



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0066VA-1 for Roanoke City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
| <p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has adopted VA SOL and is supplementing the new standards with IA benchmarking tests to provide data that can be used to track student achievement. The applicant is also implementing a behavioral tracking system. However, it is not described how this will lead to academic success and the workplace readiness that it claims to. The state looks to have a strong data collection system in place which the applicant will use and supplement with their own district system. The applicant does mention it is not overly efficient as there is no single system available which encompasses all the data they will be using. The applicants' plan to recruit and retain teachers is based heavily on sign-on bonuses, though there is no evidence to support this as an effective strategy. Also, applicant has shown a strong desire to turnaround lowest performing schools but with no evidence of success. The Eight-step instructional process described looks solid, but lacks details or specifics of how it will be ensured teachers are following it or using it at all. Section scores a medium as it covers the necessary components, but is vague in terms of actual processes.</p> | | |
| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points) | 10 | 2 |
| <p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Section scores low as the applicant does provide a list of schools and the number of students at each, but there is no process for how schools were chosen or whether they've met the eligibility requirements. The SOAR program described seems only to focus on at-risk students, with no explanation of how activities can be scaled up to all students at all schools.</p> | | |
| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
| <p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant describes individual reform efforts with key activities and goals that are broken down into timeframes the applicant will seek to accomplish them within. The timeline also reflects how they will be made available to all staff at all schools, therefore bringing it up to scale throughout the district. The rationale reflects how activities will relate to student achievement by describing the deficits that will be focused on by each program. Section covers all necessary points and scores highly.</p> | | |
| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
| <p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Section scores a medium, as all the numeric goals are listed, but there is no explanation provided for how goals will be met or what specific activities will take place to meet them. Despite explanation however, the goals do seem to be achievable as the intent looks to limit gaps and raise proficiency in a manner that does not require large jumps in the rates.</p> | | |

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points) | 15 | 7 |

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has shown moderate gains in achievement despite some major jumps both up and down from year to year. Even after a dropoff when the new test was introduced, there seemed to be a slight recovery during the second year. Graduation rates have risen greatly from 2008, although college going cannot be determined as the applicant used whole numbers instead of a percentage of the cohort. Work has been mentioned as taking place in the lowest achieving school, but no evidence of success is given. The new data system seems to be providing teachers with better information, though no mention of whether or not students can use it, or how much is available to parents through the parent portal. Section scores in the low medium range due to modest levels of success in student achievement.

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

5

4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Section scores highly as the applicant covers all the requirements. The division provides a scorecard of school activities related to resource management, and equity report to cover funding, enrollment, turnover, and federal accountability, and finally provides an Annual Financial report, all of which are available on their website. The scorecard's public availability shows an effort towards transparency as the applicant aims to make all the required information as public as possible.

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

10

10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows it has sufficient autonomy as the programs being implemented are already in place. The applicant would use RTTD funding to build upon, rather than create new programs. The SOAR program is supported by the VA School Improvement Initiative, and although the VA Board of Education has final decision making authority, they have provided the LEA latitude in terms of implementation of programs.

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

15

6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has sought stakeholder support for the past 5 years of its programming. The SOAR project was developed by and is supported by the district, schools, teachers, parents, students and the community. The applicant also points to its success in running the program despite not receiving grant support. There is no evidence of teacher buy-in mentioned in the narrative. Letters of support from external stakeholders are attached showing support in the community. The section scores a low due to lack of evidence teacher support and does not necessarily state that stakeholder support and communication was specifically for RTTD and not just individual programs.

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

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points) | 20 | 6 |
| (C)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>This section scores on the low end of the scale, as it is lacking detail and does not address all the requirements. The applicant presents the SOAR project and Reach Down, Lift Up as it's personalization strategy. However, it seems to be only for a select number of students and not the entire population. Students in these programs are exposed to height quality content based on their individual interests, but there is no mention of whether this type of instruction will be available to students who are not in SOAR. The applicant's 8-step process and Personalized Learning Plans are also mentioned as vehicles of personalization, but again, there is no detail about how teachers will be trained in the processes, whether they will be monitored, or how they can be sure they are reaching all students. The applicant is also vague in presenting college and career readiness, saying students will be exposed to opportunities, and advanced level coursework will be "stressed" but this does explain how it will help students achieve or whether they will be able to graduate with the necessary skills for postsecondary education. The annual Parent Academy is the only program discussed for getting families involved, but this looks to be a once a year program with no follow up. No data systems or mechanisms are in place to ensure students can use technology systems, or whether teachers will be trained to track and manage data to use to provide ongoing feedback and assessment.</p> | | |
| (C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points) | 20 | 6 |

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section receives a low-medium score due to most of the indicators not being acknowledged, and the few that were do not elaborate with much detail. The training for Project SOAR looks to meet criteria, it is ongoing, with both summer and monthly workshops and focused on providing teachers the skills and supports needed to create personalized environments for students. The section describes the teacher evaluation system, but only alludes to administrator evaluation without any detail about who will perform those evaluations or how they will be used. The applicant discusses a technology specialist who will provide assistance to teachers for using data but does not discuss what kind of data, whether there is a process for using data, or what other kinds of digital support will be available for teachers. There is no mention of school leadership teams or how the applicant plans to increase the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals in specific schools or subject areas. The applicant also does not address whether SOAR will be used for all students, which leaves them in the position of possibly not defining college and career goals for the entire population.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points) | 15 | 4 |
| (D)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>This section scores low-medium, as the applicant addresses all the necessary components but provides no evidence or support. The Governance structure that is outlined in the appendix does not provide insight or information as to how it will oversee different aspects of the grant. The applicant states that the schools will have autonomy over staffing, budget, schedules and roles, meaning they will have the ability to set their budgets, hire teachers and staff, and define their roles. However, that does not necessarily lead one to believe this will have an effect in personalizing the student environment. The applicant states students will have opportunity to progress based on mastery, rather than time, but only supports that statement by showing the standards allow for testing in "windows". There is no evidence students will have numerous ways or times to show mastery other than testing at several different points. The applicant provides no evidence of support or structures in place for English learners or students with disabilities.</p> | | |
| (D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points) | 10 | 2 |
| (D)(2) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>The applicant shows that all students, educators and parents should have access to data through the school's system. Parents and students without WiFi can use the library or the valley-wide WiFi zone, but there is no discussion of resources parents can use, such as public computers, or guaranteed access to them. Applicant does provide evidence for technical support, exporting information for parents and students, whether or not data systems are inter operable other than simply stating those items exist. The applicant does not provide the necessary evidence, or any examples to clarify or to back up the narrative.</p> | | |

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points) | 15 | 4 |
| (E)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>Section looks to have been omitted, though other sections briefly discuss ongoing evaluation. However, the plans are vague and don't discuss who will oversee evaluation, how often it will occur, what data will be examined or a rationale for that data.</p> | | |
| (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points) | 5 | 0 |
| (E)(2) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>Section looks to have been omitted.</p> | | |

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|--|----------|----------|
| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points) | 5 | 2 |
| (E)(3) Reviewer Comments: The applicant lists numerous goals across all grade levels and provides a brief explanation of how progress will be measured, and how the specific numbers were chosen. However, there is no discussion as to how progress will be measured, or whether changes/adjustments can be made in a timely manner. The applicant also does not provide reasoning for its selection of those specific indicators or how they will lead to the schools meeting their goals. | | |
| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points) | 5 | 0 |
| (E)(4) Reviewer Comments: Applicant describes how the SOAR process works, but not how the program itself will be evaluated. | | |

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points) | 10 | 10 |
| (F)(1) Reviewer Comments: The applicant provides a budget, as well as a fairly detailed narrative identifying sources of funding for the project, the positions that will be supported through the funding, and the resources that will be purchased. Applicant also identifies how the specified resources will be used to support the project. They continue to identify whether or not funding is a one time purchase or ongoing and will need to be supported, such as professional development. | | |
| (F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points) | 10 | 3 |
| (F)(2) Reviewer Comments: The applicant outlines several hopes for sustainability, but fails to offer any actual plan. The train-the-trainer model they have implemented for SOAR should use less funding in the future, as would the one-time purchase of books and equipment. The applicant also believes the Project Director and grade level coordinators will be moved to different positions as the project will require less administrative oversight. However, the applicant has not been able to definitively state any of these things will happen, nor have they created a plan that would reallocate funding as necessary. | | |

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points) | 10 | 2 |
| Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: The applicant receives a low score on this section, as they do not provide nearly enough detail. They do clearly exhibit partnerships to support the plan, as well as identifying desired results. However, there is little explanation of how results will be measured. The description of how the partnership would work provides several options of what they hope results could be, but no specific activities performed by specific partners. There is no discussion of needs assessments for students either. | | |

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | | Met |
| Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: The applicant's project SOAR builds on the four core assurance areas. It is designed specifically to be tailored to individual | | |

student needs, as data will be used to monitor individual growth. The project has a college and career readiness aspect that looks to prepare students not only for graduation, but to teach the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. The STEM component should allow for deeper student learning and provides students various 'hands-on' activities and trips that will aid in broadening their understanding. Finally, teacher effectiveness should be improved through the use of embedded PD, and coordinators and coaches provided by the grant.

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| Total | 210 | 88 |
|--------------|------------|-----------|



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0066VA-2 for Roanoke City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Roanoke City Public Schools composed of 17 elementary, 5 middle, 2 high schools and three alternative programs includes a comprehensive and coherent plan for the reform vision in the grant. The plan includes four core educational assurance areas, which are described strategies and approaches to improve and increase student performance. This vision is described through comprehensive strategies that will transform the district to use a personalized learning approach that include the use of assessment tests in each grade level every nine weeks; using a national behavioral training program to reduce discipline issues across all participating schools by training teachers to use a common language and dealing more effectively with discipline issues when they arise; building data systems that measure growth and success including the college readiness data and post-secondary enrollment information and developing a reporting system to measure the growth and success of all students within the school district over the past five years; recruiting and retraining highly qualified teachers through strategies that includes a sign-on bonus; and turning around some of its lowest achieving schools that include the Forest Park Academy which serves middle and high school students who were at-risk for failure and Hurt Park Elementary which is currently is fully accredited and has met the annual measurable objectives through a variety of positive and effective community and school based agencies. These are positive strategies that have been presented in the proposal to support the vision. The grant provided a description of the need for teachers to have timely data on students (demographic, test data, enrollment, schedule, behavioral, and academic) use of the Eight-Step Instructional Process to impact the curriculum and provide students with hands-on activities and real-world experiences through project based learning. While the grant proposed a vision, the narrative and proposed strategies lacked specific comments with regards to teachers and student roles in the classroom and how the district would implement a personalized learning plan or what it would look like for the student. The applicant commented on the challenges of making the curriculum relevant, rigorous and personalized to meet student needs but lacked specifics and supportive research how this will be implemented in the district. There was no research justification for the approach presented in the proposal.

