



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0096TX-1 for Region One Education Service Center (ESC1)

### 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>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The ESC 1 <b>TL<sup>2</sup></b> project is structured around personalized learning, supported by quality leadership and teaching, utilizing data on purpose, tracking crucial middle to high school transitions by students, all centered on project-based learning as the instructional model to best meet academic and student needs. Teachers and students will be held to college- and career-readiness standards, with training provided to teachers to help them realize how best to accelerate student achievement. While personalized learning is the focus of the <b>TL<sup>2</sup></b> project vision, conflicting statements are made in the Competitive Preference Priority, which calls into question the proposal's vision (see Competitive Preference Priority comments). This section is scored a [ 6 ]. While the proposal does address each of the four core assurance areas, there is not sufficient evidence that it articulates a clear and credible approach that will lead to accelerating student achievement for all students, specifically Special Education, high-risk, and English learners those most disenfranchised in its system. Inferences are made to programs (instructional and technological) to be used, however, an explicit view of what a classroom would look/feel like is missing.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The application provides a unique and focused approach to targeting services among the 39 selected schools identified from the seven consortium LEAs. A criteria filter has been applied in order to identify significant need areas in order to optimize customization of service.</p> <p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear delineation of how each school has been identified as a <i>Priority, Focus, or Support</i> school. Of the 39 project sites, five high schools and three middle schools list as Priority sites, and of these, four sites are identified as persistently low performing.</li> <li>• Clear delineation of key project personnel, as well as the creation of district- and campus-leadership teams, providing the "human capital" needed to realize the consortium's personalized learning projects.</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No reference to, or use of, the tiered criteria filter beyond this section. This reviewer is not clear how the designations will help prioritize the delivery of services or programs as stated in the narrative. The application does not provide specific protocols for the prioritization of personnel or services.</li> <li>• This reviewer could not locate the referenced needs assessments (templates) or how they will be/were used to target and differentiate work within the consortium by key personnel. Mention is made of the needs assessment again in section (A)(3), but no documentation is referenced in the body of the narrative nor is it included in the appendices.</li> <li>• There is a significant discrepancy between narrative and table values provided. Table 3 in section (A)(2)(b) clearly lists four sites as being categorized as persistently low-achieving (PLP), yet the narrative states there are only three such schools warranting Priority status. The school site <i>Veterans MS</i> is listed as a PLP, yet its' criteria filter shows it as a Support school, indicating that that lowest priority filter has been applied.</li> <li>• While this section clearly identifies seven LEA's as making up the consortium, the projects Logic Model states an 11 LEA consortium.</li> </ul>		

The application contains glaring inaccuracies in its most basic areas – identifying the lowest achieving schools for priority services, as well as the number of member LEAs. RTTT-D applicants are required to show attention to each of the core educational assurance areas. The application shows inconsistent application of its treatment of the area relating to persistently low-achieving schools. A score of [2] is awarded for this section, based on a lack of evidence that the project has adequately addressed prioritization within its structures for all persistently low-achieving schools as identified within the scope of selected sites.

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

**10**

**5**

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

The **TL<sup>2</sup>** project contains a detailed outline for systemic reforms. The six objectives are fully compatible with the tenants of this program, as are the eight strategic guiding principles.

Strengths:

- The reform model is supported by research showing efforts in bolstering structures that influence leadership translating to better teaching. The model also supports the uses of data and assessment systems in conjunction with articulated learning progressions.
- The plan provides a realistic acknowledgement of teacher limitations in the face of instructional shifts that must occur given the rigor and demanding expectations of the new state college- and career-readiness standards. The fact that 35% of consortium teachers do not hold valid certification is worthy of significant and immediate attention.
- Appendix 36 outlines the **TL<sup>2</sup>** High Quality Plan and Timeline, clearly indicating the activities, deliverables, timeline, and persons responsible for their implementation.

Weaknesses:

- This reviewer could not locate the mentioned needs assessment (template) or how they will be and/or were used to strategically target and differentiate work within the consortium by key personnel. No documentation is referenced in the body of the narrative nor is it located in the appendices, yet the needs assessment is listed as a strategic guiding principle underlying the reform model.
- The Theory of Change model is aligned to the **TL<sup>2</sup>** Logic Model. While the models are not necessarily contradictory, when viewed in tandem, the cells within the Initiatives-Activities-Outputs columns in the Logic Model are sized to fit within the diagram, and are not necessarily matched/aligned as presented in the narrative. The value of the diagram is obscured by the choice of formatting. The detail presented in the narrative regarding the six reform objectives is not easily matched in either the Theory of Change or Logic Models.
- While early sections in the application clearly show 39 LEAs within the ESC 1 service area, the Rationale section indicates there are 45 LEAs within the service area.
- It is unclear if partnerships with institutions of higher education have already been created. There is no direct indication showing partnerships with institutions of higher education to support the work of the consortium. A listing of trainings and workshops in Appendix 6 does not specify if these activities are currently being/have been undertaken by district personnel, with most not showing who or which agency led the sessions.

The **TL<sup>2</sup>** Theory of Change and its accompanying plan are ambitious. All aspects of the reform plan are aimed at improving student learning opportunities. The six reform initiatives are comprehensive, and appear feasible given ESC 1's history of success with previous state and federal initiatives. The **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal addresses scalability by addressing sustainability. The plan proposes that for school reform to occur, the entire district must transform, and to accomplish district-wide reform, leadership capacity will be developed at each school. A "results-oriented" leadership will be developed, using rigorous student, staff and program evaluations. The DLTs/CLTs will be trained via direct and online modes, as well as through coaching and mentoring, and they will be expected to use comprehensive needs assessments, data, best practices, performance expectations, and evaluation data to monitor and adjust the instructional program to better meet the needs of students. However, much is made of the fact that 51% of teachers in the consortium have less than 10 years of experience, but no indication is made as to how many of these teachers are in fact rated as highly effective or effective. There is no comparable information for principals, their lengths of tenure, or rating of effectiveness. The tenants of the theory and its plan rest on school turnaround with strong and focused leadership, yet no indicators are provided on baseline levels of leadership going into this project. This reviewer could not locate a needs assessment (template) or the means by which each LEA has used/will use the information to determine "barriers to improved student performance" as mentioned in the narrative. It is unclear what local information was used by ESC 1 (lead LEA) to formulate this ambitious plan. It is unclear how the status of existing leadership structures, quality of current teaching

staffs, school climate within each district, or needs were used to select the “Investments” described in the logic model. Therefore, while the change- and logic-models are detailed, this section receives an overall score of **[5]** as there is question about how the model has been developed to capitalize on LEA strengths while addressing needs. Mention is made that the proposal was written over 24 months: this seems an adequate timeframe in which to develop, administer, collect, and analyze a needs assessment for the seven member LEAs, as well as to collect baseline leadership data.

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

**10**

**2**

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

Assessment in the state of Texas has undergone significant changes.

Strengths:

- Performance on summative measures should show a narrowing, or decrease of achievement gap by student subgroups. As taken from Table (A)(4)(a), decent gap **decreases** are recorded in the following goal areas for these subgroups:
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading Proficiency: Special Education
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics Proficiency: Special Education
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade Reading Proficiency: Special Education
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade Reading Proficiency: EL
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics Proficiency: Special Education
  - 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading Proficiency: Special Education
  - 8<sup>th</sup> grade Reading Proficiency: EL
  - 8<sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics Proficiency: Special Education
  - End of Course English II Proficiency: Special Education
  - End of Course Biology Proficiency: Special Education
  - End of Course Biology Proficiency: EL
  - End of Course Biology Proficiency: At-Risk
- The End of Course Biology Proficiency for Econ. Disadv. Is the **ONLY** area projected to **surpass** the Overall group and is projected to do so by one percentage point.

Weaknesses:

- Performance on summative measures should show a narrowing, or decrease of achievement gap by student subgroups. As taken from Table (A)(4)(a), gap **increases** are recorded in the following goal areas for these subgroups:
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading Proficiency: Econ. Disadv.
  - End of Course English I Proficiency: At-Risk
  - End of Course English II Proficiency: At-Risk
  - End of Course Algebra I Proficiency: Econ. Disadv.
  - End of Course Algebra I Proficiency: EL
  - End of Course Algebra I Proficiency: At-Risk
  - End of Course History Proficiency: At-Risk

Assessment, and the requisite standards to which they are tied, have undergone significant changes in the state of Texas. The 2011-2012 school year saw the introduction of a new assessment system throughout the state, with many districts and schools realizing declines in their AYP ratings and drops in all levels of reporting. It is difficult to determine whether or not the **TL<sup>2</sup>** performance goals are at or above state expectations, as the state targets provided set out performance-level values, while the proposal provides percent proficient values as indicators, with no primer to explain which of the three performance levels correlates to a proficiency designation for this section.

It must be recognized that stakeholders continue to adjust to the new measures. However, performance on summative measures should show a narrowing, or decrease of achievement gap by student subgroups, regardless of assessment and curricular changes. One goal to be met under Race to the Top-District is decreasing the achievement gap for all students. This proposal does not show such a narrowing/decreasing of achievement gaps, specifically for the Special Education subgroup. While there is minimal increases projected for graduation rates, there are no indicators explicitly detailing college enrollment rates. This section is scored **[2]** as the project fails to show a narrowing of the achievement gap for all

students, and as such, does not demonstrate that the plan is ambitious or achievable for all students.

## 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>7</b>

### (B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

ESCs work closely with their districts to provide resources and expertise in services such as professional development, technical supports, and assistance working with at-risk and low-income, and English learners. ESC 1 has 47 years of working in its region, assisting districts in improving student achievement, and to achieve this support, it has managed several large federal and state-funded reform efforts.

#### (a) Improving Student Outcomes and Closing Gaps

##### Strengths:

- In the state’s TAKS assessment program, the following subgroups showed significant improvement in regional data, presumably as a result of implemented reform measures:
  - Special Education with 21.6 percent change over time.
  - At-Risk with 12.2 percent change over time.
- According to a GEAR-UP pamphlet (Appendix 21), the ESC 1 region GEAR-UP cohorts have served approximately 14,000 students over a 13-year period. While data in the narrative does not provide achievement information specific to this program, the pamphlet provides some information regarding cohort achievement.
- There is genuine acknowledgement of the challenges faces within the region and the need to provide more and better services to support families and students with social, emotional, and behavioral issues.
- While laudable in addressing social and intervention challenges faced in the region, data is not directly attributed to reform work by ESC 1 to reduce these critical risk factors.

