their goals.</p> <p>The applicant does a nice job of defining the instructional coaches and their role. Coaches are responsible for embedded professional development. They provide mentoring and modeling. They lead Professional Learning Communities and coordinate data teams that analyze data and disseminate that information to teachers.</p> <p>Details of the one to one technology devices and its plan of reform and how it is going to scale up and transform into meaningful change to support district wide change is lacking in detail, this makes it difficult to classify it as a highly-qualified plan.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's approach to the goals of improved student learning and performance on summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates and college enrollments is to increase technology, instructional coaches, response to intervention, and ongoing formative assessments, academic interventional and graduation coaches. These tools are strong reform items, but there lacks detail in a plan that shows how it is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity.</p> <p>Process and procedures is lacking of how these tools will be used to increase the performance on summative assessments, decrease the achievement gaps, increase the graduation rates and improve college enrollment. Although they present the reforms, there is a lack of evidence of a high quality plan of how they plan to implement and use the reforms to reach their ambitious target goals.</p> <p>The overall reading goal for 3-8 is to move from 47.4% in 2011-12 to 63.9% in 2018. The goal is ambitious and realistic.</p> <p>The achievement gap target for all students 3-8 is to move from 20.5% in 2012-13 to 14..81 in 2017/18 post grant. The goal is adequate, but questionable as ambitious.</p> <p>The graduation rates will move from 92.3% in 2012/13 to 94.8% post grant in 2017/18. The goal is ambitious and realistic.</p> <p>The College enrollment rate goal is to move from 51.4% in 2011/12 to 58.4% in 2016/17 The goal is adequate, but questionable as ambitious.</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	7
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is expected to demonstrate a clear track record of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching.</p> <p>The applicant has a lack of evidence of how they have improved student learning outcomes and closed achievement gaps over the last four years</p> <p>There is a lack of evidence of data showing the raising of student achievement, high school graduation and college enrollment rates over the last four years.</p> <p>Ambitious and significant reforms are evident by examples of Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model, Interactive White Boards, Math Labs, Recovery Programs, Instructional Coaches, Early Intervention models and formative assessments which have all advanced student learning and achievement as well as increased equity.</p> <p>There are examples of ambitious and significant reforms provided in its persistently lowest-achieving schools. One of the schools was rewarded as a Tennessee Reward School this past year for its significant reforms from a low achieving school.</p>		

There is a lack of evidence of student performance data available to students, and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

Overall the applicant has a strong reform vision, with strong assessment and standards to drive instruction, but lacks supporting detail over the last four years as well as using performance data to enhance student and parent participation, instruction and services.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides for increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments, including by making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures for K-12 instruction.

Evidence is provided in appendix C of a high level of transparency in LEA processes practices through Fiscal Management goals, Annual Operating budget, Accounting System, Financial Reports and Records, Audits and State and Federal Aid Eligibility Determination.

The personnel salaries at the school level for instructional staff, teachers and non-personnel expenditures are not evident although a salary schedule and the assignments of teachers, principals and support personnel is provided through the State and Federal Aid Eligibility Determination.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	----------

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Although It is commendable that the State of Tennessee has created a position titled Director of Personalized Learning. Thereby showing State support for implementation of personalized learning environments. there lacks information on the successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under state legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environment.

The Applicant has provided a vision towards implementing several components around personalized learning, and a competency based credit system; Therefore they show support for personalized learning environments and independent mastery. Massive Open Online Courses are being discussed as an option for secondary student access for personalized learning environments, as well as advanced elementary students taking classes from High School Teachers and Distance delivery options for personalized learning.

Although all of these personalized learning strategies are to be commended, there is a lack of data supporting State, legal, statutory and regulatory requirements to implement them.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	10
--------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	-----------

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Evidence is provided for stakeholder and community support through staff and school site leadership, meetings of teachers, principals, instructional coaches and system level administrators. Additionally, Parent, Teacher Organizations as well as local business and civic leaders participated. Letters of support were provided from several entities. It would have been beneficial to have more detailed information and outcomes of the varied stakeholder engagements.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	11

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides general ideas of using the computer program KUDER as well as Placed Based Learning Objectives

for preparing students for college and career. The use of Technology Facilitators, Instructional Coaches, Teachers and Counselors will aid and guide portfolio development for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- career-ready.

The plan lacks evidence of implementation and instructional strategies for students to pursue rigorous course of study aligned to college-career standards.

