



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0046NC-1 for Pitt County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The eastern North Carolina Rural Education Consortium (eNCREC) articulates a strong reform vision—to become a model for rural school districts to transform school systems and enable them to create future-ready graduates.</p> <p>(a)</p> <p>The applicant addresses each facet of the four core educational assurance areas.</p> <p>In its quest to adopt a set of standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and beyond, the district has already met this assurance area by previously adopting the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Math and English Language Arts and the North Carolina Essential Standards for all other subjects. Both of these national and regional initiatives are more than adequate standard to use for the applicant's proposed program. The Consortium's state of North Carolina is a member of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, which is responsible for developing and delivering CCSS assessments, beginning in 2015. The cooperating schools will also use a growth model to determine attainment of curriculum standards.</p> <p>HomeBase, the data system which the Consortium will be used to measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction, will be carried out at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year. This online database addresses the needs of all stakeholders and allows for inter-district collaborations. This system, created using previously awarded Race to the Top State Competition funds, will also include an online catalog for professional development as well as rubrics for teacher observation and evaluation.</p> <p>The applicant offers a complete plan of how teachers will be evaluated. Through the state's Race to the Top grant, a new evaluation system was developed to identify the effectiveness of teacher, principal, and school instruction. The applicant also briefly mentions that teachers will be eligible for merit pay and increased teacher autonomy as well as interventions such as instructional coaching, guided practice, and collaboration.</p> <p>Finally, to underscore its continuous achievement, the applicant highlights the continuous academic gains for five Pitt County Schools where, over the past four years, they have demonstrated significant progress and growth—rising from the bottom 5% to achieving some of the highest growth in the state. The applicant hopes to implement these practices in the proposed program and details how the lessons learned from these programs which the reviewer believes are applicable, scalable, and can be implemented throughout the consortium.</p> <p>(b)</p> <p>In its narrative, the applicant outlines an effective approach to increase student achievement and deepen understanding. Four consortium-level data directed teams will ensure that objectives are met. More specifically, the Grant Coordination Team will be charged with designing and monitoring individual student learning plans, while the Individualizing Learning Team will implement the individualized learning pathways for students.</p> <p>(c)</p> <p>The applicant provides a brief description of the learning environment. Based on performance data, students will be able to move throughout the school to receive personal instruction.</p> <p>Overall, this places the eNCREC in the high range. While the overarching vision was strong, the applicant fails to mention how it will recruit and retain teachers; how the teams will effectively and cooperatively design and implement training for teachers.</p>		

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant shares its reasonable approach to implementing its reform proposal and how it will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of its proposed activities.</p> <p>(a-c)</p> <p>The consortium will require that all schools that fall under their purview to participate in The Pathways to the Future Ready Graduate initiatives and, according to Table A.2, more than 45,000 students will be served (&gt;30,000 low income and high need students, and &gt; 3,000 educators). The result of this approach is that all students and participating educators in the consortium will benefit from the proposed program. Change will be implemented from the district level and will require buy-in from all participants. This type of reform will ensure continuity and consistency in the program.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant places in the high range.</p>		

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The eNCREC will use the four consortium-level data directed teams to ensure the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. Each district will then have a LEA-level team that corresponds to the appropriate consortium team as well as a consortium-level project manager who will be responsible to align the work and ensure consistency across the consortium. The four teams are explained below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team One--Grant Coordination (Personalizing Student Support)--This team will provide oversight and guidance related to the consortium activities, including designing and monitoring the structures and processes whereby individual student learning plans are developed and instruction is personalized for each child. This team will include the superintendent and/or designee for each LEA, the district's Project Manager, team leaders from each of the districts' Teaching, Learning, and Leadership teams, outside evaluators, and other individuals as identified by the consortium. The district-level team will consist of the district's RtT-D coordinator, superintendent/designee, and the team leads for each of the other teams (teaching, learning, and leading).</li> <li>• Team Two--Individualizing Teaching--This team will oversee and align all aspects of the grant related to teacher professional learning, particularly professional learning to equip teachers with the skills they need to implement personalized learning in the classroom. This team consists of the districts' Professional Learning leads. The district-level team will include the district PD lead, district and school administrators, master level teachers, instructional coaches, professional development specialists, and other designated personnel.</li> <li>• Team Three--Individualizing Learning--This team will be responsible to oversee all aspects of the grant related to the implementation of the individualized learning pathways for students. This team consists of the districts' learning leads. The district level learning team will consist of the district learning lead, district and school administrators, teacher leaders, coaches, support specialists related to drop out prevention (student retention, counseling, life coaching, academic achievement, etc.), and selected community partners.</li> <li>• Team Four--Individualizing Leading--This team will be responsible for all aspects of the grant aligned with activities related to improving the leadership capacity of building administrators and district leaders. This team consists of the three district coordinators and leading leads. The district-level team will include district leaders and school administrators, and any other need personnel as identified.</li> </ul> <p>Figure A.2 outlines the monitoring and sharing of best practices across schools. Comprised of stakeholders from various areas (teachers, superintendents, community partners, and professional development specialists), this structure help the applicant reach its outcome goals.</p> <p>The applicant's theory of change, based on Joellen Killian's theories, asserts that everything rises and falls on leadership. Therefore, the consortium will first focus on school leaders and building their effectiveness, which in turn will trickle down to teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement. A detailed matrix (Table A.3) for school identification and ongoing support and development is offered.</p> <p>The applicant states that "the overall impact of the process is the creation of learning organizations that create conducive learning environments that raise student achievement while elevating the instructional quality needed to address the cognitive and affective domains of students."</p> <p>Overall, the applicant's plan is high quality. The LEA hopes to initiate change at the highest levels and replicate that</p>		
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success using teams with the same names and responsibilities, at the district level, which makes this an effective approach. The outlined goals are ambitious and the process the applicant used to determine these goals places this score in the high range.

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

**10**

**4**

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

\*The applicant does not address this under a specific heading, but the programs goals are outlined at the end of section (A)(3).

The proposed project—Pathways to the Future Ready Graduate—has stated five goals: improve students' achievement scores and graduation rates and reduce achievement gaps; improve participating schools' effect by at least one designation on the support matrix; provide individualized learning plans for students; provide individualized professional learning plans for educators; and contribute to the creation of a community of collaboration that promotes a coordinated partnership within and among the LEAs. However, the applicant fails to provide sufficient quantitative data about its summative assessments, achievement gap reduction and graduation rates for its students. Much of the information, including baseline data for SY 2012-2013 and long-term goals, will not be available for review or cannot be calculated until after the proposal submission deadline. The applicant also does not include any data for postsecondary degree attainment. Because of this, the applicant scores in the lower end of the middle range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

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

The eNCREC demonstrates a strong track record of improvement for student achievement and has implemented a series of reforms which will provide a good foundation for further progress.

(a)

The districts have made great strides in improving graduation rates.

- Since SY 2008-2009, two of the three school districts, Brunswick County and Pitt County, have seen improvement rates in the double digits.
- The remaining district, Sampson County, made significant gains in student middle school proficiency from 19.45% to 44.9% over the same period of time.
- And significant gains were made in closing the achievement gap as evidenced by the Algebra I End of Course performance scores, where Farmville Central High School reduced the gap between its black and white students from 37.1% to 9.8% over the course of six years.

Lastly, the measures that the applicant has implemented to achieve these gains are the activities and programs that the applicant has outlined in this proposal. Successful initiatives such as the CADDA (Comprehensive Analytical Data Directed Approach: Customized Student Academic Plan) initiative, video reflection, personal learning communities, and instructional facilitators will be shared across the consortium to ensure widespread regional success.

(b)

To illustrate its efforts to implement and achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools, the applicant offers the gains made by Northwest Elementary School, a rural school located on the outskirts of Pitt County. After three years, this school rose from the Priority Schools designation, the lowest, to the Rewards Schools designation, the highest, after installing new leadership, an instructional coach, and the Teacher Leadership Cohort (TLC). The applicant then highlights the specific impact of the TLC initiative on other schools. Recent data from SY 2011-2012 indicates that 80% of participating schools met expected growth standards on the state's accountability program and 60% of participating schools met high growth standards. More significantly, the average growth for schools with a TLC was nearly two times the average of all schools in the district.

(c)

With Race to the Top State Competition funds, HomeBase, a comprehensive, cloud based, state-wide software solution, was created that makes available student performance data to educators, students, and parents. When students log in

each day, they can access a dashboard that enables them to see cumulative performance. Parents have a portal that provides them access to the same information. And teachers can instantly manipulate data to see students' strengths, deficiencies, and needs when planning instruction.

Under the proposed program, the software will be upgraded to offer educators customized professional development that will ensure that teachers and school leaders know how to effectively examine the data through the lens for impacting and adjusting instruction to meet the individual needs of students.

HomeBase will also provide, combined with comprehensive training for teachers and administrators in place, the tools necessary to design individual support plans. Using the CADD process, teachers will analyze student performance data, identify the student story, both academically and socially, and then make the appropriate adjustments to meet the student needs. Also, all consortium members will utilize the personal learning community platform to study weekly student performance data from common formative assessments and adjust instruction to reflect individual student needs on a regular basis. Data dashboards, now available through the HomeBase platform, will take the place of student data folders, thus increasing the parent involvement from a weekly take-home folder event to a daily email and sign on through the parent portal. This availability of information and data will support daily parental involvement. Graduation Coaches, Success Coaches, and Student Advocates will be crucial to working with students and their parents in and utilizing the wealth of information available to them to make decisions that impact the student's academic future and graduation.

Overall, the applicant seeks to build on its historical record of success with improving graduation rates, middle school proficiency, and overall student state-assessment achievement. The information provided that the LEA is capable of building on its past record of success and is clearly aligned with its stated vision. However, the applicant does not provide much detail about the LEA's graduation rate, the college enrollment rate, or how they will use their data to improve student achievement. This places the applicant in the lower end of the high range.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The eNCREC currently maintains a high level of transparency in its processes, practices, and investments. All information regarding personnel salaries is available to anyone through public records requests. District expenditures are released annually. Consortium members will be responsible for creating a public online database which will allow the public to search and sort salaries for all employees as well as other fiscal expenditures. All stakeholders, including parents and community members will be able to gain access to this database free of charge at any time.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates an extensive effort to be transparent in all financial matters. This places the applicant in the high range.

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

The applicant effectively states the extent of its autonomy. The RtT District Proposal is supported by both the support of new state policies, procedures, initiatives, and laws and the variety of pilots, programs, and district initiatives currently underway. For example,

- New for the 2013-2014 school year, State Board of Education Policy GCS-M-001 allows schools and districts to award credit based on mastery of subject content to students in grades 6-12. Interested students can elect to demonstrate mastery of a subject even without participating in a class. Specifically, “students shall demonstrate mastery through a multi-phase assessment, consisting of (1) a standard examination, which shall be the EOC/EOG where applicable, or a final exam developed locally and (2) an artifact which requires the student to apply knowledge and skills relevant to the content standards. This multi-phase assessment process builds a body-of-evidence that allows a committee to determine if the student has a deep understanding of the standards for the course or subject area, as defined by the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, thereby earning credit for the course without experiencing it in the school setting.”
- North Carolina General Statute 115C-105.41 requires any districts and schools to, “identify students who are at risk for academic failure and who are not successfully progressing toward grade promotion and graduation, beginning in kindergarten” and design a personalized education plan (PEP). These plans describe the individual interventions used to support students and ensure they are on grade level by the end of the school year. This statute also refers to every student identified as English Language Learners, thus requiring every ELL student to have a personalized plan with routine and established monitoring and assessments of acquisition of the English language.

While North Carolina has provided a strong framework for implementing individualized student learning, there is still much

autonomy in how each LEA can do that as evidenced by the above district initiatives. Because this is a state-wide initiative, there is not doubt that the conditions will exist. The applicant scores in the high range.

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

**15**

**13**

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

The applicant offers strong evidence that it has engaged all stakeholders in the development of the proposal and future implementation of the project.

(a)

Various stakeholders, including parents, students, and district-level personnel from participating schools were invited to offer feedback. The Teacher Quality Partnership initiative was an important tool in this process.