##### Weaknesses:

- For the various reform efforts listed, there are no clear indicators delineating:
  - which districts in the region benefited from which reform projects, or, whether any of the seven member LEAs were included in these earlier projects;
  - targeted grade levels or numbers of students impacted by these efforts;
  - any correlations to specific populations served
  - whether the data represents only those districts or sites served through the federal and state-funded projects, or whether the data reflects all districts in the ESC 1 service region (Figure 3, Table 6, Table 7, Table 8, Table 9). It is also not clear if data reflects progress resulting from work supported by the funded reform efforts.
- While the data shows “steady incremental progress” for subgroups on TAKS, the area of Reading does not show such growth. It is curious that the **drop** in Reading scores is connected to an increase in the number of students (approximately 26,000 between 2007-08 and 2010-11), while population increase is not attributed as a factor influencing results in the other subject areas.
- Table 7 (All Tests Met TAKS Standard Comparion [sic]) - College Readiness
  - Impossible to determine if data refers to Grade 12 students, or to the general population. By listing percentages only, there is no way to correlate the values using other data in the application.
  - Data does not include information on At-Risk or Economically Disadvantaged subgroups.
  - College-ready English Learners increased from 2% to 7%. While this represents a 250 percent change, one must question if an ending value of 7% represents growth validating claims of successful implementation.
- Data presented to illustrate record of success in the member LEAs is presented as an aggregate (Figure 4) by subject area. Individual accomplishments or lack thereof are masked by an aggregate presentation. No data presented to show subgroup achievement levels, and therefore it is impossible to determine progress toward closing achievement gaps.

(b) Achieving Ambitious Reforms in lowest-achieving or low-performing schools

Strengths:

- Support structures within the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal provide a reasonable and realistic approach to customizing efforts at a campus level. The District Leadership Team (DLT) and the Campus Leadership Team (CLT) create an avenue for comprehensive and inclusive decision-making, building capacity for leadership within the consortium.

Weaknesses:

- One would reason that the four persistently lowest-achieving schools (three of which are identified as Priority focus sites) have been supported from 2008 to 2012 by reform efforts conducted by ESC 1 on behalf of persistently low-achievement schools in its service area. Information is not provided to verify this inference. It is not clear if the 7 member LEAs under **TL<sup>2</sup>** were involved with ESC 1 and any of its earlier reform efforts. It remains unclear if four **TL<sup>2</sup>** –member schools labeled as persistently low-achieving were recipients of services under previous reform efforts undertaken by ESC 1.

(c) Student Performance Data accessible to inform and improve participation, instruction, and services

Strengths:

- Appropriate leveraging of the Youth Connections data portal used under the GEAR-UP grant will provide a proven platform that can be adapted to capture ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** performance data.
- The VAL-ED and TalentEd Perform software systems provide comprehensive performance assessment ratings, using state-of-the-art dashboard technologies to display captured findings.
- Use of the STAAR One assessment item bank supports teachers in using high-quality and high-rigor assessment tools with students.

This section is scored [7]. ESC 1 is to be commended for its work in creating an item bank to support the transition to the new state standards and assessment program. The ESC 1 STAAR One project details a well-thought collaborative effort addressing vital components needed to educate teachers on the new levels of rigor and complexity of thinking expected of students under the new state academic standards for college- and career readiness.

Significant funding has been received by ESC 1 service region to support a variety of reform efforts that span 15 years of work. Regarding establishment of a clear record of success, the narrative generates tenuous connections between the various reform efforts and how significantly they addressed achievement at persistently low-achieving schools. The ESC 1 track record is ambiguous if trying to validate ESC 1’s ability to achieve ambitious and significant reforms, specifically as the work relates to the four **TL<sup>2</sup>** –member schools labeled as persistently low-achieving. Evidence is not clear that ESC 1 has realized ambitious reform changes as a result of the implementation of the programs described.

<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:**

There are extensive levels of stated transparency throughout the ESC 1 system, with agreements having been made with Consortium LEAs for data sharing.

- Significant funding received previously by the ESC 1 service region supported the creation of the PEIMS information management system as well as the Youth Connection database. Both of these programs can be leveraged under ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>**.
- The narrative does not clearly articulate how the work of ESC1 and the Consortium LEAs will lead to “significantly broadening public access” to information. While commendable, the statement is not supported with actionable details.

This section is scored a [4]. The proposal demonstrates overall, sufficient levels transparency in processes, practices, and investments, in all areas except in its discussion on making information more readily available to the public on specific sites – the narrative encompasses more of an aggregate presentation and not a presentation of information on a site-by-site

basis. Current avenues exist for information sharing, but the plan suggests creation of even greater levels of dissemination, and it is this aspect that is not explicitly outlined.

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

**10**

**8**

**(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The 2008 adoption of the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards has created higher accountability standards and rigorous academic standards to better align to federal AYP expectations. These various models and standard sets are now reflected in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards. As such, the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal identifies the appraisal process as integral to fostering effective educators who will be responsible for implementing effective personalized learning environments.

Strengths:

- The state has strengthened student learning targets and accountability measures and is working to improve educator effectiveness.
- Consortium LEAs will follow new state-mandated principal and teacher appraisal systems (PDAS), as well as integrate new software systems (TASB, VAL-ED, and TalentEd) to fill identified gaps in the existing PDAS system.
- ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** and Consortium LEAs will leverage the state-wide online learning environment via Project Share.

Weaknesses:

- Broad, unsubstantiated statements are made regarding online delivery methods reducing training costs while increasing teacher effectiveness and student success.

This section is scored an [8]. It is clear that each LEA has sufficient autonomy to implement the personalized learning environments described in the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal as well as the augments to the existing appraisal system. What is not clear is the ability of ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** and Consortium LEAs to follow the mandated PDAS appraisal system as well as simultaneously conduct the three new appraisal systems seems overly ambitious. While the plan is commendable, it is not clear if safeguards are in place to help minimize incompatibility between systems.

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

**15**

**7**

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

ESC 1's work with previous reform efforts provided protocols that have been replicated in the genesis of this application: Focus Groups, Work Sessions, and stakeholder surveys were used, specifically targeting input from parents and students.

Strengths:

- Surveys were conducted to gauge support for the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal from teachers, parents, and students. ESC 1 worked with Consortium LEA representatives to review input received, scrutinized the feedback, and then revised the project scope as appropriate.

Weaknesses:

- While Response Percent and Response Count are visible for both Parent and Student survey results, this information is missing on the Educator survey results.
- The narrative states that 91% of teachers support the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal. Calculations reveal this number to be closer to **77%**.

This section is scored a [7]. The proposal provides a clear description that project stakeholders were engaged in the development and refinement of the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal. Letters indicate a broad spectrum of community and higher education support for the project. Focus groups including school administration, teachers, parents and students were held to work on project design. A framework and rubric and is given as the impetus for the Turnaround Educator Series. While much description is given to a process that spanned 24 months, there is little evidence to validate that the engagement was more than simply information sharing. As for the Turnaround Educator Series coming from the work of the focus groups, a handout/flier is provided to demonstrate the end-result, there is no discussion as to what the recommendations were, or in how they were used to revise the project plan.

Statements regarding teacher support for the proposal are misleading. The 91% figure quoted represents the 2,709 educators responding to the survey: when averaged over the six survey questions, approximately 77% of educators actually responded with either Agree or Strongly Agree (Appendix 16). The Educator survey does not post results in the same manner as both parent and student surveys. It is not discussed why the teacher survey is posted differently from the others.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>

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

The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal is based on a high-quality plan that clearly sets forth goals, activities, reasonable timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. The personalized learning environment is rooted in clearly articulated Foundational elements. These elements create the framework upon which the high quality plan is built. Strategies to realize personalized learning for all students are currently known and used by the Consortium LEAs. The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal's innovation is found in the types of technology that can tailor the learning environment to address student learning styles, access, and academic needs.

Strengths:

- Technology provides a relevant, real-world aspect to the learning experience. The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal recognizes the need for high levels of educator and student facility with these emerging technologies. Incorporating these new tools into the instructional program will require extensive professional development to help educators realize 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms where students are engaged in 21<sup>st</sup> century activities. (*i.e., Customized Learning Plan; ACT ENGAGE; EXCELErator; STAAROne; Project Lead the Way; Gateway to Technology; iTunes U; interactive personal devices*)
- The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal includes a comprehensive set of assessment tools which will be used to determine academic readiness as well as monitor student progress toward proficiency on student-determined and mutually-agreed to goals. (*i.e., STAAROne; ACT ENGAGE; EXCELErator*)
- The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal sets forth a rigorous instructional program that may or may not conform to traditional ideas of what a school or classroom might look like. The underlying theme throughout the proposal is to create student-centered programs that accommodate all learners, as well as being results driven. The selected programs can help students understand where they stand with regard to college readiness. (*i.e., Foundation High School Program; 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade Bridge Program; SIOP; Ex-CELL; Millennials Teaching Millennials*)
- In order to realize a highly customizable and individualized learning environment, the high quality plan includes bringing on personnel to help train and coach teachers, students, and parents in selected strategies. These key leaders will help teachers analyze data to better implement relevant strategies identified in the ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal. They will also train students in how to use the various tools and resources available to them. (*i.e., Campus Learning Coach; RTT-D Technology specialist*)
- Intervention programs and instructional models incorporating best-practice instructional strategies and cutting-edge technology tools will be used to meet the needs of all students, including EL and high-need students. (*i.e., SIOP; Ex-CELL; Prentice Hall Writing Coach; Read 180*)
- Project-based Learning will be employed to help foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. Project-based Learning along with community service learning will be structured to promote student appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures and contexts. (*i.e., Youth Leadership Council; community service learning; Socratic seminars*)
- Ongoing parent and family events are planned to further existing parent collaborations. Greater emphases will be given to providing parents with information about college preparedness, rigorous coursework needed for college success, financial literacy, and college entrance requirements. (*i.e., Parent Leadership Council, College Access Program; Digital Access, Outreach and Awareness Activities*)
- Ongoing and regular feedback will be available to students, parents, and teachers, leveraging various technology programs to provide formative and summative assessment information as well as an early warning system via selected student data systems (*i.e., STAAROne*)

*Weaknesses:*

- The distribution of one Campus Learning Coach per Consortium LEA appears inadequate given the varying student enrollment and staffing numbers at each of the 7 Consortium LEAs.
- Students will formulate an Individual Learning Plan during the first semester of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, but not update it until their junior year in high school. While mention is made of regular monitoring, there is question as to why such a lengthy time-span for adjusting the plan.
- The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal does not clearly distinguish career readiness as being different from college readiness. It is not clear if the college and career readiness progressions take into account rigorous and relevant vocational programs.

