



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0219MN-2 for St. Croix River Education District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Leading a consortium of seven LEAs and serving more than 5000 students, St. Croix River Education District (SCRED) presents a solid research-base and a well-organized plan to achieving the absolute priority of personalized learning. SCRED wants to expand its existing efforts at employing problem-solving models, data-based decision-making, academic standards, and analysis of sub groups performance. The initiative proposed is: <i>Personalized Learning Using Database Decision Making: Redesigning Schools Using a Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework</i>, and can be considered logical and integrated with existing infrastructure.</p> <p>The applicant provides extensive evidence to support their goal of increasing the number of students that are college and career ready through the implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Framework and will create the conditions for personalized learning and differentiated instruction through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased high quality professional development in reading and math and increased collaboration for teachers to develop individualized learning plans • Instructional coaching on newly learned skills and to support implementation of MTSS, • Instruction that is guided by student data, and effective utilization of technology • Focus on enhancing conditions for learning both in the classroom and at home through parent academies designed to engage and empower, and comprehensive mental health support services through partnerships • Comprehensive formative student assessment strategies and frequent progress monitoring and decision-making about interventions through grade-level teams • Building problem-solving teams to examine student data on a weekly basis to determine if interventions are successful. • Grade Level Team Facilitators (GLTFs) lead regular data meetings with their grade level team and creating personalized learning plans for students • GLTF's will receive training on using the Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) available to them through TIES Data System • Use of technological software programs (such as Voyager's VMath Live, VocabJourney and Kurzweil) to provide adaptive personalized learning plans for each student. <p>This reform vision is comprehensive and coherent, but not particularly ambitious for high need students. The applicant's approach is undeniably convincing, grounded in research and offering a solid set of activities to respond to students individualized learning needs. Core assurances are being built upon with high potential strategies for effective professional development and a whole scale framework for implementation of MTSS. SCRED demonstrates a track record as a part of their vision based on their success implementing a SIG grant in one district school which has made demonstrable improvements. A description of the classroom is assessment-focused, but student-centric in its meaningful application of data and shared leadership among educators for student outcomes.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The lead LEA, SCRED worked collaboratively with the other six members of the consortium to select 13 schools with a total student population of 5,476 participating students of which, 41.2% qualify for free or reduced lunch and 3,236 (or 59%) are classified as high need students. Eligibility is confirmed by the concrete description of the participating schools and students and the implementation of new evaluation systems tied to student growth measures, based on the Minnesota State Statute and align curriculum to college and career ready standards.</p>		

The applicant's proposed vision for implementation of personalized learning aligns well with the K-8 students who will be impacted by the RTT funded activities. SCRED strategically selected English Language Arts and Mathematics as the core focus of the investments based on need.

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

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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED has a history of hosting an RtI Center to support statewide implementation, which justifies their capacity to support bringing the proposal activities to scale to improve student performance and increase equity. These goals will be achieved through training and support to districts on the MTSS framework with an emphasis on data-based decision-making across multi-tiers of instructional supports that will be standardized to increase fidelity of implementation. Trainer of trainer model to build capacity around instructional decision-making, opportunities for teachers to participate in online professional development, web-based assessment tools to increase teacher efficiency in using data, integrated mental health supports, and incentives for increasing parental engagement around college and career readiness

Goals are clear and capacity is evident. But, the logic model for the proposal is weak on outcomes as it relates to the core focus of reading and math. Implementation design through a train the trainer model to build capacity on instructional decision-making, access to blended professional learning opportunities, online student assessments, and integrated social emotional supports all demonstrate a concrete foundation to build and scale initiatives. The omission of timelines and parties responsible for deliverables of how LEA-wide reform and change will be successfully realized, diminishes the quality of the overall plan.

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

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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED presents ambitious but achievable performance measurement targets that are based on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) in Reading, and Mathematics and The Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) for 3rd through 8th grades and by identified subgroups (low income and students with disabilities). Focused on decreasing achievement gaps, grade level teams will use these proficiency targets to set goals for students and to assist in determining which students need additional intervention and support, which strengthens the potential for meeting project outcomes. Targets associated with high school graduation and college enrollment were set overall, but not by subgroup to highlight decreases in achievement gaps.

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	12

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED has posted impressive results particularly with an over 50% decrease in the percentage of students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), and an increase in the four-year, on-time graduation rate. In 1995-96, SCRED identified 4.4 % of students as SLD compared to 4.1% statewide. By 2012-2013, the SCRED percentage has dropped to 2.33% while the statewide average was 3.3%. All participating districts have each independently displayed significant student gains in longitudinal cohort groups for typical peers and students with disabilities. Other impressive results relate to increasing the aggregated graduation rate from 79.53% in 2008 to 82.88 in 2012, exceeding the state's graduation rate of 74.3% in 2008 to 77.6 in 2012 respectively. In the lowest performing schools, SCRED has demonstrated a track record of success in managing and publicizing complex data and supporting the successful implementation of a SIG Grant. One weakness relates to further explanation of MAP data and how this demonstrates the applicant's track record of success.

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

5

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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not display a high level of transparency due to an absence of discussion about how SCRED intentionally makes information public about processes, practices, and investments. There is confirmation however that the Minnesota Department of Education annually makes all school-level expenditures available to the general public through

their established data center. An example was provided from a participating school to provide evidence to this assertion.

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

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7

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The central piece of evidence provided to describe conditions and sufficient autonomy for local districts and schools to have flexibility to determine curriculum and instruction and structure learning environments and assessments aligned based on the Minnesota ESEA Waiver. Academic standards are determined at the state-level, but SCRED limits the discussion here to only describe these aspects. It is less clear what the state-level support is for MTSS a central component to the applicant's proposal. SCRED describes running an RtI Center from 2007-2009, but no accountability for why it was only those two years. More detail is necessary to ensure successful conditions. Upon review of the letters of support included in the appendix, legislators at all levels of Minnesota government were in favor of the key details in the RTT proposal and the track record of SCRED to implement major initiatives effectively, which strengthens the context.

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

15

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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED engaged each Parent Teacher Association and Principals in all participating school buildings and solicited feedback from educators by hosting meetings to discuss the contents of the proposal and received highly favorable feedback. No actual documentation was provided from these meetings in the form of agendas, minutes, or feedback that was incorporated which would have leant more evidence of meaningful engagement. Only one select group of educators from Rush City School District were asked based upon their qualifications to comment on the proposal, but all participating teachers union signed on to the proposal. SCRED also attests to using social media outlets to solicit feedback.

A significant number of letters of support from state agencies and legislators, universities, parent organizations and other external partners in support of the grant were submitted and strengthen the engagement. Students are noticeably absent from the feedback loop.

