



# Race to the Top - District

## Technical Review Form

Application #0058NC-3 for Wilson County 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 applicant shares a comprehensive education reform vision for ensuring that participating students graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary for future success in college and career. This vision is strengthened by the fact that it is based on a well-known "Early College Model" which includes design principals that addresses the four core education assurance areas.

The applicant plans to build on the "Early College Model" by developing a more comprehensive program (Centers for Academic and Personal Success, CAPS, program) that includes both middle and high school. Through the implementation of the proposed CAPS program, the applicant provides sufficient evidence of its commitment to adopt rigorous college and career readiness standards for participating students. Since the applicant's state was an early adopter of the Common Core Standards, the applicant pledges to follow this leadership and to consistently support their teachers in developing appropriate strategies for infusing the Common Core standards and assessments into their classrooms. The incorporation of Instructional Technology Facilitators to assist teachers in enhancing their instructional practices, specifically as it is needed to help the individual student with personal educational goals, is further evidence of the applicant's vision to adopt standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace.

The applicant's vision to implement the "HomeBase" instructional improvement and student information technical system signifies its commitment to build data systems that measure student growth and success. In addition, the applicant describes a laudable vision to use technology to employ blended learning and digital learning strategies in the classroom. Ensuring that educators will be trained on technology applications for real-time feedback for identifying student needs and in turn, provide the appropriate academic, social, emotional, and behavior supports is a valuable component of personalized learning environments.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence as to its vision to develop and sustain personalized learning experiences for all students. Appropriate shift in instructional practices such as the classroom teacher transitioning to become a facilitator of learning rather than the driver of learning is a critical component of the applicant's vision. In addition, the applicant proposes to promote "professional learning communities" at the school level to assist educators in the development of personalized learning environments.

Notable is the applicant's inclusion of a "sustainability and success" component that includes "growth and success priorities", focus on transparency, and outreach to include all stakeholders. The applicant sufficiently demonstrates its vision to build on a well-known model of reform (Early College) and to develop a pipeline of effective educators through purposeful educator development of its teacher's assistants, teachers, and teacher leaders. However, the extent to which the applicant plans to recruit, reward, and retain effective teachers as well as to turn around lowest achieving schools was not apparent in the stated applicant's vision.

It is concerning that the applicant's proposed reform model presented in this application is consistent with, if not the same as, the previous reform models used to achieve the past performance results. For

instance the HomeBase instructional improvement and student information system is currently implemented in all schools. However, the applicant proposes to use this grant funding to implement the same student performance data system. It is unclear if the current proposal will continue to provide ambitious and significant reforms particularly in the lowest-achieving schools.

**(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)**

**10**

**6**

**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a layered capacity building plan for the implementation of the proposed "Centers for Academic and Personal Success", CAPS, education improvement model. The applicant proposes that CAPS will be fully implemented in all schools within four years. The applicant provides a list of all the school that will participate in the the grant activities as well as the descriptive statistics requested for each school.

It is unclear as to the rationale of piloting the CAPS program in the Beddingfield High School and its feeder schools first. Although, it is apparent that Beddingfield High School has the third largest population of participating high-need students. It is unclear of the strategy of scale up of CAPS model based on the success at the Wilson Early College Academy. There are limited similarities of the descriptive statistics between Wilson Early College Academy and Beddingfield High School (such as the gap between the number of participating high need students and the number of participating low-income students). These gaps seem to be too drastic of a change for the first implementation pilot. Therefore, the extent to which the applicant's approach to implement its reform proposal will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal is not apparent.

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

**10**

**5**

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

The applicant's proposal includes a scale up plan for implementation that begins with a set of pilot schools. By end of year four of the the grant period, the applicant proposes to include all high schools and middle schools in the proposed CAPS improvement initiative. However, the applicant does not provide all the components of a high quality plan such as a specific timeline for the transition from pilot schools to the other schools in the district. Furthermore, the applicant does not provide a scale up vision to address the elementary school level. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the proposed scale up plan will produce a quality implementation or quality results in district level student performance.

The proposed partnership with the "Wilson Youth Master Plan" indicates notable support for a meaningful district wide reform change. As evident by the letters of support provided from the "Wilson County Department of Social Services" and "Community of Schools of Wilson County" , the applicant has sufficient support from community organizations to affect meaningful reform beyond the participating schools such as reaching out to parents and other community stakeholders.

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

**10**

**4**

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

The applicant proposes to use the ACT Battery of Tests (including ACT, PLAN, and Explore) to assess student performance throughout the grant period. However, the first performance assessment will not occur until Grade 8. The extent to which the proposed CAPS reform model is likely to improve student learning is greatly diminished by the lack of performance data in early middle school. Therefore, this lack of data will make it difficult for the applicant to provide the necessary modifications to the reform model throughout the grant period.

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning because data was not presented regarding the "College Ready Benchmark Scores" per the four subject areas assessed.

It is unclear as to the applicant's vision to decrease achievement gaps in the elementary and middle grade levels. The applicant only presents baseline data and goals for decreasing achievement gaps in high school and only in two content areas: reading/language arts and mathematics. The rationale to only set performance goals in two content areas in high school is unclear.