The eastern North Carolina Rural Education Consortium (eNCREC) was initiated by the new superintendent for Pitt County Schools, Dr. Ethan Lenker. Formerly the superintendent of Sampson County Schools, Dr. Lenker is the lead member of the consortium who began an analysis of Pitt County. Recognizing numerous similarities between initiatives in the both Pitt County and Sampson County, he realized that the overall model for professional learning, cultural renewal, and a focus on best classroom practices all emanated from the same under-riding educational philosophy of success for every child. Then, a consortium involving Pitt County Schools, Sampson County Schools, and Brunswick County Schools was created. District level staff from all three county school systems came together through meetings, emails, conference calls, and Google share. Individual student performance data was shared and improvements and initiatives were discussed.

For example, the implementation of the Teacher Leadership Cohort (TLC) and the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) with East Carolina University (ECU) are two initiatives that Pitt County would like to implement. The TLC model invites teachers, identified throughout the district as highly effective based on data, to agree to a change in their teaching assignments to a high needs school and work with a cohort of other highly effective teachers to increase student performance at the school. Stakeholder involvement in this initiative included administrators, teachers, the Pitt County Board of Education, and parents. From the beginning of the implementation of this initiative, several variations occurred in the format, training, and assignment process. Principals were concerned about the schools losing the TLC teachers and how it affected their student performance. Teachers in the receiving schools were concerned about the “expert” perception some of these teachers brought to the new school. The applicant states that most of these concerns were alleviated through changes in the initial implementation processes and those changes occurred through input and feedback from the stakeholders. All levels of stakeholders provided input and feedback on the TQP initiative--students and professors at ECU, UNC-GA administrators, parents and teachers involved with the student interns. And with input with teachers within Pitt County Schools and recommendations from parents and students involved in the classrooms, the rigid format of student teaching was changed to be an inclusive model and, in some cases, two interns in one classroom learning co-teaching techniques.

Students also had the opportunity to participate during Board of Education meetings, as well as the Pitt County Dropout Prevention Task Force in Pitt County, which consists of members from East Carolina University, Pitt Community College, Greenville Police Department, Pitt County Sheriff's Department, Pitt County Mental Health, Pitt County Social Services, Vidant Medical Center, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), principals and teachers.

It appears that all members of the community were effectively engaged in the process and that the applicant went to great length to analyze information and, where possible, amend the proposed program to address their needs.

(b)

Various letters of support were offered by the applicant. Twenty-two stakeholders from a wide range of areas, such as town mayors, civic organizations, and area community colleges offered their support and provided sufficient positive feedback for the proposed services. However, the letters of support do not detail the ways in which the external stakeholders will help the applicant achieve its goals.

Overall, the applicant places in the high range for this criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant states how it will improve the existing learning environment.</p> <p>(a)</p> <p>The detailed narrative includes plans to provide students with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Skills to establish personal goals.</b> Success and graduation coaches will assist students and serve as liaisons between classroom instruction and personal goals. The coaches will also serve as advocates and mentors.</li> <li>• <b>Data-driven, personalized support plans.</b> The CADDA process will be used to establish data-driven, personalized support plans. Using the CADDA process, teachers will analyze student performance data, identify the student story, both academically and socially, and then make the appropriate adjustments to meet the student needs.</li> <li>• <b>High quality, real-world content and experiences and exposure to diverse cultures and content.</b> Students will have the opportunity to participate in internships, career-mentoring, job shadowing, and field trips to community colleges and higher education within surrounding communities.</li> <li>• <b>Experiences to enhance critical thinking.</b> Students, with the help of teachers, will have the ability to tailor the curriculum in order to reach higher-level and more complex goals.</li> </ul> <p>(b)</p> <p>In addition to these measures, the applicant also explains that program staff and educators will teach students how to establish their own goals. Further details about how the students will move through the program are offered. For example, CADDA will be utilized to monitor student progress and also allow teachers to assign students to one of three academic areas: Basic, Repair and Extension, or Enrichment Activities. This effort will be coupled with educational plans such as Individual Education Programs for students with disabilities, Personalized Educational Plans for at-risk students, and Individualized Learning Plans for the remainder of students. These practices will allow educators the opportunity to effectively monitor student progress toward their goals.</p> <p>(c)</p> <p>The applicant will also provide students with HomeBase software instruction. HomeBase will also provide the tools necessary to design individual support plans. Additional support will be provided by coaches, counselors, and teachers.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant offers an adequate plan of action for implementing an individual learning environment for students; however, the plan is not high-quality and does not provide enough information about how parents will be involved in continuous improvement of programs and service. More specifically, the plan does not detail how parents will be supported in helping students achieve their goals (as opposed to their initial involvement in the programs' creation). This is especially important for elementary and middle school students. Because of this, the applicant scores in the middle range for this criterion.</p>		

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>
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<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Overall, the applicant offers a reasonable plan for teaching and leading under its program.</p> <p>(a)</p> <p>All teachers will engage in training, as well as professional teams or communities, that support their individual and collective capacity to create personalized learning environments for students. This will be accomplished through establishing Professional Learning Communities and implementing blended professional learning—an approach which seeks to support and advance teacher achievement.</p> <p>In other sections of the proposal, the applicant states that it will take a data-driven approach in order to frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators. The primary source of this information will come from the HomeBase data software, which will be shared with all stakeholders.</p> <p>Finally, the applicant states that it will use state evaluation tools, walk-through observations, and video to improve teachers' practice and effectiveness. The applicant will also provide recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement through sustained workshops, instructional coaches, and principal feedback. Principals will receive feedback</p>		
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through state-required observations and be assigned to one of three career-related tiers according to their long-term goals.

Yet, the plan to adapt content and instruction is limited. The applicant mentions the placement of Differentiated Instructional Facilitators in all high school and in select middle schools, but fails to mention how content and instruction will be adapted for elementary school students.

(b)

According to the applicant, all teachers will be trained, have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Those resources include:

- CADDA, which uses data to inform both instructional design and evaluation
- EVAAS Predictors
- EOG/EOC scores, attendance, suspensions, grades, and benchmark data

The CADDA will be used to monitor student progress and allow teachers to assign students to one of three academic areas: Basic, Repair and Extension, or Enrichment Activities. This effort will be coupled with educational plans such as Individual Education Programs for students with disabilities, Personalized Educational Plans for at-risk students, and Individualized Learning Plans for the remainder of students. These practices will allow educators the opportunity to monitor student progress toward their goals.

The applicant fails to list the high-quality learning resources, including digital resources, that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, and the tools to create and share new resources it plans to implement.

(c)

According to the applicant, all participating school leaders and school leadership teams will have training, policies, tools, data, and resources that will enable them to structure an effective learning environment that will meet individual student academic needs and accelerate student progress through common and individual tasks toward meeting proposal requirements. The training, policies, tools, data, and resources include:

- Using feedback from the state's and school's teacher evaluation systems to help principals assess and take steps to improve individual and collective educator effectiveness
- Administering bi-annual school-climate surveys for the purpose of continuous school improvement
- Training aspiring principles and those who want to remain in assistant principal roles

The applicant hopes that by creating a pipeline of trained, effective, and responsible principals, student performance and achievement gap gains will be continuous. The plan is sufficient.

(d)

The applicant offers an adequate plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects (mathematics and science) For example, the applicant highlights the Teacher Leadership Cohort, a program that provides supplements of varying levels to high-performing teachers who elect to transfer into low-performing schools for a minimum of three years. These teacher leaders work to build the professional capacity of teachers and improve student achievement. One of the members of the Consortium, Sampson County Schools, offers stipends to teachers in designated content areas as well as to teachers to teach at specific schools identifies as not meeting expectations or are in very rural locations. However, the applicant does not indicate how it will increase the number of teachers in specialty areas such as special education.

The applicant places in the middle range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

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

The applicant outlines a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, and when and where they are needed.

(a)

The applicant clearly states that the consortium will be governed and guided by its Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by all three districts. The consortium will hire a Project Director who will oversee all aspects of the grant implementation in the districts, who will work directly with the district superintendents and district leads for the various strands of the grant (teaching, learning, and leading), and who will serve as the point person for the Pathways to the Future Ready Graduate initiative. The Project Director will also work with each LEA to meet both the requirements of the grant while at the same time abiding by the individual and distinct policies and practices of the districts.

Teams will govern activities and will be divided into two levels: the consortium level and the district level. At the consortium level there are four teams, the Grant Coordination Team, the Consortium Teaching Team, the Consortium Learning Team, and the Consortium Leading Team. District-level teams will mirror the Consortium-level teams and will be primarily responsible for monitoring student achievement progress, improving teacher and administrator capacity, and providing appropriate services to all participating schools. These teams will work with each school's staff to support and guide services to ensure district goals and initiatives will be implemented across the consortium as well as provide the supports necessary for these goals and initiatives to be met. The team leader for each district team will meet quarterly with the respective consortium teams (made up of the team leaders from the other districts) to measure progress and discuss interventions across the consortium, facilitating the sharing of best practices and offering guidance when issues arise.

District teams will meet twice per month to ensure leadership across the district remains in constant communication with school-based leaders and will report quarterly to the consortium's teams of the same name, thereby providing a check and balance for the progress across the consortium.

This approach, top-down implementation, will ensure overall consistency. Because change will come from the highest levels of the consortium, the LEA will provide the tools necessary for all schools. This is an effective means of implementing change.

(b)

As schools move along the School Support Matrix, a continuum toward effectiveness, they will acquire more autonomy in their fiscal and operational functions. The matrix provides an effective means by which schools may show improvement. Much like a grading rubric, schools know what they need to do in order to succeed. Allowing schools access to this information before the process begins, gives schools the opportunity to ready themselves and prepare to carry out the consortium programs. This transparent process can only aid schools in improving their environments.

(c-d)

Credit by demonstrated mastery of skills, identifies the process by which the district will award a student credit in a particular course without requiring the student to enroll in or complete classroom instruction evidenced by seat time. Students may demonstrate mastery through a multi-phased assessment, consisting of at least one standardized examination, or a final exam, developed within the district, as well as an artifact which requires the student to apply knowledge and skills relevant to the content standards.

In Sampson County and Fastrack in Pitt County, the organization Jumpstart has sponsored successful initiatives aimed at accelerating middle school students that have been retained in elementary school. By completing one year's worth of curriculum standards in one semester, enables students to get back on track for graduation with their peers. Brunswick County and Pitt County Schools also adopted credit-recovery programs that enable students to have online access to courses they have failed. Alternative programs are available in the consortium districts that enable students suspended from school, as well as students who are incarcerated or on probation, access to curriculum and classes. These students have the opportunity to continue to earn credits towards graduating on time and college and career ready.

These programs effectively give students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, as well as give them the opportunity to demonstrate the mastery of standards at multiple times and comparable ways.

(e)

The Exceptional Children's Program provides learning resources such as research-based reading and mathematics programs designed to meet the needs of high need learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Each of these programs utilize instructional practices that take into consideration multiple modalities of learning, multiple entry points, explicit instructional practices, and the use of technology for instructional support and assessment. Programs adaptable for students with lower cognitive functioning also offer these learning resources.

Technology, such as Smart Boards, assistive devices, iPods, and iPads will be utilized to enrich instructional presentation and student engagement in the Common Core, North Carolina Essential Standards, and extensions of the core and standards for low-incidence populations. This technology will also assist in the development of 21st century skills as well

as enhance instructional presentation and assessment for students with disabilities and English Language Learners.

The applicant states that all of the consortium's districts are focused on increasing the technology available to its students in order to enable a more adaptable and flexible method for personalizing their learning attainment.

Overall, the outlined measures the applicant plans to implement are focused, sound, and strong. The applicant scores in the high range for this criterion.

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

**10**

**7**

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

The applicant outlines an effective infrastructure that supports personalized learning.

(a)

Ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources, both in and out of school, to support the implementation of the applicant's proposal, the applicant will use the state's Instructional Improvement System (IIS), which is housed within the HomeBase software package. This software system includes learning resources, curriculum assessments, curriculum content resources, teaching tools, and professional development for teachers. All of the resources are aligned to the new curriculum standards. Consortium staff have undergone three years of professional development on the new standards and are now implementing the IIS as portions of it becomes available from the state.

The above system, combined with the HomeBase parent portal, will provide access to students and parents (at home or on the road), information about the progress of students' instructional goals and learning, access to teachers' lesson assignments, homework help, and practice work correlated to the curriculum standards, as well as resources for practice, remediation, or enrichment.

Teachers will also incorporate these resources into their daily instructional methods, employ the CADDA approaches with parents and students to determine individualized pathways, and follow up with daily access to progress and intervention. HomeBase will also provide the capability to house and store the individualized student plans for easy access for parents and students at school and at home.

(b)

The applicant states that to ensure that every district has the capability to access to all these resources, North Carolina has allotted portions of the RttT state grant fund to each district to prepare the infrastructure and technical support. With these funds, and through community partnerships, E-rate priority funds, and other federal and state allocations, eNCREC has been able to ensure all schools and participating stakeholders have access to an array of instructional and technological resources and support such as regular updates of traditional, CTE labs, and mobile devices, as well as implementation of Computers On Wheels for students to use when the labs are being utilized. Many of the schools have also been equipped with ACTIV or, 70" LED TVs, iPads, and other tablets. Web-based instructional programs, online programs such as digital video streaming, electronic encyclopedia databases, and core content for remediation and acceleration purposes will also be utilized.

Each of the consortium districts have technology specialists, network engineers, instructional technology personnel, media coordinators trained in instructional technology, and instructional coaches trained to provide technology support.

(c)

The online software HomeBase has been implemented and has led to the successful uploading and merging of data from other software systems. Recently, another vendor, Amblify, successfully merged with the data file of HomeBase and now allows the assessment data to be accessible to students and parents. The applicant clearly states that this merging of all data and student progress provides a one-stop place for parents and students to monitor their progress.

(d)

To underscore the fact that interoperable data systems are currently being used, the applicant explains that the state funds were used so that all districts in North Carolina have merged systems for human resources, student information systems, budget information, and instructional improvement. HomeBase, the overarching system houses PowerSchool, SchoolNet, and the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System.

However, the plan does not address how all students, regardless of income, will be able to access the digital features of the plan. For example, will students and parents who do not have access to computers be able to access the information in an alternate way or will loaner computers be available. Because of the failure to address the importance of these factors, the applicant scores in the middle range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant comprehensively lists its five project goals (divided as impact and implementation goals) and provides the targets by which they will measure themselves. Goals will be monitored by the national evaluator, consortium team, district team, or designated combinations.</p> <p>The applicant's initial framework for continuous improvement revolves around measuring professional learning. As such, evaluation of professional learning will take place on multiple levels: classroom, school, district, and consortium. Table E.1 highlights a master list of all project goals and activities, including their respective deliverables, implementation timelines, and persons responsible for overseeing them.</p> <p>The governing structure for eNCREC will be responsible for monitoring and assessing goals at benchmark intervals throughout each year of the grant. A focus of the applicant's evaluation work will also be to conduct and review data as well as share the results among the consortium members to improve district collaboration. The applicant will also work with school leaders and Professional Learning Communities to measure the impact of program implementation on student achievement. Benchmark data, common formative assessments, and other assessments aligned to the college and career ready standards will be examined and the district Learning Teams will measure progress toward annual goals. The national evaluator will measure progress towards meeting these goals as part of their evaluation of the program. Climate surveys and the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, administered in the fall and spring, will measure changes/progress towards improving school culture. Changes in school culture are also part of the applicant's action research to determine the best practices needed to improve student achievement. Information will be shared through annual reports and best practices will be highlighted for other districts in the consortium to adopt.</p> <p>The applicant's reporting process is sufficient and transparent. All summative evaluations will be made available to the public through the annual reports published by the evaluation teams. The reports will be available on the consortium website. Required progress reports submitted to the Department of Education, in compliance with the reporting conditions of the grant, will also be available through this same website.</p> <p>Yet some clarity is needed. The applicant states that the information about student performance will be forwarded back to the consortium, however, the applicant does not provide sufficient detail about how this information will be used to improve student performance. And although schools will be re-evaluated on both the affect and effect scales annually, placed accordingly, and receive district support linked directly to their location on the matrix, the applicant fails to describe how it will revise the proposed programs and services to effect widespread change. The applicant also fails to describe its continues improvement plans for after the grant period ends.</p> <p>Overall, the applicant scores in the middle range for this criterion.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

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

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

The eNCREC will communicate and engage its stakeholders, both internal (teachers, coaches, school and district administrators, and other consortium personnel) and external, through continuous improvement and reporting processes throughout the life of the grant. The consortium, by developing its own website for posting information and data, utilizing the district member's public information officers, and utilizing the reporting structure within the consortium's governing structure, will be able to communicate and report on improvements, successes, challenges, and adjustments as the consortium data dictates. The eNCREC will further engage its stakeholders in the components of this proposal through the District Cycle for Improvement and The Change Cycle Leading to Improved Efficacy and create a separate website with links posted on each of the member district's websites for easy access for external stakeholders to access and investigate progress and goal attainment. This website will house consortium information, including reports of progress in meeting the

goals and achievement progress of students in all areas addressed by the grant proposal. Transparency in implementation progress and evaluation reporting will be available.

However, it is unclear how students will be involved in the process and more details are needed about continuous engagement past the initial grant period and because of this, the plan fails to meet high-quality standards. Overall, the applicant scores in the middle range for this criterion.

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

**5**

**3**

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

The applicant outlines ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup, with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. For example, the applicant proposes to increase the current rate of proficiency for economically disadvantaged Math (Algebra I) Grade 10 students (in Brunswick County) from 80% to 92%. Similarly, the applicant proposes to decrease the Sampson County Grade 6 Out of school Suspensions from 149 to 100.

(a-b)

The applicant also states the data on performance measures will be collected through the state testing results, district benchmarks and PLC data, other data collection methods as needed (surveys, internal student achievement data, student progress on meeting their goals, retention data, etc.) and their work with contracted evaluators. Data, such as retention rates, will be used to develop more long-range plans and interventions. Some of the data, such as benchmarks and suspensions, will provide formative data which will drive the frequent adjustments to intervention required to support students where they are at as the applicant strives to create college and career ready graduates.

The applicant states that this data will be analyzed at quarterly consortium meetings and monthly (or bi-monthly) district meetings (depending on the specific data set and team involved in the analysis) to measure impact goals.

The measures outlined here show both breadth and depth in the applicant's approach. The frequency with which the applicant will analyze the data is appropriate and realistic for a such a large consortium.

(c)

The applicant hopes to track the progress of the entire K-12 educational system with indicators measured at key times (3rd, 6th, 9th, and 10th grades). The applicant believe that what happens in the K-3 classroom is just as important, if not more important, towards determining a student's educational accomplishments as what happens in the 9-12 classroom. By examining data at various levels throughout the spectrum, the applicant hopes to target and deliver interventions and support where they are most needed. As students progress through the system, these data points will enable them to identify needs quickly and address them with interventions early. This information addresses how the applicant will review and improve student progress; however, it is unclear how the applicant will review and improve the measure over time if the data that it has collected is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

Overall, the applicant places in the middle range for this criterion.

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

**5**

**3**

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

The applicant outlines an effective plan to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed activities.

The applicant states that the evaluation of their program will be ultimately driven by the impact of their decisions on student learning. The applicant also states that the program evaluation will focus on the project goals and effectiveness of the activities and will happen in consultation with their national evaluator. eNCREC will secure a qualified outside independent program evaluator to monitor the effectiveness of investments such as the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina, a nationally-recognized evaluator who has performed evaluations of the effectiveness of the North Carolina Teaching Fellows, the East Carolina University Teacher Quality Partnership Grant, and the North Carolina Race to the Top grant. The applicant will conduct staff surveys, pre-post assessments, classroom observations and walkthroughs, and analyze student achievement data to evaluate the program at each level.

Although the applicant's vision of evaluation is strong and involves credible agencies that will lend additional objectivity to the process, the applicant fails to meet the definition of high-quality. More details about the plan are needed. Overall, the applicant scores in the middle range for this criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The eNCREC outlines a complete budget to support the project for the duration of the grant. The applicant states that the total costs of the Pathways to the Future Ready Graduate project exceed \$46,000,000, and it appears that most of the funds to support the project will come from Race to the Top grant, while the remainder will come from sources such as federal, and regionally-funded initiatives operated through Brunswick, Pitt, and Sampson County School systems, including Communities In Schools, Title I, Title II, IDEA funding, and School Improvement Grant funding. However, the applicant gives too broad a range (10-20%) to determine whether the contributions will be sufficient.</p> <p>One-time investments such as technologies to supplement school systems and materials needed for personalized environments have been identified, yet more details are needed about what the technologies are. If the applicant proposes to implement software to support communication and instruction, these should be ongoing investments as technology needs to be constantly updated.</p> <p>Overall, the reasonability and sufficiency of the budget cannot be fully determined. The applicant fails to articulate a rationale for its investment priorities that is consistent with statements made previously in the narrative. For example, the applicant states that as teacher effectiveness increases, fading of support and transfer of responsibility back to teachers happens, and the DIFs and coaches gradually return to the classroom teaching positions they had in the past or to another position in the district. This rationale contradicts the applicant's previous statements of continuous support for teachers.</p> <p>The applicant scores in the middle range for this criterion.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>It is uncertain whether the eNCREC's budget is reasonable and sufficient to sustain the proposed project beyond the funding period. The plan does include support from the State and local leaders, and the program will receive financial support from federal and state programs such as Title I. Yet the reviewer is unclear how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments. For example, a key component of the program is the implementation of instructional coaches. The applicant proposed to identify funding sources to continue identified positions such as instructional coaches based on savings in other areas such as expected savings from reduced need in capacity building and state level funding expectation; however, in the (F)(1) section of the narrative, the applicant states that these positions will be phased out. Lastly, the applicant mentions its post grant goals but does not provide how those goals translate into budget expenditures, i.e., an estimated budget for the three years after the term of the grant that includes budget assumptions, potential sources, and uses of funds.</p> <p>The applicant fails to outline a high-quality plan and therefore scores in the low range for this criterion.</p>		

## Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Through its established Student Success Academy (SSA), a program for at-risk youth, the applicant plans to continue its successful partnerships with several local organizations. The highlights some of the program's features and a vague plan is outlined in the narrative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant explains that the Student Success Academy/Pitt County Educational Foundation began in 2007 as a</li> </ul>		

grant funded, ten-week summer/yearlong program and provided Pitt County rising 6th grade students the skills necessary to be successful and productive in the transition from elementary to middle school. The program was created and implemented by a group of nonprofit local agencies, including the Boys and Girls Club, Building Hope Community Life Center, The East Carolina University Intergenerational Community Center, and Pitt County Schools among others. The participants are selected and recommended by the use of a rubric to be completed by their 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. Upon completion of the SSA, the participants are then held accountable for their progress by the SSA Coordinator. The coordinator meets with the students and keeps track of the academic and social outcomes for each participant on a monthly basis throughout the academic school year.

- Approximately three population-desired results for 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the district were identified. All results include increased ELA and math proficiency as well as study habits.
- Achievable performance measures have also been identified. For example, eNCREC seeks to increase family participation from its current 60% to 75% by the year 2016-17.

Yet many aspects of the proposed program are unclear.

- How the capacity of staff will be built to meet the needs of students is not mentioned. This is particularly important when the applicant plans to scale up the program.
- Much data about the Cohort achievement is offered, but there is no plan about how the data was collected and how future data will be tracked to determine whether it meets selected indicators.
- The applicant states that the program itself is currently only in Pitt County Schools,. Yet, the applicant hopes to align the program with one of its stated goals: to increase collaboration and implementation of best practices across the consortium and that the programs could easily be started in both Brunswick and Sampson counties based off the positive results in Pitt. But no plan if offered as to how this will happen. More detail is needed.

Overall, the applicant scores in the middle range for this criterion.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has adequately met this priority. Throughout the narrative, the applicant has coherently and comprehensively addressed how it will build on the core educational assurance areas by:

- Creating learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools such as CADDA,
- Creating supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards, such as HomeBase, or college- and career-ready graduation requirements,
- Accelerating student achievement and deepen student learning by offering internships, mentoring, and field trips,
- Increasing the effectiveness of educators through coaching and increased professional development,
- Expanding student access to the most effective educators with its partnerships with local universities,
- Decreasing achievement gaps across student groups by providing continuous evaluation and retooling of services provided to the students, and
- Increasing the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers through programs like the Student Success Academy.