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

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

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a philosophical approach to learning that is research-based and focuses on instructional strategies that are personalized. The ideas to support implementation of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) include access to online mastery-based interventions like VocabJourney and VMath for grades 2-8. Metacognitive skills will be exercised through interactive access to content in multiple modalities to engage students in deeper understanding. This type of software can support a teacher in providing a personalized learning plan, personalized learning recommendations, and a personalized learning sequence which aligns with the absolute priority. The approach to learning is valid and includes a combination of project-based learning and student engagement through technological supports and motivational methods. It remains unclear based on this high-level discussion of learning, there is a lack of connection with practice details associated with implementation and a connection to college and career readiness.

The applicant exposes students to diverse learning opportunities, with a significant emphasis on high need students. Some creative ideas include:

- Assistance collaborating and traveling virtually from a partnership with East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative (ECMECC), schools get assistance in collaborating virtually with schools around the world and virtual field trips
- Students with disabilities and their families have access to SCRED's "We 'R' Able" program, which offers community events and activities with an emphasis on arts and music.
- ELL students participate in an annual arts, culture and career building field trips.
- All students gain exposure to Native American Literature adopted with the Minnesota Common Core Standards.

Implementation of differentiated instruction will be accomplished through justified investments in professional development and instructional coaching. Teachers will be empowered to create different environments for learning: flexible grouping, individual work, collaborative assignments, conversation and debates that require higher order thinking skills and evidence-

based arguments. To best meet student needs the applicant proposes that teachers will receive training in: measurement, tiered service delivery, research-based instructional strategies, and the problem solving model for students most at-risk. TIES Data System will provide data management infrastructure for goal setting and progress monitoring of student outcomes.

SCRED outlines an impressive research-based framework for learning, but does not submit an accompanying plan for implementation with timelines and deliverables. The resulting assessment of their approach to learning is somewhat mixed. SCRED clearly demonstrates a knowledge base and interest in further pursuing the promotion of strong differentiated instructional strategies and a re-imagined educational experience. But, without a detailed plan for how this will be accomplished across the participating districts, it is difficult to understand the needed RTT investments.

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

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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Teaching and leading will be supported through a combination of online, face-to-face, team, and coaching experiences which can be considered effective investments with the right personnel to execute. The central strategy for SCRED to improve teacher effectiveness is through instructional coaching, expert coaching, and coaching coordination. With a strong coaching framework and evaluation system, teachers will have the job-embedded support they need to implement strategies learned through professional development to identify optimal learning approaches to execute a personalized learning environment.

Training for teachers, coaches, and principals who work with the highest needs students will be provided through Data Academies and progress monitoring mechanisms. Grade Level Team Facilitators (GLTFs) selected by Principals will lead regular data meetings with their grade level teams to ensure accountability at the school-level. With support from SCRED, the outcomes-focused Grade Level Team Facilitator Training Project will build capacity for leadership and data-based decision-making skills and is backed up by comprehensive Facilitator Role Expectations.

SCRED provides a high quality plan for teaching and leading, which allows for a clear vision of investments that will be made in training and coaching. The timelines and deliverables are only described for the next year, so insufficient understanding is available about implementation for the rest of the grant period.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	12

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED has a long standing formal governance and leadership structure for how it interacts and supports districts through a Superintendent Operating Committee and Governing Board. The applicant provided relevant evidence that participating LEAs signed an MOU in support of the RTT proposal alongside an annual agreement to cooperate. Further evidence is provided that schools work directly with SCRED through bi-monthly Principal meetings to share data and plan supports for staff. School-based leadership teams have control over decision making that impacts personalized learning.

SCRED has been leading an effort to implement the MTSS framework since 1995, which emphasizes intervention strategies for students who need them the most and treats each student individually. While demonstration of mastery is at the core of MTSS, it is unclear whether accompanying policy structures are in place in member districts to support this type of student learning progression.

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

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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant further elaborates their commitment to supporting all stakeholders in having access and support to relevant data through the existing TIES student information system. With particular focus on how RTT investments will help expand training for Parents, the candidate outlines a high quality plan for further deepening the impact of the home/school connection. Technical support and additional resources for parents will be provided through:

- 9 Parent Academies per school district/ per year
- Parent Academy Facilitators to lead events, provide technical assistance in accessing and understanding data, and training/feedback in intervention strategies to support struggling students

Data systems are confirmed as interoperable and open, and additional investments in Voyager's Edplicity, a web-based cloud that allows for the seamless sharing of open data, will allow parents and students to academic enrichment at home. While the focus of this section focused on the increase of parental access through training and technology investments, existing data infrastructure and other proposed investments will ensure educators use data effectively and in a seamless and interactive way.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant specifies their plan to continue implementing the Minnesota Department of Education's successful continuous improvement cycle model. Multiple layers of review are evident to analyze the investments of RTT that seek to improve student growth, provide professional development, and employ relevant technologies. Parents, students, teachers, and principals will all participate in the monitoring and measurement of the proposal initiatives, while SCRED will serve as the leader in disseminating results on a quarterly and annual basis. The public sharing and the explicit discussion about how course corrections and adjustments will be made during the life of the grant is a deficit in their plan for continuous improvement.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>All appropriate external stakeholders are addressed by the applicant, with strategies for multiple modes of engagement. Without a synthesized view of communication cycles that focus on continuous improvement, it is more difficult to piece together the internal cycle of communication vs. the external cycle of communication. Lack of reference to communication that includes new RTT human capital investments, such as coaches and grade-level team facilitators lessens the credibility of the communications strategy overall.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	4
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Performance measurement of student academic growth is a vital component to the success of the initiatives proposed by the applicant, and is presented in aggregate. Ambitious and achievable research-based targets are set by SCRED across the grade levels from K-8 for high-need subgroups for both cognitive and non-cognitive growth. A battery of assessments are presented, while some are appropriately more diagnostic, such as CBM and Aimsweb, others are used to track college and career readiness based on exceeding state targets on M-CAP in reading and math. Some inconsistency is evident, as SCRED describes the use of NWEA MAP assessments at the beginning of the year, and end of the year as useful to assist in ongoing progress monitoring. The academic growth indicators are all seemingly appropriate, and accompanying rationales have been provided.</p> <p>As it relates to social and emotional indicators, SCRED offers two concrete assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ages & Stages Questionnaire-Social Emotional (ASQ:SE) - A first level screening tool • The Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS): A brief teacher rating scale suitable for use within universal screening. <p>Overall the performance measures are clearly ambitious and achievable based on the focus on reading and math and being able to diagnose and measure student achievement. Less information is provided about how the measures will be reviewed and improved over time. Also, while ambitious measurements were provided to support doubling the number of effective educators serving high need students, it is unclear how this is fully supported by current evaluation systems.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a high quality plan based on the set of activities presented and the methodologies that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of investments. The efforts are solid in their approach and will be organized around evaluation of implementation and outcomes and will be coordinated by SCRED’s executive staff, project staff, and a third-party evaluator and data collection specialist. This team provides a strong foundation to collect data and produce results on a quarterly basis, and stakeholders will play an important role in providing feedback on goals and processes to help assess impact of RTT initiatives.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Existing district funds (\$2,185,100) will be leveraged to support RTT investments, and SCRED will also continue to contribute local funds to support existing and future investments related to meeting the goals of The Personalized Learning Using Database Decision Making: Redesigning Schools Using a Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework project. Investments have thoughtful accompanying rationales and are supported by the proposal as a whole, and the applicant provides a well-organized delineation of one-time vs. ongoing investments that further bolsters the overall budget presentation.