The approach to learning should engage and empowers all learners, in particular high-need students with support of parents and educators so they understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals. There is a lack of supporting detail in this area.

The applicant provide strong evidence of identifying and pursuing learning and developing goals linked to college-and career- ready standards or graduation requirements. .They show strong evidence of how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress towards those goals.

The applicant shows evidence of involvement in deep learning experiences and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. They do a nice job of mastering critical academic content. There is a lack of detail on goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, and creativity.

The applicant provides evidence that the student will have access to a personalized sequence of instructional content, a high-quality instructional approaches and high-quality content. There is a lack of supporting detail on regularly and ongoing feedback as well as accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students.

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

20

11

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a 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 includes an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that enable students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards.

The applicant provides an approach to teaching and leading that helps educators to improve instruction and increase their capacity to support student progress toward meeting standards. All participating educators engage in training and in professional teams or communities.

Although the applicant reports that they will have Professional Learning Communities there is no evidence of how the discussion will surround college and career expectations, students academic needs and graduation requirements. The PLC's are expected to surround students engagement in common and individual tasks, academic work, collaborative work and project based learning.

It is noted that there are commendable practices with CTE students and PLC's. Electronic Portfolio's and teacher training on effective use of computerized learning is noteworthy. Although, there is no evidence to show that more than implementation will be monitored.

The use of individualized portfolios to guide individualized student instruction is recognized. There is no discussion on what the expectation is of the portfolio is and how it will be measured and monitored. There is evidence of feedback by the new Tennessee Educator Advancement Model (TEAM) evaluation that was put in place in 2011-12.

There are several strong areas of detail around training systems and practices to continuously improve school progress.

It is recognized that a plan is established to support ELL students although it is vague.

There is a lack of a plan addressing hard to staff schools and special education.

The extent to which the applicant has a high-quality plan is lacking in detail. The standards, assessment, and reform focus areas all show they will have an immediate impact on Teaching and Leading.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	9
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning by showing evidence of providing support and services to all participating schools.</p> <p>The LEA provides for school leadership teams. They are given the flexibility and autonomy required for the full implementation of the grant. There is a lack of detail in roles and responsibilities for school leadership teams in participating schools.</p> <p>There is a concerted effort to move towards an opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent. There is some evidence of hesitancy in the organization provided in this area. There is evidence that the District is tackling the issue of demonstrated mastery of standards with multiple tools.</p> <p>There is evidence of a variety of methods of instructional practices for English Learners. No discussion of students with disabilities. These areas both lacking in detail.</p> <p>There is a lack of LEA practices, polices and rules surrounding such areas as roles and responsibilities of the school leadership teams. The reviewer has concerns about implementation of demonstrated mastery as well as providing a variety of methods of support for sub-groups.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Family Resource Center and Family Engagement Coordinator are part of the applicant's vision to support that all stakeholders regardless of income have access to the necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal.</p> <p>The applicant currently uses interoperable data systems that provide student information. There is a goal to move towards human resource data, budget data, and instructional improvement data. The applicant currently provides the data on the its web page.</p> <p>There is a concern that all students, parents, educators and other stakeholders have appropriate levels of technical support. A variety of information technology systems are provided to export student data. The applicant provides for a significant amount of man power, equipment and infrastructure. The plan lacks detail on how it will be implemented, managed and supported. There is overall a lack of detail for LEA and school infrastructure.</p> <p>There is a lack of information on technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems.</p> <p>The plan for LEA and school infrastructure that supports personalized learning is lacking in detail.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides information about surveys for internal and external stakeholders as well as regular classroom visits by instructional coaches, administrators and/or central office to be use for continuous improvement process.</p> <p>Professional development needs assessment will be one of the first steps in addressing ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement in the area of teacher training.</p> <p>The following resources are listed by the applicant to communicate facets of the grant. Individual school newsletters, PTA Meetings and newsletters, open forums, press releases, open presentations, school cast systems, survey monkey, school bulletin boards, marques, handbooks and special events.</p> <p>Information is lacking on how the applicant will measure the quality of its investments.</p>		

The continuous improvement process lacks detail in how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the the quality of its investments. The process calls for regular feedback on progress towards project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. There is a lack of supporting evidence in this area as well.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides for a plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

The applicant proposes to use the following plan to communicate all facet's of the grant which will be provided through school newsletters, PTA meetings and newsletters, open forums, press releases, open presentations, school calling system, survey monkey school bulletin boards, marques, school handbooks.