Finally, the applicant does a good job outlining its goals and supporting programs. Yet, the overall picture of what the personalized learning program will look like from the point of view of the student, teachers, and parents is not entirely clear. The application would have been stronger had the applicant included these details.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>150</b>
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# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0046NC-2 for Pitt County Public Schools

### A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has presented a reform vision that builds on each of the core educational assurance areas. The North Carolina Common Core State Standards for Math and English Language Arts and the North Carolina Essential Standards for all other subjects were implemented during the 2012-13 school year. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortia will be added in 2015. North Carolina also has an ESEA wavier to provide flexibility to use a growth model in the designation and classification of schools. A state wide data base, HomeBase, provides access to track student progress and is available to school staff as well as parents. Innovative strategies to recruit, develop and reward, and retain effective teachers and principals were addressed. The applicant reports gains in this area over the past three years and provided additional mechanisms to meet this goal. Starting in 2015, North Carolina's RttT grant and the ESEA waiver will provide an evaluation system to identify teachers, principals, and schools who are effective, highly effective or in need of improvement. Means to attract and reward high performing teachers were detailed. A partnership with the University of North Carolina System has been formed to redefine teacher preparation and inducting practices. A record of improving low performing schools was provided. The applicant describes this approach through a student named Jackson as he progresses through his academic experience. Program goals aligned with the core assurances are listed with activities for teaching, leading and learning.

The applicant articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support. A "data directed" system of supports will be overseen by a manager to align the work and to ensure fidelity within the three districts that make up the consortium. Four teams will be formed to provide:

- oversight and guidance related to consortium activities including designing and monitoring the structures and processes to provide personalized instruction for each student;
- oversight and alignment of all aspects of teacher professional learning;
- oversight of all aspects related to the implementation of individualized learning pathways for students; and
- oversight of all aspects related to improving the leadership of building and district.

A classroom experience will provide each student with instruction based on a personalized plan. This means that students may move throughout the day receiving instruction that is best-suited for his/her unique learning needs from the most appropriate teacher in the most appropriate format. The applicant provides five goals to demonstrate the alignment of goals, activities, and the RttT-D core assurances.

The applicant has provided sufficient detail to document that it has a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. This is evident in this section and is described through all sections of the application.

The applicant has provided a comprehensive and coherent reform vision placing it in the high range.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant plans to serve all 45,000 students in all schools in the three districts that are included in consortium. Each school will be assessed to identify the effectiveness of the school. Implementation levels will be determined and supported based on need.

A table is provided with the number of participating students for each district in the consortium along with the number of participating educators, students, and high-need and low income students. This data for each school in the consortium is provided in the appendix..

The applicant has described an approach for implementation of school reform across the three districts of the consortium. Data will be used to evaluate how services at schools, grade bands, and subject areas will be determined. The amount of support provided will be determined based on this evaluation.

A rationale for serving all students is based on the developing a personalized learning plan for every student. The plan builds on a logic model that is detailed in A(3). Schools fall into one of the following determinations:

- Schools of Potential
- Schools of Stability:
- Schools of Success:
- Schools of Significance:

Support for these schools is determined using multiple affect and effect data.

The applicant has provided a comprehensive plan to support its reform proposal. There are goals and they are linked to teaching and learning and to the RtT-D core assurances. Activities, deliverables, timelines, and responsibilities are not listed in this section; however, they are provided consistently throughout the application. The required data has been provided. This section is scored in the high range.

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

**10**

**9**

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

The applicant presents a theory of change based on Joellen Killian's "chain of casual actions that will lead to the intended results." When principals become effective leaders then teachers become more effective teachers which results in increased student achievement. Schools will be determined as in need of high, medium, low or minimal support. Criteria to determine each school's affect data and school effect data are specific. Goals to determine each school's effectiveness have been developed using multiple measures such as:

- state designations (i.e.. in need of improvement)
- growth status
- reading, math, social studies proficiency
- free and reduced lunch student achievement
- principal experience
- % of beginning teachers

A continuous model of improvement will be used build a support system unique to the unique cultural and achievement needs of the school.

A high quality plan has been developed with key goals, activities, and rational determined to increase personalized learning and achievement for each student and to meet the goals of RTTTD. This is a comprehensive plan based on the current situation in each school. The responsibility for implementation is shared across the stakeholders. Achievement scores and graduation rates will be provided in other sections. A project manager and four teams will be developed to ensure implementation fidelity of the grant within the districts. These teams were described in other sections.

Based on specific criteria, schools are rated in one of four categories.

- Schools with Minimal Effect – Total score between 36-27
- Schools with Moderate Effect – Total score between 26-18
- Effective Schools – Total score between 17-9
- Highly Effective Schools – Total score less than 9

The goal is to increase achievement so that all schools are rated as highly effective.

The applicant has implemented a process to evaluate the progress of all schools in the consortium. It has specific criteria

based on multiple criteria. Schools are provided with support based on their placement along a continuum. There is a defined infrastructure at the consortium, district, and school level to implement the reform initiative.

A high-quality reform plan on how this reform proposal will be scaled up to meet the needs of students in all schools in the consortium has been presented. The applicant has provided a theory of change and how it will improve student outcomes. The goals are clearly defined with rationale, deliverables, timelines, and responsibilities documented. This section is rated in the high range.

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

**10**

**3**

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

Performance scores on summative assessments are not provided. These scores are not currently available and will be provided upon the release of state scores in November, 2013. Data from before 2012-13 is not comparable with the grant goals because state content standards and testing were changed as a result of the state's Race to the Top grant. Baseline data for 2011-12 is provided for the three districts in the consortium: Pitt County, Brunswick County and Sampson County.

Graduation rates are projected through 2017-18 with increases of less than 10% for each subgroup over the grant period. These appear to be reachable but not overly ambitious with an ending goal at Pitt of 62.% for LEP students and 66.9% for students with disabilities and similar goals for Brunswick County and Sampson County. Improvements are projected for all subgroups but do not address decreasing the gap between these groups. Improvement for all groups is based on student achievement determined at the baseline. This means that the projected goal for higher achieving groups remains higher. Projected goals for traditional underscoring subgroups remain lower throughout the grant period and a reduction in the achievement gap is not predicted.

College enrollment for Pitt County college enrollment is substantial with an end goal of 95%. Rates for Brunswick (68.9%) and Sampson (65%) are lower. This is based on the CTE system (not explained). A system to establish baseline data will be developed and disaggregated data by subgroups will be reported using that system. Postsecondary degree attainment is not discussed.

The applicant has not provided specific goals to show how achievement gaps would be decreased. Performance scores are not available due to a change in assessments and 2013-14 is considered to be a transition year between assessments. This section is rated in the low range because of unavailable data in this section and there is no data available in the appendices.

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

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

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

The applicant has described how the districts that make up this application have shown some indicators of success over the past 6 years. Graduation rates have shown a steady increase since 2008-2009 in each of the three districts (approximately 10 for Brunswick and Sampson and 20% for Pitt). Sampson Middle School student proficiency in math and reading and 8<sup>TH</sup> grade science showed significant increases from 2007-08 to 2011-12. Pitt demonstrated a reduction in the performance gap between white and black students at some high schools in Algebra I on the End of Course Performance. High Schools implementing initiatives to close the achievement gap showed significant decreases in this area. Disaggregated data was provided only for Sampson High School Math Scores. This data was not provided for other schools. Data on college enrollment was not provided; however, an initiative to allow students to receive an associate's degree through the Early College Program and through the Health Sciences Academy is detailed. The applicant has discussed some areas of success but has not provided data to support their claims.

Data are available to students, educators, and parents through a comprehensive, state-wide cloud-based, state-wide software solution, HomeBase. This system will make enormous amounts of data readily available and visible. The applicant will provide professional

development to enhance the ability of all stakeholder groups to examine this data and to use it impact and adjust instruction.

A clear record of success over the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement is primarily presented in narrative form. There were no raw scores included to demonstrate the applicant's ability to improve student learning by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates or college enrollment. No data were provided regarding raising scores in the persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Most data were provided for whole district only. The data were presented for areas of improvement but were insufficient to provide a clear record of success over the past four years across all three districts in the application.

This would place this section in the mid scoring range.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

All information regarding actual personnel salaries is available through a public records request in compliance with North Carolina G.S. 160A-168. District expenditures are released annually through board meetings and consortium members' websites. RTTD Grant expenditures will be made available through online public databases with the ability to search and sort salaries for all employees as well as other fiscal expenditures.

The applicant provides transparency of expenditures as required by North Carolina and the information is made public through meetings and websites. There was sufficient detail on this process to determine a high-level of transparency.

This places this section in the high scoring range.

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

Successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments include:

- The North Carolina RTT Grant provides a framework and infrastructure to support personalized learning.
- State policy allows districts to award credit based on mastery of subject content for students in grades 6-12 even though they did not attend classes.
- North Carolina requires districts and schools to identify students at-risk for academic failure and are not successfully progressing toward promotion or graduation to have a personalized learning plan.
- The applicant has the ability to assess, track, monitor and intervene in the education progress of every student in grades three through twelve through the state HomeBase initiative.
- Districts are provided with autonomy to implement state initiatives to meet the needs within their students.

There are no barriers identified that would inhibit the implementation of the personalized learning environments presented in the application.

The applicant has provided sufficient conditions and means of autonomy to rate this section in the high range.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Stakeholder engagement throughout the development of this proposal and stakeholder support for the proposal include:

- District staff from all three districts met to determine compatibility to work together.
- Support was garnered from 22 stakeholders including mayors, parent advisory boards, service organizations, and higher education and business partners. These stakeholders submitted letters of support.
- Feedback from principals, teachers, and parents was solicited.
- The grant proposal was presented to stakeholders throughout the community.
- An approval rating of over 90% from teachers and principals is noted; however, there is no evidence of how this rating was obtained.

The appendix includes copies of surveys used to solicit input from teachers, leadership/school improvement teams, a

faculty assessment survey, interdisciplinary team assessment, and department assessment survey. No results from these surveys were provided.

The application has provided a description of stakeholder engagement and support. Stakeholder input and feedback was used to the address academic and social interventions chosen. Letters of support listed above were provided from each of the groups listed above. Evidence of the approval rating of teachers and principals is not provided. This would rate this section in the mid scoring range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>

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

The applicant has developed a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students with support to graduate college- and career-ready. This plan includes an approach to implementing instructional strategies for all participating students that enables participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready graduation requirements and accelerates learning.

- The applicant has provided a five goal plan with activities, rationale, deliverables, implementation timeline, and person responsible for oversight.
- The applicant describes a guided vision of a personalized student learning environment and what it might look like for Jackson, the representative student who is followed throughout the application. The school experience will be a fluid system allowing students to move on if expectations have been met or to receive additional instruction in areas that have not. It is important for students to understand what they are to learn and where they are along the in this process as documented by the dashboard for an at-a-glance look at student performance.
- The Professional Learning Community model allows staff to identify the current student level of achievement and to improve the achievement level and to provide periodic evidence of progress. Students will have access to a variety of virtual learning environments for course credit. As the student progresses through the grades, there are student internships, residency programs, and job shadowing experiences allowing them to have access and exposure to cultures, contexts, and perspectives.
- Costa's model for cognitive coaching (Gifted Intelligent Behaviors) will be used to develop skills commonly demonstrated by leaders: persisting; listening with empathy; thinking flexibility; thinking about thinking; etc.
- Accommodations for high-need students will be addressed through his/her individual plan. Some mechanisms include flexible grouping, re-teaching, or acceleration. For those who need a more restrictive and directed plan, the response to intervention or problem solving-process will be used.
- Graduation coaches help students trace personal goals.
- Graduation coaches, councilors, teachers, and other school personnel will assist students in accessing the Home Base portal. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) provides the framework for improving learning and teaching. *Pathways to the Future Ready Graduate* has been developed to improve achievement scores and graduation rates, improve school affect, college and career readiness, individualized professional learning plan, and coordinated partnerships within and between all consortium members.
- Student progress is continuously monitored to examine basic skills, repair and extension and enrichment activities. Educators have ongoing conversations regarding each student's story to develop a long range plan or sequence of instructional content (one of 5 plans) with appropriate intervention.
- Instruction is selected based on student need and presented in the classroom or through personalized online or digital learning. School Net provides resources that have been vetted for quality, rigor, and alignment with goals. A variety of virtual models is available to expand student opportunities. The Education Value-Added Assessment System is used to examine the impact of teachers, schools and districts on student learning. Reports are created to predict the future performance of students in Algebra I, Biology and English I.
- Students may participate in other learning environments within the school or through instructional practice that combines traditional face-to-face classroom instruction with online and digital learning.
- HomeBase facilitates aligning goals with the monitoring and tracking of student progress by individual content standards. A sample report was provided; however, no mechanisms were mentioned on how training and support to understand and use this tool were included.

The applicant has provided a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment with sufficient support that when implemented will provide students with support to assist them in graduating college-and-career-ready. Rationale for selection is provided. Tools for implementation and supports for teachers and students are included. The timeline to implement personalized learning for all grades is projected for 2016-17. This score for this section is in the high range.

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

**20**

**20**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

Teaching for change

- Professional Learning Communities (PLC) provides the framework for improving learning and teaching. *Pathways to the Future Ready Graduate* has been developed to improve achievement scores and graduation rates.
- Student progress is continuously monitored to examine basic skills, repair and extension and enrichment activities. Educators have ongoing conversations regarding each student’s story to develop a long range plan or sequence of instructional content (one of 5 plans) with appropriate intervention. Instruction is selected based on student need and presented in the classroom or through personalized online or digital learning. School Net provides resources that have been vetted for quality, rigor, and alignment with goals. A variety of virtual models is available to expand student opportunities. The Education Value-Added Assessment System is used to examine the impact of teachers, schools and districts on student learning. Reports are created to predict the future performance of students in Algebra I, Biology and English I.
- Students may participate in other learning environments within the school or through instructional practice that combines traditional face-to-face classroom instruction with online and digital learning.
- HomeBase facilitates aligning goals with the monitoring and tracking of student progress by individual content standards. A sample report was provided; however, no mechanisms were mentioned on how training and support to understand and use this tool was included.

Leading for Change

- Training and support is offered for principals and assistant principals in providing effective feedback to teachers, coaching them to improve, and guiding school decisions based on measurable goals.
- Observations required by the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System provide regular, formative-based walkthroughs.
- Training is provided for principals at the school level and as collaborative practice in other buildings to enhance skills in identifying and reinforcing good instruction.
- Additional training is provided for assistant principals so that they will be ready to move into a principal role.
- Surveys are conducted to allow customization and targeting of school goals. Schools participate in a Working Conditions Survey every two years which is part of the principal's annual evaluation.

The applicant has different ways to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective At Sampson stipends are paid to teachers in designated hard to fill content areas (Middle School and High School Math and Science) Pitt pays high-performing teachers who elect to transfer into low-performing schools for a minimum of 3 years. A Teacher Leader Cohort (TLC) assists in the development of a positive school culture and in building professional capacity of other teachers in the building. To become a TLC a teacher must have had at least two years of data demonstrating positive influence on student achievement.

The applicant has provided a credible plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment to support all students to graduate college-and career-ready.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>

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

The applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, and level of the education system with the support and resources they need, when and where

they are needed. A governing structure has been established at the consortia to support project implementation. The applicant will dedicated staff within each LEA to ensure support for the consortium's efforts.

Four teams will be established at the district level to monitor student progress, teacher and administrator capacity, improvement and to provide appropriate services to all participating schools.

- A matrix is provided to show the level of flexibility and autonomy each school will have. As it moves along the continuum toward effectiveness, the school will receive more autonomy in their fiscal and operational functions. If a schools falls low on the continuum , it will receive a more 'hands on" approach from the consortium.
- Students who demonstrate skill mastery and proficiency will be able to receive course credit without logging in traditional hours. This can be documented in multiple ways. For example, Jumpstart in Sampson County and Fastrack in Pitt County are programs that allow students to progress at a self pace given their desire to do so. A timeline was not provided.
- North Carolina has mandated a mastery credit awards initiative. The implementation process is not fully developed at the State level but should be available for the RttT-D grant period.
- Resources to meet the needs of high need learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, will be provided through technology and applied software applications.

The applicant has provided practices, policies, and rules that facilitate personalized learning. Structure for organization is provided at the all levels of the consortium. Resources and the level of support are based on a continuum of effectiveness. There are multiple ways for students to demonstrate proficiencies and resources available to high needs learners. Students are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in a variety of ways. These policies are in place in some but not all of the districts in the consortium. During the 2013-14 school year, the consortium will develop policies to implement the North Carolina mandated mastery credit awards to better meet the needs of all students. This places this section in the high range.

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

**10**

**7**

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

The applicant has a provided a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and infrastructure that provide every student, educator and level of the education system with the support and resources they need.

Infrastructure to support the grant throughout the LEAs and schools has been greatly enhanced using North Carolina RttT, state and local funds.

HomeBase was rolled out in July 2013. This system is a software system that houses learning resources, curriculum assessment, curriculum content resources, teaching tools and professional development for teachers. All are aligned to the new curriculum standards.

The HomeBase parent portal provides remote access to students and parents with information about student progress on goals, teachers' lesson assignments, homework help, and practice work correlated with standards, and resources for practice, remediation or enrichment.

The schools have adequate wiring and infrastructure. There is a 1:1.5 device to student ratio. A plan to keep equipment up to date is in place.

Each district has technology specialists, network engineers, instructional technology personnel, media coordinators trained in instructional technology, and instructional coaches trained to provide technology support. There were no specific on how parents or other interested stakeholders, "regardless of income" would have access to the necessary tools, content or other pertinent data available. The applicant will provide this training as part of its grant activities.

HomeBase has been enhanced with the implementation of other software to allow greater access for parents and students in a one stop place. The grant would provide needed training to all stakeholders to assist in using this information.

The North Carolina Race to the Top funding has ensured that all districts in the state have interoperable data systems. HomeBase, the overarching system houses PowerSchool, SchoolNet, and theNorth Carolina Educator Evaluation System. PowerSchool is the student information datastorage system, housing all student demographic information, student transcript and grade information, school operational information, and classroom operational information

The LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning with access to equipment and technical support. A web portal is available that includes academic resources based on student academic interests and needs. There is, however, no mention of how this will be made accessible to parents outside of the school day. There was no specific detail on training parents on the use of HomeBase

data. This section is rated in the mid range.

## E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

### (E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's high quality plan for a rigorous continuous improvement process is clearly documented. Five goals with activities, rationale, deliverables, implementation timeline and person responsible for oversight is provided. Monitoring plans are aligned to sections B, C, and D of the application. Key deliverables include

- # of students on track to graduate as measured by 6<sup>th</sup> grade retention
- Increased graduation rates
- Survey results and alignment of professional development
- Student goal sheets
- Personalized student plans
- Teacher training on the CADDA process
- Increased # of highly effective teachers in high needs schools
- Agendas, meeting minutes of collaborative team meetings Investments in high-quality professional learning focused on personalizing instruction will result in students' achievement and they will graduate from high school ready for college and career.

Improvement will be monitored using multiple methods including: on-time student grade promotion, increased graduation rates, survey data, student goal sheets, assessment data, etc.

The North Carolina Educator Evaluation System on the HomeBase connects the assessment of students to the teacher of record and is part of the teacher's evaluation record of effectiveness. This is available to stakeholders.

The consortium will be responsible for monitoring and assessing goals at benchmark intervals throughout the year. In addition to this evaluation, a national evaluator will monitor and measure progress and report results annually.

Continuous improvement will be reported through meetings, reports, and posted on a website.

Goals will be monitored on a formative basis using a district cycle for improvement. Progress will be reviewed each summer and as test data becomes available. The schools will be re-examined and changes made as needed based findings from this monitoring process.

The applicant's goal is rooted in the Theory of Change and Logic Models described in the application. The five project goals provide the targets for measuring the effectiveness of the models. Specific activities, rationales, deliverables, timelines and person responsible are included.

Goals have been determined through the grant period only. The applicant has provided a credible plan of improvement that provides timely and regular feedback on progress toward project goals. It includes measures for ongoing corrections and improvements during the term of the grant. Results of investments funded through RttT-D funds will be publicly shared.

This section is rated in the high range.

<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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### (E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has described on-going internal and external stakeholder engagement.

The governing structure of the consortium will report achievement data to teachers, coaches, administrators. Opportunities to evaluate the plan on a consortium, district, and school level are part of the plan.

External stakeholders will be engaged through a website. There will also be regular meetings for partners such as higher education, business partners, law enforcement agencies, etc.

There is a goal listed for community partnerships throughout the grant and communication with these groups is listed in the narrative. The activities and deliverables are not provide.

Many but not all of the components of a high quality plan are included. The section is rated in the mid scoring range.

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

**5**

**3**

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

The rationale for selection of performance measures is based on creating college and career ready graduates. They are related to literacy, lost instructional time, on-time promotion, highly effective principals/teachers and external high school indicators.

Data will be examined at various levels giving the ability to target and deliver interventions as needed.

The applicant is aware that \$30 million across the consortium is significant. Evaluating the effectiveness of investments will include an outside evaluator to ensure an effective, proven organization management this process. This is also important if the consortium's work is to be replicated in other rural areas in North Carolina.

The number and percentage of participating students by subgroup whose teacher of record and principal are a highly effective teacher and a highly effective will be available beginning in 2015.

The number and percentage of participating students by subgroup whose teacher of record and principal are an effective teacher and an effective principal will be available beginning in 2015.

For grades K-3, the applicant will use the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade end of grade proficiency and the number students the number of suspensions with PBIs or out of school suspensions. The annual targets are ambitious and achievable. The increases for subgroups are ambitious; however, the projected increases will not reduce the gap in achievement by subgroup.

For grades 4-8, the applicant will use the 6<sup>th</sup> grade end of grade proficiency the number students the number of suspensions with PBIs or out of school suspensions, and the number of students that have not been retained (by whole group only). The annual targets are ambitious and achievable; however, the projected increases will not reduce the gap in achievement by subgroup.

For grades 9-12 the applicant will the ACT College Readiness for Reading and Math. All 10<sup>th</sup> graders take this test. The projected increases will not reduce the gap in achievement by subgroup. The goal for the whole group at Pitt is 80% while no subgroup's goal is greater than 54%. Goals for Brunswick and Sampson are lower for total group and by subgroup. The number of suspensions 9-12 is the other measure provided. These are reported in # and not by percent. The goals are not ambitious with the baseline for all at Brunswick 1329 in 2012 and the goal in 2017 is 1317 with similar numbers at the other districts.

Performance measures related to highly effective teachers and highly effective principals will not be available until 2012 and the data regarding on-track indicators can't be determined until baseline data is released in November. The applicant has provided other data. Some goals are ambitious and others are not. Goals do not decrease the achievement gap between subgroups. This section is rated in the low mid-range.

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

**5**

**4**

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

A high-quality plan to evaluate improved achievement scores, college-and-career readiness, implementation of individualized professional learning, the creation of a community of collaboration have been identified throughout the proposal.

The governing structure for eNCREC will be responsible for monitoring and assessing the implementation goals at benchmark intervals throughout each year of the grant. This process will be a formative assessment process designed to inform progress towards implementation and, ultimately, impact. eNCREC will also contract with a national program evaluator (such as the Education Policy Initiative at Carolina (EPIC)) under a competitive bid process aligned with financial requirements, as part of an annual summative evaluation of the grant. Working partners, the Consortium Leadership Team and the national evaluator will monitor and measure progress and report results annually.

All summative evaluations will be made available to the public through the annual reports published by the evaluation teams. The reports will be available on the consortium website. Required progress reports submitted to the Department of Education, in compliance with the reporting conditions of the grant, will also be available through this same website. The initial design team for the grant has identified 12 specific performance measures, Rationale, response, and how the measures will be reviewed over time are clearly presented.

The applicant is aware that \$30 million across the consortium is significant. Evaluating the effectiveness of investments will include an outside evaluator that has proven to be an effective and proven organization for the management of this process. This is also important if the consortium's work is to be replicated in other rural areas in North Carolina.

The evaluation of effectiveness of investments will include staff surveys, pre-post assessment, classroom observations and walkthroughs, and analysis of student achievement data to evaluate the program at every level. This section is rated in the high range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

### (F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget is organized around five major projects that align with the goals of the project. These are consortium administration, district administration, leading, teaching and learning. Each category of these major projects is listed with the primary associated criterion and any additional associated criteria. Each expenditure is linked to its location in the grant and the total amount of funding allocated for that project. For example, the Learning Section projects are located in sections (A)(1)(b) (D)(1)(a), (C)(2), and (E)(1). Total RtT-D grant funds for this area equals \$4,838,473.55 and district and other funds equal \$5,558,473.55. The total for RtT-D grant funding is \$30,000,000.00 and other funding is \$46,008,000.00. This shows significant consortium support for the grant and provides confidence in its ability to implement and sustain the reform initiative.

There is a significant up-front investment for technology in year one and is listed as the only one time expenditure. The majority of up-front investment is for technology and professional development.

The budget aligns with the high quality plan proposed and is in addition to significant funds already allocated for personalized learning. This section is rated in the high range.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
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### (F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has designed a support matrix to demonstrate that the intensity of supports the school receives throughout the grant period. The level of support ranges from high to minimal. A successful project would mean that the school required less fiscal and human support. Funds to support remedial instruction would be reduced from the current spending of \$2,000,000 yearly. Positions paid by the grant will be moved into vacancies funded by local funds. Sustainability is built into the proposal through the theory of change and logic model presented in the grant.

Support to implement and sustain personalized learning include Communities In Schools, Title I, Title II, IDEA funding, School Improvement Grant funding, and grants from non-profit agencies and civic organizations.:

#### Vendor and Consultant Partners

The scale of the consortium allows the applicant to negotiate contracts with content and leadership specialists to receive good value to build capacity across the three districts. Strong partnership have been built with Community Schools, Thinking Maps, the Centers for Quality Teaching and Learning, School Improvement Network, MyLearningPlan, Cambiun Learning, Teacher Created Materials, and Pearson.

#### University Support

Brunswick and Pitt County School systems are both located near two large universities in the University of North Carolina System (UNC-Wilmington and East Carolina University (ECU), respectively). Both of these universities offer teacher preparation programs as well as principal preparation programs.

#### School & District Support

Meetings that focus on data analysis as part of the CADD process, parent meetings to design individualized learning plans, and classrooms and offices where PLCs meet or teachers review video reflections will be supported and held at the

individual schools.

The applicant has provided a high quality plan for implementation and evaluation throughout the grant. The budget is linked to the grant's goals and the focus is on building the capacity of staff. The budget does not extend beyond the term of the grant; however, it is linked it to current budgeting and consortium philosophy. The applicant has demonstrated that implementation of personalized learning is embedded in the philosophy of the three districts in the consortium. Costs associated with the RttT-D grant have been selected to build infrastructure and to train personnel. A considerable amount of other funds have been directed to the goals of this grant.

The budget aligns with the high quality plan proposed and is in addition to significant funds already allocated for personalized learning.

This section is scored in the high range.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The Competitive Preference Priority proposal addresses a need for dropout prevention. It expands on a 2007 program in Pitt County where the district partnered with the United Way to provide 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at risk of leaving school with after school and summer programs.

This component will provide interventions to engage students in order to them to stay in school and achieve at a level that will allow them to graduate college-and-career ready. They have developed three goals for The Student Success Academy (SSA):

- 75% of SSA graduates and their families will participate in scheduled SSA Family Events
- 95% of SSA graduates will be on grade level by 9th grade
- 100% of SSA graduates will graduate on time

These goals are consistent with Absolute Priority 1.

Students were targeted for participation based on:

- Below average to low average academic scores in math and/or reading;
- Attendance problems;
- Behaviors that may be challenging but not severe;
- Economic status that might interfere with opportunities outside school;
- Likely to be at home during the summer with little or no supervision; and
- Promoted to the sixth grade.

Evaluation of the program is provided and the evaluation spans several years. The evaluation shows that participants achieved at a higher level on academics. No students from Cohorts 1-4 dropped out of school. Collaboration will be expanded to include other service organizations, higher education, hospitals, and police departments. Activities are designed to increase academic achievement and to assist students in dealing with barriers they face daily. Sessions are taught by highly qualified teachers and assistants. There is no specific description on how the partnerships will build the capacity of staff in participating schools. The program is targeted to students with low reading and math scores, attendance problems, challenging behaviors, low economic status. Parents receive information and can participate in Positive Parenting Seminars. The partnership has provided detail on students needs through school input, surveys, and behavioral measures. Student needs identified on these measures are ones that indicate that students are at-risk for not meeting academic progress and participating in behavior that is not conducive to staying in school and graduating. Activities for these students include ways to enhance decision-making skills and other means to support improved results for students. Parent involvement is encouraged by communicating parental expectations for the value of education, linking schoolwork to current events, fostering educational and occupational aspirations, and making for plans for the future. The program's student success analysis compares the math, reading, character education skills, attendance rate, high school promotion and dropout rates for students who received the services with students who did not. This was conducted in years 2007 through 2013. Success rates have been excellent for the 7 cohorts described. The achievement goals are ambitious. The goals are

consistent with achievement rates from the previous years. There are plans to scale the program to include more students over time and to expand the program to include the other counties in the consortium.

The applicant has presented a program that meets the goals of the grant and has shown that it is a successful program. The rationale for this type of program is based on research. The % of successful participants is listed. There is no indication of the number of students who will participate. This section is rated in the high range.

## Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has done an excellent job of coherently addressing how the consortium will build on the four core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards, accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic and social/emotional needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; increase achievement scores across student sub-groups, and increase the rates at which students graduate high school prepared for college and career.

The applicant describes a guided vision of a personalized student learning environment and what it might look like for Jackson, the representative student who is followed throughout the application. The school experience will be a fluid system allowing students to move on if expectations have been met or to receive additional instruction in areas that have not. The importance for students to understand what they are to learn and where they are along the in this process is documented by a dashboard for an at-a-glance look at student performance. The Professional Learning Community model allows staff to identify the current student level of achievement, to improve the achievement level, and to provide periodic evidence of progress. Students will have access to a variety of virtual learning environments for course credit. As the student progresses through the grades, there are student internships, residency programs, and job shadowing experiences allowing them to have access and exposure to cultures, contexts, and perspectives. Accommodations for high-need students will be addressed through each student's individual plan. Some mechanisms include flexible grouping, re-teaching, or acceleration. For those who need a more restrictive and directed plan, the response to intervention or problem solving-process will be used. Student progress is continuously monitored to examine basic skills, repair and extension and enrichment activities. Educators have ongoing conversations regarding each student's story to develop a long range plan or sequence of instructional content (one of 5 plans) with appropriate intervention. Students may participate in other learning environments within the school or through instructional practice that combines traditional face-to-face classroom instruction with online and digital learning.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) provides the framework for improving learning and teaching. Pathways to the Future Ready Graduate has been developed to improve achievement scores and graduation rates, improve school affect, college and career readiness, individualized professional learning plan, and coordinated partnerships within and between all consortium members. Training and support is offered for principals and assistant principals in providing effective feedback to teachers, coaching them to improve, and guiding school decisions based on measurable goals. Observations required by the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System provide regular, formative-based walkthroughs. Training is provided for principals at the school level and as collaborative practice in other buildings to enhance skills in identifying and reinforcing good instruction.

The applicant has different ways to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective At Sampson stipends are paid to teachers in designated hard to fill content areas (Middle School and High School Math and Science) Pitt pays high-performing teachers who elect to transfer into low-performing schools for a minimum of 3 years.

The applicant articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support. A "data directed" system of supports will be overseen by a manager to align the work and to ensure fidelity within the three districts that make up the consortium.

The applicant has implemented a process to evaluate the progress of all schools in the consortium. It has specific criteria based on multiple criteria. Schools are provided with support based on their placement along a continuum. There is a defined infrastructure at the consortium, district, and school level to implement the reform initiative.

The applicant has developed a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning

environment in order to provide all students with support to graduate college- and career-ready that is consistent with Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	173
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0046NC-3 for Pitt County Public Schools

#### A. Vision (40 total points)

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

**(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has outlined a proposal including all four core educational assurance areas however the section on Core Assurance #2 (Building Data System) does not provide much in-depth information on what data systems the applicant intends to build for the purpose of data-based decision making process. The applicant lists how the data system will provide some instructional guidance, communication and professional development but lacks a critical aspect as defined in the Department's guidelines: "building data systems that measure student growth and success, **and inform teachers and principals with data about how they can improve instruction**", in which translates to creating a system that allows for stronger decision-making process.

As for the core assurance #2 (building data systems), the applicant mentions only HomeBase as a part of its data systems and states that the teachers, educators, and parents will use HomeBase to collaborate, develop assessments, track academic progress, and record student data. The applicant also adds that teachers can go to HomeBase to gain access to online professional development.

In respect to other core assurances, namely #1, #3 & #4, the applicant has implemented standards and assessments early in 2012 so the district has worked with the standards and assessments for the past 18 months or so. This gives the applicant some experience working with the standards and assessments and allows them to better implement personalized learning environment for the students in the district. As for recruiting and retaining effective teachers and principals, one of the more critical aspects to building capacity is ensuring that that the local organizations, agencies, and/or universities are capable of supporting the efforts. The applicant mentions that it does collaborate with local university in developing a pipeline to support this and the State legislation has agreed to allot some money to support "high-performing teachers." In addition to that, the applicant has developed a new evaluation system that will better identify teachers who are Effective, Highly Effective or In Need of Improvement starting in 2015. This is a result of partnership with the local university, which, again, is critical to building capacity. Finally, there's evidence that the applicant has successfully turning around schools in the district (Pitt County Schools).

The strength in (A)(1)(b) lies in clear overview of how the applicant wishes to implement the project. The applicant details how it will restructure teams to support the project including grant coordination, individualized teaching, individualized learning, and individualized leading. The fact that the applicant makes effort to restructure teams and establish a clear delineation of duties will allow the applicant to successfully implement parts of the project. The applicant also describes in great details what each team will be responsible for and what tools they will incorporate in supporting their efforts. The question becomes whether the applicant can commit to the plan and see to it that they follow through with the plan.

Again, in the section (A)(1)(b) provides some in-depth on the analytical data system the applicant intends to create but

does not make any mention of what type of data the applicant intends to include in the system such as budgetary, resources allocation or others. Furthermore, the applicant does not outline what quantitative and qualitative data are specifically or what they include.

In reviewing some additional information, it is clear that the applicant has a clear approach to implementing "Individualized Teaching" but there's one part in the section that may appear to be not credible: Coaching section explains that the consortium will place an instructional coach at each of the schools, which raises the question of whether a single instructional coach at each school can ever be credible considering the load each coach will have in dealing with a school of teachers. The suggestion that a single coach will be able to meet the need of the entire school is unrealistic and not credible at all. Even though the plan has a concept that may work, the fact that there are likely to be teachers who need support from coaches and for the district to suggest that it is credibly possible for a single coach to support all of the needs is unreasonable.

For (A)(1)(c), the applicant provides some details on how it intends to create a dynamic, flexible and highly engaging learning environment for the students in the district including ensuring that teachers utilize technology as a part of their instruction. The only issue with the section is the applicant earns a lot of style points but not offer much of substance. It does not include specific details on how it will redesign classrooms to support this initiative. It does not provide specific details on how it will redesign outside the classroom to support this initiative as well.

Due to some areas of lack of information especially in the design of data systems, the applicant receives 6 out of 10 points.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant explains in the section that the consortium, consisting of three school counties, (Pitt, Brunswick and Sampson), will include all schools within the counties to participate in the project. There are 54 schools in the consortium and they total 45,000 students (however, Table A.2 shows a total of 89,000 students for Sampson County, but that's in error when it should be 9,000 students or so).

In the appendix, the applicant provided a detailed list of participating schools and shared demographics of each participating school including high-need and low-income students per selection criteria.

Due to the fact that the applicant has selected all students and provided a detailed matrix of demographics at three LEA's, the applicant receives 10 out of 10 points.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

It is clear in reviewing the section that the applicant has a vision of how it intends to incorporate data and proven logic models to translate this project from a small scale of three participating LEA's to additional school districts. The applicant presents a mix of academic theories, school reform models and data sets to establish "a theory of change" that will lead to "success for students, teachers, and the system at large." Theoretically, the applicant has a vision but it does not appear to materialize in any form as the applicant does not provide details on how it will actualize the changes. Rather, the applicant gives figures and models (Guskey's efficacy cycles, eNCREC matrix, L'Esperance logic model, School Effect, and Fullan & Quinn's Capacity Building). But nowhere in the application does one find how the applicant plans to integrate all of the figures and models together into a coherent and clear vision of reform.

Furthermore, the applicant has developed a complex system for identifying schools and their needs within the framework of the project (teacher affect, efficacy, and support) but at the same time, the process appears to be very complicated incorporating different research-based theories, multi-layered data, and capacity building that the result gets 'lost in the translation'.

However, the strongest part of the proposal was how the applicant uses Fullan & Quinn's Capacity Building model. The applicant transposed the Fullan & Quinn model to the applicant's eNCREC Pathway to the Future Ready Graduate Plan, which clearly outlines how some of the changes will take place.

The applicant has presented a vision of how it would implement LEA-wide reform & change but a mixed bag of theories make it implausible to expect the applicant to successfully implement the changes. Using multiple theory models will likely result in confusion and impede the applicant from successfully making the necessary changes to effectively reform the consortium. In addition, the applicant doesn't provide details on how it intends to scale up the reform model to schools outside the consortium and how it will fully implement the reform. For that reason, the applicant receives 4 out of 10 points.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has presented a set of tables showing performance measures including baselines for summative assessments, decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment but the applicant does not provide any annual goals for assessments, gaps & enrollment, which makes evaluating whether the target scores are ambitious yet achievable or not.

The graduation rate is the only category that has any annual goals but no baseline for SY12-13. Without any baseline for SY12-13, it is difficult to understand historical trends and identify whether the schools improved or declined between SY11-12 and SY12-13 thus making it a challenge to determine if the target goals are ambitious yet achievable or not. With a rather cursory review, it does appear that the graduation rates are achievable but they may not be ambitious. Overall, SY2011-2012 shows 77.5% of the students graduating and the applicant hopes to improve it to 88.3% by 2017-18 (a gain of less than 11% over 6 years translating to less than 2% of growth annually - achievable, yes, but ambitious, probably not). Again, this is only cursory as there's limited baseline to allow for reliable inference or projection.

Due to lack of data, it is impossible to ascertain whether the goals are ambitious yet achievable even though the applicant has provided tables and included baselines and target annual goals for the graduation rates, . For that reason, the applicant receives 2 out of 10 points.

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

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

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

In the section, the applicant has produced some evidence of success over the past four years:

First of all, Table B.1 reveals that the graduation rate for three schools in the district have improved statistically with the largest gain of 20.1% from 2008-09 to 2012-2013, which is a clear record of success;

Table B.2 reveals that the district has had gains in achievement localized at Sampson County middle schools in three subject areas: Math, Reading & Science. This is a clear record of improvements in student proficiency, which is laudable;

As a result of three initiatives: School Improvement Grant in 2009, Departmental Instructional Facilitators, Video Reflection, Professional Learning Communities, and CADDA, Table B.3 shows three schools closing achievement gaps as opposed to those schools who did not participate in the initiative opening wide the achievement gaps. The schools that participated (Farmville Central HS, North Pitt HS, & South Central HS) have respective achievement gaps of 9.8%, 12.0, & 16.5 comparing to 37.1%, 29.0, & 16.5 that were 6 years ago. However, there is an area of concern with this: the closing of the gaps appear to be limited to Algebra I and there's no evidence of other subject areas showing similar type of improvements.

In response to selection criteria (B)(2), the applicant provided some evidence of turning around a low-performing school (Northwest Elementary School) and was able to improve overall student achievement at the school and currently, the school is no longer labeled as "Priority School" meaning it is no longer a persistently failing school. This was accomplished with a battery of initiatives, which clearly resulted in turning around the failing school.

Currently, the applicant has a "software solution" that houses all of the data on students and teachers. However, the applicant expresses, "concern about how access to this data will translate to deepening the understanding of individual student needs." This indicates that the applicant has implemented HomeBase, the software solution, but has been unable to utilize it effectively. This also indicates that the applicant has not been able to utilize the data as a part of its efforts to advance student learning and achievement in the past four years. In brief comments, the applicant adds that parents have had access to data dashboards in the HomeBase platform.

With a clear record of success in improving student achievement, the biggest area of weakness comes from the inability to utilize data effectively to drive reforms and changes and for that reason, the applicant receives 10 out of 15 points.

<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant has made transparent LEA processes, practices, and investments including making such information available through requests, board meetings, district websites, and annual reports. The consortium has also set up an online public database allowing the public to search and sort variety of data for public consumption. In addition, the applicant has shared the data with local newspapers and the data are posted on the newspapers' websites as well.

The applicant shall receive 5 out of 5 points for this section.

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

First of all, the applicant is a member of a state that received Race to the Top state grant, in which the state revised their legal, statutes and regulations to become eligible for the initial Race to the Top grant. For instance, in order for the state to apply for the grant, the state had to revise to allow for stronger data warehouse, assessment system and new laws to support student achievement.

Due to the changes, the applicant has the autonomy to implement a framework for individualized student learning. The state law and policy has allowed the consortium to function under the North Carolina Response to Intervention (NCRtl) to design "multi-tiered, teamwork approaches" to support personalized learning environment. In addition, the consortium has implemented a variety of initiatives such as CADDA and developed partnerships to ensure that they may successfully implement personalized learning activities as outlined in the vision.

In short, the applicant has presented evidence of conditions and autonomy to implement changes. For that reason, the applicant will receive 10 out of 10 points.

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

The applicant identified 22 stakeholders supporting the proposal and they vary greatly from mayors, advisory boards, local colleges & universities, and businesses. The applicant claims that the proposal enjoys better than 90% approval rating from the teachers and principals, which clearly reveals the support the proposal has received from the community and the school personnel as well.

However, the section does not offer any details on whether the stakeholders were engaged in the development of the proposal. Additionally, there are no comments referring to whether the collective bargaining representations support this project. In fact, the only statement evident of any type of engagement would be "Stakeholder involvement in this initiative included administrators, teachers, the Pitt County Board of Education, and parents," (p. 72). But that's it. The rest of the section focuses on what the consortium has set up to support the project such as Teacher Quality Partnership, AVID project, and others. It may be possible to infer from the consortium projects that the applicant has successfully engaged others in this project but that's limited to inference and does not exhibit clear evidence of it.

The applicant shall receive 7 out of 15 points.

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

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

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

The applicant has provided a very structured report detailing how the applicant would address selection criterion. The emphasis the applicant has placed on their project focuses mainly on creating individualized learning for all of the students in the LEA's through helping the students establish personal goals and providing the necessary support so that the students will be able to become college- and career-ready. This involves ensuring that the students develop as critical thinkers and capable of collaborating with others. For instance, the applicant writes, "The first thing students need to learn is what they are supposed to be learning," (p. 79). This corresponds with one of the criteria: helping students understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals (Selection Criteria (C)(1)(a)(i)). The applicant presented details on how it will help students understand their destinies and how it will help students develop "soft skills" to become prepared for 21st century society but the applicant doesn't provide much on how it intends to help students deepen their learning experiences.

Through CADDA, the applicant will create a tool that will allow the students, the parents and the educators to monitor data closely and make decisions that will guide the students through their learning experiences. Specifically, CADDA will allow the students to have "access" to personalized, high-quality instruction. The applicant defines CADDA as "the preface" for the entire concept of student support it will help "guide the teacher(s)" as they work with the students. CADDA will provide the teachers with access to data and allow them to utilize data to support instruction. Data will also allow teachers to move from "assembly-line" type of education to more individualized instruction with emphasis on Individualized Education Programs, Personalized Education Plans, and Individualized Learning Plans. In the proposal, the applicant also mentions revising new Standard Course of Study to incorporate Common Core Standards. In addition to CADDA, the applicant explains that the educators and the students will be able to utilize HomeBase, Education Value-Added Assessment System to help school leadership determine how teachers, schools and districts are impacting instruction.

However, the applicant does not provide much details on how it intends to streamline data from multiple systems and this is a risk for data overload. Currently, the applicant lists School Net and HomeBase as the tools that the district will use to better utilize data for the purpose of personalized instruction but there's not much discussion on how they will utilize both sets of data nor is there any discussion on how both sets can be streamlined to support instruction. As indicated, there's a risk of data overload.

With a strong vision and plan for creating individualized learning experiences for the students, the applicant receives a score of 14 out of 20 points due to some concern about data overload, which harms "the overall credibility" of the proposal.

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

**20**

**12**

**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

To support teachers in becoming "high impact" educators, the applicant has emphasized professional learning as opposed to professional development and places focus on Professional Learning Communities, Blended Professional Learning, Ongoing Coaching and Reflective Practice. Despite providing in-depth discussion on how the applicant will prepare the teachers, the applicant provides limited discussion on adapting content and measuring student progress.

The applicant will incorporate CADDA and HomeBase as a part of LEA-wide efforts to help teachers track student progress more effectively and provide intervention if the students begin to fall behind. The teachers can use HomeBase to track students progress and disaggregate student data into specifics and use data to guide instruction. Currently, teachers can use data from CADDA to track EVAAS Predictors, EOG/EOC scores, attendances, grades and benchmark data and utilize the data to group the students and provide interventions where needed but there's no discussion on how content can be adapted or whether the data can be utilized to "adapt content and instruction," (Selection Criteria (C)(2)(a)(ii)). Briefly, the applicant explains that data feedback can be used to help teachers adapt interventions but technically, interventions, when defined, can mean many things including re-grouping, providing additional instructional time, or others. It does not necessarily mean content may be adapted to better support individual student learning styles or needs. This is where the applicant does not provide details in regard to "adapt content," per selection criterion.

The applicant's major focus on building school leadership capacity is the assistant principal as the applicant provides great amount of details on how it intends to divide assistant principals into three categories to help identify what assistant principals need to develop in order to become effective principals however there's no discussion on how to improve current principals, who might require additional training to better lead instructional teams in implementing Common Core Standards or how the current group of principals can best support teachers.

The applicant explains how it intends to "staff strategically" their teachers at low-performing schools and their method for moving teachers depend on providing supplemental funding including incentives and stipends to encourage teachers to move and work at low-performing schools. Included in the discussion is how the applicant intends to utilize teachers to lead in professional communities and encourage collaboration between teachers within instructional teams. The applicant does not make any mention of how it intends to place principals at low-performing schools.

Altogether, the applicant has presented a plan but it did not provide much in-depth discussion on one of more critical areas: building capacity of effective principals. In essence, school leadership is listed one of two critical areas: teachers and principals therefore it is a critical omission on the applicant's part.

The applicant will receive 12 out of 20 points.