The projected investments are sufficient, but potentially over the top based on the number of students who are being served by SCRED for the purposes of this project. While only slightly more than 5000 students will be served by the proposal, the funding request is at the top of the range (\$20 million). Human Capital investments appear reasonable, particularly as it relates to efforts around coaching, facilitation, and coordination. Technology investments are a little less clear in the context of existing infrastructure. Minimal investments are being made in actual hardware and will mostly be applied to software, but limited discussion has been provided to assess the existing infrastructure at participating schools. Investments in training and professional development for all stakeholders, whether through Parent Academies, Principal Data Academies, or school-based Problem-Solving are warranted based on the goals of the proposal.

Social and emotional budget items include: Mental Health Therapist and an Advisory Board, which are reasonable as long as there is a clear connection and integration to provide personalized recommendations for students. This aspect is somewhat vague throughout the proposal. One of the key concerns of the budget relates to ongoing evaluation. The proposal has a robust approach to evaluate the project, but the costs are rather significant in the context of the number of students being served (\$2 million). Also, there is a lack of understanding how the SCRED evaluation team and third-party evaluator will interact with the RTT Steering Committee.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	9
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(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant successfully demonstrates a strong strategy of expanding their existing partnership with the mental health provider Therapeutic Services Agency, Inc. (TSA). Grant funds will support the scaling up of mental health services in all elementary schools, and greater collaboration and participation in parent academies, team meetings, extended school day, and early detection activities. Data will be used to drive personalized learning recommendations and monitor progress through an Asset Inventory supportive of the diagnostic tools SAEBRS and ASQ. SCRED and TSA have been working together since 2008, and will collaborate on securing additional funding to expand services and improve outcomes. Performance measures were somewhat insufficient, but well targeted. There is limited discussion about how the social emotional and academic performance targets will be integrated.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	9

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant successfully demonstrates a strong strategy of expanding their existing partnership with the mental health

provider Therapeutic Services Agency, Inc. (TSA). Grant funds will support the scaling up of mental health services in all elementary schools, and greater collaboration and participation in parent academies, team meetings, extended school day, and early detection activities. Data will be used to drive personalized learning recommendations and monitor progress through an Asset Inventory supportive of the diagnostic tools SAEBRS and ASQ, which strengthens the documentation. SCRED and TSA have been working together since 2008, and will collaborate on securing additional funding to expand services and improve outcomes. Performance measures were somewhat insufficient, but well targeted. There is limited discussion about how the social emotional and academic performance targets will be integrated.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

SCRED will build on the core assurances, based on their coherent and comprehensive system of supports it proposes to both expand and develop through the RTT project activities. The initiative proposed is: Personalized Learning Using Database Decision Making: Redesigning Schools Using a Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework, and can be considered logical and integrated with existing infrastructure.

The absolutely priority is met based on their clearly organized and research-based plans to improve educator effectiveness and parental engagement to ensure a personalized educational experience for every student. This is an assessment-focused proposal that emphasizes supports necessary to properly diagnose, plan, practice and ultimately produce results for students. Collaboration among stakeholders engaged in academic progress monitoring, leadership of educators, and integration of school and home and academic and social/emotional services will help meet the applicants' goals for preparing students.

The small area of weakness in the proposal lies in the mixed picture of transparency, accountability, and capacity of SCRED to improve outcomes from investments. SCRED has a 30 year history, and has been successful in the implementation of MTSS over time in reducing the number of students with disabilities. From 2007-2009 SCRED had funding for serving as an Rtl Center, but there is no explanation of why this service was not continued. Also, there is limited evidence provided as to their track record around professional development. On the other hand, SIG investments were successful in supporting turnaround efforts managed by SCRED. The applicant has also done its due diligence in terms of publicly sharing results, but engagement in the proposal development lacked documentation of feedback from educators, parents, and students.

Total	210	169
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0219MN-3 for St. Croix River Education District

A. Vision (40 total points)

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

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

A clear and comprehensive reform vision was described in great detail and spoke to the transformation the state and

district began years ago and how it plans to deliberately enhance its programming based on the needs of the students exceeding state and federal expectations.

Reform efforts grounded in problem-solving and data analysis and hopes to be enhanced through this grant award by: broader base to reach parents and the community; professional development and coaching; and, the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework through response-to-intervention (RTI).

create conditions for personalized learning and differentiated instruction using a three-tier approach
 increase collaboration among teachers - enhancing conditions for learning in the classroom and at home through parent academies and comprehensive mental health support
 research-based interventions
 problem-solving decision-making model to address systemic needs as well as student needs.
 Plan reflects a credible approach to improving student achievement with a specific lens on providing intentional interventions or enrichment based on student performance data.

all students screened three times per year using measures linked to state standards
 data used to evaluate effectiveness of core instruction and identify students needing intervention (Tier 1)
 based on data some students may need supplemental instruction, a double dose to improve achievement (Tier 2)
 based on data some students may need intensive and individualized instruction, a triple dose to improve achievement (Tier 3).
 Plan reflects an innovative approach to increasing teacher capacity through professional development in reading and math and coaching:

using data to evaluate effectiveness of core instruction
 ensure teachers are applying professional development to instruction
 problem-solving teams training using a five-step decision-making model to intensify and individualize instruction and to guide coaching conversations.
 Plan incorporates a deliberate parent/community involvement goal through the implementation of parent academies to engage and empower parents to set high expectations for their children; provide targeted assistance to their children; make a plan for post-secondary educational opportunities; use technology; and, use school/community resources to address social-emotional issues.

A robust data system currently exists that has capabilities to retrieve a wide variety of data - student, classroom, district, and consortia level.

The district presented a comprehensive, detailed, and innovative reform vision.

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

Plan reflects a clear description of the processes used to identify the participating schools along with the rationale for selection:

- collaboration with six local educational agencies to review student data required for this competition
- 13 schools selected (met criteria of competition), which equals 5,476 students
- specific grade levels at the 13 schools were selected
- six schools did not meet the adequately yearly progress in 2012
- 41.2% qualify for free or reduced lunch and 59% classified as high need students
- high needs students clearly defined as students eligible for free or reduced lunch, students with disabilities, special education, and students classified as at-risk according to the early warning program.

A comprehensive list of participating schools and a disaggregated list identifying low-income, high need, and participating educators was clearly described.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The MTSS framework is described as the catalyst of this high quality plan to accelerate student achievement with an emphasis on data-driven decision making with multi-tiers of support.

- the proposed plan builds on existing efforts in the district (scaled up to 55 districts between 2007-2009)
- proposed plan can be replicated by other districts with diverse districts, settings.

Project goals are clearly stated and grounded in a research-based logic model:

- improve the proficiency of teachers/principals to use student assessment data to inform instruction through professional development and coaching
- increase college and career readiness through increased student growth in reading and math through meaningful professional development and coaching
- increase parental involvement and engagement in the educational processes (clear objectives related to this goal)
- increase teacher strategies on how to intensify and personalized learning for students needing intensive instruction.

The logic model addressed the following ambitious goal areas:

- resources - 7 local educational agencies; 13 participating schools; local government; business/vendors; and parents
- inputs - research-based curriculum in literary and numbers; instructional coaches; instructional programs (chrome books; edplicity; Kurzweil, etc)
- activities - data-based instructional and curriculum training; instructional coaches; continuous improvement; parent academies
- outcome - increased student growth in reading and math; increased teacher proficiency; increased parental involvement; increased personalized student learning
- impacts - successful and confident students and teachers; involved families; and, community engagement.

Timelines and responsible parties along with the practical details would have strengthened this plan.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Plan describes ambitious yet achievable goals for the 13 participating schools and grade levels:

multiple data points via summative assessments to evaluate and identify student weaknesses
 formative assessment measures (MAP, curriculum based tests) to measure student growth over time
 methodology for determining status to analyze assessments to predict student's level of academic proficiency on state assessments
 methodology for determining growth to gain an understanding of what students know and to track students' progress from year to year.
 The high quality plan and the methods described to accelerate student performance are appropriately identified and defined in the charts.

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	13

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

District plan represents a significant track record of success exceeding four years. Particular stellar performance include:

- significant growth for at-risk students
- 50% decrease in the percent of students identified with a specific learning disability
- increase in the four-year, on time graduation rate
- use of periodic screening of students using the general outcome measures and MAP to monitor student growth and readiness for state assessment
- use of the NWEA DesCartes Continuum of Learning by teachers to provide targeted instructional areas in reading and math; and, to gauge the gaps students may have
- one school named a state Celebration school for being among the top performing schools (2013).

SCRES has demonstrated a credible reform efforts in its lowest achieving schools by:

- School Improvement Grant funds and new leadership resulted in a concerted effort at East Central Senior

Secondary, which was a persistently low-achieving school, with graduation rates increasing by 11.8% between 2010 and 2012.

Student data has been available to all stakeholders (parents, students, teachers) for the past seven years:

- available upon request - public reports via print and on website
- TIES Data System - district wide robust data warehouse
- data housed through the Minnesota Department of Education through a portal to obtain district and student data
- data charts indicating progress monitoring of students is share one-on-one by teachers - used to set goals and reflect on student progress
- parents conferences.

Plan contained an in-depth look at progression of student achievement, specifically comparing low-achieving subgroups with general education students. At times the graphs were confusing and the various representations seemed unclear.

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

Plan indicates reasonable transparency regarding processes, practices, and investments. The following information is made public by accessing Minnesota's Department of Education Data Center and selecting Data Reports and Analytics then by selecting Expenditures-District/Site Level. The report shows the following information:

- school level administration
- regular instruction
- career and technical instruction
- special education
- student activities and athletics
- instructional support services
- pupil support services
- operation maintenance
- student transportation
- capital expenditures.

Information listed in the sample provided listed aggregate expenditures.

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

Plan contained a sufficient explanation of its autonomy as related to the state's expectations to implement state standards identified for K-12 including college and career readiness based on the ESEA Waiver Request.

SCRED has district-level autonomy to: determine the curriculum, instructional methods, assessment tools, and appropriately matched learning environments.

Letters of support from a variety of businesses, corporations, and educational leaders confirm that the existing conditions in this district are producing results and indicate the use of the RTTT award would further propel and accelerate student learning.

- "SCRED has received state and national recognition for their implementation of a Response to Intervention or Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework. Over the past 18 years, they have seen significant increases in achievement for all students, and have reduced the number of students with Specific Learning Disability by 50%."
- "Building upon their greatest assets, a robust data system, and educators that remain vested in being highly effective, SCRED's proposal sets forth a replicable plan that will provide over 5,000 Minnesota students with personalized learning environments that designed to achieve or exceed the college and career readiness standards for EVERY student."

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	13
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED took specific steps to engage key stakeholders in the initiation and development of the proposed RTTT plan:

directly contacted PTA and building level principals to request input into the proposal's design and support for implementation upon award

hosted meetings with curriculum directors, principals, and superintendents to discuss the intent to apply and related content
 select group of one school district's teachers across disciplines were asked to review and comment on the proposal
 used social media to disseminate information including the intent behind the proposal and to request feedback (Facebook and Twitter)

SCRED Executive Director met with each local teacher's union group to explain the grant and obtain feedback (as evidenced by the union presidents' signature on the MOU)

one teacher and one Curriculum Director will serve on the RTTD Steering Committee providing input and feedback on grant implementation.

Support for the proposal was garnered by the: Minnesota Department of Education; LSU Director of National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring; University of Minnesota Special Education Program; University of Minnesota School Psychology Program; Innovative Quality Schools; Congressman Rick Nolan; and, ServeMinnesota.

Thirteen more organizations expressed support of the district's proposed plan as evidenced by various letters of support from the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council, Lakes and Pines Community Action Council, and many others.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	17

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The high quality plan provides a rigorous instructional focus for all students, including high needs students. The intent of plan is to comprehensively implement personalized learning through the Response to Intervention and Multi-Tiered System of Support while deliberately monitoring student gaps and progress along with the student and parents.

- students will participate in individualized goal setting
- teacher conferences with students (parents) to evaluate progress toward personal goals
- positive reinforcement for students showing growth
- parent academies to introduce or deepen understanding regard college and career readiness including options for college and resources to prepare their children
- deepen students' understanding through engagement in a variety of learning activities to apply new skills in a real world setting (example provided)
- interactive math instruction using concrete strategies (manipulatives) to demonstrate abstract concepts
- professional development on metacognitive strategies and on growth-mindsets in math
- teachers providing multiple opportunities and multiple modalities toward mastery
- flexible grouping in reading classes
- rigorous student goals based on target scores predictive of college and career readiness
- teacher accommodations and assistive technology to address the learning styles and needs of students.

Access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives was described in a variety of ways:

- participating districts receive training and assistance in setting up virtual collaborative opportunities where students can take virtual field trips
- students across the states study Native American Literature under the newly adopted Minnesota state common core standards
- high inclusion rates within the classrooms heterogeneously grouping ELL and SPED students with general education students
- students with disabilities and family members have access to the district's We R Able program, a community arts and music program.

Relative to differentiated academic instruction and engagement, students and teachers will be exposed to opportunities that provide time to collaborate for common purposes, capacity building for teachers in RTI an MTSS, instructional coaches to support implementation with teachers, and specific tier-related interventions will be matched to student needs.

For students needing intensive and individualized interventions, the district is proposing to develop apps that provide

scaffolding, repetition, and correct feedback.

The plan demonstrates exhaustive, focused efforts to address teacher capacity and multi-leveled student learning.

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

20

20

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED clearly articulates a solid plan for investing in building teacher capacity as a catalyst for accelerating student learning for high needs students:

- LETRS & NUMBERS training - research based literacy and numeracy curriculum using a blended training model
- LETRS training provides significant ingredients of effective reading instruction (12 modules); targets early childhood teachers and foundational literacy skills
- NUMBERS - big ideas in number sense (K-5); fractions and decimals (3-6); ratios and proportions (5-8); and, data, measurement and geometry (K-8)
- train-the-trainer module - aligns with the work of the school-based instructional coaches.

Professional development will be extended to include summer instructional coaches academy and coaching assistance opportunities.

- targeted support to teachers of Tiers 2 and 3 students
- early childhood coaches (to be hired)
- Coaching coordinator to support instructional coaches and ensure each teacher is equipped with appropriate knowledge, skills, and strategies to help students
- Coaching academy to create plans to improve instruction; collaborative communication; assisting teachers in choosing approaches to best meet students' individual needs; providing encouragement and support in teacher self-reflection; and, deepen instructional practices.

Plan proposes a Grade Level Team Facilitator Training Project to specifically increase achievement in identified areas; build capacity within the school through quality use of data by grade level teams; promote strong data organizational skills; and, to build local leadership capacity. Meetings would be grade level collaborative problem-solving and progress monitoring sessions to promote achievement at the local school.

Plan describes the development of Data Academies to address specific plans for Tier III students to:

- assist teachers and coaches in new ways to collect and use data-driven instructional decisions and personalized learning plans
- plans for intensifying and differentiating instruction.

Plan provides comprehensive descriptions of each of the criteria items as noted in the appendices and included attachments. The high quality plan appropriately provides a viable timeline to implement immediately each task outlined in this category. The activities included represent key stakeholders in integral portions of the plan.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED demonstrates existing structures in practice that provides central office support and services including:

roles and responsibilities clearly defined as indicated by a governing board comprised of one school board member from each district
governing board meets quarterly
principal meetings are held bi-monthly to share data and plan supports for staff
SCRED has an Agreement to Cooperate that is signed by each member LEA annually as outlined in the government structure
participating district's have school-based autonomy and flexibility over school schedules, calendars, personnel and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators, non-educators, and school-level budgets.

Relative to students' opportunity to demonstrate mastery through standardized assessment given 2-3 times per year, depending on the tiered support of the students. Formatives are also used to ensure students demonstrate progress toward mastery curricula objectives.

SCRED will continue to use MTSS as a core instructional tool to provide tiered instruction to students and RTI for students with special education needs. Data monitoring and data-driven instructional approaches will be based on multiple data points.

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

10

8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Plan details communication methods to ensure continuous collaboration among all stakeholders including anywhere, anytime opportunities for parents and students to access instructional resources and student data. Additional avenues to access information include:

- parent academies - specifically designed for Tier 2 and 3 students; access to web-based access to open data formatted content in/out of the classroom; supplemental academic resources shared
- access to technology - personal devices available to impoverished families
- TIES student information system - common student information system; options for parents and students to access teachers' gradebooks and messages
- technical assistance provided.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

SCRED provides a comprehensive plan to continuously reflect on its performance toward specific goals and a rigorous approach to monitor, measure, and share feedback through:

- a Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle to monitor each of the inputs, performance goals and measures
- measurements will be assessed using standard academic measures
- use various media forms to release performance data.

Specific timelines, responsible parties, professional development, and technology areas were provided. Each stakeholder (parents, staff, and students) will participate in measuring, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of each instructional goal.

- frequency of monitoring and responsible parties clearly stated
- method of monitoring identified in each area of student growth, professional development, and technology
- use of surveys and assessments to determine student growth and teacher effectiveness (leadership and instructional skills).

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Plan reflects a sound, reasonable communication plan which acknowledges and addresses primary stakeholder groups.

- Parents - parent academies; Edplicity (for communication with teachers), emails, phone calls, direct mail, the internet, and private meetings
- Students - face-to-face conversations, Edplicity, information on school and district's webpages; directly from schools or districts by email; and, graphs of individual progress
- Teachers, principals, and superintendents - email, telephone, meetings, social media

- Community, supporters and partners - email, telephone, direct mail, internet, social media, and private meetings
- Funders - timely submission of all required reports; attendance at all required trainings or workshops; email, phone, and direct mail.

An explanation of the Plan, Do, Study, Act graphic as it relates to continuous improvement would provide explicit information about the internal feedback cycle and dialogue among key implementation staff.

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

Plan included the charts and graphs reflecting the appropriate number of performance measures along with a detailed explanation of the assessment tools and its intended impact on accelerating student learning and closing the achievement gap:

- Oral Reading Fluency - students scored on the number of correct words per minute; designed to identify at-risk students and to monitor progress related to instructional goals
- Math Concepts and Applications - assesses the general mathematics problem-solving skills expected in Grades 2-8; allows educators to quickly screen and monitor mathematics progress
- MAP - use logistic regression to analyze MAP scores and set targets that can reasonably predicts students' academic proficiency on state assessment
- Number Naming - can predict students who would do well or not well on kindergarten measures; students asked to name number; is considered a critical skill for students at age four
- Ages & Stages Questionnaire - Social Emotional - identify children at risk for social or emotional difficulties; initial tool for use with four and five years old; scores determine if child is progressing socially and emotionally at a normal pace
- Picture Name Fluency - teachers can estimate a child's level of vocabulary development, which may help identify at-risk students in need of early literacy intervention
- Letter Sound Fluency - assesses a child's knowledge of symbol-sound correspondence, which serves as a foundational literacy skill; SCRED used data to identify number of correct letter sounds needed by the end of Kindergarten to help identify at-risk students and target instruction appropriately
- The Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener - serves as an indicator of early symptoms of behavioral or social-emotional challenges; targets variables related to areas ranging from social success and academic achievement to emotional wellness; helps prepare school's need to build or modify services offered to students.

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

Plan presents a focused strategy to evaluate the effectiveness of RTTD funded activities:

- process evaluation to document and assess the implementation of the program through quantitative and qualitative measures (surveys, observations, interviews, focus groups, fidelity checklists, student growth assessments)
- SCRED's executive staff, project staff, and a third-party evaluator to meet quarterly to recommend suggestions and improvements if program is lacking
- Third-party evaluator throughout the planning and implementation to ensure fidelity to the program model and to verify the success of the project
- Evaluation will address: project content, rate at which participants receive material; fidelity; program reach; experience and responsiveness of participants and organizational factors that directly influence program implementation.
- Third-party evaluate will facilitate focus groups and required interviews; will produce monthly, quarterly, and bi-annual evaluation progress reports detail evaluation activities and outcomes.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

An adequate budget is outlined in the plan that specifically addresses the four core educational assurance areas and provides a rationale for expenditures while also identifying one-time investments as well as supplemental funding.

combining existing district funds with the competition funds to support the full implementation of the project the six school districts and SCRED investing over \$2 million to support the project each district will allocate local funds to maintain the robust data system, TIES each district is contributing \$10,000 to provide substitutes for substitute teachers for the Grade Level Team Facilitator SCRED is allocating over \$370,000 in local funds for grade level team stipends, training costs, Odyssey software, additional Kurzweil materials, and other training/materials SERVE Minnesota will contribute \$47,490 for the reading and math corps interventions. One-time investments for positions, fringe benefits, evaluator, travel, software, and professional development expenses was clearly identified.

On-going expenses identified included: additional personnel, mental health staffing, software and instructional program packages, and professional development; however, the school district is prepared to sustain these efforts post-grant.

Plan details a very specific budget, high quality budget with clear delineation of funding sources, job descriptions, and rationale related to the project's goals.

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

10

8

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Plan clearly describes sustainability efforts per goal:

- Goals 1 and 2 (improve proficiency of teachers/principals to use student assessment data to inform instruction; increase college and career readiness through student growth in reading and math via high quality professional development) - continue using the existing robust data system; smaller scale professional development trainings within the local school budget; continue train-the-trainer delivery model; knowledge gained during professional development should remain in tact since low turnover rate in district
- Goals 3 and 4 (increase parental involvement and increase teacher repertoires on intensity and individualized instruction) - parent academies will continue with SCRED four times per year rather than nine; continue parent advisory board; formation and continuation of PLCs - SCRED agreed to continue the grade level facilitators (meetings and stipends) through the use of local funds.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Plan proposes a high quality approach to addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students, specifically for high needs students through expanded its existing partnership with Therapeutic Services Agency, Inc. (TSA) through:

- early detection, early intervention, proper mental health supports
- co-located mental health services to all participating secondary schools (currently exists).

SCRED and TSA intends to scale its services up through competition funds by:

- implementing an after-school day treatment program for students who have severe emotional or behavioral disorders
- providing co-located mental health services in all elementary schools
- having mental health therapists participate in problem-solving and student support meetings
- having mental health staff at early childhood screenings for four year olds
- partnering with Parent Academies providing ways to meet social, emotional needs of students
- developing a mental health advisory council comprised over various stakeholders

- creating and implementing an extended school day treatment program for at-risk students.

Tools to track/monitor include the Social, Academic, & Emotional Behavior Risk Screener evaluation and the implementation of the Assets Inventory to determine baseline assets and measure progress. Students will be reassessed once a social, emotional behavior has been identified and mental health services have begun. Program will support, monitor, and evaluate students' needs to ensure effective strategies/interventions are appropriate.

The partnership will broaden staff and parent understanding of the needs of targeted students, social and emotional behaviors resources, and strategies for fostering a positive learning environment and home environment.

Specific ambitious but achievable goals include:

1. increase the number of participating students accessing mental health services by 2% (an increase of the current .005%)
2. decrease the number of participating students who mental health assessment score decreases from an elevated level by 25% (based on empirical data as no baseline data is available)
3. increase the number of four and five year olds with an elevated social emotional scores receiving on-site screenings by mental health therapist (from zero to 100% based on mental health therapist being on-site to conduct screenings as a result of the RTTT award).

The comprehensive plan addresses most of the criteria areas; however, a feedback cycle or protocol for evaluating the effectiveness of the mental health participating in the various school-level meetings, parent academies, and early childhood screenings was not included.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>This plan addresses all components of a high quality plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ambitious, yet achievable goals and outcomes were included • needs of students specifically identified and defined (high needs students) • outlined timelines, deliverables, activities, and persons responsibilities • described a detailed plan of sustainability • appropriate budget to scale up existing programs, structures, and professional development. <p>SCRED presented a comprehensive plan to broaden its reach to accelerate student growth and deepen teacher capacity to service all students. It is evident that the district has a solid academic program with a solid framework (MTSS and TRI) that has been the underpinning of its current success.</p>		

Total	210	180
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0219MN-1 for St. Croix River Education District



A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the applicant provides a comprehensive review specifically addressing how this project will build on its work in the core assurance areas. - a significant elements within the vision describes how data decision-making facilitates personalized learning through a multi-tiered system of support. - student screenings occur at varying frequencies throughout the year based on a student's personal tier, and the narrative describes a process of teacher teams working to accelerate student success. - the project is committed to developing teacher expertise in using data-based decision-making to diagnose student problems. - the vision also describes the important role parents fulfill and how this project will establish parent academies for engaging and empowering parents. - personalized learning environments will be facilitated through increased use of technology software, and teachers will be trained extensively in using data while planning their instruction. Principal data academies will annually update their skills in using data within their schools to improve the personalized learning environment. - ensuring effective teachers is emphasized by utilizing a value-added approach where teachers have 35% of their evaluation based on student growth. - the narrative provides a clear example of what learning in the classroom will be like as well as how schools will be organized to close achievement gaps. - in this thorough articulated vision, the only weakness evident pertains to how the project will deepen student learning. The concept is mentioned but details are sparse whereas significant detail is provided for other aspects of personalized learning environments. - overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the middle of this range. 		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the narrative describes the selection process as being focused on the selection criteria but provides limited evidence on the specific considerations during this review. This sparse discussion is considered as the only weakness for this section. - the 13 schools in the 7 districts are clearly identified. - participating schools meet the competition's eligibility requirements with 41% of participating students from low income families. - a chart details student numbers specified in the competition's requirements. - the project focus is identified as being on reading and mathematics. - overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the middle of the range, 		

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the plan provides a logic model which demonstrates the relationship between project goals, activities, rationale or impacts for these activities and outcomes or deliverables. Other elements necessary to qualify as high-quality such as timelines and identified parties responsible for implementation are not evident. - the narrative provides evidence regarding previous success in scaling-up a project to 55 districts. - explanation of how this project will be scaled-up is sparse and inadequate to understand the process which will be utilized. - overall, this section is assessed at the medium range. 		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	6
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a chart provides baseline data, targets for each of the project years, and a post-grant target for the overall population as well as two sub-groups - students with disabilities and free/reduced price lunch. - targets for the overall population are almost always increased 2% annually regardless of whether baseline performance is at a high level currently or low - e.g. less than 60%. The fifth year target in some lower areas of performance may be boosted. In 3 instances of lower performance the annual targets are at 3%, which begs the question of why other lower performance targets are not more than 2%. Having targets so consistently applied despite considerable differences in baseline data is a concern that some targets may not be as ambitious as they might be. - on the other hand, sub-group targets are quite ambitious yet achievable and, if reached, should result in performance that will easily exceed gains identified in the overall targets. - the nature of this proposal which is focused only up to grade 8 does not allow for annual goal setting with two required categories - graduation and college enrollment. Nevertheless, the project projects increased annual graduation targets without indicating how senior high school students will be impacted. It seems more logical that grade 8 students will impact graduation rates in the project's 5th year and then impact the college enrollment target for the post-project year. - overall, this section is assessed at the medium range. 		

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

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the narrative presents charts for each of the LEA's depicting student growth in reading and math over multiple years. Student with disabilities are also reported as a sub-group. What is unclear in the graphics is whether the improvement exceeds an annual standard because the MAP assessments utilize a scale and student achievement is reported relative to the scale. Therefore, grade 3 should be higher than grade 2 results on the scale but there is no indication as to how much higher the performance should be to demonstrate success in improving student achievement. This is a substantial weakness in the report because the analysis does not provide the number of scale points necessary to demonstrate expectations for each grade. - high school graduation rates are improved in recent years and, indeed, improved greater than the state's improvement. - ACT scores are presented as evidence that the state is preparing students for college to a greater degree than the rest of the nation. In supporting this success, the consortium demonstrates that the LEA schools have higher ACT scores than the threshold for state universities. - one school is identified as having undertaken significant reform to improve on-time graduation. Details of the reform effort are sketchy. - long-term success in accelerating student achievement has occurred with more than 50% reduction in students identified with SLD. 		

- student achievement data is readily available to students, parents and teachers for discussing growth and setting targets for improvement. These data are depicted in chart form as well which facilitates understanding.
- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range.

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

- there is limited evidence provided indicating a high-level of transparency regarding processes, practices and investments.
- transparency is evident by the applicants' publishing of actual personnel salary information for instructional staff and for teachers as well as school level administration.
- however, aggregated costing does not separate salary and teacher benefit costs.
- the narrative does not provide any information regarding how the public has access to other than financial processes such as board activity, meeting agendas or minutes.
- a specific school's site-level report stipulated by the state on expenditures is provided as a visual reference for the level of detail available to the public.
- overall, this section is assessed in the medium range.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- the narrative merely indicates that the standards identify the K-12 educational expectations for the achievement of all students across the state. It summarizes the local autonomy issue by indicating that local districts have flexibility to determine the curriculum, instructional methods, assessment tools, and learning environments.
- This consortium is comprised of seven LEA's with their own distinctive cultures. No evidence is provided regarding variances in these cultures for accommodating school conditions - e.g. schedules, calendar, extended time - which might increase success for the benefit of students.
- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	12
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- the narrative and appendix related to this section contains an impressive listing of support for this project including the required support from teacher union leadership.
- support was also evident from numerous state political representatives, post-secondary institutions as well as educational service organizations.
- although only one mayor's office provided a response, appropriate timelines for providing a response were documented.
- it is indicated that PTA's, principals as well as district leadership personnel were involved in the application's design. The description of how these groups were engaged is somewhat vague.
- the consortium utilized social media to garner greater input.
- while it is indicated that input during the development process produced revisions, specificity on what changes occurred is lacking.
- overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the high range and at the low end of the range.

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

	Available	Score
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(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	16
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the requirement for a high-quality plan has several components that are lacking. Specifically, implementation timelines and persons responsible are not indicated. - the plan includes an impressive set of software instructional tools designed to achieve personalized learning for students. These tools allow students to work independently anywhere and at anytime to customize their learning, which supports their efforts in moving up the tier system utilized in this project. The customization is structured so that a year's worth of learning is identified, and students receive electronic messages reinforcing their effort. - the narrative is strengthened by incorporating several examples of how the classroom differs in a personalized versus traditional setting. - parental understanding regarding the importance of personalizing the learning environment will be facilitated by providing guest speakers from the business community for PTA's so they can hear directly how the workplace expectations are changing. Parents will also be presented an important concept that intelligence can be grown rather than only inherited, which is foundational to making effort while in school. - student engagement in their learning will be enhanced by their involvement in personal goal setting and then routinely accessing graphical representations regarding their progress. - the narrative provides appropriate demonstrations regarding ways in which students will benefit from multiple representations utilizing a variety of experiences such as manipulatives, pictures and graphs. - differentiated instructional strategies utilizing individualized assignments, collaborative assignments for building teamwork, and classroom conversations and debates will further support the personalized learning environment. - students will have personal learning plans based on personal profile reports that are based on their personal data. - the narrative indicates how tools will be in place for students which will support their success but is vague on the degree to which they will experience training and ongoing support in using these resources. - in summary, the narrative describes a comprehensive description of how students will function in a personalized learning environment where their educational needs will be met by differentiated and individualized instruction to take them from where they are at to where they must be to meet college- and career-ready standards. - overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the low end of the range. 		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	20
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the narrative provides a comprehensive high-quality plan identifying goals, activities and rationale, deliverables, timelines, and persons responsible for the first year of operation. Details in this plan are impressive. - all teachers receive extensive on-line professional development for personalizing student learning in reading and mathematics. This professional development is enhanced by providing instructional coaches using the trainer of the trainer model within each school. The narrative provides convincing descriptions of how this model will be implemented to ensure that each teacher's participation and needs are addressed for supporting the success of each student in the two subject areas. - facilitators within each school will monitor data on learning, and conduct monthly grade level meetings to review personalized progress of students. The narrative provides clear expectations of the expectations these facilitators will provide in ensuring that data-driven decisions are made in personalizing student effort and success. A detailed checklist that these facilitators must complete is included. - the roles provided by consortium staff are also summarized. - principal in-service for supporting personalized learning is accommodated with thorough training in data use through an annual conference. - tier 3 teachers receive additional coaching on matching their students' needs with instructional requirements. - evaluation and compensation systems for teachers and principals are based, in part, on student demonstrated progress. Two LEA's have 60% of compensation increases based on students gains while the remaining LEA's have 35%. 		

- in summary, the narrative demonstrates a thorough and convincing description of how staff will implement personalized learning by adapting content and instruction, while frequently measuring student progress and using feedback from evaluation systems' to improve practice. Extensive use of technology ensures that optimal learning approaches are utilized and that the data is available to facilitate accelerated learning.
- overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the high end of the range.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	13
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the narrative provides a detailed agreement between the consortium and LEA's. This agreement outlines a strong commitment to provide school level leadership teams while also providing for sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing issues, and school-level budgets. Detail in this agreement demonstrates a strong consistency in this competition's requirements for service and flexibility. - mastery of learning rather than time is the overwhelming focus, and is enhanced by a convincing regimen of assessment to ensure accelerated progress. - technology utilized in this progress ensures that students have opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times even to the extent that for some it occurs weekly. - evidence of student assessment utilizing multiple comparable ways is somewhat accommodated by using formative assessments in addition to the scheduled summative evaluations. Information beyond these assessments is sparse. - a thorough process is outlined identifying how students qualify for special education designation is provided. The narrative is silent regarding English learners. - overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the low end of the range. 		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the plan provides for parents to have access to technology supports through parent academy facilitators who also help with interventions in the home setting. Low income parents will be provided with personal devices and internet access to engage with licensed electronic instructional programs to support personalized learning. - a student information system is provided so that parents and students have access to teachers' grade books as well as having the capacity to e-mail teachers directly. - Parent academies meet monthly and have strategies such as meals to encourage participation and reduce barriers to attendance, where the focus is on developing support in the home environment including an emphasis on pursuing college enrollment. These academies provide an impressive array of support including access to additional educational resources and videos modeling effective instructional techniques. - throughout the project's response, ample evidence is provided that interoperable data systems are utilized. - overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the high end of the range.. 		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	9
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p>		