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

The applicant did not provide a detailed account on the selection process of the schools but indicated that the administration felt that all of Roanoke City Public Schools' secondary sites had a high-need student populations and subgroups that were not advancing academically as required. It was indicated that SOAR will focus on all middle, secondary schools and program sites that include: William Fleming and Patrick Henry high schools, Addison, Breckinridge, Jackson, Madison, and Wilson middle schools, and programs at Noel C. Taylor Academy and Forest Park Academy. The applicant did not describe the process for selecting the schools but did include a chart that described the demographics for

each building.

The data indicates that the participating schools meet the eligibility requirements, the poverty levels ranging from 57 to 93%. All of the participating schools are listed and the eligibility is adequately provided in a clear way. There is little narrative to accompany this section, and there is not a great detail of narrative or elaboration on how all of the schools would be part of this proposal or how the students would be selected for this program.

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

10

8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant included a plan that addresses all of the key elements but lacks details and does not explain the process for expanding and scaling up the program. The grant described Project SOAR, which has 4 components starting at 6th grade through 12th grade that are described as: (1) Begin to SOAR, (2) SOAR-Middle Grades, (3) SOAR-Higher, and (4) SOAR-College/Workplace Readiness. "SOAR is designed to be scaled up as students move from grade level to grade level starting with the 2013-2014 school year." In the future, the project can be expanded into the lower elementary school sites. There is also a fifth grade a program called "Reach Down, Lift Up (RDLU)" which will be used to prepare the students for the transition to middle school. Since the students in the SOAR program are considered at-risk and there is the potential for a "summer slump", the students will have the opportunity to attend an extended school year during the summer that will focus in mathematics and science through a trans-disciplinary approach. This will support and address personalized and project-based learning with STEM connections. The project builds on enriching the learning experiences of students by building on interests and making connections to real world experiences. There is continuous support for students while participating in the extended school year program. While the applicant has included the SOAR program and related activities, the details to design and implement the extended school year are unclear and vague.

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

10

8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There is no narrative describing the data (charts) provided specifically for sections A–E However, the district wide reform and scale up are somewhat described in previous sections and throughout the application. The applicant makes the case for how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful, district wide change by:

(1) including all schools in the proposed grant activities; preparing students to be ready to enter either college or the workplace by graduating high school; (2) closing the achievement gap (3) recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers; (4) implementing a system of integrated data systems and track student academic gains; and (5) utilizing data to identify appropriate interventions where needed and implement strategies that personalize learning experiences of students, especially those at greatest risk of failure. The proposal does include a chart for the achievement gains made all students (including subgroups) in the last four years and graduation rates have risen from 59.1% (class of 2008) to 80.4% (class of 2013); the dropout rate has also decreased from 22.05% (class of 2008) to 11.12% (class of 2013); and Post-secondary enrollment has also risen from 296 for the 2008 cohort to 333 for the 2012 cohort. Administrators, teachers, and parents received support through the availability of student performance data, which examined student progress from early childhood through postsecondary education and beyond.

The applicant does not provide explanations of the charts and does not summarize the results. The proposal does not indicate the process or rationale used to determine the achievement outcomes for the different school years.

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points) | 15 | 9 |

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district developed a strategic plan that focused on the ability for all students to achieve academic success. The district focused on 5 areas: (1) preparing students to enter college or the workplace by the time they graduate high school; (2) closing the achievement gap; (3) recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers; (4) implementing a system of integrated data systems that track student academic gains; and (5) utilizing all available data to identify appropriate interventions to implement strategies that personalize learning experiences of students. These outcomes of the strategic plan were explained throughout the grant but lacked specific timelines and implementation steps. The focus in the grant was to close the achievement gap in math and reading and it is unclear how these strategic plans tie into the priorities of the district.

The applicant did provide two concrete examples of success in the district. The first examples describes the effort of Forest Park Academy for middle and high school students who were at risk for failure and describes the level of success i.e. increased graduation rate, and increased achievement scores. The program has been successful since 2008-09 by graduating over 500 students who would otherwise have faced academic failure. The program supports students who would have failed in their regular school. The second example describes the effort at Hurt Park Elementary that included the collaboration with over twenty local non-profit agencies and this year made AYP and is fully accredited. These two efforts demonstrate the positive impact on the achievement level of the students but the applicant indicated that there are still many areas that need improvement and are challenging for the district. The grant did not include any district wide efforts or programs/projects related to SOAR that would be common across the district. The district did describe the need for an aggregate data system but did not provide any details related to this need.