The proposed goals for graduation rates and college enrollment are not ambitious and do not align with the applicant's vision for college- and career readiness which states that "all WCS students graduate having participated in a robust and rigorous instructional program that prepares them to succeed in college, the workplace and to compete in the global economy." The rationale for the range of percent increase per subgroup is unclear. For example, the percent increase in the graduation rate for black and hispanic students is approximately 16% by SY 2017-18. However, the percent increase in graduation rate for students with disabilities is approximately 22%. Furthermore, the applicant indicates an approximate 37% increase in overall graduation rates from 2008 to 2013. However, the proposed reform model is only estimated to increase overall graduation by approximately 11.4% over the next five years. In addition, the applicant proposes that only one subgroup, white students, will meet/surpass the the state's graduation rate of 82.5%.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>Notable is the district's improvement in graduation rates from 58.2% in 2008 to 72.6% in 2012 via the implementation of reform initiatives such as a one-to-one digital device and laptop operation program, collaborations with the Wilson Youth Master Plan, and the Early College Model at WECA. All of the district's high schools have observed a steady increase in graduation rates during 2011-2013. However, data was not provided for each high school 2010 graduation rate. Therefore, it is unclear if each high school has observed an increase in graduation rate for the past four years.</p> <p>A snapshot of evidence for improved student learning outcomes is presented. For instance, Vick Elementary School students increased math proficiency from 29% to 80% since 2007. Darden Middle School students increased reading proficiency from 28.4% to 69.5% from 2008 to 2012. However, this snapshot of evidence is not sufficient to ascertain the extent of a district-wide clear record of success over the past four years. Data was not presented to demonstrate evidence of success (such as raw student data) for closing achievement gaps and college enrollment rates over the past four years.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a high level of transparency in the district's processes, practices, and investments. Through a variety of stakeholder meetings, newsletters, publications (such as <i>The Wilson Education Partnership Community Guide to Understanding our School Budget</i>), and electronic updates, school system priorities and updates are communicated. Transparency is also facilitated via two processes: district websites and specific requests. If desired information (such as personnel salaries) is not readily available via the district websites, responses will be provided for any written request.</p> <p>Non-personnel expenditures at the school level is managed appropriately by the school bookkeepers. Upon written request, this information can be provided.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implement the proposed reform model. Notable is the district's alignment with the state's Race To the Top goals such as "NC public schools will produce globally competitive students" and "NC public schools will be governed and supported by 21st century systems." There is appropriate state structure and statues (such as North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 115C) in place at the state level that assures full autonomy of the districts to manage the implementation of the state's mission for education: <i>Every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and post-secondary education and prepared for life in the 21st century.</i></p>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p>		

The *Vision Planning Session* for the proposed reform model included an appropriate diversity of district stakeholders including parents, students, and community organizations. Notable are the support letters from a variety of stakeholders such as the Dean of the School of Education at Barton College, the WCS 2012-13 Teacher of the Year, and students. This is evidence of a shared vision from a snapshot of stakeholders for the proposed reform model.

The district "does not have collective bargaining representation due to a North Carolina ban on collective bargaining." Therefore, there is no evidence of union support. Although focus groups were held at participating middle schools and "approximately all staff members were present", this is not sufficient evidence that at least 70% of teachers from **all** participating schools support the proposed reform model.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant presents a vision for implementing a CAPS reform model that is focused on providing a personal learning environment for all students. Via individual learning plans and actionable data dashboards, students, teachers, and parents will use appropriate tools to address individual learner goals. Hence, students will be aware of what they are learning and why it is important for their future success.</p> <p>The proposed personal inventories that will be taken by students at the beginning of each school year will provide useful data to teachers as they design and implement instructional strategies that are most beneficial for the students. Notable is the applicant's focus on addressing the needs of high-need students. Appropriate accommodations will be provided for ELL and students with disabilities to assist this student subgroup with reaching their personalized learning goals.</p> <p>More details are required on the format and focus of the individual learning plans. It is unclear as to the extent at which the students individual learning plans will be linked to college-and career ready standards or college and career ready graduation requirements. It is also unclear as to how the applicant proposes to measure progress toward the learning goals identified in the plan. Furthermore, it is unclear if a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development will be included in the individual learning plans.</p> <p>The inclusion of the instructional approach of project based learning will provide opportunities of increased student engagement.</p> <p>Although some high school students will be provided opportunities to take courses at partner institutions of higher education, there is limited evidence presented of the extent to which the applicant plans to involve all students in similar deep learning experiences in areas of their academic interest.</p> <p>The applicant proposes a limited implementation strategy for ensuring students have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. Although the proposed use of technology can break down access barriers to a variety of cultures, additional instructional opportunities that include cultural perspectives should be explored.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence as to the extent of providing support of parents, educators, and students developing skills such as teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, and creativity.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>

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

The applicant proposes a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching that focuses on two core beliefs that every educator is accountable to ensure that every student is learning and that technology cannot replace a high quality teacher. The applicant is committed to provided WCS Instructional Technology Facilitators at each school that will be charged with provided just-in-time training on appropriate instructional strategies for personalized education. Educators will have ample opportunities to collaborate will colleagues via professional learning communities which will be coordinated by the Instructional Technology Facilitators. The high quality professional development plan for educators also includes an appropriate timeline for training (during school hours, on early release days, on teacher work days, and before and after school), stipends for educators, and costs for substitute teachers.

It is evident from the proposal that there will be a focus on adapting content and instruction via the implementation of a "Response to Intervention (RTI)" model which uses assessments to motivate and engage students in their learning. The proposed train-the-trainer model is sufficient for building RTI capacity with the participating educators.

More details are needed to ascertain the extent to which educators will be trained and supported in processes to frequently measure student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards and use data to inform both the acceleration of student progress. Although the applicant provides a reference to a concept of training for educators that will address measuring strategies of student progress, it is unclear of the types of measures that will be included and of the frequency of the assessments.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of the extent to which it plans to use the established Education Evaluation System to improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness. The system is rigorous, transparent, data driven, and standards based. Most notable is the mentorship program, Peer Assistance Review (PAR), which is modeled after another state's successful program. The proposed principal and teacher evaluation is very likely to provide the necessary and timely feedback to ensure continuous improvement in educator effectiveness throughout the grant period.

Through the use of the HomeBase information technology tool, the applicant proposes to obtain actionable information that helps educators identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs. The WCS Instructional Technology Facilitators are capable to then train the teachers on appropriate instructional strategies such as blended learning and differentiate instruction to incorporate to meet the individual student academic needs. In addition, the proposed partnership with external trainers will provide useful training to principals, instructional facilitators, and teachers via such programs as the LEAD Institute, Coach University, and Summer Institute.

The applicant provides sufficient evidence of a high quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. The professional development for educators as described above will be transferred to all educators via a train-the trainer instructional design model which is an effective strategy for building widespread capacity across a school district. Furthermore, the incentive program as described in the application (such as providing stipends and tuition reimbursements) and providing assistance to teachers in taking the Praxis 2 exam for increased content area endorsements, are proven strategies for increasing the number teachers who are effective and highly effective.

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

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

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

It is evident that the district has and will continue to have support in implementing reform strategies to improve student performance. The district and the state have a share vision of a consolidated "learning organization" where all levels of staff are accountable for student success. The central office has adequate staffing to address instructional needs of the district. For an example, the Executive Director of Secondary Education will manage closely the implementation of the proposed reform model. There is a dedicated technology support structure that is staffed appropriately to address the technical concerns that may surface with the proposed information technology component of the proposed reform model.

The existing school leadership teams will be supplemented with instructional and leadership coaches. Together, these leaders will have sufficient autonomy to implement the proposed reform model such as managing school schedules,

making appropriate academic decisions, and determining staffing models. In addition, each school has a bookkeeper who is responsible for fiscal management of the school budget and maintaining records of expenditures at the school level. The participating schools have sufficient systems and personnel in place to provide the appropriate school leadership required for the implementation of the proposed reform model.

The principles of the Early College model supports the concept of demonstrating mastery via a variety of methods. Project Based Learning, which is proposed as a instructional approach to learning in the proposed reform model, is highly suited for multiple methods of demonstrating content mastery. The applicant's inclusion of one-to-one technology will also provide additional authentic methods for demonstrating content mastery. Therefore, it is evident that the proposed reform model will provide opportunities to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.

The applicant's proposal to include digital curriculum via a one-to-one technology initiative will provide limited learning resources that can be adapted for full accessibility for students with disabilities and ELL. However, the applicant does not provide adequate evidence of an extensive range of learning resources that will assist a variety of special needs.

<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant's plan to lease the one-to-one digital learning devices, which are required for implementation of the proposed reform model, will diminish material cost and allow for accessibility of this necessary learning resource for participating students regardless of income. In addition, the applicants partnership with community organizations such as Greenlight fiber-optic cable and network service provider and local library branches will likely provide additional support to students, parents, and other stakeholders to access the necessary content, tools, and other learning resources outside of school.

The after school computer lab support which is provided by the district's Department of Administrative services is likely to provide appropriate technical support for students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders. However, the applicant does not provide a critical component of a high-quality plan with regards to this support. That is, the frequency/timing of the after school computer lab support is not apparent.

The applicant's proposed HomeBase information technical system has proven to be user friendly and capable for data export. It is designed for transparency and accessible to students, parents, and other education stakeholders. All necessary data will be accessible to allow for successful implementation of the personalized learning plans for each student. In addition, the HomeBase system has interoperable capabilities with the Human Resources Management System, Fiscal Department Accounting System, and SunPAC. It is apparent from the applicant's assertion that the established HomeBase information technical system has proven to meet the technical infrastructure to support personalized learning.

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

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

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

The applicant presents a high-quality plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process. Three key positions (CAPS Plan Lead Coordinator, Middle School Coordinator, and High School Coordinator) will be dedicated to the monitoring of key milestones and goals of the proposed reform model. Weekly discussions and analysis of key milestones and goals will occur. An appropriate hierarchy of leadership is proposed to biweekly review implementation analysis completed by the three coordinators and make necessary modifications. Transparency is apparent throughout the continuous improvement process due to the consistent tracking and reporting on updates, successes, and challenges.

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

The applicant presents a high-quality plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The applicant identifies a subcommittee whose responsibilities will include a focus on communication and engagement with stakeholders. The applicant clearly identifies all

relevant stakeholders including parents, staff, and community organizations. Appropriate timing is provided for ongoing communication and engagement with all stakeholders. Notable is the invitation to parents to participate in bi-monthly parent focus groups. Also, notable is the ability for teachers to provide feedback via an online survey link.

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
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**(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a high-quality approach to continuous improvement including itemized deliverables, persons responsible, and progress measurements. Notable is the progress measure that includes the task of facilitators reviewing personalized learning plans for students. However, as described throughout the application, facilitators are responsible for coaching teachers throughout the implementation of the proposed reform model and assisting with developing instructional strategies to meet the need of each student. It seems unreasonable to assume that these same facilitators will be able to dedicate the required time to review each student's personalized learning plan. Therefore, the this progress measurement is ambitious but not achievable.

The "Equitable Technology Practices" deliverable is remarkable. The partnership with Greenlight will surely promote equitable technology practices particularly for those students and parents most in need. However, the progress measurement of "ongoing meetings and communication with Greenlight leaders" for this deliverable will likely not yield the appropriate actionable feedback required. This progress measurement should include a measurement of accessibility and usability of the actual technical learning resources outside of school (at home).

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

The applicant proposes to employ an external evaluator to conduct the evaluation of the proposed reform model. Notable are the qualifications of this established evaluator which includes over two decades of experience in program evaluation and extensive knowledge base of the district's curriculum standards and technical platforms.

The applicant presents a plan for evaluation that is consistent with typical education program evaluation strategies. Notable are the evaluation tasks of facilitating outside expert reviews of personal education plans and the conduction of interviews with staff and external partners. The applicant does not provide sufficient timeliness of the listed evaluator tasks.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

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

The applicant clearly indicates the budget line items that will be covered by the district. For example, "an expert facilitator will travel to Wilson eleven times over the course of the four years to provide climate and culture training", however the cost of this travel will not be funded by grant funds.

Adequate funding is allocated for substitute teachers to cover the classroom responsibilities of teachers who are participating in the necessary training to implement the proposed reform model.

The grant funding allocated for the leadership training for principals is unreasonable. Although, it is critical to build leadership capacity in the principal population, the proposed

leadership training provides only general leadership professional development. Therefore, the cost of this professional development should not be solely allocated to this grant funding. In contrast, the instructional coach training cost is appropriately allocated to grant funding since this professional development directly impacts the success of the goals of the proposed reform model.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents a high-quality plan for sustainability that includes reasonable components of sustainability, strategies to address the components, and timeliness. Notable are the creative reassignment of the CAPS Coordinators, the continued support of the at-school professional learning communities, and continued engagement of key stakeholder groups including advisory boards.

It is unclear as to the plan to keep the Instructional Facilitator positions at the school level. It would seem reasonable to keep this role as they provide critical support for teachers as described throughout the application.

The applicant proposes to seek ongoing four year leasing agreements with the digital device vendor. The applicant proposes to shift this sustainability cost to under the district's budget under "general operating expenses." It seems unreasonable for the district to automatically shift a cost of \$8,100,000 (as indicated in the budget narrative as the four year cost of leasing the digital devices) at the end of the grant period. It would have been more reasonable for the applicant to indicate this budget assumption if only a partial of the leasing cost during the grant period would have been allocated to grant funds and the district covered the difference.

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

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

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents two partnerships (NC New Schools Project and Wilson 2020) of which are already established. The NC New Schools Project receives support from the philanthropic organization, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Wilson Early College Academy, which is the model for the proposed reform initiatives presented in this application, is supported by the NC New Schools Project. Therefore, the applicant's proposal to continue this partnership as it expands this model to all of its secondary schools is reasonable and appropriate. The supports that this partnership will yield are aligned with the goals of the proposed reform model and include such support as New Teacher Institute and Coach University.

The proposed partnership with Wilson 2020 is also an established partnership within the district. As stated by the applicant, "the Wilson County Schools and the Wilson 2020 Board have joined in partnership to work with the community to create a Youth Master Plan designed to improve the outcomes for all Wilson County Youth." This is an appropriate partnership in that there are shared desired results between all members of this partnership. Notable is the parent engagement component which will yield training and workshops.

**Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments**

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents a coherent and comprehensive plan that addresses how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that are designed to significantly improve learning. Through the implementation of the proposed CAPS program, the applicant provides sufficient evidence of its commitment to adopting rigorous college and career readiness standards for students in middle through high school - core education assurance area 1. Since the applicant's state was an early adopter of the Common Core Standards, the applicant pledges to build on this leadership and to consistently support their teachers in developing appropriate strategies for infusing the Common Core standards into their classrooms. The incorporation of Instructional Technology Facilitators to assist teachers in enhancing their instructional practices specifically as it is needed to help the individual student with personal educational goals is further evidence of the applicant's vision to adopt standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace.

The applicant provides exhaustive evidence as to its vision to develop and sustain personalized learning experiences for all students. From the shift of the classroom teacher as the driver of learning to that of a facilitator, to the support of teachers to structure their classrooms as needed to meet the population of students being served at that time, and to the implementation of professional learning communities so that educators can share best practices for developing personalized learning environments for all students, it is certain that this applicant is focused on meeting the needs of all of its students.

The proposed HomeBase information technology system is sufficient in providing the interoperable capability to inform students, parents, teachers, and principals with data about how they can improve student learning.

The applicant presents a plan for professional development of teachers that includes the leadership of school-base instructional coaches. However, the professional development of principals is limited to general leadership skills. The proposed reward system of incentives, substitute pay, and tuition reimbursement is sufficient to encourage educators in their professional development. The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence of its specific plans for turning around lowest-achieving schools.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>147</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0058NC-4 for Wilson County Public Schools

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

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

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

The applicant clearly articulates the building of core educational assurance area within the vision. The motto of: "Learn Create. Inspire" are at the core of this district-wide reform. The core beliefs of Equity, College and career readiness,

personalized learning, effective teachers and growth and success position the district to embark on transformational change. The applicants will utilize the comprehensive reform plan called CAPS or Centers for Academic and Personal Success. Their reform model will model the Early College High School, which focuses on creating small-personalized centers merging both the high school and college experiences. The approach is clear and in most areas credible to achieving their core goals. The plan includes a grid detailing four steps toward the implementation: core belief, components, core assurance link, and outcomes. For example, the college and career readiness section will promote a core college preparatory curriculum and college courses and align curriculum to Common Core and Essential state standards. The core assurance addressed is adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed. The applicant use of one-on-one technology will deepen student learning and personalizes student support.

The applicant's component sections did not reflect a depth of programming to give credibility to the desired outcomes. For example, the outcome of "creating a system which the culture of respect for diversity as well as social emotional success". While the three components: "fostering a culture of respect and high expectation, delivering relevant instruction and differentiated instruction and providing equitable technology" are best practices, there appears to need much more exploration into the deeper issues surrounding equity. The vision did not translate into a seamless and clear description in which one would actually be able to visualize the classroom from both the student and teachers perspective.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a well-defined description of the implementation process for this reform model. The schools selected are feeder schools to Beddingfield High school which was strategically selected due to its low enrollment. The plan does not clearly define which feeder schools will have students participants in the pilot program. The pilot program will focus on 200 sixth graders and 200 ninth graders from 3 schools. A chart was provided with the required demographics of potential students. This implementation will gradually include all schools within the district.

There was no indication of a process, which was used to select the pilot schools. The intentional and strategic logic for choosing a school because of the enrollment size was not clearly stated. As a pilot school there may not be the opportunity to encounter issues facing one of your higher needs schools.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides a theory of change model thread students at moves from digital learning, early college model principles, and college-and-career students. The district will use the HomeBase Instructional improvement system, which provides accesses to stakeholder (parents) to monitor student progress. Professional development opportunities and engaging in best practices are listed as tools for promoting equity, student-driven learning.

The applicant indicates that the Wilson Youth Master Plan is the "strongest endeavor to enact true district-wide reform". The score given reflects the lack of thoroughness in the describing the scaled up and traslation of a meaningful reform processes.

<b>(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
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**(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides ambitious yet achievable annuals goals in the areas of achievement gaps, graduation rates and college enrollment. The subgroup show realistic growth such as moving the Hispanic students from a baseline of 40% to 41% in a one year time span. The 1 % increases annually strive for higher achievements, while realizing the time needed to show growth, in particular with high need students.

The applicant's 8th and 10th grade summative assessment goals did not appear to be realistic or attainable within a years' time. For example, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade ACT scores start with a baseline of 13.4% (students scoring at or above College Ready benchmarks). The following year the number is to increase to 23% and subsequent years increase at a 9% annually.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated clear success in advancing district learning and achievement. The graduation rates were at 58,2% in 2008 and are now at 72.6% baseline 2011-12 . The district-wide support contributing to the advancements includes: one- on -one digital device and laptops for students and staff, program support from the Wilson Education Partnership and other community stakeholders, professional learning communities, and college readiness programs. There were schools identified as low-performing who have shown drastic improvement such as Vick Elementary, Darden Middle School and Beddingfield High School. Darden moved students from being 37.3% proficient in math to 76.8%. The state has implemented data systems which has given greater access to student's performances. These user-friendly systems allows for data-driven, personalized instructions and learning.</p> <p>While the district's graduation rate slowly improving, the current and fututres goals are still below the state graduation rates of 82.5%. The stakeholders would find it acceptable that goals past and future attainments/goals fall below state averages. There was no clear way to distinguish who were apart of the increased graduation rates. The applicant has expressed that their past success have increased equity within the district, data should illustrate that this equity is expressed across the district.</p>		
<b>(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a plethora of ways to provide a high level of transparency in the LEA processes and practices. The LEA website has all board meeting minutes, which includes policies, hiring and salaries of of appointed and hired staff. The applicant provides communication through meetings and materials developed by the LEA Department of Public Relations. The applicant also publishes a guide on understanding the budgetary processes. Teacher and Parent open houses are used to communicate information. The score reflects the lack of demonstration of the plan.</p> <p>The state of North Carolina and the applicant assigns grades that align with a salary. The creation of a grid makes it less user-friendly and therefore less transparent. Additionally, the applicant did not provide evidence to how it will attempt to communicate to families who are harder to reach with technology.</p>		
<b>(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has demonstrated evidence of sufficient autonomy and conditions under the State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements. For example, the state has adopted the Common Core State Standards, various statutes granting felinity to create a school district that supports high quality learning, rights of local school board to create policies and regulations. Additionally, the state has set forth goals for the Race to the Top plan which allows for the execution of sweeping changes.</p>		
<b>(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant demonstrated engagement with stakeholder in this plan. A informational survey was conducted and generated 40 stakeholder's which includes: District administrators, principals and teachers of the year, students,</p>		

chamber of commerce, public safety, professor and a parent. A one-day retreat generated a list of how to move forward with reforms and creating a vision. Subsequently, focus groups were conducted as the applicant moved forward with the one-to-one digital initiative.

The plan did not assure that 70% of the staff of the participating schools approved the plan. Each teacher of the year served on a focus group and 100% of the teachers of the year approved the plan, but that does not reflect the larger group of teachers. The focus groups never mention how many teachers were involved from the school. Throughout the plan the only clear planning took place with district leaders. Throughout the plan there was not a clear indication that teachers were engaged in the development of the proposal. The only feedback which changed were with the one-to-one digital initiatives and surrounded safety and security issues with the use of the technology.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant established a high-quality plan to incorporate personalized learning and teaching in order to increase achievement and meet college and career standards. The CAPS plan is based on : college ready, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, redefining professionalism, leadership and purposeful design. The student will experience both blended online and onsite learning. Instructional practices will fit the needs of the student an incorporate best practices. Students and parents will work together and have the constant contact from teachers who will emphasis what skills are needed to move forward to college and . This plan will ensure that stakeholders are in constant communications about the individual students and meeting his/her needs both academically and personally.</p> <p>The following are examples of how the applicant has approach two specific criteria:</p> <p>(1) Understanding what what they are leaning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals;. For example, "In WGS's centers for academic and personal success, students will be participating in an environment that blends both online and onsite learning. Educators will be using techniques that enable students to direct their learning so therefore it will be critical for students to truly understand what they are learning and why it is critical for their success."</p> <p>(2) A personalized sequences of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college- and career-ready;. For example, : "The schedule will also include more time for PLCS, seminar and planning which will support students even further in their personalized path to college- and career-readiness. The early college model is focused on educator collaboration to discuss targets, interventions, and baseline data of students that will help chart individual students' pathways until 12th grade".</p> <p>The applicant clearly articulates a rich, personalized educational experience for the most needy of students. While the learning aspect is critical, the applicant has referenced the need of meeting the personal needs of the students.</p> <p>The plan lacked clarity on how to approach learning and teaching while a student and his/her is living in poverty. The proposed sites for this program will be working with students and families in which day to day survival becomes a priority. The plan is proposed in a way that does not reflect the realities of serving families in crisis or high need. This population can not be separated from it's reality outside the school building.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant CAPS plan is designed to mover educators always from "traditional" roles towards innovative instructional practices. The individualized nature of the plan embraces blended, differentiated and personalized teaching. The applicant is utilizing best practices with regarding to effective staff development training. The training -for-trainers will be used throughout the district. The applicant is aware that the success of the CAPS program will depend greatly on the quality of teachers within the program. Front end support and compensation is critical and the applicant has demonstrated the worthiness of this approach.</p> <p>Teachers have shared responsibility for student learning and the NC Education Evaluation System is used to evaluate teachers and principals. Peer Assistance Review programs will be enhanced in order to have a strong mentoring programs.</p>		

The CAPS plan will support educators with tools such as : Home Base-data system for students, extended built-in planning time, and Instructional Coaching.

School leadership will have an array of development opportunities such as: Climate retreats, data-driven practices, LEAD Institute, New Principal Institute, Leadership Innovation Network, Leadership Coaching, Instructional Coaching for Common Instructional Framework, Coaching University. Teachers will have the opportunity at the New Teacher Institute, Common Practices Symposium, Learning Laboratory and the Summer Institute.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<p><b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant will create a CAPS Leadership Team to ensure smooth implementation, support and services to all participating schools. The current infrastructure present a strong central office staff capable of supporting this plan. The department of Accountability and technology and the Office of Business Operation will also ensure support during the implementation phase of the program. The applicant has demonstrated a strong commitment to provided the needed resources from existing sources in order to allow the success of the program.</p> <p>The applicant will provide flexibility for the school leadership to operate the program and the various components of the plan. This includes determining when a student to earn credits for mastering a topic and through multiple ways. The central staff will provide assistance for students with disabilities and English Learners, as well as autistic spectrum. However, the applicant was vague on how the building will also work with central staff to work with students who are English learners and/or disabled.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<p><b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a plan addressing policies and infrastructure to meet the needs of all stakeholders. The applicant acknowledges one disadvantage to the program is the great technology divide which impacts access for some students and families. They will use the central office's student services to establish alternative means for students and families. The applicant should consider having those student services housed within the participating school. Providing wrap around services in one location has proven to be successful for underserved students and families.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant will utilize the CPLT team to monitor the program and will meet as often as weekly. These meetings will allow for any adjustments, sharing and modifying of the program. The central leadership team and the school board will be informed on a monthly basis with a narrative report generated from the CPLT team and the grant administrator.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant will provide communications to all stakeholders. Parents will be informed during monthly informational nights, website, bi-monthly focus groups. Teachers will have communications through various staff meetings, posted minutes on the websites, serving as a liaison, participation in monthly Superintendents teacher's advisory council. Outside staff will have similar access to communications and updates as participating teachers. Student's will be able to conduct surveys and give email feedbacks. The broader community will have the opportunity to attend informational nights conducted throughout the year, district and school websites.</p>		

<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a realistic and achievable plan to measure performance. The incremental progressive annually reflect a realistic, but excellent high expectations for the program participants. For example, the expectations of the teachers using a reliable use to evaluate performance within the classroom. The plan illustrates a baseline score provided by the NC Professional Teacher Standards and high expectations for growth. The plan is clearly articulated and is a reliable source to make adjustments as needed. This is an excellent tool if utilized properly by the applicant and demonstrate their commitment for excellence. A high quality plan will demonstrate a clear knowledge of current and acceptable best practices in evaluations and measures of K-12 schools. The plan can incorporate state-wide and nationally accepted assessment tools.</p>		
<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has both internal and external evaluations to access, adjust and revise during the implementation. The applicant clearly demonstrates the ability and commitment to closely monitor all areas and has strategies in place to assure that the plan is a worthy investment. The outside evaluator will compile and generate a user-friendly narrative to inform stakeholders of the evaluation results as well as the changes to be implemented.</p> <p>A high quality plan will have a template of how often, what types of tools will be evaluated and why. A plan would consist of what are acceptable measures and what will be addressed when the plan is not meeting the standards they created.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>
<p><b>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a detailed budget narrative and budget which identifies all funds used to support this project. The requested funds were reasonable and would support the implementation of the plan. The applicant was able to give rationale for all expenditures. The applicant was vague in ensuring long-term sustainability of personalized learning environments.</p>		
<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><b>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provided a plan to address the sustainability of the plan. Staff will be reassigned as well as the continued use of existing personnel who will participate through the plan. The use of train-the-trainers will continue to provide support to new and existing teachers. The applicant has a leasing agreement for the use of technology and stakeholders will continue to seek outside funding sources. The plan did not adequately address data to inform future investment and sustainability.</p>		

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

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<p><b>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a description of sustainable partnerships such as the North Carolina New School (NSNSP). The partnership was supported by the Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation. NCNSP works with over 100 innovative schools models. NCNSP provides offer a variety support services for innovative schools and offers research-base services.</p>		

demonstrated to: increase teacher and administrator capacity and effectiveness, accelerate teacher and administrator career growth, increase student engagement, improve student performance on assessments and improve graduation rates. The CAPS plan entails sweeping reforms which allow for the student to drive their own educational program. Teacher's provided data-driven personalized instruction utilizing the latest technologies in a blended classroom setting.

According to the applicant, The Youth Master Plan allows for a true partnership ensuring that many stakeholders are invested in preparing youth from the cradle to adulthood. The applicant provided focus groups, surveys in order to have community input and support. The applicant suggest continue to access new data systems which are user friendly and empower students, teachers and families to engage in the success of their student. The evaluation strategies are impressive and consist of both internal and external evaluations conducted regular and adjust, modified or changed to make improvements.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		<b>Met</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The CAPS reform model is minimally coherent and comprehensive meeting the core educational assurances. The individualized learning using blended instruction and align with college and career standards. The applicant supports effective teaching and provides all needed tools in order to be successful at decreasing the achievement gap across students groups. The evidence in the application would met the necessary requirements, however to the extent that a high-quality plan was created is lacking.</p>		

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>168</b>
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## Race to the Top - District

### Technical Review Form

Application #0058NC-5 for Wilson County Public Schools

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

	Available	Score
<b>(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>The applicant presents a clear vision to create small academies at each district school using the early college high school framework as a model.</p> <p>a)The narrative provides evidence that the applicant has experience in the four core education assurance areas. The district has adopted the Common Core and Essential State Standards and assessments that focus on promoting college</p>		

and career readiness. The district has adopted a data system that allows parent, student and educator access to performance measures in real-time (i.e., HomeBase data system) and a focus on developing teachers and administrators through training (i.e., professional learning communities, technology training). Evidence is also provided that demonstrates the applicant has experience turning around low performing schools in the district (Beddingfield High School recognized as Turnaround School , Vick Elementary and Darden Middle Schools recognized as state Title I Reward School).

b)The applicant clearly identifies the selected framework to guide its project. The district intends to use the design and supports associated with the early college high school model to provide students with a personalized program of study that prepares students for college and the workplace. The framework’s inclusion of strategies to support small learning environments, personalized student learning plans, and accumulation of college credit reflects the project’s intent to prepare students for college through catered learning plans. Academic and social emotional support structures embedded in the early college high school model will be modified to fit the grade level (i.e., middle and high school) and teachers will receive training on how to integrate digital and face-to-face instruction suited to student needs and learning styles. The applicant has one current early college high school, Wilson Early College Academy, and seeks to replicate the success of this program in other district schools. However, the applicant does not provide current performance data for the district’s existing early college to support its claims that the program has been successful. Evidence of model success in the district may have provided support for these claims.

c)The applicant provides a description of the classroom experience. The role of teacher will move from leader to facilitator, the teachers will have autonomy to design classroom instruction to meet student needs (i.e., flipped classrooms, seminars, workshops). Professional development will be job-embedded and include student supports that encourage relationship building. The sample schedule in the appendix also highlights instructional time devoted to remedial classes and instructional time devoted to college courses for students.

The district’s vision of reform is based on the early college high school model. The inclusion of suggested student support strategies unique to the early college high school framework fit the project’s use of personalized learning plans, blended learning and college/career readiness. However, the lack of data on performance in the existing early college weakens this section of the narrative. The response scores in the high range.

<b>(A)(2) Applicant’s approach to implementation (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
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**(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

a)The applicant provides a rationale for the selection of project schools. The district-wide project will be implemented in phases. The pilot middle and high schools will be selected from one of the district’s feeder zones. The subsequent implementation phase will include all middle and high schools in the district. However, beyond school size, the narrative does not clearly rehearse the district’s decision-making process. The narrative only states that the Beddingfield school cluster was selected based on size. The lack of additional factors that led to the selection suggests that the process was not thorough, based factors related to teaching and learning, or schools’ alignment with the competition’s eligibility requirements.

b)The participating pilot middle school has not been selected yet and the participating high school will be the only high school in the feeder zone. A graphic provides data on all middle and high schools in the district. Across the district’s middle and high schools, there will eventually be 6526 students participating, 4841 of which are from families with low-income. Across participating schools, 806 students are classified as high-need and 390 educators will be impacted by the program.

c)In that school selection has not been finalized, the specific number of participating students is not known. In the pilot stage, 200 students from a feeder middle school will participate and 200 students from Beddingfield High will participate. The total number of teachers in at Beddingfield is 63. The number of educators at the feeder middle school are as follows: Darden Middle employs 29 educators and Speight Middle School employs 22 educators. In that each school serves more than the projected number of students in the pilot, there is no breakdown of how many pilot students are high-need or come from families with low income. Nonetheless, the project will eventually be scaled to all schools and serve 6526 students, 390 educators, 806 high-need students and 4841 low-income students.

The response scores in the middle range. While the school selection process is given, the lack of explanation to support the process weakens the narrative. The lack of demographic data on the pilot phase versus data on all schools (i.e., full scale implementation) also weakens this section of the narrative.

<b>(A)(3) LEA-wide reform &amp; change (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
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**(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents most elements of a high-quality plan. The plan for LEA-wide reform and change scales components

of the project to all district schools and is aligned with district core beliefs delineated in the narrative. In that 1:1 technology access, early college strategies and HomeBase access impact schools beyond the project, the district seeks to establish meaningful reform both in the project and LEA-wide. The plan for implementing the project and initiating change articulates activities, deliverables, persons responsible for activities and lists indicators for measuring progress. Because the plan aligns with the applicant's core beliefs, the likelihood that the plan will advance district outcome goals is increased. The theory of change model also highlights this focus on LEA-wide reform and change. The applicant does not, however, clearly indicate a timeline in the plan. The absence of benchmarks that identify when activities occur weakens the application. Furthermore, the lack of quantitative benchmarks for indicators and a process to evaluate feedback from qualitative indicators listed may hinder evaluation of project progress. The narrative provides conflicting completion dates for the Wilson Youth Master Plan, upon which the success of the project is linked. The narrative notes that the master plan will be completed and presented in May of 2013 and a summary document in the appendix states that it will be completed and presented in May of 2014. The date of development is critical in that a completed plan provides strength for the project because impact can be measured from the beginning of the project. The lack of a completed plan delays measurement of impact at least until year 2 or year 3 of the project. In that the narrative labels the master plan as the strongest endeavor regarding reform, the lack of clarity regarding its completion weakens this section of the application.

The plan for reform is sound in that the applicant has considered the impact and scalability of the initiative. The sharing of project resources and development of personalized learning throughout the district, indicate a focus on addressing achievement in all schools. Beyond the missing time references in the high-quality plan and clarity regarding the completion of the Wilson Youth Master Plan, the elements of the applicant's plan for establishing the project and scaling its components are evident. The response scores in the middle range.

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

**10**

**7**

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

The district provides a slate of performance goals that address performance for all participating students. The goals are achievable for a district-wide program providing academic and social emotional supports. Goals are established for summative assessments, but student subgroups are not noted for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade ACT EXPLORE and 11<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN. Goals are also clearly indicated for decreasing achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates, and increasing college enrollment rates. The applicant does not, however, provide ambitious performance targets for subgroups currently scoring beneath the overall average level of performance noted for each indicator. For instance, the ACT overall proficiency rate is 34% , but three of the six subgroups are not anticipated to even approach the proficiency rate benchmark. While anticipated performance benchmarks are incremental, they do not progress aggressively enough to bring all subgroups at least to the level of average proficiency. This trend is also indicated in WorkKeys performance projections. Also, given the district improvement in overall graduation rate, the targets for college enrollment rate is comparatively low (i.e., from 7.3% to 42.5% by subgroup)

The narrative includes the required goals and performance benchmarks. However, performance benchmarks are not clearly ambitious based on data provided in the narrative. The applicant scores in the middle range.

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

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

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

The applicant demonstrates a record of success in advancing student learning and increasing equity.

a-b)The applicant provides evidence that it has improved student learning outcomes and closed achievement gaps. Continuous increases in graduation rate by subgroup shows the district has closed the gap between minority and white student performance. Decreased performance gaps also noted between overall graduation rate and the performance of economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities . While only three years of data are provided in the appendix for subgroup graduation rates, performance increases are worthy of note and indicate district ability to affect change. The applicant does, however, provide evidence of improvement in overall district graduation rate and math/English/reading data. The district's overall high school graduation rate increased from 58.2% (2008) to 72.6% (2012). The rate is still below the state average, but represents a marked improvement in district overall performance. Darden Middle, increased the percent of students scoring proficient in math from 37.3% (2007) to 76.8% (2012). Reading performance also increased from 28.4% (2008) to 69.5% (2012). Beddingfield High School realized similar success in

Algebra I performance, in which 54.8% of students scored proficient in 2007 and 75.2% scored proficient in 2012. English performance also saw gains from 65% proficient (2007) to 88% proficient (2012). The narrative did not, however, include increases in the college enrollment rate. Therefore, all components of the selection criteria (1)(a) are not addressed.

c)The applicant makes student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve learning. All parents in the district have access to a student data portal through which they can access student coursework, grades and learning resources. The new student information system, HomeBase, was released in 2013, but prior to its release parents had access to student data through the state's NC Window on Student Education (NC WISE)and Common Education Data Analysis & Reporting System (CEDARS).

The applicant's response scores in the high range. Data is provided that shows four years of improvement in overall graduation rate and evidence of improved academic performance in target schools. Stakeholders are able to access data that is student-specific, released in real-time and capable of impacting change in performance and school supports.

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

**5**

**4**

**(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant provides evidence of transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments. Presentations that discuss district status and initiatives include advisory councils (superintendent, parent, teacher and student advisory councils), an annual budget meeting where community leaders are invited to attend, education partnerships meetings and PR events and initiatives released by the district.

(a-c)The district board discusses salaries for all school-level instructional and support personnel at each board meeting prior to the applicant's appointment to a position. The salary range and rate for that specific position is recorded in meeting minutes and published as public record. The district uses the state salary scale to identify salaries for all state positions on its website and all salaries are accessible via a Freedom of Information Act request.

(d)The LEA does not release non-personnel expenditures at the school level. But if requested, the data will be released to the public.

The applicant provides access to most of its records, but does not release actual non-personnel expenditures at the school level. Therefore, the applicant's response scores in the high range.

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

**10**

**10**

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

The LEA has demonstrated that sufficient autonomy exists for them to implement the personalized learning environment proposed in the narrative. Section 115C-47 of NC General Statutes gives districts the authority to make decisions that promote personalized learning. NC Legal, statute and regulatory requirement also provide flexibility for LEA decisions regarding school structure, curriculum/instructional materials and innovation.

Because the state affords the LEA flexibility to implement a personalize learning environment, the response scores in the high range.

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

**15**

**11**

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

A)The applicant provides evidence that it engaged stakeholders in the planning process and adjusted the proposal based on stakeholder feedback. Initial planning meetings regarding 1:1 computing in middle school began in 2012 with a group of 40 parents, students, district personnel and community members. Feedback on challenges associated with using tablets in the classroom and digital learning were addressed and included new restrictions on downloading apps and digital media library access. This feedback was integrated into the current application prior to sharing it with both the Superintendent's and Teachers Advisory Councils.

Teacher surveys also gathered feedback during proposal development. North Carolina is a not a collective bargaining state; therefore, 70% of teachers had to show support for the proposed project. The narrative indicated that 100% of teachers participating in the middle school focus groups and 100% of the teachers on the advisory council supported this project. However, it is not clear if 70% (n=273) of participating teachers (n=390) support the project. For example, it is not clear if all middle school teachers attended the focus groups or how feedback was gathered from all high school teachers.

b) The applicant provided multiple letters of support for the project. IHE representatives, district principals, community group

representatives, education partners and the Chamber of Commerce all expressed support for the initiative.

The applicant did not meet the threshold for participating teacher support, therefore the response scores in the middle range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(C)(1) Learning (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
<p><b>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The district has a high-quality plan that details how it will personalize the learning environment for students. The plan notes activities, deliverables, persons responsible and progress measurement, but does not include time benchmarks. All students will be exposed to teachers who've been trained in integrating technology and other instructional strategies designed to prepare students for college and careers. Most notable in the applicant's approach to personalize learning are the foundational components for teaching and leading in this new paradigm: a shift from educator to facilitator; use of professional learning communities; instructional coaching from the NC New Schools Project; training on blended learning, differentiated instruction, personalized learning, and Response to Intervention; a train-the-trainer model for building teacher capacity, high-quality training on digital learning devices and the HomeBase dashboard; and an evaluation process tied to teacher effectiveness decisions. These tenets ensure that teachers have the tools and supports they need to guide students in a personalized learning environment.</p> <p>a)The project will assign each student a digital device and place them in a small learning community to allow teachers to integrate instructional strategies and use digital resources to deepen the learning experience. Each student will be guided by a personalized education plan that maps to college and career-ready graduation requirements. The applicant intends to use the digital device as an instructional tool to provide a rigorous course of study uniquely suited to the needs of each student. The early college framework and the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school facilitate the mastery of critical and advanced content. However, the applicant does not provide a clear explanation of how many students are expected to earn college credit beyond AP and IB credit.</p> <p>b)Each student will be guided by a personalized education plan to ensure that they are college and career ready. The narrative lists instructional approaches slated for the project: blended learning, differentiated instruction, Response to Intervention; technology integration, and small learning communities. Students will have access to frequently updated data through the district's HomeBase student data system. Teachers can access student interest surveys/inventories and deliver instruction that reflects student interest and needs. Frequent collaboration between educators will ensure that revisions or accommodations inserted into the education plan are a result of team discussions during Professional Learning Community meetings where all options are considered.</p> <p>c)Based on lessons learned from year one of the 1:1 digital device pilot, students will be provided technical support via the school-based technology facilitators and workshops on digital device use. However, the narrative notes that students will use high-quality digital content but does not specify the type, subject or describe the process used to select the content.</p> <p>The applicant's response scores in the high range.</p>		
<b>(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<p><b>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>a)The focus of this project is to prepare teachers to effectively instruct students in a personalized learning environment. All students in the school will be exposed to early college practices (middle/secondary grades) and advanced content through college course enrollment (secondary grades). Rigor would be increased by the use of high-quality digital content, a smaller learning environment and a personalized education plan that reflects student interests and career/college plans.</p> <p>a)Project funds are set aside to send administrators and teachers to training provided by the NC New Schools Project. Teachers will be supported by coaches, Instructional Technology Facilitators, and administrators as they restructure the current learning environment. The length and intensity of training provided by the NC New Schools Project will provide teachers with a toolkit of strategies and resources to revise and adapt lessons for personalized learning. Teachers will assist students in reviewing and revising their educational learning plan by identifying lessons or resources that address student needs. Teachers and administrators will have access to the HomeBase student information system. The system will allow teachers to identify resources, advise students regarding levels of performance, and access interest inventories or surveys to adjust instruction. HomeBase also serves as the site for educator evaluation, which integrates student</p>		

performance into the teacher evaluation process. