



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0037NC-1 for Moore County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

There are some positive aspects of the stated reform vision. For example, the applicant's stated objective is to transform low-performing schools, and to provide more opportunities for students and teachers. In addition, the applicant reports that they are currently developing an infrastructure to utilize technology that was part of an earlier Race to the Top plan. The proposal suggests that this will provide equitable access to digital resources throughout their school system. In addition, as part of the Race to the Top state program the applicant indicates that current funding is supporting five strands in the scope of work including standards and assessments, data systems to inform instructional design, teachers and leaders, turning around low achieving schools, and the development of STEM fields. Although there are positive aspects of the reform vision, more information on how the proposed plan will enhance existing resources is necessary to convey a coherent and comprehensive reform vision.

The proposal is focused on the transition to common core standards and professional development related to these standards over the previous three years. The applicant has also developed a district-wide program to offer additional reading and math support. This program involves assigning a career coach to work with students for the development of an individualized plan that seeks to strengthen areas of academic weakness in high school. The applicant reports that this program incorporates data into the review process of identifying students for high level math and science courses as well as advanced placement courses. They have initiated a success program, as a research pilot program. If successful the plan is to replicate this program throughout the district. The applicant has indicated the development of an assessment database. This database would contain practice tests and vocabulary drills based on the common core and standards for science, math, English, and social studies. According to the proposal teachers would be able to utilize information from this database to form instruction. The applicant notes the utilization of an additional assessment system for teachers to access individual student performance data and predictive data regarding individual student expected growth. The proposal provides information on the anticipated enhancement of wireless capability, security, and other factors. More information regarding the utilization of data in instruction would be helpful. Although certain aspects of this section appear positive, the applicant is lacking a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks based on student interests.

The focus on building work in four core assurance areas as defined by the competition are limited. The applicant indicates placing high-performing principals in low schools, in low-income areas. The proposal suggests that the effective leadership of these principles influence teacher's capacities and motivation. This leadership program is funded through the districts Race to the Top program funding. The applicant has detailed how they will fill up on their work in the fourth quarter educational assurance areas. The applicant has detailed an approach to accelerating student achievement, and increasing equity through a personalized support system. Although there is some detailed information on what the experience will be for teachers participating in personalized learning environments, there is limited information describing the classroom experience, and what it will be like for students. More information on the classroom experience for students would be helpful for understanding and envisioning the overall plan.

The applicant scored in the midrange, because a description of the classroom experience for participating students and teachers in a personalized learning environment was limited. Regarding the articulation of a comprehensive and coherent reform vision, the applicant is lacking in the high-quality plan. There is limited information articulating eight clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, and deepening student learning.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	6
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has developed a tier system defined by a pyramid consisting of four tiers. Tier IV schools are considered the lowest performing schools indicated by state test scores and low benchmark performance for more than two years. The applicant has also targeted tier 2 schools for assistance in achievement gaps, and for not meeting federal or state benchmarks for one year. Tier 4 schools have been designated as a priority. These schools have at least 81% low income students. The proposed project is part of the reform initiative targeting 7000 students and approximately 500 faculty members in eleven out of twenty three schools in the district. The applicant indicates a population with a significant wealth disparity, and the poverty rate that roughly 12.9%. Furthermore, according to the applicant 46% of students in the district received free and reduced lunch, where 60% of the participating students are economically disadvantaged. The applicant indicates a graduation rate of 81.7%, meaning that almost 20% of the cohort is not graduating. The applicant indicates that their district did not meet annual measurable growth targets last year. Only 10/23 schools met all annual measurable growth targets, and 14 schools improved their performance. Applicant indicates spending time analyzing data which revealed that minority students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities were areas of concern. This information is important to note, because the applicant provides data on needs in the districts with a limited comprehensive and coherent reform vision. The applicant listed the participating schools as required in the assessment criteria. In addition, the applicant has listed the total number participating students and the percentage from low-income families. The applicant has indicated that 60% of participating students are from lower-income families, surpassing the requirement of 40%. The applicant has also detailed the number of students from high needs areas and indicated that 37 of the participating students are homeless. The process for selecting schools was also detailed in this section. Therefore, the applicant met requirements detailed in the listed criteria.

This section scored in the midrange because more information is needed on the actual criteria used to develop the pyramid system referenced the proposal. The applicant states that they selected schools who would benefit from this program, but how and why they would benefit is not clearly describe with specific detail. This lack of information is problematic. The applicant did not adequately describe the process by which schools were selected to participate, in a manner consistent with the intention of the competition. Again, for this reason the applicant scored in the midrange.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Certain aspects of this section of the proposal could be made clearer and supported by more detailed information. For example, when the applicant states that 'effective and accessible teachers will serve as professional learning coaches and instructional design architects', there is limited information detailing what exactly ineffective and accessible teacher means specifically in the stated context, and no supporting evidence to suggest that current teachers are necessarily effective and accessible.

The applicant has submitted a logic model as an attachment included in the appendix. The attached logic model includes inputs, outputs, and outcomes. However, the proposal lacks sufficient data on the timeline, deliverables, and persons responsible. For example, the persons responsible for outcomes are generally listed by vague titles, such as "instructional design innovation director." According to the logic model this individual would be responsible for 80% of students having access to quality teacher, learners graduating college and career ready, decreasing gaps in achievement, increasing school graduation rates, and other factors. Sufficient details on how this individual will impact of these changes, and sufficient details on meeting these goals are lacking. In addition, deliverables are lacking in the logic model.

The application refers to scaling the project to students beyond the targeted schools, however details on how this will occur are not fully sufficient. In addition, these details are not addressed fully within the logic model. More details regarding how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated beyond the participating schools would be helpful for the evaluation of this proposal. This section of the proposal scored in the midrange for the previously mentioned issues, as well as the failure to provide high-quality plan detailing achievable goals with annual targets.

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

The applicant has detailed annual goals in the form of a logic model. The applicant intends to focus on pre-K through 12 grade bands. The pre-K and kindergarten goals will be assessed using teacher observation records in class assessments. The applicant intends to measure graduation rate data, SAT score data, FAFSA completion data, and college enrollment data. How this information will be utilized would have been helpful in clarifying the goals and the general approach to the project. It was not clear from this section exactly how the applicant intends to raise graduation rates and college enrollment. In addition, this work is an area to increase equity among students.

The applicant has set a goal of eliminating achievement gaps for all students regardless of demographics. The applicant listed baseline data for 2011 and 2012. Baseline data for school year 2012 -2013 was not available. A significant gap in reading proficiency scores exists among subgroups. In some cases, this gap is around 20 to 30 points. The applicant has detailed a plan to lessen these gaps by school year 2017-2018 and in the post-grant. Proficiency status gaps exist in the area of mathematics. The applicant has established the goal of raising the levels of all students and reducing gaps in reading and mathematics, in school year 2017/18 and the post-grant period.

The applicant has provided percentages for overall college enrollment rates. However, this data is not disaggregated among subgroups for school year 2011/12. College enrollment rates for school year 2012/13 were listed at 78%, again however, this information is not disaggregated among subgroups. The applicant has set goals for subgroups for college enrollment. However, it seems unclear if these are reasonable without adequate baseline data. In addition, it's hard to assess these target goals without a clear plan on raising college enrollment rates among subgroups.

This section of the proposal scored in the midrange, because the goals do not seem achievable given the lack of disaggregated data. Although the numbers are potentially achievable the lack of specific disaggregated baseline data in several categories makes it unclear whether or not the applicant possesses the information necessary to achieve the specified goals. The lack of adequate baseline data also makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the applicant has a clear record of success within the specified areas outlined in this section of the proposal, as consistent with the intention of the competition.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided limited information on the extent to which they possess a record of success in the past four years advancing student learning and achievement, and even less information on the extent to which they have increased equity in learning and teaching. The applicant has detailed improvements in lowering dropout rates, and cited statistics supporting this claim. Specifically, the applicant has documented cutting their dropout rate in half from 2007 to 2012. The applicant detailed a modest gain in advanced placement exams taken between 2008 and 2013. The increase in the applicant's graduation rate was modest, from 73.1% in 2008 to 81.7% in 2013. The applicant has detailed gains in performance composites, but it is unclear what these refer to or how they're measured.

The applicant has detailed a partnership with a 'Leadership Academy' used to address the need of effective administration and leadership capacity within the participating districts and throughout the state. The applicant ties enhanced administration and improve leadership to advancing student learning and achievement. The applicant could enhance the proposal by giving examples of how enhanced administration and leadership has approved student learning outcomes, and/or closing the achievement gap, raising student achievement, high school graduation rates or other factors relevant to this section of the proposal. In other words, the applicant would improve this section by better detailing her giving evidence of the connection between enhancement of administration and student achievement.

The applicant notes that they decreased their dropout rate by almost half, and they reference increasing graduation rates. However, the increasing graduation rates are more modest than the decreasing dropout rates. The applicant could enhance their proposal by detailing how these two categories are measured, and explaining why there is a disparity between the two. Demonstrating knowledge of this disparity would help convince the reader of the applicant's capacity to affect these categories. The applicant did provide some speculation for the modest gain in graduation rates, attributing these two turnover among administrators into out of the three high schools.

The applicant provided information on the increase in students taking advanced placement exams. Although this is promising, it is unclear from the proposal whether or not there is increasing opportunity for students to take advanced placement courses. In other words, it is unclear if the number of advanced placement courses offered in the schools has increased. The applicant briefly references a success program designed to introduce more students to AP skills and increase AP potential among underrepresented subgroups. This seems extremely promising. However, there is no data to suggest any increase in the number of underrepresented subgroups taking AP exams or being placed in AP classes. Lack of data in this area is problematic.

The applicant detailed composite performance increases in reading and math among all students, and at risk subgroups. Therefore, the applicant does detail student performance gains consistent with the focus of this section.

In this section of this proposal, the information on outreach to stakeholders was limited. The applicant details access on each school's website that links to school performance data on the primary Department of Education's website. More noteworthy, is that student performance data is sent directly to each household every three weeks along with an

explanation of the student scores, achievement level and the implications. In addition, quarterly parent-teacher conference days are available for parents to ask questions and address concerns. Meetings involving the superintendent and the community, and monthly PTS a meetings are other ways the applicant shares information with stakeholders.

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

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant reports the utilization of a link on its website to the main state Department of Education site with information on salary schedules for each position in the district as well as additional information on the sources of funding, purposes of funding, and specific uses of funding. The applicant included a chart with the information referenced here in the appendix.

The LEA has demonstrated a high level of transparency including processes, practices, and investments. This transparency includes making public by school, the actual school level expenditures for K-12 instruction, pupil support, and school administration. The applicant has provided a chart detailing the information made public. This information includes personnel salaries for all school level instructional staff. The applicant has enhanced transparency by disaggregating data in a number of categories, for example detailing whether or not the funding is derived from state, federal, or local expenditures. In addition, the applicant has enhance transparency by disaggregating data by purpose, including by instructional and noninstructional. The applicant provides information through a program report, which includes areas such as maintenance and exceptional education. The applicant also provides an object code detailing expenditures related to teachers, media specialists, office support, custodians, and so forth. Because of the detailed information, and high level of transparency the applicant received the full points available for this section of the proposal.