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| (B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points) | 5 | 4 |
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicated that it makes every effort to be transparent in its practices, and investments. There are five categories reported to the public regarding on the progress of the district: (1) teaching and learning, (2) management of resources, (3) engaging the community, (4) achieving our vision, and (5) student achievement. The scorecards are reported annually for the previous year and are posted to the web site for parent/ guardian and community review. While there are annual reports, additional progress reports, either on a quarterly or monthly basis would benefit the community at large since comparisons and progress could be assessed more often. An annual Equity Report report updates staff, parents, and community on staffing, teacher turnover, funding, student enrollment, and Federal Accountability achievement. A Comprehensive Annual Financial Report is published and posted to the RCPS website. Reports are also made to the Virginia Department of Education as required. The applicant discussed the salary schedule which is posted to the district website. These are positive steps in reporting to the community the efforts, areas of success and areas for improvement that will support the district efforts to increase student achievement.

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| (B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points) | 10 | 8 |
|--|-----------|----------|

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a prior record of success and sufficient authority and autonomy to implement the proposed project design. This includes the expenditure of 111 million dollars to rebuild two comprehensive high schools and partnering with the Hurt Park Promise Neighborhood project. The Virginia School Improvement Initiative and the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII) supported this project. The *Code of Virginia* § 22.2-16 provides considerable latitude relative to implementation instruction, including projects such as SOAR, and places the general instructional decisions in the hands of the individual LEA School Board. This flexibility encourages and supports the district in making curricular decisions that support the efforts to meet the needs of the students to increase student achievement.

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| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points) | 15 | 6 |
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did include a list of stakeholders that were involved over the past five years in the development and implementation of this effort. Each component had input from the various stakeholders in the community at large including the municipal government. Online surveys, questionnaires and letter writing were part of the process in the involvement of the community to support and enhance the project. The proposal includes a number of support letters from the City Manager of Roanoke and various community organizations. The applicant indicated that there is no evidence of 70% buy-in by staff.

It is unclear at what stage of the proposal the students and parents were involved. It was also unclear if the staff had input prior to the development of the proposal or was the proposal already developed and some of the ideas were added after meeting with various groups. There was no indication that the proposal was sent to the Virginia Department of Education for review or that there is a 70% buy-in from teachers. The grant did not indicate whether there was involvement on the part of the community to participate by providing input in the development of this proposal

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

| | Available | Score |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| (C)(1) Learning (20 points) | 20 | 12 |

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes the use of parent and educator support to fully implement Project SOAR. The parent support will consist of sharing information on the purpose, goals, and structure of the program including STEM and providing information on how student(s) can become college and/or career ready. A SOAR Parent Academy (SPA) will provide information and skills to help their child(ren) with test anxiety, proper nutrition, career and college pathways, personal goal setting/achievement, reading and understanding student report cards, etc. Educators will be provided project-based learning, trans-disciplinary teaching, flipped classroom approaches, and development of SOAR units of instruction based on STEM. Teachers will be asked to share links in their classroom to college and career readiness and personalized learning activities and projects based on the student's SMART goals. The SOAR Teacher Academy (STA) will provide workshops on methods of personalizing student learning through the access and use of data to increase the opportunities for deep learning experiences in the area of student academic interests. The applicant discussed the use of scaffolding to support and promote learning when students are acquiring concepts and skills and when there is transition from one level to the other i.e. from elementary to middle school. These supports may include the following: mentors, sharing of data, ideas, experiences, and providing school and college tours, parent information and training, and after school and extend school year enrichment activities and others. The applicant provides a thorough description on how the student and mentor will work together to assess the progress and assure that the student is on target in completing the Personalized Learning Plan.

While some of the areas and components of this part are included in the grant, there is a lack of detail and explanation on the use and correlation to the goals. There are no selection criteria for the mentor and limited explanation on who will develop the Personalized Learning Plan and the content. The SOAR Teacher Academy (STA) appears to be a place to receive workshops and support but the grant does not provide a process or strategy for the identifying the type of professional development that will be provided to staff. There is no indication when these workshops will be offered, i.e. during the day, summer, after school, etc. The proposal described the use of a personalized learning system and student data system but did not discuss the process and steps for implementation.

While some of the areas and components of this part are included in the grant, there is a lack of detail and explanation on the use and correlation to the goals. There are no selection criteria for the mentor and limited explanation on who will develop the Personalized Learning Plan and the content. The SOAR Teacher Academy (STA) appears to be a place to receive workshops and support but the grant does not provide a process or strategy for the identifying the type of professional development that will be provided to staff. There is no indication when these workshops will be offered, i.e. during the day, summer, after school, etc. The proposal described the use of a personalized learning system and student data system but did not discuss the process and steps for implementation.