The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal integrates a range of strategies to capitalize on creating comprehensive yet responsive learning environments. This section is scored a **[13]**, as the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal sets forth a comprehensive plan for services and activities, but there is question as to whether the distribution of one Campus Learning Coach per Consortium LEA is viable or equitable given this person's responsibilities to organize and deliver many grant activities within a Consortium LEA. In its plan for customized and personalized learning environments, the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal is not clear as to why a student's Customized Learning Plan remains static from 6<sup>th</sup> grade until it can be modified in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, in effect disallowing for customization of a student's learning plan.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal is based on a high-quality plan that clearly sets forth goals, activities, reasonable timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

*Strengths:*

- Personalized Learning Communities: Consortium LEAs will provide teachers with job-embedded training, coaching, and collaboration utilizing research-based strategies to bolster pedagogy, curriculum alignment, assessment methodologies, and instructional scaffolding. The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal is organized to develop effective educators responsible for facilitating students' personalized learning plans and meeting the needs of all students. (*i.e., Campus Learning Coach; ELA Coach; Multiple Intelligences, the Differentiated Classroom; Project-based Learning; cooperative learning strategies*)
- A plan is provided where teachers will learn to use data more effectively to better monitor student progress toward attaining proficiency on college and career readiness standards, with additional attention to the needs of EL and high-risk students (*i.e., SIOP, Ex-CELL, differentiated instruction*)
- Action steps are outlined where staff will be trained to use Project-based Learning to support acquisition of real-life skills grounded in the college and career readiness standards. Teachers will learn to adapt content and instruction to best meet student needs and choices. (*i.e., modeling, co-teaching, observation, feedback*)
- Teachers will use diagnostic tools to measure student progress, with monthly trainings provided to help translate the data into instructional action.
- A timeline has been established for training in Webb's Depth of Knowledge schema on rigor and the development of instructional practices accelerating student progress toward successful completion of college and career readiness standards.
- The Leadership Simulation Incubator is an innovative project allowing principals and teachers to test decision-making processes while practicing effective instructional strategies. The Simulation activities are scenarios linking leader behaviors to improved student learning. (*i.e., AEIS, PEIMS, TalentEd Perform, VAL-ED, School Turnaround Model, Teachers-Training-Teachers, Mentoring of Teachers, Master's Teacher Initiative, Principal Leadership Academy, Leadership Simulation Incubator*)
- Consortium LEAs will align data from several assessment programs to accelerate student progress toward meeting CCR graduation requirements. (*i.e., ACT ENGAGE, Readistep, EXCEerator, STAAROne,*)
- ESC 1 will partner with several IHEs for training in school turnaround program models to develop administrative and instructional leadership, and improved curriculum development. (*i.e., digital tools such as iPads, TI-Nspires, probes, laptops, IVY League University School Turnaround program, ESC 1 STEM Center, T-STEM Academies*)
- *The ESC 1 Professional Development Resource Library housed within the Learning Management Moodle as well as the ESC1 Media Coop are available to all consortium participants. Educators have the ability to select resources that best meet their needs. These resources allow administrators and teachers to learn how to access, use, and integrate a variety of digital resources and media into the instructional program.*

- ESC 1 will partner with several IHEs for training in school turnaround program models, with the intent to develop administrative and instructional leadership and improved curriculum development available to all ESC 1 educators, schools, and districts. ESC 1 and Consortium LEAs will provide access to interactive media various trainings options to assist teachers in implementing major instructional changes required of personalized learning strategies and project-based learning, as well as using new technology-enhanced instructional tools.
- The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal proposes using existing region-wide databases in conjunction with grades, STAAR-EOC grades, course enrollments, and demographic information, to help educators determine the best possible instructional program matched to student progress and need.

Weaknesses:

- The distribution of one Campus Learning Coach per Consortium LEA appears inadequate given the varying student enrollment and staffing numbers at each of the 7 Consortium LEAs.
- Not clear how the subjectivity of teachers' grading schema will be addressed, as one of the data points to be used to determine student academic achievement are grade-level and course-level grades.

The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal outlines an ambitious, high-quality plan to increase the effectiveness of educators which in turn will improve the instructional program afforded all students. The proposal includes an innovative initiative, the Leadership Simulation Incubator project, poised to provide a technologically-based, interactive model for leadership development.

However, the overall ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal includes a myriad of initiatives for improving Teaching and Leading. Activities and projects are promoted as being available to all ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> participants, but does not indicate a timeframe for delivery of training and/or access. It is not evident that a scaling-up will be used, or if there will be full-scale implementation from the onset. Furthermore, there is not clear indication why the trainings will target the need of EL student with special needs, and not all students with special needs.

However, there is question that sufficient personnel have been assigned to the implementation and oversight of the many projects. This section is scored an **[10]**. It is not clear the proposal is sustainable given the proposed staffing model of 7 Campus Learning Coaches, 2 ELA coaches, 2 STEM coaches, and 1 Technology Specialist listed as the personnel responsible for oversight and implementation of project initiatives at 39 geographically separated schools distributed among 7 independent districts.

#### 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>9</b>

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

The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> proposal clearly describes the governance structures of the LEAs as having autonomy over establishing schedules, calendars, personnel selections, staffing models, budgets, procedures, internal structures to support reform strategies.

- The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> personalized learning framework is explicitly grounded in competency-based education, providing students flexibility in how credits can be earned. Students will be able to demonstrate mastery via online- and blended learning, dual enrollment, before/after school programs, project-based and community-service learning, and credit recovery. Differentiation of pedagogy, resources, support and curriculum for students with special needs and for EL students is embedded in the Teaching for Learning Design model.
- The ESC 1 TL<sup>2</sup> personalized learning framework provides for alternative means by which to determine promotion. These include face-to-face and web-based tutoring, before- and after-school programs, extended learning, credit recovery, remediation/acceleration, individualized instruction, as well as parent and community assistance programs.

This section receives a score of **[9]**. ESC 1 and the 7 Consortium LEAs have entered into agreements stipulating a

governance structure that is in full alignment with Race to the Top recommendations, stipulating equity of access to a high-quality educational program by all students. ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** personalized learning framework provides a comprehensive approach to establishing instructional programs that address student needs to support their learning. The theoretical modeling of the personalized learning framework provides a cogent delineation of the stakeholders, their roles and responsibilities within the framework, as well as long-range expectations for each group. While the 7 Consortium LEAs have the ability to set schedules and calendars, there is no discussion as to a process to determine if a personalized learning environment containing these flexible programs for personalized learning has been established at the sites within each of the distinct Consortium LEAs. The high-quality plan and timeline in Appendix 36 does not contain explicit reference to the Teaching for Learning Design model as described in the narrative.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal presents an ambitious plan to ensure stakeholders have the necessary tools and materials to implement **TL<sup>2</sup>**.

- Students, parents, and teachers will have access to tutoring and coaching by Campus Learning Coaches and Academic Tutors, both in and out of school, including weekends, and summers, year-round. Coaching will consist of best-practice strategies, Web-Plus tutoring, and wireless Cyber-mentoring – allowing access anywhere, any time.
- Technology tools (iPads, laptops, WiFi digital devices) will be loaned to students who are without access to such devices outside of school.
- The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal supports use of existing online data management systems (PEIMS, PAP, AEIS, Youth Connection), a billing and invoicing program (STCCY), and network related services (ESCONETT), longitudinal state assessment data (TAKS, STAAR, EOC, TEAs, AEIS, Youth Connection, ACT ENGAGE
- ESC 1 will use the PEIMS and AEIS systems to collect and compare data, as well as to monitor and evaluate performance-measure outcomes.

Concerns:

- Access to the Ivy League Turnaround trainings (both residential and onsite), is by invitation, counter to the notion of equitable access. It is not clear why all current leadership will not participate in these activities during the first year of grant implementation, yet administrators coming into the grant in subsequent years will be required to participate in an online version.
- The budget narrative does not provide detail to determine the number of devices that will actually be made available to each site. If one estimates the cost of a mid-range iPad, the budget allows for a class set of approximately 25 machines per site. With enrollment numbers among the 16 high schools and 23 middle schools averaging approximately 1,519, and 873 respectively, this number does not seem realistic in realizing this initiative.

The plan does set forth a reasonable projection for implementing informational technology systems that will assist students and their families with real-time information regarding academic progress. The goals and activities in the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal specifically address college and career readiness skills and creating several pathways to acquiring them. The programs, systems, and resources outlined within the plan will provide students, parents, and educators with access both during and outside of school, with support provided via tutoring and academic coaching. This section is scored a **[5]**, as the narrative does not establish overall credibility that the project will deliver the types of services and access proposed. The proposal inadequately addresses how students or classrooms will gain access to the technologies detailed within the plan. The project- and budget-narratives provide insufficient details to determine the number of devices each site will receive, if these devices will only be used to support students without access to the technologies outside of school, or if/how they will be used to supplement existing technological resources at the sites.

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

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

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal outlines a continuous improvement process that is focused by a vision that sets out a target for collecting student achievement data, use the data to plan and implement professional development and instructional strategies to address student needs, and finally collect program data to evaluate project activities and projects to determine overall project effectiveness.

- The plan provides reasonable separation of responsibilities and functions in its staffing to ensure all aspects of the project stay focused and targeted on student achievement and teacher effectiveness. A 30-day response window will be used to address implementation issues, including lack of progress toward meeting achievement goals.
- Youth Connection will be used which is a customizable, short-term and longitudinal interoperable data system.
- District- and Campus Leadership Teams will monitor progress toward meeting project goals. Leadership will also collaborate with civic and business organizations in order to share information while also collecting program feedback. Project leadership will also cultivate relationships with local media to help promote college-going messages.
- Teachers will have immediate access to performance data, using the information to identify student needs, areas for re-engagement of content, and to help determine the best instructional approach(es).
- Performance data will be reviewed daily (teachers, coaches), monthly (Exec Council, DLT, CLT), quarterly (Exec Council, DLT), and annually (external evaluator, Exec Council). Trend data will identify schools and districts needing greater project supports, as well as impact from improvement efforts. Data will be used by site leadership for selecting resources and professional development.

The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal sets forth a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. The plan stipulates the roles and responsibilities of key personnel needed to plan, execute, and evaluate project activities. The high-quality continuous improvement process structured into ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** uses data (performance levels, surveys, evaluations) as feedback to adjust instruction for both students and educators. This section is scored a **[15]**.

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

**5**

**4**

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

A continuous review process is embedded in the ESC 1 The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal. Various councils (Executive, Advisory, Parent Advisory, Youth Leadership, Regional Advisory, Curriculum Advisory), the DLTs, CLTs, and Teacher Advisory Committees will continue to meet to review data, feedback, monitor, and plan. Vendors and project partners are included in the communications protocols. Timelines stipulate monthly parent forums, quarterly principal and DLT updates, and annual stakeholder feedback surveys. This section is scored a [4], as there is a clear understanding among the Consortium LEAs that communication with and among stakeholders is critical to the project's implementation.