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

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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant included a plan as part of the appendix. The applicant has a stated focus on personalized learning environments and use of personal computing devices. The applicant has also provided Internet service to low-income families.

The applicant references putting in place an infrastructure for technology as part of the state's initial *Race to the Top* funding and planning. Although the applicant has received these funds they reference lacking the funding needed to support a technology plan adequate for the success of their students. More detail supporting the need of funding would be helpful in this section. The applicant states needing more digital learning resources to provide "unlimited opportunities" to teach and support struggling students. However, a more comprehensive vision of this plan is lacking from the proposal. The applicant does reference the scaffolding of literacy and math support for students, which seems positive.

This section contains some rather vague statements that could be clarified. For example, statements like "the seeds of learning must be planted early and grown for a lifetime." More specificity regarding the plan in place, and how technology will be utilized within this broader context would support this section of the proposal greatly.

In this section, the applicant references a partnership with the United States Army. This is a partnership to target low performing students at middle and high schools. The program provides tutorials and mentor opportunities. While this program seems to have positive benefits, the connection to the post program supported by this proposal is unclear. Clarifying these connections could enhance this section of the proposal.

The applicant scored in the mid-high range for having successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the technology changes in their proposal. This infrastructure for the applicants plan is connected to technology. The applicant has provided some positive detailed information on personalized learning environments consistent with the intention of the competition. However, the applicant did not receive the full amount of points for this section due to a lack of specificity on how technology will be utilized within the broader context of the proposed plan. In addition, the applicant did not provide adequate information regarding the successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under state regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments detailed in the proposal.

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

15

12

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant reports utilizing meetings with schools administrative teams to engage stakeholders. The applicant utilized these meetings to convey the school's vision and current initiatives, and reportedly identified teachers who could help guide the proposal's initiatives.

Additionally, presentations were made of faculty meetings and PTA meetings for participating schools to inform stakeholders on the drafting of the proposal and to seek feedback and questions. The applicant reports that teachers and parents provided verbal and written feedback on the possible implementation. In addition, the applicant reports utilizing student feedback. The applicant provided a signed letter from teachers included in the appendix. The applicant did not reference collective bargaining in this section. Although the applicant references teacher and parent support it would've been helpful to have examples of teacher feedback included in this section, and information on how this feedback guided the proposal development. Any information on how feedback from parents and teachers was utilized which strengthened this section greatly. In addition, there was no referencing of community stakeholders such as civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, community-based organizations, or institutions of higher education. If the goal of increasing postsecondary education opportunities and higher education enrollment, letters of support from local colleges and community colleges would have strengthened this section of the proposal.

The applicant included the signatures of teachers supporting the proposal. However, the applicant did not report the district's position on collective bargaining, specify whether or not they have the support of a teachers union, or the percent of teachers in support of the application.

The applicant does not address the district's collective bargaining situation. However, the applicant reports that faculty members at participating schools were given a letter of support to sign, which is included in the appendix. Teachers reportedly signed if they agreed with the outline of the proposal that was produced during the professional development with teacher leaders. The applicant reports that 100% of teachers at each participating school signed the letter of support. The signed support letters are attached in the appendix.

The applicant scored in the mid-high range for including adequate information on stakeholder engagement in the process. The applicant received points for including a broad range of stakeholders in the development of the proposal. The applicant did not receive full points for this section due to the lack of adequate information on how feedback data was utilized in reshaping the proposal; and for lacking specificity it one the percentage of teachers supporting the proposal.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	15

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a theory of action in the appendix to illustrate five areas of support assigned to students. The applicant intends to incorporate these goals within technologies and data systems with access to a personalized learning plan for each student. Applicant reports that students and parents design personalized learning plans collaboratively in relation to interest, life goals, and academic needs.

The applicant reports using project-based learning fosters skills for college and career ready standards. In addition, the applicant reports training students in data collection and analysis so that students might interpret and reflect upon their data to understand strengths and weaknesses. The relation between the project-based learning, and the analysis of personal data could be made clearer.

The applicant reports utilizing project-based learning to enhance the mastery of critical academic content. Furthermore, the applicant sites research suggesting that students with low verbal ability and low reading scores learn more content through project-based learning than the traditional classroom environment. However, the proposal is unclear as to how project-based learning will be incorporated with students of low verbal ability and low reading scores within the school district. More specific examples of how the applicant intends to use project-based learning in the context of their schools would be helpful.

The applicant reports students having access to learning plans that are designed with college and career ready curriculum as well as personal learning goals. According to the applicant they will be designed with input from the teacher, observation, parent meetings, and formative assessments. Teachers will have access to a database that includes historical testing data for each student as well as predictive data to inform future instruction. The proposal includes funding for teachers for professional development and how to utilize the assessment data.

The applicant reports that they will use a flipped classroom model with teachers designing daily instruction around the needs of each student. The applicant reports that teachers will communicate with parents through webpages and classed newspapers to involve them in the process. The applicant reports needing to utilize instructional technology and personal computing devices to fully implement reform model where teachers act as academic coaches to facilitate the application of knowledge. More vivid descriptions of how this process will work, and how technology will be utilized specifically would enhance this section of the proposal.

The applicant scored in the mid-high range for having a quality plan consistent with the intention of the competition. However, the applicant did not receive full points because the plan is not fully coherent and comprehensive. A more coherent and comprehensive plan could include more detailed information on how personalized learning with people from student's current knowledge and skills. A high-quality comprehensive plan would include more detailed information on how accommodations would be utilized to assist high need

students in the goal of preparing them for college or career ready standards.

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

20

16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant reports that teacher standards were adopted within their State four years ago. These standards are stated to address skills, knowledge, and behaviors relevant to the role of teachers in the classroom. The evaluation system is stated to be in-line with student progress toward meeting college-and-career-ready standards, and graduation requirements in a manner consistent with the aims of the program. Specific examples of these standards, how they are utilize, and the extent to which teachers are meeting these standards would be helpful in assessing this section of the proposal.

The applicant reports providing over 300 courses for teachers and school leaders for professional development; however, the focus and content of these professional development courses was not adequately specified in the proposal. Including this information would enhance this section of the proposal.

According to the applicant, teachers will participate in summer leading activities and ongoing job embedded professional development. The applicant states that the project will entail four primary modules for professional development centered around blended leading, flipped classrooms, digital integration and teaching, leading strategies, 21st-century technology, and formative assessment. The detail and information provided in this section was helpful in understanding this aspect of the proposed program.

The applicant references a flip classroom model in which students will utilize personal computing devices to connect with educational content at home; and the applicant has provided training for educators to support their individual and collective capacity to develop personalized leading environments, and to meet students' academic needs. The applicant also references the use of a curriculum specialist to help teachers utilize instructional strategies that are personalized to students' educational plan.

The applicant reports that a statewide teacher and principal evaluation system is in place. There is a rating system was standards. According to the applicant, both teachers and principals are evaluated by this system. The applicant has referenced student growth as a necessary part of the evaluation system. However, the proposal is lacking more detailed information about how the connection between student growth and the evaluation of teachers will be measured. More information on this connection and whether or not it is been used previously would enhance this section of the proposal.

The applicant has detailed teaching and leading resources. The applicant reports utilizing teachers as trainers to facilitate project-based learning in the classroom. The applicant suggests that teachers will be able to train students in order to facilitate student directed learning. To foster this, the applicant anticipates preparing educators to utilize tools, data, and resources connected to a platform and digital learning devices. The applicant has focused on resources such as student assessments, measures of student progress, a state education value added assessment system, reports to communicate with parents, high-quality resources, digital resources, a data warehouse, and personalized educational plans. In this section, it is hard to assess exactly what is already incorporated within the district, and what resources have yet to be developed and implemented. More clarity regarding these factors would be helpful and enhance this section of the proposal. In addition, a stronger argument supported by data would be helpful in assessing the extent to which various resources are needed within the district.

The applicant has detailed training policies, tools, data, and resources for educators. The applicant states that the training, policy, tools, data, and resources are connected to in evaluation system and therefore for continual school improvement. As part of the initiative detailed in this proposal data will be used reportedly to guide teacher effectiveness.

The applicant reports that participating schools, and the teachers in the schools will be trained in data analysis. Reportedly, again, this data analysis is focused on student's academic needs. Teaching staff will also be trained on utilizing the common core and essential standards. The applicant reports already having started this process as part of their State's original Race to the Top funding. However, the applicant reports the need for training to continue for new teachers. More evidence and specificity supporting this need would enhance this section of the proposal.

The applicant details advising in this section of the proposal through the use of career coaches and for students with reading and math intervention needs. More details regarding these programs would be helpful in assessing this section of the proposal.

The applicant has a stated focus of increasing equitable access to effective and highly effective teachers and principals in low performing, hard-to-staff schools. The applicant intends to utilize an existing program, a leadership program designed to enhance school administration. Again, more information on this program would be helpful. For example, where does this program recruit administrators from, what type of leadership skills development do they focus on, to what extent is there an interactive process between the Department of Education and this program, and so forth? Specifying the details to these types of questions would enhance this section of the proposal.

The applicant scored in the mid-high range by having a quality plan consistent with the intention of the competition. However, the applicant did not receive full points for not including comprehensive and coherent high-quality plan. For example, a coherent and comprehensive high-quality plan would have included detailed information on new teacher training. A comprehensive and coherent high-quality plan would entail more detailed information on students receiving instruction from highly effective teachers, addressing student needs, measuring progress towards college readiness, improving teacher effectiveness over time, and identifying optimal leading approaches. The proposed plan presented here was lacking the amount of specificity necessary to constitute a high-quality, coherent and comprehensive plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has detailed their organizational structure in this section of the proposal. The applicant has listed the primary duties for various administrators. In addition to the superintendent and deputy superintendents, the applicant reports having curriculum specialists who visit each school on a monthly basis, and meet weekly with teacher leaders in each school to provide support. The applicant also reports having an assigned literacy coach who works individually with students who are below their expected growth levels in reading. The applicant reports that the superintendent supports the schools' curricular and professional development needs. According to the applicant, priority schools receive monthly walk-throughs and debriefing meetings by the supervising superintendent and a director of research and accountability.

The applicant reports providing school leadership teams with operational flexibility and autonomy over school schedules, school personnel decisions, budgeting, staffing models, as well as the roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators.

The applicant reports having school leadership teams that facilitate personalized learning. Details on how school leadership facilitates personalized learning are limited. More specific details on the connection between leadership and personalized learning would enhance this section of the proposal.