Although there is strong support of communicaton and engagement. It would have been beneficial to understand what kind of information the leadership groups had decided to share and why. The feedback received and how the applicant was going to use the feedback to monitor, communicate and make adjustments to the plan. This would have made ongoing communication and engagement evident, therefore meeting the requirements of a high-quality plan.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides performance measures overall and by sub-group with annual targets for required and applicant proposed performance measures. The applicant provies rationale for selecting the measure, how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed implementation success. The applicant lacks detail in showing how it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation.

McMinn County Schools provides evidence of ambitious yet achievable performance measures as they gauge highly effective teachers and principals. The rationale for choosing the performance measure is based around the highly effective status according to the final TEAM Evaluation Model composite. A principal or a teacher whose students achieve one and one-half grade levels of growth within an academic year is deemed highly effective.

The applicant has identified special needs as an area that needs additional support to close the achievement gap in their performance measures. There is a lack of detail on how the applicant plans to address this sub-group other then its general reform effort for all students and schools. There is a lack of detail on how the measurement will be reviewed and improved over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a high-quality plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top - District funded activities, such as professional development and activities that employ technology.

Although the applicant provides a plan for evaluating effectiveness of investments the plan does not provide an evaluation model; however goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties are identified. The plan lacks detail in what will happen when timelines and areas of mastery are not met.

The applicant discusses the implementation of the common core and personalized learning environments.

There is convincing evidence that the professional development activities will provide a model of continuous improvement. In the development and evaluation of activities that employ technology, the plan of how the one-to-one technology devices, the individualized learning plans and the professional development all come together is lacking detail of a coherent plan.

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>McMinn County proposes to spend \$20,000,000 through the RTTT-District Level Grant. The majority of the budget is allocated to equipment costs, teacher stipends and software and virtual school development.</p> <p>The majority of the grant is spent on infrastructure which provides for a high level of sustainability because of one time costs. The applicant sites the desire to put mobile technology devices in the hands of students, enhance professional development as key components of the reform vision.</p> <p>The applicant's budget, including the budget narrative and tables support the project.</p> <p>A detailed description of the budget is provided that is both reasonable and justifiable. The budget leans heavily on one time expenditures, therefore ensuring support of ongoing sustainability.</p> <p>Equipment costs and professional development are key components of the budget.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	5
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has a plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. There is a lack of evidence of a plan to address how the applicant will evaluate improvements in productivity and outcomes to inform a post-grant budget. There is lack of a budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources and use of funds.</p> <p>The budget and sustainability is both reasonable and realistic with the majority of the expenditures in equipment and training.</p> <p>The budget assumptions, potential sources and uses of the funds are well defined.</p> <p>The plan does not show sufficient evidence of support from State and local government leaders, nor is there evidence of a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of past investments.</p> <p>Overall, there is evidence of how the applicant will sustain project goals. The costs the applicant represents are specifically focused on one time costs to implement equipment, software, professional development and a virtual school to implement personalized learning. In order to be high-quality the plan the applicant would need additional detail on how the post-grant budget would be generated based on improvements and outcomes, and it would have been ideal to provide a budget for the three years after the term of the grant.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a plan for resource alignment and integrated services to meet the competitive preference priority. The applicant provides private and public partnerships through the adopt a school program, a memorandum of understanding with Family Resource, and partnerships with three institutions of higher learning.</p> <p>The applicant provides evidence of a coherent and sustainable partnership with private and public organizations. The applicant provides evidence of population-level desired results for students in the LEA that align with and support the applicant's proposal.</p> <p>There is evidence of building the capacity of staff to disaggregate the data as well as the information being reviewed by comprehensive needs assessment committees. Details of decision making processes, engaging parents and families and assessing the applicants process is lacking.</p> <p>The applicant is expected to engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions to improve results over time and in addressing student, family, and school needs. There is a lack of evidence of how the applicant is showing evidence of, a plan to routinely assess progress in implementation to maximize impact and resolve challenges and problems that may occur.</p>		

The applicant receives some credit because it identifies its annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level and describes its desired results for students.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant builds on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career- ready graduation requirements.</p> <p>The applicant coherently and comprehensively addresses how it will build on the core education assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators. Specific examples are academic interventions and graduation coaches, on-going formative assessments, instructional coaches and increased availability of technology. These items are aligned with college-career-ready standards or college-and career-ready graduation requirements.</p> <p>The anticipation is that these items will accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across students groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. What the applicant is lacking is detail on how it will implement, monitor and sustain the vision.</p>		
Total	210	123