Communication avenues include the **TL<sup>2</sup>** website, media, presentations at board meetings and public forums, email, district/site meetings, evaluation reports, and professional development trainings. However, greater detail is warranted in describing student engagement in the review process.

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

**5**

**2**

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

The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal contains 12 performance measures, each matched to significant levels of research (rationale).

Consistent and timely analysis of student achievement data (STAAR) using a variety of assessment sources (**TL<sup>2</sup>** database, third party data systems) will provide Consortium districts the ability to determine gains in student learning, and determine how best to marshal professional development and instructional resources.

**Strengths:**

- STAAR mathematics standards, inclusive of Algebra 1: Closing of achievement gap projected for Special Education students grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> as compared to ALL Students, deficit of 29% points decreased to 23% points, indicating a trending that show a closing of gap for Special Education students.
- 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> college- and career-readiness indicator with ACT ENGAGE: minimal closing of achievement gap for At-Risk students.

**Weaknesses:**

- For grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> on track to college- and career-readiness, it is unclear how composite calculations based on ACT ENGAGE, will provide actionable data.
- Baselines are not provided for performance measures relating to health and social-emotional leading indicator. Again, composite calculations done for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. It is unclear how composite information will provide actionable data to structure services and interventions.
- The performance measure selected for grades 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> college- and career-readiness is focused on college readiness. While college-readiness tools are predictive of college success, it is unclear how the selected assessment tools (SAT and ACT) gauge career readiness.
- The following Performance Measure calculations raise questions:
  - 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> C-C-R with ACT ENGAGE: no baseline given, although footnote indicates a baseline is available. Hispanic and ALL Students start at 72%, but by 2017-18 Hispanic subgroup expected to come in lower than ALL Students (90% vs. 92%).
  - 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Pass or Take Pre-Advanced Placement: projections show a significant increase to achievement gap across all subgroups except EL.
  - 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> ACT ENGAGE on-track for College and Career goals: significant increase to achievement gap across ALL subgroups.
  - 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> pass career readiness or elective: No significant narrowing of achievement gaps.
  - 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> career readiness on-track with ACT/SAT: significant increase to the achievement gaps.
  - 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> STAAR mathematics: widening of achievement gap projected for EL and At-Risk students.
  - 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> STAAR ELAR: significant increase to achievement gap for At-Risk students
- 8 Performance measures do not show a closing of achievement gaps for subgroups: in several instances, the gap widens.

Comprehensive research is cited supporting the project's performance measures. However, the aggregation of grade levels (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>) obscures data by grade level, masking performance. It is not clear how services can be determined, or instructional strategies applied if the data does not provide information by grade-level cohort. This section is scored a [2] as projections on several performance measures do not show a narrowing of achievement gap for subgroups, but at times, shows a widening of the gap. Furthermore, under the performance measures Highly Effective and Effective teachers/principals, each year reflects the same percentage values, regardless of subgroup. Research shows the most at-risk students need the most talented teachers, yet the plan does not explain why all groups are treated equally in a way that would not place more of its highly effective and effective teachers with students with highest need.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

This section is scored a [4]. The ESC 1 **TL**<sup>2</sup> proposal outlines a high quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. Data from formative and summative assessments, surveys, classroom observation logs, student participation rates, grades, enrollments, and STAAR-EOC interim and summative scores, PD surveys, staff evaluation data, and AYP status will be used to determine project effectiveness, fidelity, outcomes and outputs of **TL**<sup>2</sup>. Detailed rationale is provided for all layers of the project to be evaluated, including clearly defined performance measures, rationale for the selection of each measure, the type of rigorous and timely formative data to be expected, and the review and revision of measures to gauge their progress toward meeting stated goals. However, under the 8 questions that will drive project evaluation, there is no discussion that seeks to gauge the value or effect of the various professional development measures included in the proposal.

**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>

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** proposal clearly identifies all funds intended to support its implementation. The proposal indicates which project-level costs are on-going vs. one-time expenditures. While the budget includes matching funds, showing leveraging of both state and federal funding sources to support program implementation, several areas related to sufficient support of implementation are not adequately addressed or discussed. Staffing and Supplies are two such areas.

While digital formats (e.g., email, webinar conferences, online trainings) as means of communication are shared as possible ways to mitigate distances, the proposal does not sufficiently address how the projected staffing model will adequately monitor, advise, and direct 7 LEAs with 39 schools and 2,975 educators, given the wide geographical boundaries of the ESC 1 region. The budget narrative does not explain why 7 Campus Learning Coaches - one per LEA - have been placed under the Budget category "Other". There is no discussion addressing equitable distribution of work for these coaches, given relative sizes of the LEAs and the number of schools served.

With over 20% of the budget earmarked for Supplies (predominately technological), it is not clear that the distribution of these resources will benefit all students under the grant. Under Electronic/Technology Equipment, there are no delineations to indicate the number of iPad or TI Navigators devices to be purchased, or whether these purchases include service agreements, which in and of themselves can be costly purchases. Given the dollar amounts in the calculations, each site will in all likelihood will realize one class set of devices each year for four years, meaning 4 classrooms of devices which calls into question the scalability of the technology tools to all grade levels. If these devices are being assigned to STEM and English Language Arts classrooms, the number of devices is not sufficient and will not support full implementation of project activities. This section is scored a **[5]**.

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

**10**

**3**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

This section is scored a [3]. The ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** budget narrative does not address sustainability post grant. With 1.7% of the total budget defined as one-time investment, the remaining 98.3% of the budget is designated on-going operational cost. The proposal does not provide a high-quality plan or any specific plan by which to extend the project's activities and programs beyond the life of the grant. References are made that ESC 1 had the resources and the capacity to sustain the project, that many external supports exists to help continue the work, and that by nature of the extensive professional development and tech purchases (iPads and TI Navigators), the goals of the grant will continue. The proposal does not include specific timelines, key personnel responsible, or specific deliverables that can be used to gauge the claims put forth by the proposal.

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

This section is scored a [ 4]. The CPP for the ESC 1 **TL<sup>2</sup>** project is focused on providing personalized learning for students. The narrative states ESC1, the consortium LEAs, and partners believe the **TL<sup>2</sup>** project cannot meet the personalized needs of students within the traditional system. As such, the CPP is being used to promote a comprehensive and coherent reform model as required in section (A)(1). The narrative indicated a needs assessment and comprehensive inventory of conditions and community collaborations will be completed, but it is not clear why these are being done here and not incorporated into the **TL<sup>2</sup>** project vision as delineated in sections (A) and (C). There are 47 identified areas bulleted to be addressed by ESC 1, ESC LEAs and project partners: this does not seem a reasonable number of project goals/outcomes/action steps to be tracked and incorporated into **TL<sup>2</sup>** project structures. Furthermore, it is not evident that programs have been developed specifically to address social-emotional and behavioral needs of students, or that beyond surveying parents, a framework exists/will exist to provide parents access to services and support. It is not clear how services have been reformed to meet the personalized needs of students.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>115</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0096TX-2 for Region One Education Service Center (ESC1)

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

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

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

The applicant received a medium score based on the applicant providing a comprehensive reform vision that covered all the critical elements for reform. The overall score was supported by the links to the four core educational assurance areas, yet was reduced based on the lack of specific details provided that would support the coherence of the approach. The following provides rationale for each sub-criterion in this section:

(a) The applicant builds on the four core educational assurance areas as evidenced throughout the application to include this first section. The reform vision identifies alignment to college and career readiness standards as a critical feature as well as the use of a formative assessment system designed into the personalized learning system approach described in this section. The applicant also identifies a focus on teacher effectiveness both in recruiting and also in developing as reflected in Initiative 2: Academic Rigor - Excellence in Teaching and Learning as well as a focus on turning around low performing schools as identified in Initiative 1: School Turnaround - Leading Turnaround in the Lowest Achieving Schools.

(b) The applicant provides a range of strategies across the various initiatives described, though the applicant does not operationalize the approach with enough detail to ensure that the approach is coherent. As an example, the applicant makes broad statements about key factors such as focused effective leadership, effective teaching, customized professional development, quality and timely assessment, and standards-based curriculum without directly linking the factors together or providing specific examples.

(c) The applicant provides specific intended outcomes at the student level throughout the section, though information specific to what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments was limited.

<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 received all possible points for their approach to implementation as they (a) clearly described the process to select schools to participate with a priority placed on schools that are identified as some of the lowest in the state (priority, focus, or support; (b) provided a list of schools that will participate in grant activities by LEA; and (c) provided a complete demographic profile of the students in the participating schools to include the number of students within sepcific subgroups (SPED, Economically Disadvantaged, English Learners, etc.).

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant received a <u>medium</u> score for this section based on providing only part of the required elements of a high quality plan. The applicant did identify the role of ESC1 in supporting efforts across the region and their history of supporting educational change efforts and professional development initiatives across the region. This would suggest that the ESC is capable of scaling the project across other LEAs within the service district area though all of the elements of a high quality plan were not provided.</p> <p>Specifically, the applicant provided evidence of key goals, a rationale for specific activities and identified some of the parties responsible for implementing the activities. The applicant did not include a specific timeline or specific deliverables for each of the critical components of the high quality plan. The theory of change provided in the application includes a focus on teacher effectiveness with four component parts. None of the four component parts speak directly to quality of instruction and/or instructional approaches as reflected in the reform vision. Furthermore, the theory of change did not align with the logic model provided. Thus, the applicant received a score in the medium range.</p>		
<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant scored a <u>medium</u> score based on the information provided in this section to include improved student learning and performance as articulated in the annual goals. The score for this section would have been higher had the applicant set ambitious goals for all subgroups and had the applicant set goals that would have achieved a reduction in the achievement gaps across all subgroups. The following provides specific information for each sub-criterion.</p> <p>(a) The applicant provides performance measures on summative assessments (STAAR) for reading and math proficiency for grades 6 - 8 and on End of Course assessments for high school age students in core content areas such as Algebra, Biology, English and Social Studies. The articulated vision may result in the levels of improvement identified in this section as these goals are achievable. The goals provided in this overall section do not seem to be ambitious for all students as the projected growth for lower performing subgroups are lower than the overall growth for all students.</p> <p>(b) The applicant projected a decrease in the achievement gap between various subgroups including economically disadvantaged, students with special needs and English Learners. The inclusion of economically disadvantaged was noted, though the achievement gap between this subgroup and all students is very small in all categories as most students being served can be identified as economically disadvantaged. These goals appear to be both ambitious and achievable.</p> <p>(c) The applicant identified gains in graduation rates for all students that exceed the increase for the most reported subgroups. Specifically, the overall increase from baseline to post-grant for all is (7.31%) while the increase for economically disadvantaged (6.79%), SPED (6.41%), English Learners (6.27%) and at-risk (6.4%) were all smaller. These growth targets do not reflect increased equity as the annual goals do not project for a closing of the achievement gap as measured by graduation rates.</p> <p>(d) As discussed in (c), the applicant identifies greater growth goals for all students specific to college enrollment than all of the other subgroups. Furthermore, the projected growth for Special Education and English Language Learners is neither ambitious, nor addresses the equity issue reflected in the large gap between the overall student college-going rates and the rates for ELs and students with special needs. In fact, the applicant projections suggest the college-going gap will increase over the course of the project rather than decrease as all students college going rates are increasing at a faster rate than for students with special needs and English learners.</p> <p>The overall score fell in the mid-range based on the concerns articulated specific to both graduation and college-going rates as described in (c) and (d) above.</p>		