The applicant reports that the proposed project will include a continued use of online assessment tools related to the common core standards and essential standards. Reportedly, students have access to this information. This speaks to the focus of the program by addressing the manner in which students can progress and earn credit through demonstrated mastery. The applicant reports that students earn credit based on mastery through the use of formative assessments. The criteria for assessments and the measurement of student progress is based on curriculum identified by school leadership teams. According to the applicant, once students have mastered a goal, they have the flexibility to progress on two new goals. Reportedly, teachers can track student mastery of content and support their progress. Although this section speaks to the stated intention of the overall program, the section does not adequately address the way in which students can meet standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways. This section of the proposal did provide detailed information on student promotion and accountability standards from school year 2012-2013.

The applicant detailed a school evaluation system with a grading scale for schools that reportedly under achieve. The applicant reports that the personalized learning environment is guided and supported by district level personnel.

The applicant reports that policies are transparent providing information to parents, students, and community stakeholders. One example provided by the applicant was "community kitchen table talks" held on a quarterly basis. This section would be enhanced by providing specific details on feedback that was provided during one of these talks, and how it was implemented by the district.

The applicant reports having a program in place for parents in Title-I schools, to involve them in activities throughout the school year. The applicant reports having a partnership with Communities in Schools, which reportedly helps provide content and support for personalized learning. The applicant reports that this project will allow this partnership to be expanded. How the program enhances personalized learning was not adequately detailed in this section. This section of the proposal would be enhanced by including specificity as to how the partnership enhances personalized learning.

The applicant reports increasing districtwide technology through the installation of a wireless network. This plan is aimed at providing digital teaching and learning resources and digital textbooks.

The applicant provided details on infrastructure related to personalized learning in this section. The applicant provided the example of a school garden program in which students grow vegetables and are allowed to take vegetables home with them.

The applicant reports that the utilization of personal computing devices are essential to the enhancement of the personalized learning environment. More detailed information about the connection between the use of personalized computing devices and personalized learning is detailed in other sections of the proposal.

The applicant scored in the mid-high range by providing a plan to implement policies and infrastructure aimed at providing students with the resources and support necessary. Aspects of this plan include flexibility and autonomy in school personnel decisions. These factors notwithstanding, the applicant did not receive full points by lacking a cohesive and comprehensive high-quality plan. A cohesive and coherent high-quality plan in this section should include more information on the connection between leadership and personalized learning in terms of students' needs. In other words, it's not clear from the proposal how enhanced leadership will translate into enhanced personalized learning for students. The applicant would enhance their plan, including its cohesiveness and comprehensiveness by providing more details on the process by which students could earn credit and demonstrate mastery. Providing more information on the adapted instructional practices for high need students would also enhanced the quality of the plan provided.

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

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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant details a technology initiative with online learning communities involving teachers and students. Reportedly, parents, caregivers, support providers, and community members can work together pre-learning experiences. Applicant reports the formation of the data warehouse implemented last year as part of the districtwide technology plan. The data warehouse is stated to provide formative feedback and benchmark assessments. Through the initial statewide *Race to the Top* program, the applicant's State implemented an instructional improvement system. This system has portals for parents, students, teachers, and administrators to access data on instruction, assessment, and post secondary goals. In addition, this portal provides attendance data, a summary of information, standardized testing information, demographic information, and emergency contact information. According to the applicant the instructional improvement system allows students to gauge instructional resources aligned with the common core standards, store exemplars of personal academic work, and for parents to be able to track their child's performance.

The applicant addressed interoperable data systems on human resource information, budget data, and other factors in other sections of the proposal. This section of the proposal included information on student information data, and instructional improvement data systems.

The applicant received full points for this section for the extent to which the applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator level of the education system with the support and resources they need.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant reports having contracted with an external evaluator. They have contracted with the same public policy institute who is currently evaluating the statewide Race to the Top program. The applicant provided a proposed evaluation plan. According to the applicant, the external evaluator will "finalize this plan" to identify and collect reliable and valid baseline data as well as provide formative feedback for improving services. Reportedly, the external evaluator will monitor project progress and provide summative evidence of the projects impact. It's unclear whether the external evaluator wrote the evaluation plan, or will simply approve a plan written by the primary applicant. Clarifying these details with enhance this section of the proposal.</p> <p>The applicant details existing forms of evaluation utilized among schools. However, information on the proposed evaluation model for this project is limited. The proposal includes phrases such as "strong formative component to ensure that data is provided in real time," but details on the specific data and how it will factor into programmatic changes is limited. The summative evaluation plan vaguely acknowledges that factors such as, student achievement, graduation rates, college enrollment, and other factors will be included. However, information on how they will be included is limited. A table is included in this section that details a mixed method approach, which seems promising. However, the plan does not include sufficient information on the measures utilized within evaluative methodology. For these reasons, this section scored within the midrange. More detailed information on evaluation timelines, measures utilized within the evaluation, more specific information on how evaluation data would be utilized in program improvement, and more detailed information on the persons responsible for overseeing evaluation would have enhance this section of the proposal.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant reports has an evaluation plan with a planned component to ensure real-time data to project leaders at each school site. Reportedly, this will create a feedback loop for the initial project implementation. Project staff at the school site will hold monthly face-to-face and/or technology-based staff meetings related to the objectives of the project. The applicant reports quarterly formative evaluations with an assessment of project fidelity and implementation across participating schools. The applicant provided a visual graphic of the improvement and management process. In addition to the visual graphic, the applicant provided a set of four research questions to be answered by the summative evaluation plan. Although some of the questions such as those related to graduation rates and college enrollment seem to have fairly obvious criteria for evaluation, details on how exactly the applicant intends to measure the degree to which the program increases parental engagement in student learning is unclear.

The applicant lacks aa comprehensive and coherent high-quality plan, because more detail on how exactly the applicant intends to evaluate such things as parental engagement, the ability of teachers to implement effective strategies that promote literacy and problem-based learning, and the development of reliable technology is necessary. This information would enhance this section of the proposal, by conveying the extent to which the plan could feasibly be implemented.

The applicant has provided a table on the data collection methods for project objectives that was helpful in identifying the intended quantitative and qualitative methodology for project evaluation. The applicant does provide plan with a thorough mixed methodology appropriate to measure project objectives. More information however on the frequency of methodology would be helpful in assessing the evaluation plan. For example, how often does the applicant intend to conduct teacher observations, classroom observations, principal interviews, parent interviews, and so forth?

The applicant did provide information on analysis and dissemination. Applicant reports that qualitative data will be analyzed for correlational and inferential statistics to help determine the impact of the project on student achievement. The applicant reports that information will be shared with parents, district staff, and community leaders. Again, the applicant relies on the utilization of the website with links to the information. In addition, the applicant reports that information will be provided through newsletters, a data warehouse, and presentations at state and national conferences.

This section scored in the mid-range because the details of a high-quality plan in relation to this section are lacking. The utilization of quarterly formative evaluation is not justified by the proposal. It's not clear from the proposal, that quarterly formative evaluations will be sufficient. The rationale for selecting the proposed reporting systems was not included. The references existing data systems, without providing specific information on the effectiveness of these systems.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant meets the benchmark of 12 performance measures. These 12 performance measures have annual targets. The applicant states that the project director will be monthly with the external evaluator and project leaders to review each measure and the results. The first two performance measures for all participating students involved ineffective or highly effective teacher. Three of the performance measures are reportedly the same applied at different levels in with the applicant terms “grade appropriate ways.” The applicant reports that these three measures are of non-cognitive growth. The non-cognitive growth is reportedly measured through the use of student, teacher, and parent survey data. Their reports a performance measure for students in kindergarten through grade 3. This measure is connected to online assessments to measure student proficiency in cognitive skills and to “predict future success.” The applicant reports that performance measures for grades four through eight monitor percent of students on track in terms of college and career readiness, based on reading proficiency scores. Four additional measures are aimed at the high school level. There is a performance measure for the number of students that submit an application for federal student aid. The applicant reports that the completion of this form is a necessary component of being college ready. Additional performance measures tend to track college and career readiness through the number and percentage of advanced placement exams, successful completion of AP courses, critical thinking skills and college credit, and the percentage of students who take the SAT with a score above 996. The applicant also reports a performance measure for students in grades 9 to 12 in math proficiency.

According to the applicant the project director, evaluator, and project leaders will meet regularly to evaluate the performance measures and make needed adjustments. The applicant's plan is aligned with the performance measures defined by this programs notice. The program measures are also aligned with the applicable population.

Although, the previously mentioned measures sound promising, a high-quality plan for reviewing and improving measures over time is lacking sufficient data necessary to ensure the implementation progress over time. The short-term outcomes, midterm outcomes, and long-term outcomes do not have a sufficient rationale in terms of the selected measurable goals. This causes their selection to appear random, and therefore the potential to meet the goals as questionable. Because of these reasons this section of the proposal scored in the midrange.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has provided a table listing evaluation goals as well as the purposes of the evaluation. The applicant has focused the evaluation goals on the overall impact of the grant implementation on student outcomes, parental engagement, and teacher practices. In addition, the applicant has focused on cost effectiveness in the interest of sustainability beyond the initiation of the grant. In accordance with Race to the Top -District funded activities, the applicant has targeted: student achievement, graduation rates, college enrollment, parental engagement, problem-based learning, teacher training, and development of a replicable technology/curricular project. The table detailing these measures contains the frequency of measurements as well as the forms of data collection utilized. The table gives a good account of the evaluation process. The applicant has provided goals and objectives. The applicant has also provided a logic model related to implementation of the plan. The logic model contains activities, outputs, short-term measures, midterm outcomes, long-term outcomes, and a table column detailing the individuals responsible for these outcomes.

Although there are positive aspects of this section of the proposal, there are problematic aspects as well. Some of the listed quantitative analysis, and administrative data review relies on fairly subjective measures, such as questions to project participants. It's unclear why parents were not targeted, for example, in the measures of parent engagement. The assigned lead person for several measures is listed only as the "instructional design and innovation director." The rationale for assigning this individual to these measures was not specified adequately. For these reasons the applicant scored in the mid-range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

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

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has allocated funds for multiple concentrations. The applicant has allocated funding for a mobile preschool consisting of a redesigned school bus with a certified teacher and teacher assistant, books, and reading and math resources. Including more detailed information in the narrative sections of the proposal would enhance the thoughtful rationale required in this section of the proposal. For this pilot project the applicant has requested roughly \$1.5 million. The applicant has allocated funding for personnel including the hiring of the project director, digital integration facilitators, math teachers, reading teachers, mentor coordinators, technology support personnel, one early childhood teacher, teacher assistant, bus driver, and one clerical position to assist with reporting and data collection. The applicant has requested funding in the amount of \$119, 500 for travel. More information to justify this amount in the proposal would have provided a thoughtful rationale consistent with the criteria specified for this section. The applicant reports that school leaders and the project administration team will disseminate the projects implementation results nationally. More information on where the team intends to present the implementation results would enhance this section of the proposal, and budget narrative.