- the narrative provides evidence of the applicants commitment to continuously improve its plans by describing a process model that uses a cyclical approach for ensuring continuous improvement.
- a planning grid is presented which adequately addresses some of the elements of a high quality plan. For instance, timelines are readily apparent when the various evaluations will occur, the assessment activities are summarized for each of the required areas related to student growth, professional development and technology, and a rationale is evident within the description.
- the evaluation presented demonstrates sufficient rigor because information is gathered, analyzed and released multiple times per year. This extensive schedule of reviews provides many opportunities to make adjustments regarding expectations.
- the plan is weakened in addressing the party responsible by confusing the individuals completing a survey rather than identifying the person(s) actually responsible to ensure that the assessment is undertaken.
- reporting findings in a quarterly and annual report are the basic methodologies identified in publicly sharing the information from these assessments. The plan could be strengthened by undertaking more visible efforts in ensuring stakeholders and taxpayers that the investment is being well-spent and that children are benefiting from participating in this project.
- this section is further weakened by not specifically addressing how an assessment and review will be conducted after the grant is concluded.
- overall, this section is assessed at the medium range and at the high end of the range.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- the plan in this narrative identifies the various internal and external stakeholders which will receive information about the project, but it does not indicate how these stakeholders will be engaged so that they have opportunity to provide feedback and make suggestions for improvement.
- the plan provides many examples of how stakeholders might communicate with each other but other aspects are quite sparse. It is difficult to ascertain in the narrative what are the goals to be addressed in this section. Identification of persons responsible for these communications is vague because everyone within a stakeholder group seems to be expected to pass information along rather than having a specific person identified for ensuring that the communication occurs. Specific timelines when communications are distributed are also not evident.
- overall, planning for ongoing communication and engagement is quite limited and vague.
- overall, this section is assessed at the low range.

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

- a detailed set of tables provides evidence of how each of the applicable population groups for "all", PreK-3, and grades 4-8 have performance measures for each group. These tables identify the baseline data, targets for each year of the project as well as post-grant targets. The nature of the project does not lend itself to addressing the grades 9-12 category.
- measures identified satisfy the competition's requirements relative to academic and social indicators.
- rationales and how the measure will provide rigorous, timely and formative information are extensively detailed for the various assessments employed. Detailed charts are displayed in the appendix which provide annual norms of performance based on the data for large populations, and these tables negate the requirement that there be specified a plan of action for improving the measure.
- a review of the annual targets presented reveals a projected annual improvement that are sufficiently ambitious and achievable.
- overall, this section is assessed at the high range.

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

- a high-quality plan for evaluating effectiveness is thoroughly documented which will ensure that implementation is assessed on a regular basis using both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Immediacy of feedback is enhanced by the plan's commitment to conduct quarterly reviews. Use of an external evaluator to assess the planning and implementation of the personalized learning environment increase the likelihood of valid documentation. The rigor in this plan to ensure objectivity in the assessment presents a strong case that results will be informative to the schools.
- overall, this section is assessed at the high range.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the proposed budget identifies its request for RTT-D funds while providing evidence that funding will also be forthcoming from the districts involved. Indeed the amount from the consortium is more than 10% of the amount request from this competition. An additional small source of funding will be coming from a partnership with SERVE Minnesota. - the narrative provides detailed lists of expenditures which will be one-time and ongoing. - a thorough description is provided for each category indicating how the funds will be used for each year of the grant. Such extensive detail in identifying budgetary costs provides assurances that the project has thought through all of the issues it needs to address in this proposal. - travel and supply budgets can catch the critical eye of the public but are low-cost items in this proposal. - sustainability of this project beyond the grant period is enhanced by two factors. First, most of the budget is identified for one-time expenditures related to technology support for personalized learning. Second, the teacher turn-over rate is historically low in these districts which reduces the need for extensive training programs. - the consortium has addressed sustainability by developing a plan for the 3 year post-grant period, which includes district funding as well as SERVE Minnesota funding to sustain the personalized learning environment. - overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the high end of the range. 		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some of the elements for a high quality plan in sustaining the project after the term of the grant are adequately addressed - key goals are stated and include activities with rationale. - missing from the plan is indication of timelines, deliverables and persons responsible for the activities. - a budget breakdown for the post-grant period using the same budget categories for this competition is provided, and it identifies the funding sources from the LEA's, consortium and SERVE Minnesota. - the consortium details extensive evaluations throughout this application, including at the conclusion. A weakness in this narrative is that it does not indicate how this project's evaluations will be used to inform the post-grant period. - overall, this section is assessed at the medium range and at the low end of the range. 		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the narrative indicates a working relationship with TSA focused on early detection, intervention and support for high needs students in the LEA. This partnership has existed for 30 years but will be augmented with implementation with a 		

personalized learning database for decision making. The applicant specifically addresses how this funding will increase TSA's capacity to consult with school teams regarding a student's needs and then integrate and align private and public services.

- the narrative presents a thorough description of how indicators will be monitored using a specific measurement tool already developed, and use this information to target its resources to improve results with participating students. A strategy to scale the model to the entire set of districts is already underway.

- the narrative explains how therapists would work within each school to integrate mental health services for high needs students in support of their high academic performance.

- these therapists would assist in developing staff capacity in awareness and needs assessment as well as assisting in screening students for early identification. They would then work with parents in providing a nurturing home environment for achieving academic success. Finally, they will serve the project by monitoring its effectiveness and collaborate to resolve challenges.

- the applicant identifies 5 performance measures for population-level desired results. Only one measure has baseline data currently. Annual targets are presented; however, the targets for "the % of participating students whose teachers reported positively modified behaviors" is confusing because it projects declining values. In fact, it should be re-stated to reflect an increasing percentage of students demonstrating positive behavior. This confusion is not regarded as a weakness in this evaluation because it only needs to have the targets reversed.

- overall, this section is assessed at the high range and at the high end of the range.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Throughout this proposal it is evident that the applicant has comprehensive plans to address the personalized learning environment for participating students, which can be readily scaled to the entire population. Students accelerated and deep learning needs will be addressed by meeting their academic needs through effective educators and decreasing achievement gaps across groups. Educators will be supported in their professional development and by technology which will monitor student and educator performance, and will facilitate individualization in ensuring that students achieve graduation requirements aligned with college - and career-ready requirements.

Total	210	160
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