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

	Available	Score

<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>In addressing how the applicant has established, "LEA practices, policies, and rules," the applicant has established consortium-level and district-level offices that will provide support to the schools implementing personalized learning environments for the students. The offices will provide the schools with the necessary infrastructure to support the grant and the implementation.</p> <p>The applicant has also developed a matrix that will enable districts to flex amount of support it provides to the schools. The more the school succeeds, the more autonomy the school leaders will have in running the schools. The less the success, the less autonomy the school leaders will have and the more support it will receive from the districts, which is an unique concept that can help the consortium determine which schools will require more assistance, thus allowing them to better manage its game plan.</p> <p>For the part on credit for mastery, the State defines mastery as "command of course material at a level that demonstrates a deep understanding of the content standards and application of knowledge." This aligns with the criteria as established by the U.S. Department of Education. The applicant explains that students will be awarded credits based on whether the students demonstrate successfully what they have learned from the course as opposed to seat time. The applicant also adds that eNCREC will develop local procedures and policies to align with this concept, thus allowing school districts to emphasize demonstrated mastery of standards over seat time.</p> <p>The applicant has provided details on how it hopes to provide alternative pathways for achieving academic success through paths that are less traditional but viable for those low-achieving students or those students who require different pathways that will enable them to become successful learners. Also, the applicant explains that it will allow for multiple pathways but especially the pathways that will remove barriers from granting second chances to the students to pass and earn credits.</p> <p>However, it is questionable if the plan that the applicant has submitted is truly high-quality. For instance, the applicant explains that it will hire a project director to oversee the project and provide support to the LEA's as they implement the changes. It requires more than just hiring a project director to reorganize LEA central office and the applicant needs to do more if it wishes to successfully reform education. Furthermore, to make reforms, it is necessary that the applicant reorganize so that the reforms are streamlined throughout the entire organization otherwise changes will be "skin-deep." This leads to the next issue with the quality of the plan. The applicant has stated that the applicant intends to greater autonomy to the schools that experience greater success. Without a true reform from the top, it is hard to envision a situation where the schools will receive necessary support in order to succeed thus leading to limited autonomy in long run. In short, without true changes in the system, the cycle of failure will continue to permeate the system.</p> <p>Another area of concern with the application is Credit for Mastery Policies. While the applicant has aligned the policy to work with personalized learning concept, the applicant explains that the students can earn credit without enrolling in the class. It is unclear if this really means that the students do not have to take any classes and they still can earn credits. It is necessary that the students enroll in the courses but they should be able to demonstrate mastery other than "seat time" but the application appears to imply that it is possible for the students to earn credits without ever taking the courses.</p> <p>The applicant has provided some details in regard to LEA Policy and Infrastructure but the applicant has not submitted a high quality plan. For that reason, the applicant will receive 5 out of 15 points.</p>		

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The proposal provides some details on how the applicant has set up HomeBase to incorporate Instructional Improvement System (IIS) to allow for more personalized instruction including learning resources, curriculum assessments, resources, teaching tools, and professional development. In theory, the alignment of all aspects will allow the consortium to better address students' individual needs and make the resources more available to all the students in the consortium. Also, HomeBase will enable parents to have access to the content and tools at homes.</p> <p>The districts are also prepared to support students, parents, and educators as they utilize instructional and technological resources through partnerships, E-rate priority funds, and other state &amp; federal allocations. This will enable the consortium to better support the students and the parents in the districts.</p> <p>The applicant has designed HomeBase to accept data from different sources but the functions are limited at this time as it appears that they can only scan and upload without modifying the data. But mostly important, it provides parents and students a one-stop place where they can review the data.</p> <p>As a part of RTT grant award, the State created interoperable data systems that allow all districts to merge "human</p>		
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resources, student information systems, budget information, and instructional improvement" into a single system. Currently, HomeBase supports PowerSchool, School Net and NC Educator Evaluation System thus making most of the data systems interoperable and accessible for all of the districts.

The biggest concern comes from the lack of discussion on how parents or students will have access to computer-based systems if they do not have access to computers. This is a critical area of concern that was not discussed or addressed. Otherwise, the applicant has successfully established a clear and effective infrastructure that will support this initiative. For that, the applicant will receive 7 out of 10 points.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has tied its plan to continuously improve to Theory of Change that was presented in Figure A.3. The model that was presented in the Section (A)(3) explains that changes and improvements will depend on improved efficacy and the applicant implies that "improvements in student achievement happen as a direct result of educator intervention." Based on that, the central concept in the process to continuously improve depends on ensuring that teachers are instructing individually and preparing the students to become college- and career-ready.</p> <p>The applicant has presented a table detailing what that means to the district.</p> <p>The applicant lists five PFRG Goals and provided rationale and deliverables for each of the goal including some subgoals for each goal as well. the applicant, then, goes on to explain the whole concept in a brief "If-Then" statement eliciting suggestion that if teachers are engaged in professional development and the teachers are able to implement strategies, the students will improve and graduate college- and career-ready. In examining whether the teachers are able to implement the changes and whether the students are benefitting from the changes, the applicant will evaluate using data annually to determine whether there needs to be changes in the process or whether additional support will be provided to the schools. What is not clear is what the applicant shall do if the students are not meeting their annual goals other than the schools will be provided with the flexibility to develop their own goals.</p> <p>As the applicant receives summative evaluations, they will be made available to the public through annual reports and department websites as well.</p> <p>The section provides a lot of in-depth information on how it will monitor progress even though it does not provide any explanations of what action the applicant will undertake should the students fail to reach their annual goals. Overall, the applicant receives 14 out of 15 points.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has explained in the section that it will continue to communicate and engage its stakeholders, both internal and external, but the majority of the comments in the sections focused on communicating and did not address or provide any details how the applicant will engage the stakeholders on an ongoing basis. The proposal does say that there will be input and feedback but doesn't say how the applicant will gather them such as online comments, surveys, or others. The only possible inclusion is "regular meetings between stakeholders," but nothing on whether the input will be collected or if the stakeholders will have an opportunity to share comments at the meetings or not.</p> <p>Due to lack of depth in the details, the applicant will receive 2 out of 5 points.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has identified 12 performance measures and provided rationale for each measure. The results will be collected through state tests, district benchmarks, and PLC data (formative measures). In Table E.3, performance measures are listed and provided without any subgroups for first two measures: Highly Effective Teacher &amp; Principal and Effective Teacher &amp; Principal. In fact, there are no baselines and target scores as well for both categories. For the remainder of the measures (Reading proficiency, Out of School Suspensions, On Track to College- and Career-Readiness,</p>		

and FAFSA, baselines and annual target scores are provided.

The applicant explains that results will be gathered annually through state tests, district benchmarks, and PLC data (formative measures) and they will enable the applicant to better monitor progress on annual basis.

As for the ambitious yet achievable portion of the application, the annual goals are mostly achievable even though some of them may not be ambitious such as Performance Measure: Brunswick 3rd grade Reading EOG proficiency: the baseline shows 72.5% for all participating students with goal of reaching 87.5% 6 years from now, which would translate into 15% of growth over 6 years and that is a little more than 2% of growth annually. This is rather modest as far as ambition is concerned. Another example would be Pitt County - Number of Suspensions with implementation of PBIS for 3rd graders: the baseline for All shows 140 suspensions handed out in 2011-12 and the applicant hopes to reduce that to 132 by 2017-18, meaning 8 suspensions less by the end of the grant cycle. This is hardly ambitious especially with something crucial as reducing unwanted behaviors.

There is no discussion on how it will review and *improve* the process if it is insufficient over time.

The applicant will get 3 out of 5 points.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The applicant has stated that it will implement Kirpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation with focus on Reaction, Learning, Implementation, and Impact to determine whether the investments have been effective or not. But the process of evaluation will be outsourced to an independent program evaluator to monitor "the effectiveness of investments." The applicant has said that it will include surveys, pre- and post-assessments, classroom observations, walkthroughs, and analysis of student achievement to evaluate the program at each level.

In short, the applicant has said it will evaluate but does not outline clearly how it intends to do that.

The applicant shall receive 2 out of 5 points.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The budget proposal that the applicant has supplied shows a request for \$46 million to fund this project with \$30 million coming from the RTT-D grant. The applicant has included five major projects aligned with five goals. Each project/goal budget is outlined along with budget lines for positions, travel, equipment, supplies, stipends, and couple of other activities. Each budget is supplied with rationale as well.</p> <p>First, the Overall Budget Table 2-1 shows that the total budget for the project is \$46 million and RTT-D budget request is \$30 million and the applicant has identified Teacher Quality Partnership with \$8 million; however, the applicant does not offer any detail about how they plan to fund the remaining \$8 million.</p> <p>Granted, \$30 million is a lot to ask for but the applicant does have a clear plan on how it will utilize the funds in respect to each goal (five goals) and articulated rationale for each goal very well including providing details of how much funds will be needed to support the project annually.</p> <p>Generally, the budget proposal includes most details but the criteria ask for description of all funds including "external foundation, LEA, State, and other Federal funds," (Selection Criteria (F)(1)(C)(i)) and "identification of the funds that will be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs," (Selection Criteria (F)(1)(C)(ii)). In that respect, the applicant does not provide any detail or any comment in regard to both areas.</p> <p>Due to some missing details relating to external funding sources in Budget Table 2-1 and Criterion (F)(1)(C)(i), the applicant receives 6 out of 10 points.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		

The applicant has submitted a plan for sustaining project goals beyond the life of the grant. Below is a part of the plan:

The applicant believes that the project funding is heavily front-loaded meaning most of the funding will be allocated and expended in the early stages of the project to help with capacity building so that there will be sufficient number of qualified teachers to continue the project while costing less and less as the project moves through the latter stages.

One of the parts of making certain that the project is sustained post-grant is to ensure that the project is funded through another means. However, the applicant does not identify external sources including State and local government leaders.

In fact, the applicant emphasizes that the funds from RTT-D will successful reform the schools that it will require less funding post-grant and if any additional support is necessary, the consortium will invest \$2 million to support remediation, but that's the only indication of funding that the applicant will receive post-grant. The applicant writes, "Schools that continue to demonstrate the greatest need, based on the framework will receive external support," but the applicant does not identify external funding sources.

Furthermore, the applicant explains in details that they will be using the School Support Matrix to gauge inform how the applicant will fund the project after the grant money has been expended. The matrix relies on School Effect and School Affect to determine how successful the project has been. Both indicators are not well-aligned with the project goals and are not likely to provide the applicant with the necessary guidance to make strong post-grant funding decisions.

Conclusively, the applicant has not submitted a high quality plan. The applicant identifies two critical aspects in its proposal to sustain the project goals post-grant: School Matrix and 2 million dollars. The matrix is not a sensible evaluation of "the effectiveness of past investments and use this data to inform future investments," and it is unrealistic to distill the whole process to a single matrix, which is why the applicant is receiving a very low score for this portion.

Additionally, investing 2 million dollars to sustain a project is insufficient when the applicant is asking for \$30 million over four years (meaning the applicant is asking for close to \$8 million annually).

Due to weakness in the plan, the applicant will receive 2 out of 10 points.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Student Success Academy (SSA) will collaborate with the Pitt County Educational Foundation in providing support to middle school students to increase their commitment to learning, build positive life skills and empower them for future success. The collaboration provides 10-week summer/yearlong program to help middle school develop skills and reduce long-term dropouts. The partnership includes several non-profit local agencies, a university, and local offices as well.

Through developing strong academic skills such as literacy and responsible behavioral habits, the students are more likely to achieve greater academic success at the end of high school.

In addition to providing description of the initiative and partnership, the applicant has identified three population-level desired results: 75% of graduates and families will participate in family events; 95% of students will be on grade level by 9th grade; and 100% of SSA students will graduate on time. Included in the data is baselines and target goals for all three desired results.

However, the applicant does not provide much details on: how it will track selected indicators, how it will use data to target resources and develop a model to scale the model beyond the participating students. The applicant also didn't mention anything about how it will integrate education with services. The applicant explains that it will build a comprehensive framework to work with the schools but doesn't provide details on how it intends to do so.

The applicant wants to address some issues that plague rising middle school students and reduce dropouts. The applicant presents a plan but does not address other areas of focus: assessing progress and building capacity. The applicant receives 6 out of 10 points.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Overall, the applicant has presented a plan addressing four core educational assurance areas. First, the applicant has implemented standards and assessments aligned with personalized learning environment. Second, the applicant has build data system that will measure growth (HomeBase and School Net) and the applicant has developed a plan that will train teachers and principals to use data to guide their instruction and decision making processes. Third, the applicant is working with a local university to build capacity of teachers and principals including setting up professional development to improve quality of teachers and principals. Fourth, the applicant has presented evidence of success turning around failing schools.

Combined, all four core educational assurance areas should result in building personalized learning environment for the participating students and the plan that the applicant has submitted has strong quality to it. Also, the goals that the applicant has aligned with the proposal focus mainly on helping students become college- and career-ready. The applicant has also mentioned how it has worked with the State and LEA in transforming policies and regulations to support alternative pathways to learning and earning credits through mastery of content.

Overall, the applicant has met the criteria.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>127</b>
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