The applicant's most significant budget request is in the area of equipment. Here the applicant is focused on the purchasing of technology and digital learning devices, which according to the applicant will facilitate the implementation of personalized learning environments. There are not enough details provided in the proposal narrative to support the large budget request in this section of the proposal. More details justifying the need, and program impact of technology and digital learning devices would have enhanced this budget request. In addition, the applicant has allocated a significant portion of funding as contractual. More information on the contractual intentions for professional development would enhance this section of the proposal. The contractual funding allocated for external evaluation of the project was specified in the proposal narrative and in the logic model plan in section-E. The applicant also requested a large portion of the budget for the mobile preschool, including the purchase of a new school bus, the hiring of necessary staff, and other expenditures. The justification for these purchases is not adequately detailed in the proposal, and the utilization of this mobile lab is not adequately detailed in the proposal. These two factors greatly diminish the request for these funds. Because of these factors, the applicant scored in the midrange for this section of the proposal.

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

10	2
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section of the proposal focuses on cost saving approaches. The example given by the applicant is the printing and purchasing of material. The applicant reports that the use of digital devices will provide a "greener policy" reducing the amount of paper used. The applicant reports that the reduction of printing will increase the lifespan of printers and copiers, reducing equipment costs. The applicant reports that the savings would support the ongoing cost of the project. There is not sufficient evidence in the proposal to support this claim. For example, no cost estimates of printing services are provided in this section of the proposal. The applicant would need to provide a significant amount of data on the cost of printing equipment, paper costs, and other factors to make this section sound feasible.

The applicant has also reported that personalized learning could reduce the amount of funding necessary for remediation. Applicant also reports that the district Title-I funding can be used to sustain the integrity of the project in participating Title-I schools. Again, this section is not adequately supported with data. In addition, this approach seems speculative and problematic.

The sustainability section of this proposal was one of the weakest sections. A reasonable high-quality plan for sustainability is lacking. The cost-cutting measures detailed in this section seem wholly inadequate, and the reappropriation of district Title-I funding seems problematic. The overall proposal's lack of an overall high-quality plan makes the re-appropriation of Title-I funding seem more problematic.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	6

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant notes that schools traditionally provide supplemental services and forms of health screenings, immunizations, meals, and other social services. However, it's unclear from the proposal if these are in the scope of the initiative planned by the applicant. The applicant has proposed a partnership with Communities in Schools. The applicant plans to place mentors from this organization in specified schools. The services provided include a weekly support group for parents. In addition, the organization provides school-based graduation coaches, and partnerships between schools and community agencies and businesses. This agency partnership is aimed at students at risk of dropping out. The schools targeted for the partnerships are schools with a high rate of students in poverty. The applicant has referenced the engagement of parents and families in the decision-making process about solutions to improve results. The applicant has also focused on a mentorship program through their partnership. Reportedly, mentors are paired for students and schools, and meet with students weekly for a total of eight hours per month. The applicant did not adequately identify and describe annual achievable performance measures for the proposed population level. A more detailed description of desired results for students would have enhanced this section of the proposal.

There are some potential positives in this section, regarding partnerships for participating students. However, this section lacks significant information on how these partnerships will be enhanced through this project. In addition, information is lacking on a coherent plan regarding how the partnership will enhance this project. There is insufficient detail on how this project will build capacity of staff in participating schools. The applicant has placed an emphasis on leadership development, and provided insufficient details on teacher selection, recruitment, and retention. The proposal lacks sufficient information on how data will be used to monitor the partnership, target resource allocation, and improve results for participating students. There is also insufficient data on how this partnership will be scaled beyond the participating schools to enhance neighboring schools. More information regarding the impact of the partnership on participating teachers would have enhanced this section of the proposal, as well. Because of these factors, the proposal scored in the midrange.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The overall proposal does not adequately meet absolute priority 1. The applicant does focus on personalized learning environments throughout the proposal, and addresses many of the core educational assurance areas to build on. The applicant has, throughout the proposal, focused on creating learning environments to improve teaching and learning. The personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students aligned with college and career ready standards are addressed in the proposal. However, the applicant does not coherently and comprehensively specify how they will meet all of the core educational assurance areas defined in the notice. Most significantly, the increase in effectiveness of educators is lacking from the proposed plan. Although the applicant does address educator effectiveness and vaguely through the development of a leadership program suggesting its impact on educators, this does not meet the threshold of a coherent and comprehensive plan to address this important issue. For this reason, the applicant did not meet absolute priority-1.

Total	210	138
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0037NC-3 for Moore County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application narrative addresses in only a cursory manner how the proposal builds upon previous work in the four required core educational assurance areas. The presentation on data systems is only tangentially related to that area, focusing instead on network access. The narrative on recruiting and retaining teachers is insufficient and does not describe MCS's past work in this core area, as it does not provide evidence of prior recruiting/retention efforts but only that efforts continue. The discussion notes increases in graduation rate and achievement, but the reference charts in the Appendix do not support that assertion, as performance across the past 4-6 years is quite inconsistent in the tables provided. The narrative does not include any description of what the classroom experience will be like for students who participate in the project, which is a required selection criterion. The only grade level in which students receive personalized support is grade 8, even though the project involves students in grades K-12.</p> <p>Overall, the narrative is not well articulated or complete, which supports a rating in only the lower range.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative provides a sufficient description of the process used to select schools for the project, detailing how LEA schools are classified into four tiers based on student performance. Participating schools are in the highest (lowest performing) tiers. The narrative includes a list of participating schools along with the number of students and educators in the project. Overall, the application narrative provides a complete picture of the number of participants, including at-risk and low income, which supports a rating in the upper range.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative does not include a high-quality plan specific to Section A3 that describes how the reform will be scaled up. The narrative provides a general logic model with goals, an objective for each goal, and large-scale activities (e.g., deliver job-embedded professional development), but does not include specific timelines (i.e., month/year) for the activities. Deliverables are not provided in the logic model, and specific outcomes are not consistently followed across years (from 2015-2017), which makes it difficult to understand if the activities are producing the desired results. The logic model presented in the application is not sufficiently clear on how the activities and capacity will expand from the participating students to all district students. The narrative lacks clarity and provides insufficient details in several areas (e.g., no explanation of what "continuous reflection" looks like for students on their goals). It is difficult to determine if the text describes and applies only to participating schools and students in the project, or if the reforms will eventually extend to all schools in the district. Overall, the presentation addresses the required selection criteria in an acceptable, but not exceptional, manner which supports a rating in the middle range.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application includes tables of goals for improved student outcomes. The targets are generally reasonable in that they generally increase by small amounts each year from the baseline (e.g., from 84% to 91% proficiency in reading over 4 school years), and should be achievable within the grant timeline. The strategies and processes are not clearly presented that would lead to achievement of the goals in each year, either for the participating schools or the district as a whole. For example, the narrative states that MCS will "continue to expand support in order to decrease the gaps" and "students will be provided with increased and equitable access to highly effective teachers," but does not provide details on exactly what will be done to expand support and increase equity. The narrative provides insufficient information on the grade levels for career coaches, and what scaling up the MIH efforts will entail. Overall, the narrative provides the required information (summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment rate) in tables for student targets, but insufficient information in the areas cited above supports a rating in the lower part of the upper range.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative addresses each of the required selection criteria, but it often is insufficient to provide strong support. For example, the reference chart for B1 in the appendix shows not a clear record of increasing performance, but inconsistent growth in student achievement and learning. The narrative indicates a leadership academy has been instrumental in producing more effective principals, but there is insufficient evidence provided to support that <u>claim</u>. Likewise, the narrative provides insufficient evidence that reduced dropouts and increases in graduation are caused by the reasons cited in their discussion. Several times the narrative is inconsistent with information in tables (e.g., the text says the number of students taking AP exams; the table says the number of AP exams taken). Regarding reforms in low-performing schools, the narrative provides only minimal information on the specific nature of the reforms in terms of activities, changes in instruction, etc. For example, the narrative describes a STEM team concept used in three schools, but only states that the project "has led to significant reforms" in the schools with no specific details on changes made in the schools. The narrative does not include data on college enrollment, and does not indicate how students receive performance data. Overall, the narrative does not address all of the required selection criteria, and exhibits weaknesses in evidence, which supports a rating in the middle portion of the range.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application provides sufficient evidence in Appendix B2 that fiscal, salary, and expenditure information is provided by school to the public through publication on the district's website. The tables provided in an appendix include, for each school, the total amount of expenditures for instructional staff and support staff, teacher salaries, and non-personnel expenditures. The narrative states that both the proposed and adopted budgets are available on their LEA website, with additional fiscal information available on the state website, which should provide the public with acceptable access to school level fiscal information. Overall, the evidence indicates that all of the required selection criteria regarding transparency in expenditure information are met (i.e., school level instructional salaries, school level instructional and support staff, teachers' salaries, and non-personnel expenditures), which supports a rating in the upper portion of the high <u>range</u>.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The narrative provides statements of LEA projects, activities, and partnerships. However, overall it lacks sufficient information regarding the success of these endeavors and the impact on low income, low achieving, and at-risk groups of students. The narrative provides no information on the State context of legal, statutory and regulatory requirements that would support innovative strategies for improving student achievement. The narrative only states that the proposal "in no way conflicts with any state initiatives." The application provides no information on the Measures of Student Learning regarding their development, reliability, validity, and ability to measure student growth. Given that these are the common summative assessments used to evaluate student growth, it is critical that these have high levels of reliability and validity, but no technical information is provided. Overall, the application provides insufficient information on the State context and</p>		

the LEA success in impacting student achievement with cited endeavors, which supports a rating in the middle of the scoring [range](#).

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	11
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application addresses each of the required selection criteria, and provides as supporting documentation a small number of letters of support. There is no official parent organization endorsement provided, although the narrative indicates parents had opportunity for involvement in the discussion about and development of the proposal. The parent engagement appears to be more in the form of providing feedback to proposals, and not in direct involvement in the creation of the proposal. The application provides pages of signatures from teachers indicating support for the proposal, but it is not clear if they represent 100% of all teachers as no school name is provided on each particular page. The application does have the support of the local teacher union/association president, as evidenced by the signature on the assurance statement. Teacher leaders from each school participated in two days of discussion regarding the RTTD application criteria, but it is unclear in the narrative if parents and community members were included in those meetings. The narrative lacks examples of how the proposal was modified based on feedback or input from teachers or parents. Overall, the evidence provided in the application supports a rating at the high end of the middle score [range](#).