**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>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p>		

The applicant received a medium score in this section based on the evidence provided reflecting some success, though falling short of providing a clear record of success.. While the applicant provided evidence of growth over time, it fell short of meeting each of the specific elements of this particular section as outlined below. Furthermore, the presentation of certain data (i.e. the number of graduates rather than the percentage) made it difficult to ascertain some of the trends that would support a clear track record of success. The following describes each subsection specifically:

(a) The applicant provided statewide assessment data (TAKS) for all students reflecting growth in math and science over a four-year period (2007-08 through 2010-11). The applicant provides a convincing rationale for excluding the 2011-12 STAAR data. Furthermore, the applicant provides evidence of gains achieved in dual enrollment, college readiness, and post-secondary enrollment. While the applicant showed growth over the four-year period, the growth of specific subgroups did not constitute a reduction in the achievement gap between subgroups in most categories. This particular sub-criterion is specific to both overall achievement and reducing the achievement gap. This section would have been stronger had the applicant been able to show a reduction in the achievement gap.

The graduation data provided articulates increases in the number of students who graduated rather than the percentage of students. This data did not align with the % of students provided in the other categories. The reported increase in number of graduates overall and the number of graduates in the included subgroups reflects growth overall that could be attributed to population increase overall and/or within each subgroup. The presentation of this specific data cannot be used to support a clear track record of improving graduation rates as a specific outcome.

(b) The applicant provides clear evidence of successful work in persistently low achieving schools as reflected in the percentage of Tier I and Tier II eligible schools meeting AYP between 2008 and 2010. This data would suggest the work of the applicant in support of struggling schools demonstrates their ability to impact its lowest performing schools.

(c) The applicant clearly identifies how it will make student performance data available to students and educators through existing systems and further development of a longitudinal data system. The applicant identifies a variety of data sources and the intent to provide all key stakeholders with access, though the applicant does not clearly identify how the data will be provided so that it improves participation for both students and parents.

<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 received a high score based on the description of the extent to which it already makes the four categories of school-level expenditures available to the public. This included a description of the local venues (district web pages, annual audits, etc.) as well as the required Texas Education Agency Financial Integrity Rating System. While the applicant did not provide an example of the reports described, the specific links to reporting requirements by the state support the high score for this particular 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:**  
 The applicant received a high score based on the evidence provided in this section outlining the specific conditions and sufficient autonomy provided under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements. This included reference to the adoption of Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (2007;2008), House Bill 5 (2013) specific to new standards. Furthermore the participating districts are Independent School Districts (ISDs) that are both independent and autonomous as reflected in the organization and overall governance of the K-12 system.

<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
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**(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**  
 The applicant received a medium score for this section based on the limited evidence of stakeholder engagement and limited discussion of the impact of the engagement on the final proposal. The following provides specific examples:  
 (a) The applicant provides descriptions of existing strategies employed by ESC1 specific to stakeholder engagement including focus groups and work sessions with various stakeholder groups. The applicant provides evidence of parent engagement in Appendix 29 - though most of the evidence is from one ISD (Donna) and from the past two months. Within

this section, the applicant states that they have been engaged with key stakeholders in the overall development of this approach for the past 24 months, yet offers no concrete evidence of such meetings and/or processes. Providing evidence of stakeholder engagement from all 7 ISDs and from efforts from the past two years would have strengthened this section. Furthermore, identifying where and how the feedback from stakeholders shaped the proposal would have made this section stronger.

(ii) The applicant identifies that over 90% of teachers from participating districts support the proposal, meeting the 70% threshold identified in this criterion.

(b) The applicant provides evidence of support from key stakeholder groups to include parents, parent organizations, Federal and local government leaders, Institutions for Higher Education, community and faith-based organizations, and private industry. The applicant provided evidence in the form of letters of support.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>

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

The applicant received a medium score for this section based on the lack of evidence that a high quality plan had been developed to support implementation across the various LEAs. A high quality plan (as defined in the notice) includes key goals, activities, to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities. The plan articulated in Appendix 36 articulates goals, activities timelines, deliverables and parties responsible. The plan did not include a rationale for activities and the timeline and associated activities were very broad considering the level of investment that would be made and the overall scope of the work.

The following provides feedback specific to each of the sub-criteria within this section:

(a)

(i) The applicant identifies a number of initiatives (6-8 Bridge, customized learning plans, College Access Program, Digital Access, outreach and Awareness, and Itunes U platform – yet does not discuss how these programs are interconnected, nor how the programs will support students in understanding what they are learning is key to success in accomplishing their goals.

(ii) The applicant identify several critical components including links to college and career ready standards as well as a variety of programs intending to support students understanding how to structure their learning to achieve their goals and how to measure progress toward their goals. As with (i), the applicant does not provide clarity with how the programs are interconnected nor how the programs will explicitly support student understanding.

(iii) This subcategory speaks directly to students being involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interests. The applicant identifies specific learning strategies (Project-Based Learning, Service-Learning, Socratic Seminars, etc.) yet does not reference how students will be engaged in such activities within areas of academic interests and does not detail how these strategies will be deployed throughout the system.

(iv) The applicant does provide evidence that students will have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives with a focus on utilizing specific learning strategies.

(v) The applicant Identifies means for students to develop critical academic content skills and speaks to developing skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, etc. The only reference to "soft-skills" is linked to project based learning and the development of problem solving skills and workforce competencies. The applicant does identify *more individualized guidance and advising* as a planning strategy to develop 21st Century skills, yet does not identify key programs, strategies, etc. to support the development of such skills.

(b)

(i) The activities discussed in this section are specific yet do not represent a sequence of instructional content and skill development specific to individual needs. There is no reference to alignment activities at the school level or interconnections between content areas as often found within high quality project-based learning opportunities.

(ii) Applicant lists a variety of strategies that have been discussed throughout the application – and references the need to

individualize. The lack of a high quality plan illustrating how all of the various strategies discussed will be deployed at the LEA or school level is concerning. While the complexity of serving a wide range of schools across a very large geographic footprint has been considered, articulating a plan for selection of discussed strategies at the school level would have made this section stronger.

(iii) TEKS is a great resource and provides evidence of an aligned curriculum anchored to college and career readiness. The online curriculum concept is impressive, though a development and implementation timeline would have made this particular sub-criterion stronger.

(iv) The applicant has identified the necessary component parts of a system capable of providing regular and ongoing feedback for students. This includes feedback specific to college and career readiness (STAAR and STAAR-EOC) and the ability to utilize the feedback to personalize the students learning (referenced advisory model; examining learning progressions at the instructional level).

(v) Applicant lists a variety of strategies and tools and identifies Response to Intervention as a structure that will support their implementation. This particular sub-criteria would have been stronger had the applicant provided an example of how tools will be selected (based on current site-based efforts) and implemented to enhance the current Rtl structures being employed by specific districts/schools.

(c) The proposed mechanism identifies how key staff (i.e. Campus Learning Coach and the RTT-D Technology Specialist) will support the learning of key stakeholders. This particular sub-criterion represents a clear plan for supporting students to ensure they understand how to use the tools and access the resources.

<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>
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**(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant received a medium score for this particular section based on the inclusion of key elements of a high quality plan. The applicant would have scored higher if they had provided more specific information regarding school or district level implementation. The applicant referenced the various elements of effective practices yet did not provide a sense of the district or school level contexts they would be implemented within in. As an example, the statement "*...Consortium LEAs will strengthen the quality of instruction in personalized learning communities by providing job-embedded professional development and coaching throughout the year aimed at strengthening teacher capabilities in infusing innovative pedagogy (through technology, new equipment, and effective instructional approaches), adaptation of content and instruction and increasing classroom engagement,*" does not identify how the job-embedded support will be provided or how specific innovative pedagogy will be selected as a focus. Including more specific information or examples at the district/school level would have made this particular section stronger.

The following provides feedback specific to each subsection.

a) i and ii) The teaching and leading plan identifies the need for training in PBL, SIOP, EX-CELL, Marzano's high yield strategies, how to engage in high quality, digital assessment processes, data-based decision making, understanding the Common Curriculum Framework , etc. This section does not identify a high quality plan articulating a progression of what will be delivered when and how the various professional development opportunities will be coordinated to maximize impact.

iii) The applicant identifies specific measures that will be used to measure student progress at various points in the school year and makes a broad statement regarding the instructional or program adjustments that will be considered based on individual student progress. The statement specific to teachers implementing pedagogical instructional strategies that address the individual learning needs of each student is very broad and does not provide specific information of what strategies link to the various data sets being generated. Providing examples of how the data would inform specific changes in a student's academic program (i.e. specific interventions, etc.) would have made this section stronger.

iv) The applicant provides a comprehensive set of opportunities for professional development and professional growth for both teachers and administrators. However, the interface between these opportunities and the teacher and administrator evaluation system is not explicit. Specifically, the applicant does not identify how the evaluation system will drive individualized supports and interventions for either teachers or administrators. Providing greater detail as to the evaluation systems being used and how they intersect with professional development opportunities would have made this sub-criterion stronger.

(b) (i) The applicant has identified key resources that will provide actionable information that helps educators identify optimal learning approaches to meet individual student needs. Furthermore, the applicant identifies the structures and supports that will make these tools readily available at the LEA and school level via existing ESC 1 infrastructure.

(ii) The applicant identifies a variety of tools and resources that either available or will be made available. This section also

references the Project Share model that allows educators to engage in online learning; connecting with others; and to develop ePortfolios specific to professional growth and reflection. This existing infrastructure yields great potential to support teachers across the consortium.

(iii) The applicant describes tools that are available and provide access for students, teachers, and parents. This particular sub-criterion asks the applicant to identify the processes to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources to meet student needs. The applicant did not address this particular aspect of this sub-section.

(c) (i) The applicant identifies how the evaluation tools will be used in conjunction with school and district processes in support of continuous improvement of educators. However, the applicant did not provide specific attributes (i.e. incorporating student learning goals, subscribing to specific evaluation frameworks, utilization of mini-observations) of the evaluation system that will be built into the electronic system. The lack of detail in this particular sub-criterion contributed to a lower score in this section.

(ii) The applicant makes broad statements about training, systems, and practices for continuous improvement in reference to specific types of training already described in the application. As with other sections, the statements are not linked to specific examples that would provide evidence that a high quality plan for implementation has been developed.

(d) The applicant has identified key strategies to be utilized by LEAs to increase the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. This particular section is designed to support LEAs and the specific strategies and processes provide sufficient evidence supporting a high quality plan.

#### 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>10</b>

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

The applicant received a score in the medium range based on the quality of the proposed organizational structure of the consortium and the evidence provided that schools will have sufficient flexibility and autonomy to implement the proposed project. However, the applicant did not provide sufficient detail specific to how schools would implement a proficiency or mastery based education model and how schools will implement instructional approaches that are fully accessible and adaptable for all students. As such, the overall score for this section was reduced. The following provides information specific to each sub-criteria:

(a) The proposed structure clearly articulates specific roles embedded within an existing ESC structure that will support the implementation of the project. The included MOU with the various LEA's clearly delineates roles and responsibilities for the project.

(b) The applicant identifies that schools have the flexibility and autonomy necessary as required and provided by State law. Further, the applicant identifies what will be required elements of the project and how it intends to empower site-based decision making in support of project implementation.

(c) The applicant makes statements specific to giving students opportunities to progress and earn credit based on mastery, yet fails to provide specific examples of how this will occur. The examples cited include online and blended learning, dual enrollment, and early college high schools. These examples do not inherently provide opportunities for proficiency or mastery based progress. The other examples, before and after-school approaches, project-based learning, and credit recovery could include proficiency or mastery based approaches, yet the applicant does not specify how this will occur. Providing explicit examples of how this would occur, within any or all of the programs cited, would have made this section stronger.

The applicant describes a variety of approaches (i.e. curriculum choices, teacher-paced group instruction, one-to one and web-plus tutoring, extended learning, etc.) that will allow learning programs to be tailored to an individual's need or preference. This statement illustrates the intent of the applicant to provided a personalized program for each student, yet does not provide evidence that student's ability to earn credit will be based on mastering content – not seat time.

Finally, the applicant references how high school students will be afforded the opportunity to earn credit, though the applicant references State law specific to seat time and actually defines it in terms of the number of instructional minutes over a specific number of weeks. It is not clear how mastery of content can be used in lieu of the required seat time considering the seat time requirement is referenced in this section.

Overall, this section would have been stronger had the applicant provided specific means for students to earn credit and progress at their own pace at the high school level. It is not clear how the applicant will develop and implement specific practices across the consortium that will meet this particular criterion.

(d) The applicant illustrates their intent to provide a range of instructional opportunities to personalize student's education and suggests students will be assessed regularly to individualize the instructional approach. The applicant fails to address how students will have multiple, comparable ways of demonstrating mastery at the classroom level. The inclusion of a description of the various large-scale assessments (STAAR, and EOC assessments) does not reflect a range of comparable ways of demonstrating mastery. Including more detailed information specific to how student's will be assessed over the course of a year and in multiple, comparable ways would have made this section stronger.

(e) The applicant provides a statement specific to providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and accessible to all students. The various categories of design and delivery models provides a range of instructional approaches, yet is not specific enough to how the applicant will ensure that all students will be provided learning resources and practices that are adaptable and fully accessible. For example, *Scaffolding Instruction or High Yield Instructional Strategies* as stated in this section, are not specific enough descriptors that illustrate how instruction will be accessible or adaptable. More specific information would have made this particular section stronger.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant received a medium score based on the articulated infrastructure of support to include the various data system requirements. However, the application lacked clarity and specificity regarding he application lacked clarity/specificity the need to provide access for students to both academic tutors and to technology devices necessary for students to engage in Web-Plus activities. The following provides feedback specific to each sub-criteria:

(a and b) The applicant references a variety of supports for students outside of the school day and through technology supported strategies (Web-Plus tutoring). The applicant references the budget as evidence that students will have the necessary access to support the implementation of the proposal. In referencing the budget, the inclusion of 12 academic tutors to provide support outside of the school day and school year is insufficient in ensuring access for those of the over 44,000 students this project aims to serve. Furthermore, the proposed budget for Web-plus identifies an online academic support resource will be available, yet the overall budget does not reflect an investment in providing devices for families to access the Web-plus tools. The applicant identifies purchasing technology to STEM and ELA classrooms – yet does not specify how many devices are needed. Furthermore, these devices are linked to the classroom, not to individual students making it difficult to ascertain whether students will have access to these devices outside of the school day or school year.

The applicant does identify specific roles for Campus Learning Coaches that include providing technical support to key stakeholders, including parents, that will ensure a level of technical support through a variety of strategies.

This section would have been stronger if the applicant had clearly identified the level of access needed and thus provided through the grant. As an example, the 12 academic tutors appears to be insufficient in providing access to necessary support for impacted students considering the grant aims to serve over 44,000 students.

(c) The applicant clearly identifies an information technology system (Public Education Information Management System), as well as other available systems, that will allow parents and students to export information in an open data format and to utilize electronic learning systems.

(d) The applicant describes the interoperable database system used across the region and maintained by ESC 1. This systems meets the requirements of this particular sub-criterion.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>

**(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant received a high score based on the descriptions of improvement processes at the various levels of implementation (consortium, LEA, Building, and Classroom). The information provided suggests all of the elements of a high quality plan exist though the coherence and interconnections between the various levels of stakeholders is not clear.

A specific timeline reflecting how building based improvement processes will inform LEA level processes and how these processes will inform consortium level improvement would have been helpful.

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

The applicant received a high score as a variety of existing structures and strategies will be employed to continuously engage stakeholders in the continuous improvement process. Furthermore, existing structures and strategies will be used to communicate and engage both internal and external stakeholders.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant received a high score based on the inclusion of the necessary measures with a clear rationale for inclusion and a rationale for how they will provide timely, formative feedback that will inform the implementation of the project. The table provided by the applicant made the specific requirements of this sub-section easy to read and understand.

The only concern specific to this section, though it did not lower the score, was a handful of measures reflected an increase in achievement gaps between subgroups. This would suggest those particular performance measures were not set in an ambitious way for some groups (i.e. sense of belonging on the YRBS tool for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade; on track to college and career readiness for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade; and 9-12<sup>th</sup> performance measure c – on track to college and career readiness).

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant received a high score based on the description of the formal evaluation process to be utilized by an external evaluator to assess the overall effectiveness of the project and impact of the investments. While evidence of a high quality plan exist and warrant a high score, the overall score was impacted by the following factors:

- (1) The applicant identifies that the analysis will include students involved in experimental and control groups. This would imply a methodology that is more experimental than quasi-experimental and the means for identifying how students will be assigned is not clear. This would suggest that some students may have access to the supports and services provided by this proposal while others will not.
- (2) The budget appropriated for evaluation activities seem to be insufficient based on the scope of activities described in this section.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

**(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant received a low score as the budget does not provide sufficient support for the development and implementation of the project (please see detailed description under (b) provided below). The applicant did identify leveraged funds, yet did not provide a description of how those funds would be used to support specific project efforts. Finally, the applicant did not specify costs that would need to be sustained and those that are one time. The following provides specific feedback for each sub-criterion:

- (a) The applicant identifies “leveraged funds” that will support project implementation yet does not identify the specific revenue sources nor provides how the resources will be used within the project. While the applicant identifies the “overlapping” nature of the project with regards to other improvement initiatives, providing a description of how the leveraged funds would be utilized may have provided evidence of reasonable funds being allocated for activities that were deemed insufficient (i.e. 12 academic tutors serving the entire project).
- (b) The following identifies specific concerns regarding how reasonable or sufficient the funds are for implementation:
  - (i) The inclusion of two STEM and two ELA Coaches for the entire project is not sufficient in supporting the focus on

classroom level change suggested by the project. The description of these coaches roles (i.e. conducting demonstration teaching; providing profession development specific to assessment; providing AP/IB support to students; proving one-to-one tutoring for students struggling academically. A similar description is provided for the STEM coaching positions. These positions are reasonable, yet assuming 4 total coaches will support 39 different buildings as described is not reasonable, nor sufficient.

(ii) As with the STEM and ELA coaches, the inclusion of two Graduation Coaches is not sufficient in supporting each of the participating high schools.

(iii) Hiring 12 academic tutors to provide individualized support for students and parents before/after school as well as in the summer is not sufficient considering the project aims to serve nearly 44,000 students total. Considering the number of high-risk students identified by the applicant, it is not clear how 12 positions would be able to support the volume of need represented in this proposal.

(iv) The training stipends identified represent opportunities for 325 teachers to receive training. Considering the project involves nearly 3000 teachers, the inclusion of resource to support professional development for only 10% of the teachers is insufficient. This is especially true considering the range of instructional strategies and initiatives described in the project.

(v) It is not clear how the campus learning coaches will be distributed (7 FTE across 39 campuses). Regardless of the distribution, this level of resource is not sufficient considering the scope of change being proposed at the building level. It would be reasonable to assume each site needs 1.0 FTE in campus learning coaching support.

(vi) The inclusion of behavioral consultation seems to be insufficient considering the size and scale of the region supported through this project.

(c) The applicant did provide a rationale for investments and priorities and linked the budget to specific aspects of the proposal. The applicant only provided a description of how Race to the Top funds would be expended in conjunction with the project. While a description of the leveraged funds were provided, how these funds supported the overall project was not clearly articulated.

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

**10**

**3**

**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant received a low score for this particular section based on the assumptions presented specific to the impact of specific project investments (i.e. professional development and technology) and the assumptions specific to resources that would support and sustain the project beyond the term of this project.

The investment in professional development articulated in the proposal and in the budget does not appear to be substantial enough to support sustainability via increased human capital as assumed in this section. Furthermore, the assumption that purchased technology (IPADs, Laptops, etc.) will *remain as a resource for future students* beyond the four years of the grant is unrealistic as these devices have a “shelf-life” impacted by both use and advances in technology. A more reasonable assumption would be to include a replacement cycle or plan designed to sustain the initial investment.

In terms of sustaining ongoing costs associated with the project, the applicant does not identify sustainable means for supporting the ongoing costs. While the applicant identifies current funds (USDOE Gear Up grant; TEA T-STEM Center; TEA Special Education and Migrant Education Initiative; and TEA Adult Education Program) totalling nearly \$10 million dollars annually, the application of such funds and the programs they support were not clearly linked to the proposed initiative. As an example, it is not clear how the TEA Adult Education Program directly supports or would be re-purposed to support specific activities. Assuming these are viable sources to support sustainability, the applicant did not identify

how long these funds will be available in to the near future as they did not identify where they were in the funding cycle for each grant.

Finally, the applicant's identification of other funding grant funding streams to be applied for does not represent a sustainable plan. This particular section would have been much stronger had the applicant identified how funds at the school level and the LEA level were to be re-appropriated to support the new, innovative practices identified in this proposal. As an example, articulating how might Title II funding be used to sustain the efforts.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>

#### Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant received a medium score based on the following;

- (1) The description focuses on the support of various private and non-profit organizations specific to the overall grant application. The applicant does not provide specific information on how public and private resources will be used to support the social, emotional or behavioral needs of participating students.
- (2) The applicant did identify 10 population-level desired results for students in the LEA or consortium. These measures do align with and support the applicant's proposal.
- (3) The applicant provides a realistic means for tracking the selected indicators through their proposed Youth Connection database. The use of the data is implied in this section, though specific structures supporting regular review of individual data were not discussed and would have made this section stronger.

With regards to scaling up the strategy, the applicant seems to describe it's sustainability efforts for the application as a whole and provides no specific strategies for scaling up the efforts associated with this competitive priority. Providing information specific to scaling efforts associated with the competitive priority would have made this section stronger.

- (4) This particular section did not clearly describe how the partnerships within the competitive priority efforts would integrate education and other services. The description was generalized to the overall efforts of the project and did not provide specific details on the integration of the competitive priority efforts.

- (5) The applicant provides a description of how the LEAs and consortium would build the capacity of staff as outlined in the sub-criteria for this particular section. The description includes a means for assessing and identifying needs and assets at both the student and community level.

In terms of decision-making processes, the applicant does not provide enough specific information on selecting, implementing, and evaluating supports. A basic description of the structures are provided, yet more detail in terms of the actual processes for decision making would have made this section stronger. The engagement of parents and families of participating students described in this section is too general and does not identify specific engagement strategies linked directly to the competitive priority efforts. Providing more specific strategies would have made this section stronger.

Finally, the description of how the applicant will assess the competitive priority efforts are generalized and assumed as part of the larger assessment of the overall project. This section would have been stronger had the applicant identified specific assessment routines and/or progress checks specific to maximizing the impact of the proposed competitive priority efforts on a regular, continuous improvement cycle.

- (6) The applicant did identify ambitious, yet achievable performance measures for all ten identified performance measures.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

#### Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant met the minimum criteria for Absolute Priority 1, though the lack of a high quality plan for implementation at the LEA or school level made it difficult to ascertain the coherence of the overall proposal. This concern is illustrated in several sub-sections within the overall proposal with the majority of evidence supporting meeting the minimum criteria in subsections C (1) and C (2).

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>142</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0096TX-3 for Region One Education Service Center (ESC1)

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

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Region One Education Service Center scores in the high category for articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. There are five key factors defined to this vision but it is hard to tell exactly how this vision will come together. Students will participate in personalized learning environments where a smart system will track student progress meet learning needs. There is little detail to what this personalized learning environment will look like. By identifying goals for teachers, administrators and students shows dedication to the vision, it is difficult to understand how the goals tie back into the vision. All of the elements of a high quality plan are here, however it is not clear how this plan will blend together to reach the outlined vision.</p>		
<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Region One Education Service Center scores in the high category for approach to implementation. There is a process defined to determine which schools would participate in the grant however there is a lack of evidence of how research from past competitions allowed them to come to this decision of which schools would participate. The three tiered list of priority, focus and support schools is a good idea, however there is little definition and mention of why these schools are categorized as such and what learning achievements will be met at each level. Because of the above mentioned deficits to this plan Region One receives a score of 7.</p>		
<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Region One Education Service Center proposes several strong objectives of a high-quality plan for implementation, but fails to provide detailed descriptions of the activities, timelines, and deliverables that will be accomplished in order to meet the stated objectives. For example, one stated objective is to increase content knowledge and process skills of school leaders to assist teachers and staff to implement data driven effective leadership strategies and protocols. The proposal includes evidence of to turn around low performing school, increase teacher effectiveness, increase content knowledge and process skills of school leaders to assist teachers and staff to implement data driven effective leadership strategies and protocols, increase the number of middle and high school students that master academic standards, increase the</p>		

percentage of schools that meet or exceed AYP and increase the number of students who demonstrate pro-social behavior, but does not provide sufficient detail to determine whether these activities will be sequenced in an appropriate and timely manner to produce the intended impact on teaching and learning. Although the plan presents many compelling ideas for how the proposed work will scale up meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools, there is a lack of evidence of how long this plan will take or the sequence of events that will take place to complete this plan, resulting in a score of 8 for LEA wide reform and change.

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

**10**

**7**

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

Region One Education Service Center scores high in LEA wide goals for improved student achievement. The table provided shows student performance. There are reachable goals set for students however, not all subgroups are decreasing and in some cases they are increasing. It is concerning that the at-risk group is increasing. The table shows an ambitious goal to increase graduation rates in all subgroups. The table shows college enrollment increasing in all subgroups however not at an ambitious rate. As this plan will likely show gains, it is not certain exactly what those gains will be resulting in a loss of 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>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region one receives a score of 10 for demonstrating a clear track record of success. Region One Education Service Center demonstrates a track record of success by identifying successful grant projects such as the USDOE Smaller Learning Communities grants, the Bill and Melinda Gates High School Redesign Project, a Math and Science Partnership grant etc. All grants achieved the proposed objectives and accountability requirements. There is not evidence that these same schools will participate in this grant making the track record unclear. Comprehensive charts and data are provided to show improvement in learning outcomes and to close achievement gaps from 2007-2011. Each year gains were made and achievement gaps were decreasing. There is evidence of success in lowest achieving schools placing them in the top five of Texas' 20 ESC's to meet standards. 98% of ESC's district met state standards and 94% of their campuses met state standards. There is evidence that student performance data will be made available to students, parents and educators however how this data will improve instruction and services is still not clear. The lack of details on how this information will improve student learning and close achievement gaps results in a loss of points in this category.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region One Education Service Center receives a scores high in increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments for creating a high level of transparency. The correct documentation is available in print and digital formats of salary and non-personnel expenditure information. This information can be found on the district web page, annual audits and school budgets. Region One has a commitment to full transparency and has this information fully available for any stakeholder. In addition they plan to build upon this with a commitment to review, enhance and modify to a more centralized form of communication upon award of this grant. By having this information available to all stakeholders and demonstrating a plan to continue to enhance this level of transparency, Region One receives all points in this category.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region One Education Service Center scores high in state context for implementation. Region One provides documentation to represent grade level expectations at the state level. An example of this would be K-12 students are expected to demonstrate mastery of objectives and a level of proficiency at or above grade level in order to be promoted to the next grade. This is measures through state wide assessments such as the the Texas STAAR, and the Texas End of Course assessments. The commitment to successful conditions is shown by having a highly effective teacher in every classroom and a highly effective principal at every school. There is also a commitment to an Educator Preparation Program. This program will align to meet the needs of state standard assessments while holding higher standards for educators. The evidence provided for students to meet state requirements in learning allows Region One to receive all</p>		

points in this category.

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

**15**

**12**

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

Region One Education Service Center scores high for stakeholder engagement and support. Region One shows evidence of providing stakeholder engagement and support. This can be found through meetings, focus groups and work sessions that were held with parents and students for project design, to create a service delivery model, goals, project objectives, performance measures, timeline and activities for this project. There was also inclusion of district and school administration, teachers, educators, community and political leaders and private businesses to create this plan. There is a lack of evidence as to what each group contributed to this plan resulting in a loss of points. There is survey data of teacher support however it is not clear which teachers supported or denied the plan resulting in a loss of points. The evidence of parents, students, local community and civil organizations is strong. Although there is evidence of support to this plan, there is missing information as to what each stakeholder contributes to this plan resulting in a score of 12 for stakeholder engagement and support.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>

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

Region One Education Service Center scores a 17 for providing a quality plan for learning. This plan includes a measurable plan for personalized learning that can be monitored and measured with programs such as College Access Program, 6th-8th grade Bridge Program etc. There is a clear program for college readiness coaching and professional development to equip students with every opportunity to succeed in college. The Rigorous Curriculum is clearly explained so when students enter ninth grade they will automatically begin course work and select endorsements that align with college and career readiness. This idea shows students learning on an individual plan. This plan is started in sixth grade and is not revisited until high school which is alarming. If this is a personalized plan, there should be evidence to monitor and change this plan continuously to meet the needs of the student prior to ninth grade. There is a clearly defined STEM Focus to peak student interest and encourage high level classes such as honors and AP in this subject. Different co-curricular activities are planned throughout the year to entice students to continue with enrichment activities to further prepare for college and careers. Given the ambition of this plan, more activities and an explanation of at what level these activities will take place should be present resulting in a loss of points. A literacy component will be used to meet the needs of high needs learners and promote individual success. Students and parents will complete a college access program so they will be exposed to all options after high school. Several digital avenues will be used with students such as iTunes platform to peak interest. Students will be exposed to various learning experiences such as Project Based Learning to collaborate and become better problem solvers. This is a great idea; however there is little evidence of what these programs will look like. Simply defining the project does not provide enough evidence of how this will fit into the student learning plan. The use of peer councils and programs provide students the tools necessary to help one another and personal success. Teachers will be well equipped to deliver and monitor content of college and career readiness from TEKS which focuses on the written, taught and tested standards. A variety of learning approaches will be used to reach learners such as Marzano's Nine High Yield Instructional Strategies, a digital approach of iPads, lap tops and podcasts. The use of this technology shows commitment to make learning lifelong as it will be easy for students to incorporate it into their daily lives. Teachers will use a high quality approach modeled after Response to Intervention to meet the needs of struggling students. Ongoing training and support will be given to teachers, parents and students in the use of this technology. The goal is to empower the student to take ownership in their learning with the use of these tools. Although this plan has a variety of opportunities for students to succeed in a personal learning environment with the support of their parents and teachers, there is lacking evidence of how this plan will tailor to students individual needs from sixth grade until ninth grade resulting in a score of 17.

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

**20**

**16**

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

Region One Education Service Center scores high for teaching and leading. As there is evidence of on going professional development plan for teachers and administration to target at risk, EL and students with disabilities, there is not a clear timeline of how this plan will be completed. There seems as if there is a lot of options but no clear way to determine who

gets what type of professional development and at what time. There is evidence that teachers will use different programs such as Project Based Learning, SIOP and Ex-CELL Framework and Differentiated Instruction to meet student needs and prepare for college and careers, however it is unclear which programs will be used and when these programs will be used. There is evidence of an aggressive plan to monitor student progress toward college and career readiness. This plan will be monitored quarterly with built in support for students excelling or falling behind. Teachers will be provided the opportunity to discuss ways to improve curriculum, instruction and delivery during teacher professional planning days. This is a great idea, however simple collaboration might not be enough to see this plan through resulting in a loss of points. The incorporation of technology will be a challenge, but there is a platform in place to teach and support teachers. Technology such as TI N-Spire handheld devices, the TI Navigator and Vernier scientific probes will be provided to improve instructional practices and engage student learning. Students, parents and educators have access to databases such as AEIS, and PEIMS, ACT ENGAGE, Readistep, and EXCEerator data to continuously monitor progress for college and career readiness. The Talent Ed Perform is an aggressive approach to monitor teacher performance, however there is not evidence of exactly how this program will work. It is a great idea to have all of these resources, but not enough evidence to see how it will work. There is evidence of a plan to recruit and retain high quality teachers. This plan includes timely feedback on observations, a beginning teacher program, a pay for performance incentive that is tied to teacher evaluations, dismissal policies for ineffective teachers as well as a cohort Master's Program. Region One scores a 16 for showing a plan to train and retain effective teachers, use technology in the classroom as well as provide support to use the technology and monitor these programs.

**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>13</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region One Education Service Center scores high for providing a quality plan to support the project implementation. This plan will include identifying a supervisor to oversee this grant and his qualifications to oversee the project as well as identify his responsibilities during the grant. There is clear evidence of an organized central office which identifies responsible parties with a plan to initiate, implement, internalize and institutionalize. Region One identifies the flexibility in deciding school schedules, calendars and staffing models to be determined by each participating school. This flexibility will allow schools to develop and implement innovative approaches to teaching to meet students needs rather than outside stakeholders making those decisions. There is a commitment to competency based learning so students have the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on mastery not on seat time in a class. This will be approached by offering online and blended learning approaches as well as project and community based learning, however there is not a clear example of what this will look like resulting in a loss of points. Various instructional practices will be offered and used to meet the personal learning needs of each student. Different programs such as extended school year and alternative assessments can and will be used to reach all learners. Region One receives a score of 13 for showing a comprehensive plan to support this project, however is lacking evidence or a timeline to show how this blended learning approach will look and best meet students needs.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region One Education Service Center scores high in this category for providing a plan to support project implementation. In this plan, Region One identifies a plan to have all RTTD program activities and materials available to parents, students and stakeholders before, during and after school, weekends and during the summer. This allows all stakeholders the opportunity to stay current on this project. This information will be available in print and digital format and available in Spanish and English which will make it easier for families and students to access this information at any time. There is evidence of an aggressive plan to have ongoing tutoring and coaching for parents, students and educators. These sessions will be small group or one on one. By offering these sessions, parents and students have the opportunity to become more comfortable with academic information and ensures everyone has access to the necessary content and tools for the implementation of this plan. There is strong evidence that technology and wi-fi devices will be available for students to borrow from the school to access information and services after school hours. This allows all families to remain equal with equal opportunities regardless of socioeconomic status. The use of a data management system, PEIMS, which is password secured for students and parents allows students and parents to export their data information at any time. This systems shows work completed and work that needs to be complete however it does not provide this information to another program for additional learning support resulting in a loss of points.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Region One Education Service Center receives scores high in this category for identifying a quality plan to monitor continuous improvement. This plan will be put in place from the District Leadership to the Campus Leadership level and include administrators, teachers, students and parents. This shows all stakeholders are involved in the process of continuous improvement. A clear criteria for monitoring is established which will be led by an Executive Council, DLT's, CLT's, an independent evaluator and RTT-D staff. This committee plans to give ongoing and regular feedback. A plan is in place in the event benchmarks and progress is not being made. Within 30 days, the Project director, staff and participating principal will be requested and required to attend meetings to alter practices to best meet students needs. If this happens the changes will be made to all stakeholders. Advisory councils, focus groups, surveys and other out reach measures will be used to monitor and publicly share information related to the grant. Bi-monthly meetings will be held to assess outcome measure, view status performance indicators, review results and share lessons and challenges. these meetings focus on best practice to help students succeed in the classroom. An integral part to having this be successful is support. There is built in support for leadership, teachers, students and parents. This support will be in the form of student led conferences, Teacher led support will focus on 21st Century Teaching. Personalized learning will be the focus for students to gain academic achievement. The use of staff and an independent evaluator will collect data on performance on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis is a solid idea, however it does not seem as if there are enough staff involved to see this plan through resulting in a loss of points. This plan seems to need more teachers and support staff to be fully implemented and track student success to best meet their individual learning needs.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Region One Education Service Center receives all points in this category for providing a clear plan to ensure ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. To do this, there is an established RTTD-TL Advisory Council which will meet quarterly for ongoing feedback, communication, planning, engagement, and program implementation and monitoring. There are several modes of communication available to share this information such as a website, media, presentation at board meeting, evaluations and progress reports from the Project Director. There is evidence of weekly meetings and teacher planning time. Communication to parents is important and will take place through a Parent Advisory Council. Principals will communicate with teachers and staff on a quarterly basis to discuss student achievement, instruction, assessment, curriculum alignment, personalized learning environment and transparency of policies. Changes will take place based on the collection of this data. Information will be shared in a variety of platforms such as digital format, student diagnostic reports, early warning signs and college and career readiness reports. The formation of of these committees and collection of this data shows how this high quality plan of ongoing communication will deem a successful program.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Region One Education Service Center scores average for performance measures. Region One provides a clear rationale for selecting college and career readiness. This rationale is based on college entrance exams. This data comes directly from the number of students taking the SAT/ACT which shows more students are interested in college and taking the necessary steps to to enter higher education. A third party evaluator will continue to assess long and short term needs. Based on these results teacher professional development will be altered and changes to instruction to more effectively meet student needs. A logic Model is provided to explain inputs, initiative, annual outcomes, timeline and goal. A clear plan for performance measures to be reviewed by multiple individuals and groups to monitor performance measures is in place. As there is a chart provided to show performance measures with grade level goals, sub groups and targeted improvement each year, each rationale is achievable as it is a gradual increase of no more than 5% growth in any year, however not every subgroup will decrease achievement gaps resulting in in a loss of points as this would not be deemed an ambitious goal.</p>		

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region One Education Service Center receives all points in this category for clearly explaining how and why the need for an external auditor and ongoing assessment and monitoring is essential to the success of this program. There is a plan for an external evaluator to monitor the effectiveness of the activities of the grant (provided evidence of evaluator experience). Based on the evaluator experience he is highly qualified to determine the effectiveness of the plan. Region One provided eight questions to assess the effectiveness of the grant. These eight questions will help monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the program and student success. A clear evaluation method is present which will include surveys, evaluation reports, self reports, interviews and observation rubrics. The idea for an experimental and a control group to track results shows a true commitment to understand results and how and why students are successful. Region One has successfully devised a high quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTT-D funded activities resulting in full points in this category.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region One Education Service Center scores high for budget. Region One provided a clear budget with narratives to explain the cost of the grant each year as well as all funds outside the reasonable-D funds. This plan is reasonable based on the number of students being served (44,414) and the amount of money desired (\$29,999,759). In the budget, all funds are identified or explained as a one time cost or ongoing. Salary amounts were explained. The use of funds for technology, travel, and personnel were clearly identified. The use of money for travel seemed high and not necessary to complete the grant resulting in a loss of points. It does not seem reasonable to fulfill the tutoring program with the small amount of funds allocated for this service resulting in a loss of points. The budget plan is reasonable to be sustained over time because the allocation of funds is clearly represented. There is line by line analysis of what all money will be used for. Programs for this budget include intensive training for teachers, comprehensive support for educators, students and parents, stipends, instructional assistance, personal and academic tutoring, mentoring and counseling and mechanisms for timely monitoring and feedback.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>Region One Education Service Center receives a score of 10 for providing a clear 6 step plan to ensure all programs will continue after the grant. There is evidence of in-kind and cash contributions from local, state, public and private resources. The plan to market, disseminate and sale of curricular materials and professional development modules for a fee to continue sustainability will help fund these services for students. Region One provided a reasonable plan to use decisive and potential funds to sustain the plan. In the past ESC 1 has secured over \$90,000,000 in state federal and private funds to support programs in schools which shows a commitment for a post grant budget. There is evidence of clear communication between stakeholders to ensure sustainability of this plan. ESC 1 created a committee 24 months ago to conduct a needs assessment of its schools. This committee found that many needs based programs aimed at at-risk students and underrepresented students do not use a systemic college and career readiness framework for 6th-12th education, high quality assessment mechanisms, data driven protocols, job embedded professional development and school operations that can enable them in implementing programs and services effectively and efficiently. So a comprehensive reform was put together to meet the needs of these learners. This evaluation process shows past investments were used to make informed choices to present programs.</p>		

**Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)**

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

Region One Education Service scores in the medium range for competitive preference priority. There is a general list of partnerships, however, does not specifically name the institutions that will participate, thus resulting in a loss of points. Region One clearly identifies ten educational and community support goals which are reasonable and achievable during this grant. There is evidence of a high quality plan to track academic data and personalized learning growth. This plan is designed with early warning signs to help students stay on track and keep educators aware of deficiencies. This information will help educators better prepare to meet all students learning needs. Professional development opportunities are available for educators and administrators for continuous improvement which allows for collaboration and sharing of best practices. There is a strong focus on academic success and monitoring however there is little evidence of meeting the social, emotional and behavioral needs of students resulting in a loss of points. These two aspects should go hand in hand to see student achievement. A needs assessment will be conducted, an annual parent and student survey will be distributed and monthly focus groups will be held to assess needs and inform stakeholders or decisions, changes and success to the program. The decision making process is identified however does not explain how the community support will play a role other than in the evaluation resulting in a loss of points. Region One identifies achievable goals by population with an increase in each group each year.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

Region One Education Service Center meets Absolute Priority One by building personal learning environments for students. There is a clear plan to monitor student progress. There is a clear focus on college and career readiness and support is available for students, parents and educators. Because this plan is personalized, students can excel or be flagged for additional academic help. Educators will be more effective with ongoing professional development opportunities as well as collaborative efforts to improve instructional practices. This plan is designed to decrease achievement gaps in sub groups while increasing graduation rates and better preparing students for college and career readiness.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>169</b>
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