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

20

11

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a professional development plan that aligns to best practices in teaching methodology and behavior management. The narrative discussed the understanding of scaffolding and its relationship to STEM and personalized student learning. There are some additional generalizations in regards to the courses and materials but there are no specifics on the type and content of the professional development program. The grant discusses the support for direct and just in time but indicates that it will be made available through online tutorials using PD360. The courses and materials will be made available to teachers through Moodle an on-line learning management system but this section lacks specifics and concrete explanations to support the implementation of these strategies. There is no discussion on providing training on how to use Moodle or who will develop the content. This is also the first time that the grant introduces the use of hand-held computing devices and a 1:1 program for students. There is no discussion on how this will be introduced and how the staff will be trained in using these devices prior to this section. The approach in each school site is discussed but the description is vague and unclear. The implementation of one-to-one program for students could be another strong aspect of the project to ensure student progress but the applicant did not provide details and criteria to measure success for this program and how professional development will be implemented to support this effort. The grant did not describe the administrator evaluation system and did not discuss how this would be used to make changes. The proposal did not describe how the students would receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points) | 15 | 8 |

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The narrative describes the role of the central office staff and the administrative teams in each building. Much flexibility and autonomy is allowed in each of the buildings as illustrated by the ability to make budget decisions, personnel decisions, and staffing models and identify roles and responsibilities of the respective staff. Each building makes accommodations for their students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL). Students throughout the school year can demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways by taking tests at the local and state level. While this comment is a positive approach to student learning, the narrative is unclear and vague how this is implemented and when it is administered. There is no explanation of the outcome of mastery and what happens to the student once he/she has mastered the content. There was no mention on how and when the students will be provided learning resources and when instructional practices will be modified to meet the needs of the students.

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

The narrative provides an overview of the Roanoke City Public Schools infrastructure and reporting systems through the use of SunGard's *eSchool Plus* student information management system. This provides student demographic, enrollment, and grade information to teachers and principals. For the exceptional learners, Roanoke City Public Schools utilizes *Easy IEP*. *Easy IEP* is used to manage and integrate the student education process from referral to eligibility determination to the development of an IEP. The system provides teachers and administrators with documentation of parent meeting requests, personalized banks of goals and objectives, working timelines, and captures required data for state and federal compliance and reporting. The proposal indicated that it still lacks a single dashboard to provide the complete information on students in a timely manner. This response does not provide much detail on accessing and using the system; how frequently the data is updated and who is responsible for entering the student data. It is unclear if every teacher has access in his/her classroom and what type of data from this system is available to parents and students.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points) | 15 | 9 |
| (E)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>The applicant did not address this item directly but did discuss that the success of this project will be measured through a variety of methods including, but not limited to, monitoring of improvement in student standardized test scores in core subject areas, student and teacher efficacy inventories, professional development evaluations, and classroom observations. How this will be implemented was not explained in any detail but the applicant did provide performance measures that will impact the outcomes of this project. A productive approach for the applicant would be to include comments that discuss a continuous improvement plan, that provides timely and regular feedback and assesses the progress towards the performance measures.</p> | | |
| (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points) | 5 | 1 |
| (E)(2) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>There was no direct response except a couple of items in the appendices mentioned that the district will communicate with parents on STEM and co-curricular services.</p> | | |
| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points) | 5 | 4 |
| (E)(3) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>Roanoke Public Schools included a list of performance measures for its continuous improvement process. The performance measures were included for a range of grades (6-8, 9-12) and each included an item that described how it will be measured. Many outcomes were based on student numbers (such as attendance in class) but the performance measures did not include how much student achievement will increase through this program. These outcomes appear to be focused on participation in SOAR, attendance in class, course completion, skills training and others. A more productive approach would be to include the achievement gains for students in the course of the project. The applicant did not include any comments on reviewing the performance outcomes, providing feedback and making mid-course adjustments, if necessary.</p> | | |

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|---|----------|----------|
| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
| <p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The district described the four steps Plan, Do Check and Act (PDCA) as part of the continuous improvement process. The grant described the 8 step instructional process but did not correlate the two and describe how they will be implemented in a productive manner. In the PDCA model the applicant indicated in general terms what it hopes to accomplish. The same issue occurs in the 8-step model since it is described in generalities and is not applied to the specific program components. The grant did not mention any evaluation of the professional development or the use of technology to determine its effectiveness.</p> | | |

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points) | 10 | 7 |
| <p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal describes the budget expenditures for the major projects: (1) SOAR Extended Year funds that cover an additional month (five weeks) of the school year; (2) SOAR CTE Updates provides funds to update out-of-date equipment or added newer technologies that can be used to support career and college readiness programs; and (3) SOAR Regular Year funds that support the overall project during the standard school year. Each supports the visions and goals of the proposal and includes details with budget figures and specific costs associated with the major project components. Some details are provided with rationales and explanations for the expenditures. The budget figures are aligned to the major projects and focus on how the district can improve and addresses the diverse needs and unique needs of all the students. The expenditures reflect the effort of the school district to ensure that students achieve at the optimal level. The budget includes expenditures for science supplies, field trips, specifics on equipment and software expenditures to support personalized student learning and project-based activities.</p> | | |
| (F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
| <p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative describes how the district has received services, funds and support from community partner agencies for the schools. The district will continue to seek additional funds from various sources to improve the student success in the schools. The district has also made commitments to improve student achievement in various areas and will continue to modify, revise and improve the curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of the students. However, the grant did not describe the specific sustainability efforts that can/will be made to enhance the curriculum to meet the student needs after the grant has ended.</p> | | |

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points) | 10 | 7 |
| <p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The narrative includes a description of the partnerships that Roanoke Public Schools has developed with community businesses, organizations, and service providers. A number of examples were included in the grant such as the Total Action Against Poverty (TAP), Apple Ridge Farm, Refugee and Immigration Services (a.k.a. Commonwealth Catholic Charities of Virginia), Boy Scouts of Southwest Virginia - Blue Ridge Council, Girl Scouts of Virginia - Skyline Council, Virginia Tech University and others that support the school district. The proposal outlines the 6 key items that will result as a part of the partnerships formed with the various organizations in the community. The 6 items include support for parents in the community, nutritional needs, the opportunity to attend a two year or four year institution and other results for the partnership. A chart is included in Appendix H of the SOAR Logic Model, which identifies, Input, Process and Outcomes, but it lacks an explanation on how all of these efforts will be accomplished. As an example in Inputs one of the items is a needs assessment, which lacks explanation and strategies on how this will be administered and what type of data will be</p> | | |

collected.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

| | Available | Score |
|--|------------|------------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | | Met |
| Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>The applicant did discuss throughout the proposal, the use of a Personalized Learning Plan for the students in SOAR, the implementation of a 1:1 program but lacked specific details in describing how these will be developed and deployed in the district. The proposal included charts, but the interpretations were not explained in most instances and difficult to understand. The project did not provide some information and strategies for accelerating student achievement, decreasing achievement gaps across student groups, preparing students for college and careers and a number of other areas.</p> | | |
| Total | 210 | 128 |



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0066VA-4 for Roanoke City Public Schools

A. Vision (40 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points) | 10 | 7 |
| (A)(1) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>Strengths: The applicant provided information to support the four core educational assurance areas in the development of the reform vision, as indicated by the five-year strategic plan developed in 2009. The district has identified, developed and implemented strategies to support recruitment of highly qualified teachers, including the sign-on bonus program. The vision includes a credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement through scaffolding instruction and increasing equity through personalized student support using Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs).</p> <p>Weaknesses: The applicant did not concretely define how Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) would be adapted based on student interests. Additionally, it did not describe what the classroom experience would be like for teachers. A list of instructional methodologies for students to participate in were included in the proposal, including flipped classrooms and project work, but the proposal did not connect the methodologies together to describe a comprehensive classroom experience. Although all strategies and methodologies listed could all personalize learning for an individual student, connections between the methodologies, including when and how they would work together, were not included. This indicates the lack of a concrete, division-wide vision for classroom experiences beyond 'personalized'.</p> | | |
| (A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points) | 10 | 8 |
| (A)(2) Reviewer Comments: | | |
| <p>Strengths: The applicant provided a list of schools, as well as specific student groups, to participate in the program. Justification for selecting all secondary schools and program sites in the division was given, recognizing that all "sites had high-need student populations and subgroups that were not advancing academically as required." As all secondary</p> | | |

schools were included in the proposal, the district would be able to provide a deeper level of implementation and support using the proposal as its focus, as well as allow schools to support and learn from each other. The total number of students targeted by this program was called out in a table provided by the applicant.

Weaknesses: Information was not provided regarding why the sub-group of high-needs students was explicitly targeted for this program. Participating educators were not explicitly defined.

| | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
|--|-----------|----------|

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: The theory of change, or logic model that the district is functioning under, was visually depicted and clearly explained in terms of application for a school district. The district applied a theory of change model, adapted from Steven Covey, to its goals. It spelled out the immediate and long-term outcomes desired by the division, including a change in the quality and methods of teaching and learning, at an abstract level.

Weaknesses: Although the applicant lines up the theory of change with the grant proposal at an abstract level, it does not provide necessary details. The applicant does not explain how each step of the theory of change model will be implemented to achieve outcomes goals in this proposal. There did not appear to be coordination with deliverables and timelines between the key goals to determine impact on all stakeholders. There is concern that teachers will participate in an unreasonably high quantity of unrelated professional development.

| | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points) | 10 | 6 |
|--|-----------|----------|

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Strengths: The applicant provided longitudinal data regarding proficiency performance and growth, including references to closing achievement gaps. Goals for increased performance for all sub-groups of students, as well as aggregate performance, were clearly articulated. Yearly goals showing incremental change towards four- and five-year goals were also articulated. The applicant's post-grant goals reflect equal achievement levels for each subgroup, which, if achieved, would eliminate the achievement gaps.

Weaknesses: Subgroup goals were not differentiated; each subgroup, including students with Individualized Education Plans and students with Limited English Proficiency, has the same four-year goal, regardless of current status. The goals for students with IEPs and students with LEP are therefore quite ambitious and do not appear to be achievable given the lack of focus on these two sub-populations in the vision. There was not a clear process described for obtaining college enrollment rates for this project.

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

| | Available | Score |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points) | 15 | 6 |

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district described previous successes in a variety of areas.

- The district showed data indicating a gradual increase in both mathematics and reading progress from 2004-05 to 2012-13. The tables and graphs provided also indicated that many of the achievement gaps were closed. It addressed a recent drop in math scores due to new, more rigorous standards being tested beginning in spring, 2012. The district did not address the drop in reading scores in 2013.
- The persistent achievement gaps in both math and reading for students with disabilities was not addressed.
- Data was given showing a 21.3 percentage point increase in graduation rates and a 10.93 percentage point decrease in dropout rates from 2008 to 2013
- A school was highlighted as an example of turning around persistently low-performing schools. Community partners focused on an elementary school resulting in increased student achievement, although data was not presented to support this.
- The district received funding in 2009 to implement a longitudinal data system that is used to inform educators about student academic success. The district also states that teachers still lack quick turnaround of needed data in order to make instructional adjustments.

Overall, the district provides some evidence of previous success in regards to closing the achievement gaps, increasing

graduation rates and increasing teacher access to student data. The district did not provide information and details regarding longitudinal performance for students with disabilities, turning around low-performing schools or on-going challenges with data systems.

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

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district demonstrates a high level of transparency with financial expenditures by publishing the Division's Balanced Scorecard, Equity Report, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, and both professional and classified staff salaries. Samples of these were provided in the appendices, and the actual reports can be found on the district website.

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

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The state context for implementation appears to support the district's proposal. Code of Virginia 22.2-16 provides considerable latitude in implementation instruction and allows LEA School Boards to make general instructional decisions. This code appears to allow school boards to create and implement instructional systems, such as the applicant's current proposal.

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|--|-----------|----------|
| (B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points) | 15 | 2 |
|--|-----------|----------|

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The division received stakeholder comment and input regarding components of this application during the development of each individual component over the past five years. This proposal, involving the combination of the components, did not appear to be presented to stakeholders for comment, input or discussion. There was no evidence that teachers from participating schools engaged in the development of this specific proposal. This is especially concerning due to the significant instructional paradigm shift referenced in the applicant's proposal.

Three letters of support were included from community members regarding this proposal, including the city manager, a representative from the water authority, and the president from a car dealership. It was difficult for this reviewer to determine if these particular community stakeholders are significantly engaged with other community members to provide the comprehensive level of support indicated in the proposal.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Although the plan discusses ways that parents will be involved, it focuses on limited opportunities to partner. Family members would be invited to attend quarterly trainings and annual meetings, but on-going family-school communication and partnership was not described. Success was not defined for family outreach.
- Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) were discussed in descriptions, but it seems as if this area was not fully developed. There was not a template as to what information would be included in the PLP other than courses & test scores, which would resemble a student transcript. Information was not provided regarding how often PLPs would be reviewed and how teachers would be supported in responding to team changes to the PLP.
- The proposal describes how critical transitions would be supported by using the PLPs, which supports best practices for secondary student success. This includes both transitions from fifth to sixth grade and from eighth to ninth grade.
- Cultural perspectives were very briefly mentioned and not fully explained.
- 21st Century skills and competencies were not mentioned.
- Digital connections were consistently mentioned but in inconsistent ways. For example, aggregate data systems were mentioned at the beginning but dropped mid-way. Hand-held technology devices were mentioned in the middle of the proposal, but were not supported by budget. It was not obvious how students would be supported in understanding their options and on-track-ness, nor how a mentor (with up to 49 other mentees) would support each individual student.
- The proposal states that students would be exposed to Collage and Career Readiness activities, but does not

provide details or examples as to what the activities would be.

- The proposal states that students would be encouraged to participate in accelerated coursework, but does not present a compelling strategy or goal to indicate to achieve increased enrollment.

| | | |
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| (C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points) | 20 | 7 |
|--|-----------|----------|

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant included a proposal for Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) and significant professional development to support the proposed instructional shift towards personalized learning.

- A significant paradigm shift is implied in this proposal, requiring additional supports to ensure that teachers would have the capacity to adjust regular teaching methodologies to the degree needed (ie – personalized and individualized during the school day). The quantity and frequency of professional development mentioned in the proposal appears uncoordinated and unsustainable. Participating teachers would be required to participate in professional development regarding behavior management, scaffolding, personalized learning, use of data, incorporation of STEM topics across all curricular areas, and other topics requiring on-going professional learning as opposed to one-time trainings.
- The assessment implementation schedule was unclear. In one part of the proposal, a description of the division’s assessment schedules was described as quarterly. In another part, it was mentioned that schools have control of the assessment schedule other than required state testing.
- Teacher evaluation systems appear adequate, although reporting on aggregate teacher effectiveness or improvement in aggregate teacher effectiveness was not mentioned.
- Overall tools to facilitate data use and resources to accelerate learning were mentioned in the proposal, including software programs and activity kits. Specific resources included in the budget were specific to summer programming and CTE programming only, resulting in a lack of alignment between the proposal and the supporting budget.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points) | 15 | 6 |

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a district organizational structure that would effectively support the implementation of this plan. The organizational chart provided in Appendix J shows a visual keeping school principals, and thereby students, as its primary focus. Principals are surrounded by support structures in both Teaching and Learning and Operations. Schools were described as having sufficient autonomy in regards to schedules and calendars, decisions and staffing models, personnel roles and responsibilities and school budgets.

The plan did not describe how students would earn credit based on mastery as opposed to time. It mentioned that students could demonstrate mastery through testing, but did not include other methods to determine mastery. The plan did not address how resources and instructional practices would be adaptable or accessible to English language learners or students with disabilities, which is the district’s biggest achievement gap.

| | | |
|---|-----------|----------|
| (D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
|---|-----------|----------|

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal described that all data systems be compliant with the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF). Community infrastructure to support family access to data was described through the public library system, federal housing projects through the valley-wide wifi zone.

Opportunities for parents to attend quarterly meetings and/or an annual training would support access to tools and support was described. Support for families, educators and other stakeholders does not appear to be differentiated to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have access to necessary supports to support the proposal. The applicant does not describe strategies to assess and ensure that all stakeholders are supported equitably and in a variety of ways.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| (E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points) | 15 | 11 |
| <p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal included a continuous improvement process based on Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA), which was visually depicted in the appendix. The PDCA was described as a process that included development, monitoring and adjustment of activities to achieve key goals and deliverables. The visual described the timeline that PDCA would follow. The PDCA process was lacking in details with each step, including interim measures and responsible parties.</p> | | |
| (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points) | 5 | 0 |
| <p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan did not describe a plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.</p> | | |
| (E)(3) Performance measures (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
| <p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Rationales were included for the selection of each measure, and were based on sound reasoning to support increased academic achievement. The applicant clearly described how the achievement of each measure would support academic performance. The proposal described how information will be reviewed regularly and the plan improved over time, thereby increasing the chances for successful implementation of the proposal.</p> <p>The measures appear to be inconsistent with the goals at times, and are not aligned with each other. The process for implementing Plan-Do-Check-Act was not correlated with the eight-step instructional process. The tables provided did not appear to align with the written performance measures.</p> | | |
| (E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points) | 5 | 3 |
| <p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>A plan was included in the applicant's proposal to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities using the Plan-Do-Check-Act process and the eight step instructional process, citing specific activities that will be undertaken to evaluate effectiveness. The plan did not include measures to determine the effectiveness of the professional development or activities that employ technology, which are two major components of the applicant's proposal.</p> | | |

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
| <p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's budget appeared to identify all funds that would support the proposal, including both Race to the Top-District grant funds as well as other funds. Some of the external funds included in the proposal do not appear to support the project(s) where they were included, particularly the community college tuition support program, the snack program and the in-kind support from Junior Achievement.</p> <p>The budget appears to support only two components of the applicant's proposal: the summer programming and the Career Technical Education upgrades. Budget information did not address the school year programming, which appeared as a major part of the proposal.</p> | | |
| (F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points) | 10 | 5 |
| <p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal did not present a comprehensive plan for sustainability, although one-time cost items such as books and equipment were mentioned as sustainable beyond the grant program, such as. The Trainer of Trainer model was</p> | | |

mentioned as a method to maintain activities beyond the life of the current proposal. Plans for continuing summer programming and middle and high school coordinators would be dependent on the applicant seeking out and securing additional grant funds beyond the current proposal, which is generally not best practice for sustainability. The applicant states that the district will seek out these additional grant funds during the life of the current grant proposal in order to sustain programming.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

| | Available | Score |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points) | 10 | 3 |

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant’s proposal describes partnerships that were minimally mentioned during the proposal, such as the nutrition program and community college funding.

Although population-level desired results for students are described generally, there was a lack of detail regarding which data points would be used, which strategies would be used, and how results would improve over time. Additionally, there was no emphasis placed on students facing significant challenges, as all population groups were listed as ‘all participants’.

Although the applicant described several partnerships with community organizations, it did not provide a list of partners specific to this proposal, including activities that partners would provide. The applicant did not describe how receipt of the Race to the Top – District grant would support an increased capacity of the partnerships to continue the work. The proposal did not describe how success indicators resulting from community partnerships would be tracked.

The applicant did not describe how partnerships would integrate education and other services for participating students and families.

One performance measure was described, involving the percentage of eligible participating students being on track for College and Career Readiness by the end of eleventh grade as evidenced by percentage of courses needed for graduation. No information was given regarding why this particular performance measure was selected as opposed to others, or how partners would be involved in specific strategies and activities that would directly support this performance measure.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

| | Available | Score |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Absolute Priority 1 | | Met |

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a proposal that would create a significant shift in instructional strategies to fully support personalized learning for students. The district has aligned to college- and career-ready standards. It has begun to develop longitudinal data systems, focus on low-achieving schools and develop plans to recruit and retain effective teachers in hard-to-staff positions. The proposal describes a process where student learning would be deeply personalized and consistently monitored through Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs), leading to increased student achievement and postsecondary preparation. Student learning opportunities would be based on each student’s achievement data, interests and goals. Educator skills would be greatly enhanced by participation in this proposal through numerous professional development strands.

| | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Total | 210 | 104 |
|--------------|------------|------------|