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The MCS project focuses on implementation of project-based learning as a key strategy in learning for all students K-12, along with online real time assessments and digital learning devices. However, the narrative does not include a high-quality plan specific to section (C)(1) Learning, with goals relevant to this section, activities aligned to the goals, a timeline for each activity, deliverables for activities, and responsible parties to implement the specific activities. For C1a, the narrative describes how a specific personalization strategy or an activity (e.g., project-based learning) would be applied at the high school or middle school level. It is not clear from the application how many of the learning personalization strategies would work for students in K-3, particularly project-based learning, digital learning devices, and setting personal learning [goals](#). The narrative does not mention any alternative strategies to use in case project-based learning is not effective for some students. Regarding C1b, the narrative states students will develop set personal learning goals and have a learning plan, accessing digital content both at school and at home. However, there is insufficient information presented regarding how students without home internet connectivity would access digital content, or how the district will ensure all students have home internet access. It is not clear from the narrative who developed the digital [content](#), and how it is aligned with the curriculum. The narrative indicates that students and parents will have access to results of assessments; however, the narrative is not clear on the frequency of [assessments](#) and feedback, nor does the application address the technical qualities of the assessments used to provide feedback to students. EVAAS data is specified as being available for teachers to use in setting student learning goals, but it is not clear what will be used in lower grades (K-3) as EVAAS data is unavailable for those grade levels. Regarding C1c, the narrative states that information will be shared with students through grade level assemblies and an orientation workshop. However, the narrative does not provide information on how staff will ensure that students understand the digital learning platform and other resources, how they will monitor student use, and determine if additional training is needed. Overall, there is a lack of clarity and insufficient information regarding project implementation, particularly around applicability of strategies for elementary level students. Thus, the evidence supports a rating in the mid-level of the middle range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application provides a plan for C2 Teaching and Learning, by goal, in the appendix with activities, outputs, outcomes and responsible [persons](#). The timelines noted in this plan are vague and non-specific (e.g., by 2016), with activities at a very general [level](#) (e.g., identify and provide teachers with the appropriate 21st technologies for implementing a PLE). The narrative includes details (e.g., personalized learning plans completed by end of first six weeks [of](#) school) that should be described in the Appendix high-quality plan to clarify, add completeness, and facilitate understanding of the entire project. In general, the narrative, in combination with the plan in the Appendix, provides insufficient information about key issues related to project strategies. For example, a data analysis training process is not part of the action plan activities or the

evaluation plan. Similarly, it is not clear how the project-based learning teacher training will be monitored to ensure all teachers are at a proficient level as a facilitator for this [strategy](#). Often the narrative includes the verbiage from the NIA as a description of what MCS will do, with insufficient supporting statements detailing specifics on the activity. The narrative does not specify how the project addresses hard-to-staff subjects, and specialty areas (i.e., C2d), or how the SLA alternative licensing program increases teacher and principal effectiveness. Overall, the application provides a lot of strategies which address the four core educational assurance areas in a minimal, insufficient manner. The narrative addresses C2a through discussion of teachers meeting in PLCs, a literacy and math initiative for PK through grade 12, and frequent use of formative assessments. However, most of these activities (i.e., literacy/math initiative and formative assessment) are not included in the Plan activities in the Appendix, which makes it difficult to determine if the timing and other details of the training/activity is sufficient for the project. For C2b, the narrative states that teachers will be trained in project-based learning, but provides insufficient information on how the training will be monitored and verified to assure that all teachers are proficient in that instructional strategy. The resources that teachers will use include new student assessments that will be given for “all subjects with a strong focus on graduation standards and requirements.” However, the narrative or Attachment plan does not describe the development process for these assessments, nor pilot/field testing of items, technical analyses of items/tests, and other required activities for test development. These steps are essential if the tests will provide data for high stakes decisions, like those described in the application (e.g., determination of a student’s knowledge and skills to measure mastery). Similarly, the narrative for C2b presents online assessments as another tool for teachers and a option for students, but there is no information provided regarding the development or technical qualities of these online tests, which must be of high quality for the described project uses. The narrative addresses C2c by stating the LEA will use information provided by the state’s Educator Evaluation system, but provides no details on how the data will be used. Similarly, the narrative describes use of survey information (student, staff, and parent) as data to inform decisions regarding school environment, but does not provide information about the survey development process, timelines for collection, or technical analyses to assure survey validity. Overall, the evidence provided in the narrative and Appendix provides support for a rating only in the lower portion of the middle range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	10
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The application does not include a high-quality plan specific to D (as required from the selection criteria), with goals relevant to this section, activities aligned to the goals, a timeline for each activity, deliverables for activities, and responsible parties to implement the specific activities. However, the narrative provides information about the central office organization and how it supports schools (e.g., curriculum specialists visit each school monthly). Staffing at the central office is not clear from the narrative, though, as the number of assistant superintendents is noted as either two or three, which will impact project supervision and monitoring. The application states that school leadership teams have flexibility over factors such as scheduling and calendars, but provides minimal examples (i.e., only that elementary schools must have a literacy block sometime during the school day). The narrative states that students "progress and earn credits based on mastery" using formative assessments. However, the application provides insufficient information on the use of mastery learning and formative assessments in terms of what grade levels these will be used, and if not used at all levels, what comparable strategies will be used. The narrative notes that the project will implement four components of personalized learning (i.e., competency-based models, engaging stakeholder groups, blended learning environments, individualized learning plan), but it is not clear how demonstrations of learning mastery are comparable from these four substantially different components. The project relies on personalized computing devices and digital instructional resources that teachers can use to provide personalized learning strategies for students with disabilities. However, the narrative provides insufficient information regarding the applicability of the project’s strategies with both ELLs and students with disabilities across all grades K-12. Overall, the narrative addresses each of the five D1a-D1e selection criteria, but it is not clear how the strategies will be applied at all grades and with all students. The evidence only supports a score in the middle range.</p>		

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

The narrative provides an adequate description of both LEA policies and infrastructure to support the planned personalized learning [project](#), regardless of income. [The](#) technology (network, support, digital devices) information presented supports a workable and feasible system for personalized learning, although it is not clear if the network capacity is sufficient for all students to access the network at the same time. The narrative discusses the current levels of communication and support for various audiences, which include Connect Ed phone messages and online resources such as curriculum guides. The

narrative is not clear about the past success of strategies (e.g., free workshops for parents, parent communication [methods](#)), so it is not possible to determine if these should be continued and will be sufficient to promote project success. The MCS technology architecture includes open data formats and interoperability features, which would allow appropriate data access for teachers, students, and parents. Thus, even though the narrative and application does not include a plan specific to D (which includes the LEA and school infrastructure), the overall evidence supports a score in the upper range.

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 application does not include a high-level plan for a continuous improvement process, but does provide a flow chart diagram of a continuous improvement management process for the project. A table in the narrative provides quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies for each project objective. The methods included in the table are appropriate for the specific objective (e.g., use of classroom observations to assess learning environment), but additional specificity and detail is needed regarding when the data collection occurs, the sample size for the specific data collection strategy, and the precise analytic methods that will be used (e.g., t-test) to evaluate the program impact on student outcomes. Neither the flowchart nor table includes any information regarding timely and regular feedback on progress. Overall, the narrative is incomplete and insufficient to provide a clear picture of the project's continuous improvement process, which supports a score in the middle range.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application does not include a high-quality plan (i.e., goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, responsible parties) which outlines ongoing communication and engagement. The information in the brief section narrative provides a limited picture of communication and engagement with either internal or external stakeholders, and needs more specificity than provided (e.g., Project Director being a "regular presence" in participating schools). Overall, the evidence supports only a score in the lower part of the middle range.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The project application includes the required number and types of performance measures for each student level (ES, MS, HS), along with brief rationales for their selection. In general, the targets for the performance measures are ambitious and achievable (e.g., increasing the percent of students with a highly effective teacher from 10% to 21%). However, the narrative does not sufficiently describe how some of the performance indicators measure the intended outcome. For example, the number of AP exams that receive a score of 3+ does not indicate the number of students taking AP courses. Insufficient information is provided to explain how 21% of the students in a school can have a highly effective principal (and 79% does not) when the principal serves the entire school. The measurement of non-cognitive growth is through the Tripod Project, which uses surveys to generate data on student, teacher and parent perceptions. The narrative provides insufficient information about these measures (e.g., technical qualities, scales, validity), and it is not clear how these surveys would provide quarterly reports as formative information. The narrative does not address how each measure will be reviewed and improved, if needed, to ensure success of the project implementation. The application provides targets by subgroup, but the subgroups indicated in the tables of performance measures are not correct (i.e., grades, schools), as they should reflect performance of students in terms of ethnicity, ELL, income, or disability status. Overall, the evidence supports a score in the lower part of the middle range.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application does not include a complete high-quality plan (i.e., goals, activities, timeline, deliverables, responsible parties) for evaluating the effectiveness of project activities. The evaluation questions and goals are appropriate for the project, and the analysis tools should provide data with which to analyze the impact of overall categories of project activity (e.g., professional development). However, the narrative provides insufficient detail regarding specific activities within a goal to determine if project staff will be able to monitor the project in an ongoing manner. The timeline does not provide specific</p>		

months or quarters for evaluation activities, and insufficient information is provided on the specific strategies and analytic methods that will be used for data collected (i.e., ANOVA, t-tests, etc.). Overall, the evidence provided supports a score at the lower end of the middle range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application clearly identifies all funds for the project, and describes which funds will be used for one-time investments and which costs are ongoing throughout the grant period and beyond. The project-level budgets for both the Mobile Classroom and MOST Project are <u>complete</u>, with itemized costs for personnel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and indirect costs. The identified costs are reasonable and sufficient to support the project's development and implementation (e.g., the personnel costs on a per person basis for instructional coaches and digital integration facilitators are reasonable, and the numbers of these staff should be sufficient for project implementation). However, the tables for project-level costs do not clearly describe the amount of time specific staff will spend on the project, but only that they are fulltime employees. The information provided for Instructional Coach and Mentor Coordinator is insufficient to determine if these positions will not be required to maintain the project after grant funding ends. The project evaluation is budgeted as 10% of the overall budget, which should be sufficient to provide an effective and thorough evaluation. However, it is 10% of the overall budget per year, which results in more expenditures for evaluation in year 1 than in the latter project years. This does not reflect a realistic timeline for evaluation expenditures, as more funds are needed during the middle and later project years to collect and analyze the data for summative evaluation and reporting. Overall, the application's evidence provides a clear picture of how the grant funds would be expended for the project, which supports a score at the lower end of the upper range.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application provides insufficient information regarding the sustainability of the project after grant funding ends. The narrative does not include or describe a high-quality plan for sustainability. The savings noted for paper and printed costs are minimal compared to the ongoing costs of technology replacement, maintenance, and repair which will be required to maintain the project activities post-grant. Overall, the evidence provided in application supports a score in the low range.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application provides information on the partnership MCS has with Communities in Schools (CIS), which is an ongoing <u>partnership</u>. The narrative includes a table listing ten population level <u>results</u> expected from the partnership as it relates to the project. The outcomes align and support the broader application, and include both educational and family/community aspects. However, the desired results are too vague and unclear to determine if the partnership activities can produce positive outcomes. For example, each change in performance is listed just as an "increase" or "decrease" instead of a specific target either in numbers of students or percent of students. The narrative does not discuss how the partnership would use the data to target resources, scale the model beyond the participating students, and improve results over time. Also, the narrative does not include a discussion of Competitive Preference item number 5, describing how the partnership will build the capacity of staff. Overall, the evidence supports a score in the lower range.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The application did not sufficiently address Core Assurance area #3 throughout the narrative. The narrative, particularly in sections A and C, provided very little reference to the recruitment or retention of effective teachers and principals, especially in schools or content areas in which they are most needed. The application provides numerous instances of the assessments the LEA will use to monitor student growth, along with description of data systems that can provide useful information for teacher and student planning. However, insufficient information is provided about the development and technical qualities of the assessment systems and data systems to conclude that they would be adequate and sufficient to meet the needs of the project. The application provides minimal information on turning around persistently low-achieving schools. Overall, the application provides insufficient detail and depth regarding how the project would decrease achievement gaps across student groups and increase the percent of students who graduate prepared to succeed in college and careers.

Total	210	115
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0037NC-2 for Moore County Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Moore County School district is proposing to implement two projects:

1. The MOST program in 11 of its 23 schools
2. A mobile preschool

The bulk of the application addresses the MOST program and very little about the mobile preschool program. This makes it difficult to fully understand the overall scope of the proposal.

Other than adopting the Common Core Standards three years ago, the grant's strategies identified to build on this assurance area are unclear. In describing the effort to build on the district's current work in this core educational assurance area, it is unclear if some of the programs will be district-wide or provided to the participating schools in the grant. For example WorkKeys is described as an inventory being administered to all 8th grade students to assess if additional academic interventions are indicated. It is not specified how this intervention will be enhanced in the participating schools.

Other programs (Moore Success pilot and the high school assessment data base) are also specified in the application; however, it is unclear how the implementation will be different or enhanced in the participating schools targeted in this grant.

Additionally, the district's work with the data system's assurance area is described; however, it is unclear how the MOST schools will benefit by expanding their 1:1 computing initiative. Some schools are in various levels of implementation of this district initiative. The levels of success of this 1:1 project thus far are not specified in the application.

Also absent from the application are the specific details about the district's past efforts to place effective teachers and principals in its low performing schools. The applicant only states that high-performing principals were placed in their struggling schools. No specific details are provided.

Further the applicant specifies how the participating schools were selected rather than describing the outcomes of its

current work in turning around its lowest performing schools (assurance # 4). It lists the additional district support without describing the details of this support. Therefore, there is a lack of information in this assurance area.

The applicant does not provide a description about how the classroom experience will be different for the participating students and teachers. Therefore, the application lacks the necessary content in describing how the classroom experience for participating students and teachers will be impacted with the implementation of the grant components.

Overall, the vision for personalized student support is not fully described. Because the reform vision is not clearly articulated, the assurance areas not fully described, and the classroom impact for students and teachers not provided, the score for this section is in the top of the low range.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The process the applicant used to select its schools for this grant is specific and defined. The applicant uses a district pyramid system divided into four tiers to identify schools in need. This system identifies schools based upon student assessment outcomes also using results of student subgroups.

The rationale it used is reasonable to serve its low-performing schools and other schools with low performing subgroups.

The table lists the 11 schools and the data for the number of total participating students, students from low-income families, high-need students, and participating educators. It shows that the participating schools collectively meet the income eligibility requirements. The applicant intends on serving all students and staff in the participating schools. Based upon the system used to select the participating schools, the district's highest need students (low-income and those with subgroups that are struggling academically) are being served.

The applicant's approach is justified in that the proposed program activities and resources will be directed to the most needy schools whose students are in need of support, resources, and interventions.

It is unclear however how the district will approach the target population for the mobile preschool program.

Although the district's approach to identify the participating schools is credible, there is scant information about the mobile preschool selection process. Therefore, the score for this section is in the high - medium range.

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

The applicant's plan (Logic Model) is included in the application. The plan includes goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and identifies responsible parties. However, in some instances the quality of the plan components is inadequate.

The deliverables are not measurable in that baseline data and detailed goals are not provided. In some instances, an "increase" is stated as an outcome. For example, the applicant states that a mid-term outcome is "increase the percentage of students proficient in reading as measured on the state Reading EOG tests and lexile scores." Therefore, the outcome measures are not quantitative enough to show success of grant implementation.

The specific mid-term (2016) outcomes are not defined consistently from year-to-year. Therefore, there are no constant annual measures. This does not provide for accountability across the term of the grant.

Additionally, a long-term goal is that "all" learners will graduate college by 2017". This does not appear to be a realistic goal. Specific timelines are also not provided for the individual activities to be accomplished.

Notably, the Logic Model does not address any of the elements of the mobile preschool project.

The applicant describes in only general terms that the MOST Project will be scaled-up, only stating that it will be "translated into meaningful reform".

Quality components of a high-quality plan are not provided - measurable outcomes, specific timelines, and realistic long-term goals. Totally missing from the Logic Model is the mobile preschool program. Also the scale-up plans are not adequately described. Therefore, this plan will not appropriately guide the district to achieve the outcome goals of the grant. The score for this section is in the low-medium range.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides data tables to support its implementation vision. Information in the data tables is provided by subgroups by grade level as a whole. Missing from the tables is baseline data from 2012-2013 as new state summative assessments were administered. This current information is necessary for the applicant to establish its annual student outcome goals that are realistic and based on actual data. Once the 2013 baseline data is obtained using these new assessments, the targets/goals may have to be adjusted. However, using the baseline data provided from the prior year (2011-2012), the goals are ambitious and not achievable. For example, for the "economically disadvantaged" subgroup in grade 3 reading, the goal is to improve by 20.9% by the end of the grant period. This is a very large increase in performance outcomes.

Data tables analyzing the achievement gap are not provided by individual grade levels rather a grade band of 3-8 is used. By banding the six grades together, the district is unlikely to see trends and outcomes in the individual grades. As a result, specific attention cannot be targeted to certain grades where outcomes are lagging or celebration and replication of grades that are showing success. Only the grade-levels combined (3-8) are provided. No data is provided for the high school students. Because all assessed grades are not included, these high school participating students are not addressed. The methodology is described for the grade 3-8 table using the "white" subgroup as the comparison; however, in the tables for math, the "Asian" subgroup is used. This is inconsistent. The goals for the grades 3-8 gap are ambitious and achievable. For example, in reading, the baseline for the "economically disadvantaged" subgroup is 61.4 - gap of 21.85; the goal at the end of the grant is 75.4 - gap of 15.9. The tables also account for an increase in performance of the comparison subgroup. This is a strength to the application. The narrative states that the gaps will be eliminated for all its students. However, the tables do not show this to be so. For example, for the "economically disadvantaged" subgroup, the post-grant gap is shown as 79 vs. 92.8. Also, for the "white" student subgroup, compared to itself; the table shows a gap. This is inconsistent.

The college enrollment table is incomplete and as such it is impossible to determine if the targets are ambitious and achievable overall and by student subgroup. The college enrollment data is unavailable and missing for the subgroups. Only overall data is provided. As a result, the annual targets for the subgroups are not based on reliable data.

According to the applicant the summative assessment results for Grades 3-8 are based on the state's accountability model. For growth, the applicant uses the state's ABC accountability model. Therefore, the outcomes would be equal to the state's ESEA targets. For the high school, a number of factors will be used (graduation rates, SAT, FAFSA and college enrollment). The state's measures for high school success are not specifically defined as those used by the applicant.

Overall, some of the data tables have missing data in subgroups and grades. Additionally, some of the goals are ambitious and not achievable, resulting in a score in the medium range.

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Overall, the district does not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate a clear record of success in advancing student learning over the past four years. The applicant states that fourteen of the twenty schools improved performance however, comprehensive data is not provided. The only data provided is: overall drop-out rates, Advanced Placement exams taken, graduation rates and performance composites. No individual school data is provided.

The applicant describes how research shows the impact of the principal on student outcomes without providing a description of this effect in their schools. Additionally, the district has a principal intern program in its struggling schools, however there is no data about the effect of this program on student outcomes.

The applicant cites an increased focus on literacy, on class size reduction and on student interventions without providing data outcomes for these efforts. Notably, the 2012-2013 graduation rate actually declined. Generally, the application states that there has been an increase in AP exams taken by high school students.

The applicant uses composite scores to demonstrate continuous improvement. Based upon this measure, the district shows positive results. Although the data is provided overall, it is not given by school or even by individual grades (except for 10th grade).

To address its low-performing schools, a STEM grant was initiated in three of the schools. There is no evidence provided about the impact and success of this grant.

There are additional supports for the district's struggling schools such as prescriptive professional development, continuous evaluation of instruction, data analysis and the use of benchmark and assessment data; however, it is not clear what outcomes were achieved.

The district uses multiple methods to make student performance data available to its stakeholders using its web site for each school that also links to the state's data. A positive aspect of communicating performance data to parents is the frequency (every three weeks). Communication also occurs between the teacher-parent and also the superintendent to the community.

Due to the inadequacies in this section, the score is in the low - medium range.

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

The district reports that it makes public actual school level data - salaries and expenditures- that includes the levels of local, state and federal funds. These data are only available on its website. The district does not describe how it notifies the public that the information is available on the website.

There is evidence in the application that the necessary data is made public although there is only one method of public access using the web site and no process to notify the public of the availability of this information. Therefore, the score for this section is medium because there is not a high level of transparency.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The district's reform efforts are not in conflict with the state's efforts. According to the applicant, the state's Race to the Top effort is consistent with some of the proposed project's activities such as the partnership with higher education and the increased rigor and enrollment levels of AP courses.

The applicant cites its strategic plan "Growing to Greatness" referencing its policies, procedures and programs. A copy of this plan is not provided as evidence in the application.

A letter of support from the state is included in the application. The letter states, "the applicant's goals and activities align with the READY remodeling agenda and the state-level RtT grant implementations." The letter further states that the "goals and activities align strongly with the State's work."

The applicant does not specifically identify or describe any issues of autonomy for the district although there is a general plan to review district policies. In the Logic Model one of the outcomes is "non-PLA friendly policies and procedures are identified and placed on the governance committee's schedule for review". This is an example of general components of the implementation plan.

The conditions are such that the district's proposed initiatives can be implemented without legal, statutory or regulatory constraints.

Missing however is specific information about current district autonomy and evidence of the policies and procedures of the strategic plan therefore, this section results in a high-medium score.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	10
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes its process to engage its participating schools, which appears to be sufficient to gain feedback and buy-in. The stakeholder engagement included meetings and presentations with each school's administrators, faculty, and PTA meetings. Professional development workshops were also held. Teacher leaders from each school also participated in the application development.

Verbal and written feedback was obtained; however, it is not clear how the application was revised based upon this input. Notably, 100% of the staff of each of the participating schools signed a notice of support.

The collective bargaining representative signed the application, however, the steps of engagement are not provided. There are two letters of support from the mayors. Both mayors are in support of the technology supports to students. It is unclear if there are other mayors in the county and if their input was solicited.

There are also letters of support from other stakeholders and community leaders. These stakeholders include the business community, United Way, a library and the county literacy council. The letters all express support for the district's application.

Because the high level of stakeholder engagement coupled with some areas of weakness regarding the revisions due to stakeholder input and the lack of details on engagement of the collective bargaining units and lack of clarity about the mayors, the score for this section is high medium.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal's Theory of Action consists of four components:

1. Competency based models
2. Stakeholder engagement
3. Blended learning
4. Individual Plans

The MOST Theory of Action consists of these individual projects of the proposal; however, no theory of action is provided for the mobile preschool project.

The applicant also has a Logic Model as its plan to guide the implementation of the grant proposal. The Logic Model too lacks information about the mobile preschool project. Overall the Logic Model does not possess all the elements of a high-quality plan. The activities in the plan are general. For example, Objective 2, Activity A states, "create personalized learning plans to map a personal pathway to college and career ready graduation for each student". Because the implementation plan does not provide detailed activities, it will be difficult for the proposal to stay on-track. Additionally, the plan does not include measurable outcomes. For example, Objective 2, Outcome C states facilitators "are spending 90% of their effort supporting the personalized learning components". It is unclear how this can actually be measured.

The implementation of the MOST project to engage and empower learners is primarily based on the use of digital learning tools, flipped classrooms and project-based learning. Not a lot of detail is provided on how the students, parents and educators will learn about the model and use of the new systems. For students, the applicant only describes having an assembly and on-going training. Parents will receive a Connect ED message and newsletter. They will be invited to public meetings and ongoing trainings. No individualized outreach to parents is described nor does the Logic Model provide details.

The applicant states that effective teachers will assist students in understanding the importance of learning. It is unclear how this will be implemented. Also, the applicant will be using project-based learning to accomplish this goal. There is no discussion as to how this will be implemented and/or differentiated in each of the served grades.

For students to structure their learning, the applicant is using a 1:1 digital initiative. Students will use real-time assessments to determine if they are on-track to graduate using a digital portfolio. This is a strength to the application as it facilitates student learning. However, specific details are not included as to how students will be taught to use this tool.

Also project-based learning is to be used as a strategy. This will be used to make sure that students gain mastery of content. It is unclear how this will interface with traditional courses of study and in different grade levels.

The use of project-based learning is to be used for students to gain deep learning in areas of interest. Digital learning devices will be used to expose students to diverse cultures and contexts. It is unclear how these strategies will be implemented in different grade levels.

For students to have a personalized sequence of content and skill development, the applicant will be designing a learning plan for each student. The tool will take some time to implement, as it will be created with input of teachers. It is not clear when this tool will be available for use and full implementation.

According to the applicant, students will have access to a variety of instructional approaches only using the flipped classroom strategy. The application does not describe how students and parents will be engaged in this nor does it

describe how the strategy will be implemented in different grade levels of the participating schools. Digital devices are to be provided to the participating students to give them opportunities for learning during out of school time. There is not much information on how the district will fully engage the students in the flipped classroom.

The applicant is also relying only on digital content to ensue a variety of high-quality content. The Logic Plan does not include specific activities to address using a variety of content focusing on the acquisition of "21st Century technologies" and creation of "blended learning platforms".

A positive aspect of the MOST project is the use of real time assessments via the Data Warehouse. Students, teachers and parents will have access to this tool. This strategy will ensure more timely feedback although the applicant does not define the frequency of the assessments. The use of an 8th grade diagnostic assessment is described to determine the need for interventions. The applicant discusses identifying struggling students to be assigned a career coach. No detail is provided as to when and how this will occur. It is also not clear in the application how other grade level students will be assessed and interventions applied.

For the mobile preschool project, it is unclear how the preschool students will be assessed. The applicant does not sufficiently address this project throughout the application.

To address accommodations for high-need students, the applicant only describes the digital learning project in its approach, listing some strategies. No other strategies are identified for the other components of the proposal. The Logic Model does not include a high-quality plan to address accommodations for high-need students.

The Logic Model, which serves as the project's implementation plan, is not of sufficient detail to implement the components of the learning plan. The Model lacks specific activities and the outcomes are not measurable. There is absolutely no detailed plan to implement the mobile preschool project.

Project-based learning is central to the proposal, however, the Logic Model does not provide sufficient detail for the on-track success of the initiative. The components of the implementation plan lack quality and specific detail for the MOST project and essentially no information for the mobile preschool project, therefore, the score for this section is in the low-medium range.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	8
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The Logic Model serves as the applicant's plan to address teaching and leading. It lacks sufficient detail to ensure that all participating school leaders and school leadership teams have training, policies, tools, data, and resources that enable them to structure an effective learning environment that meets individual student needs. For example, Objective 4, Activity D is, "build the technological systems and infrastructure necessary to support personalized learning environments, especially in 1:1 environments". This is a very generalized activity also with a vague output, "the technology department will create a plan".

The applicant describes its professional learning communities as a means to address professional development for the project-based learning and flipped classroom components. The learning communities will meet weekly and teachers will participate in summer academies. The process to adapt instruction, frequently measure student progress and provide teachers with feedback are listed.

The feedback about student performance will be readily available using the digital portfolios and individual education plan once developed. Teachers will be trained in data analysis. The teacher will then be able to adapt content and strategies for students. The applicant does not include a definition of the frequency and timelines for this analysis of student work nor does the Logic Model describe the details of the professional development plan.

Overall, the Logic Model is not of sufficient detail to implement the components of the teaching and leading plan. In the Logic Model for professional development, it includes general activities and the annual outcomes are not measurable. For example: an activity is "develop and deliver professional development for implementing PLEs. The output is: Two core PLE Leadership modules are developed: Leading school to the 21st Century". The outcome for 2015 is: "90% of school leaders have completed both core PLE". The outcome for 2016 is measured using "increase percentage of student" proficiencies. And the long-term outcome is "all learners will graduate". Year, to year, the outcomes are not linear and as such are difficult to measure.

There is absolutely no detailed plan to implement the mobile preschool project. Therefore, it does not address the mobile pre-school teachers and their needs.

The applicant identifies the four modules of MOST: project-based, blended learning & flipped classroom, digital integration

teaching & learning strategies, 21st Century technologies and formative assessments. The applicant does not however, sufficiently describe the specific supports and activities for developing its teachers to implement the components of its projects. Educator development for the mobile preschool is not specified.

The applicant is relying on the state's educator evaluation system to improve educator practice. The system was implemented four years ago. Under the system, there are supports and interventions for struggling educators. The applicant does not provide a description of what types of supports these are and how the district used them or enhanced the remedies. The applicant does not provide evidence of the impact and outcomes of the implementation of this evaluation system thus far. This weakens the application.

The applicant plans to train its educators on the effective use of the personal computing devices, digital content and collection and analysis of data. Educators will have access to student assessment data and the value added system to address individual student needs. Digital content will also be available to educators. The teacher can then match student needs with resources. The specifics (timelines and deliverables) about the training for this to occur are not included in the application.

The application also describes the use of district wide surveys to collect data on social emotional development. It is not clear how the district's teachers will be trained to utilize the information obtained.

The application lacks a high-quality plan or Logic Model to increase effective teachers in hard-to-staff schools. No specific plan is included in the application. The applicant describes alternative school administrator licensure and the Sandhills Leadership Academy whereby administrative interns are placed in low performing schools. No outcomes for these programs are described relative to the impact on these types of schools. The focus of these strategies is on administrators not teachers.

Along with teacher hiring, screening protocols, and use of the state educator evaluation system will be used to address increasing effective teachers for students. The plan for hard-to-staff schools, subjects and specialty areas are not sufficiently addressed in the application, lacking components of a high-quality plan such as detailed activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties.

Because of the lack of detail for teaching and leading and a Logic Model and plan that are not of high-quality, it is unclear how the project's goals will be effectively implemented. Therefore, the score for this section is in the low end of the medium range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	5

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's plan to support project implementation is not of high-quality. To organize its administrative work, the plan's activities, timelines, and outcomes are general and not well defined.

The applicant describes some of the on-going structures associated with the district such as the curriculum specialists and coaches as well as the central office administrative staff. The organizational structure of the district is clearly described. However, it is not specified how these existing structures and the organization will be adjusted to implement the MOST and mobile preschool projects.

No specific plan exists to address providing school leadership teams with flexibility and autonomy over factors such as calendars. The applicant describes existing autonomy with school schedules, personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities of staff, and school-level budgets. No specific examples are provided regarding the individual differences in the district's schools.

It is unclear if any existing policies or practices will be done any differently in the participating schools. One change in practice is that the MOST students will be able to access online assessments from their own personal computing device supplied through the project instead of using school computers. The plan to accomplish this lacks detail.

The applicant proposes to permit students in the MOST project to gain mastery using electronic systems and intends to use the flipped classroom model as well. In the flipped model, students work on research and listen to lectures at home using their electronic devices and during school hours the teacher engages them in discussions about the research and lectures. Strategies to implement this model however have yet to be developed. Therefore, the plan for this is currently not defined.

Using an electronic format will permit the district to tailor resources for students on an individual basis. This is strength to the project in that the electronic format facilitates access by all learners including special education and English language learners.

A specific plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure is not provided in the application. Therefore, none of the elements of a high-quality plan are evident.

Due to the lack of a plan relative to how the existing district organization and structures will be adjusted to implement the elements of the projects, the score for this section is in the low point of the medium range.

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

The Logic Model and the contents of the application do not possess all the components of a high-quality plan. For example, Objective 3, Activity A is very general. It states, "identify opportunities to leverage non-school hours to provide learners with additional learning time and experiential learning opportunities". The scope of this activity is more like a goal than a high-quality activity. The outcome is equally vague. It states, "the PLE curriculum identifies all non-school hour opportunities for students to extend their learning time and experiences and shares those opportunities with students".

A major component of the MOST project is the personal computing devices. The applicant does not sufficiently describe how students, especially those of low income, will access the internet at home other than to say that there will be some assistance. Also, the applicant states that students will be "encouraged" to take the devices home. In a flipped classroom model, the home on-line activities are essential to the success of the strategy. There is no description on how to ensure that this will occur successfully.

The applicant lists multiple forms of communication and events for students, parents and community stakeholders. As part of this grant, the district intends on offering an online site for all stakeholders. However, a detailed plan to implement this component is not included in the application.

The current infrastructure of the district supports the use of information in an open data format. The district's data warehouse is already operational. Additionally, the applicant states that district's infrastructure already supports interoperable data systems at all of its schools. Therefore, the data systems that will be developed and used in the proposal will also be interoperable. However, the level of current use of these systems by the district's stakeholders is not described.

Although current data systems are in an open format and are interoperable, the application lacks details about stakeholders, especially those who are of limited financial means, use and access to tools, learning resources and content. Additionally, the implementation plan is not of high-quality. Therefore, the score for this section is in the middle of the mid range.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

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

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant plans to use an external evaluator to implement a continuous improvement process. The evaluator will be using the applicant's Logic Model to assess implementation levels. Because the Logic Model is not comprehensive, the improvement process will be difficult use to sufficiently analyze progress toward meeting project goals and learning of opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements.

The outcomes in the Logic Model that are specified for the three years (2015, 2016 and 2017) are inconsistent from one year to the next. For example, the activity to create personalized learning plans lacks specified timelines. It is unclear when the tool will be completed. The short-term outcome is that 90% of the plans will be implemented; the mid-term outcome is an increase in proficiency for these students and ultimately the long-term outcome is for all students to graduate high school college and career ready. The outcomes are not linear and specific to the identified activity. Notably, there are no specific outcomes identified for 2014.

Additionally, the Project Objectives are not clearly defined and measurable. Rather, in one example it only states that the curriculum will be responsive to students' expressed learning preferences, pacing and interests.

The mobile preschool project is not sufficiently described to be able to assess its impact. In fact, there is no mention of this project in the Logic Model. Therefore, it is impossible to evaluate this project. This omission weakens the application.

The data collection methods specified by the evaluator are designed to assess the project objectives using qualitative and quantitative data methods. Missing in this model are actual objectives and quantitative data that are measurable. Therefore, the model will not provide feedback of sufficient quality to improve the outcomes of the grant's proposed projects.

With respect to the provision of on-going feedback to stakeholders based upon the results of the evaluation, the applicant intends on using a variety of methods to disseminate the information. These methods are: via the web site, newsletters, data warehouse, presentations using quarterly progress reports, annual performance reports, data summaries and a final summative report. Although these methods are varied, the plan lacks details such as specific timelines, measurable outcomes and responsible parties.

The level of detail for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process is not sufficient to ensure that the grant is on track. Due to a lack of comprehensive information, the score for this section is in the high-low range.

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

5

1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The on-going communication plan for internal and external stakeholders is not fully described nor does it include the essential elements of a high-quality plan. Missing are key goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties.

The only method of communication specified is "weekly conference calls or other means of meeting." The methods of public sharing of information about the quality of investments in the grant are not addressed. The level of communication to the stakeholders is described as "frequent" and the particular stakeholders are not specified. Therefore, the score for this section is in the low range.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a rationale for selecting its 12 performance measures. Some of the measures are non-cognitive growth using the district's perception survey data, student proficiency, free application for federal student aid, advanced placement exams and SAT scores. The applicant provides a rationale for the selection of these various performance measures. An explanation is provided for each of the selected measures and why each of them is valuable and important in analyzing student progress. For example, using the SAT, a score of 996 or above, was selected because this accurately shows career and college-readiness.

Missing however, are measures for the mobile preschool project. Also missing are the student subgroups. Only overall data are provided for the all students category.

For the effective teacher and principal table, data is not provided for the effective teacher for the "all participating students category". The missing data is for the baseline and annual targets. When evaluating both the effective and highly-effective tables together, in one school the total of both tables is in the high range - 96%; and in another it is 53%. As a result, in some schools, the targets are not ambitious. No explanation is provided for these wide ranges. A strength is that all participating schools are listed separately.

Also absent is baseline data for the safe environment surveys even though targets are included. Because there is no baseline data, the annual targets are not reliable and therefore it cannot be determined if the targets are ambitious and achievable. Nonetheless, the targets increase incrementally to 85% at the end of the project period. Each grade is listed separately although subgroups are not included.

For the proficiency tables, the targets increase gradually. For example, in grades 4-8 in the "all students" subgroup, the baseline is 24% with a target of 56% at the end of the grant period. The grade levels are listed separately. These targets are achievable, not necessarily ambitious as the measure is only an increase in a lexile score. No subgroup data is provided.

For grades 9-12, the free application for federal student aid rates go from 11% to 80%. For SAT scores, the baseline rate is 9% with an end target of 29%. Some of these targets are ambitious and achievable; others achievable but not ambitious. A strength to the application is that the high schools are listed separately and have their own individual data and targets. However, no subgroups are provided.

The applicant only generally describes how these measures will be used to ensure successful implementation. The applicant only states, "The project director, evaluator, and project leaders at each school site will meet regularly to evaluate

the performance measures and make adjustments as needed".

Rationales are provided for the selection of the performance measures. For the tables, some of the data is missing and some of the targets are not ambitious. Also the description of how the measures will be reviewed and used is insufficient. Therefore, this section scores in the low-medium range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The project director, school leadership and the evaluation team plan to evaluate the effectiveness of investments using a quarterly report and a final report at the end of the project. Because the Logic Model and the goals and targets for student academic and student performance measure outcomes lack sufficient detail, it will be difficult to clearly evaluate the project's value.

The Logic Model has the key topics of a high-quality plan; however, the details and content of these are not sufficient and of high-quality. For example, Objective 1: is for professional development of teachers. The project activities are not of sufficient detail to meet this objective.

Activity C of the Logic Model is "Develop and deliver professional development for implementing PLEs." This is a very general activity. The output (deliverable) is not ambitious in that it states: "Two core PLE Leadership modules are developed." The timeline is also weak, as it does not begin until 2015.

The project director, school leadership and the evaluation team will conduct the evaluation. In conjunction with the Logic Model, there are four Evaluation Questions provided in the application. The questions are brief and broad. Question 2 is "To what degree did the program increase parental engagement in student learning." For this question only two methods will be used for evaluation purposes: interviews and surveys.

As a result, the evaluation of effectiveness of investments is not reliable. In addition, the plan does not provide specifics for the mobile preschool program. Therefore, this section is scored low.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	6

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has identified both the requested funds and those from the district (\$8,000) used to support the projects for a total budget of \$14.9 million. There is sufficient itemization in the budget to understand the costs for the proposed two projects. The personnel for the MOST project include a Project Director, Digital Integration Specialists (8), Instructional Coaches (6), Mentor Coordinators (2), Technology Specialists (3) and Clerical Support (1). For each of these line items, a brief description of each role is provided.

The applicant identifies the four MOST components (Competency-based models, blended learning environment, individualized learning plans & engaged stakeholders). It provides rationales to support these components for inclusion in the budget.

The rationale for the mobile preschool project is provided. It is a pilot program for the district. However, this project is not identified in the applicant's Theory of Change, not sufficiently described throughout the application, and does not include outcome targets and goals. Therefore, the project is poorly defined.

Because one of the two projects is missing crucial information, it results in a lower score.

The applicant identifies the funds that will be for one-time investments for the mobile preschool bus and MOST equipment over two years. The applicant intends on sustaining the Digital Integration Facilitators and Technology Specialists after the grant period.

The applicant reports having a history of successful implementation of initiatives and budget oversight without providing evidence to support this.

The Communities in Schools project will be delivered using Mentor Coordinators in two schools. It is unclear if the Communities in Schools project will serve all participating students.

The budget overall is clear and understandable while missing crucial information about the mobile preschool program. This results in a medium range score for this section.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	2
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that the district will use additional local funding, existing funding, and will capitalize on savings and efficiencies through reduced printing costs associated with digital learning. They also are projecting that there will be fewer costs associated with remediation for students thereby using its Title I funds. For non-Title I schools, it is unclear how the program will be sustained.

The budget states that the district will sustain the Digital Integration Facilitators and Technology Specialists after the grant period. There are no other details describing this.

For the mobile preschool program, the applicant intends on sustaining the program using the bus purchased from the grant. No other details are provided.

The applicant, to ensure sustainability of the projects in the proposal, does not provide a high-quality plan. There are no specific activities, timelines, or outcomes specified. No information is provided about the sustainability of each of the individual projects in the proposal as well as no post-grant budget is presented. No other funds have been identified or offered by the state, local government or others. No letters of financial support are included as evidence of future funding.

The applicant has not sufficiently addressed this section resulting in a score in the bottom of the low range.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant plans to expand its partnership with Communities in Schools. The current program does not describe its impact on student achievement even though the provider is identified as the "nation's leading community-based organization". No data is provided about the program's impact on parental involvement. Despite the provider's dropout prevention program, the graduation rate at the district actually dropped this past year.

Some data is provided about the positive impact of mentoring programs for students who skip class. No other data about the impact of mentors is provided. Data outcomes for the parental involvement program are not specifically provided other than to report that the "program is proven to show significant positive change".

No details are included in the application about efforts to build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and support.

To identify students most at risk of dropping out of school, the site coordinator will work with the school staff and will then work with these students individually. This is the extent of the description to assess the needs of students. There are no specific intervention details included other than working with parents to set goals for their child's behavior, meeting with them quarterly and participating in a 14-week training session.

There are no other identified methods to select, implement, and evaluate supports that address the individual needs of participating students. The primary support identified is the assignment of mentors. The size and scope of this strategy is not described.

For the performance measures, not all subgroups (economically disadvantaged and LEP), have baseline data. Also, class attendance and student and parental perception results are not measurable in that no data is provided. The performance measures are not particularly strong. For example, the target for year one of the grant for grades 6-8 for all students is only a reduction of two short-term suspensions; for blacks it is also a reduction of 2 (18 to 16).

Additionally, the 10 population-level desired results are not measurable. For example, only words such as increase and decrease are used without citing specific outcome targets that are quantitative. Targets are provided for only two of the population-level groups cited.

The provider currently operates a program in two of the participating schools. The applicant does not provide information about the sustainability of the provider's programs in the participating schools without a current program after the end of

the project period.

Notably, the perception surveys have yet to be developed. Additionally, a description is not provided on how the indicators will be tracked, resources targeted, scaled beyond the participating students and work with staff in the participating schools to identify students to be served. No specific information to address school and community assets and needs is provided.

Because of the missing information and lack of evidence, it is impossible to determine the potential success of this project. Therefore, the score for this section is in the low end of the low range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

This application does not meet the Absolute Priority, as the overall plan is not coherent or comprehensive. The application consists of two projects: MOST and mobile preschool. There is essentially no information about the mobile preschool program. Therefore, one of the two projects is significantly lacking in details of implementation.

For the MOST project, the application is designed to serve K-12 students in 11 of the district's schools. For the most part, strategies for student learning and teaching are focused on the higher grades. There is scant detail about services in the elementary grade-levels.

The Logic Model developed to guide the proposal is not of high-quality. Many of the elements of a high-quality plan are insufficient to implement, manage and evaluate the proposal. The activities are broad and lack detail, the outcomes are not measurable and the timelines not provided. Notably, the outcomes do not begin until 2015.

The applicant does not sufficiently describe and provide evidence of its current work on all the four core educational assurance areas or how the projects will build on these areas. More specifically, for assurance area 3, the applicant does not sufficiently provide its strategies for recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals. Also, no evidence about the elements of the educator effectiveness system is provided. Additionally, lacking are details about turning around its lowest-performing schools, assurance area 4. The outcomes of its current work in its lowest-performing schools are not provided as evidence of its success or the strategies that work. The applicant only lists the additional district support to these schools without describing the details and outcomes of this support.

Due to the inadequacies in the application, the applicant does not sufficiently address the development and implementation of providing a personalized learning environment for all of its participating students. Nor does the applicant put forth a plan that will significantly improve educator effectiveness.

Total	210	85
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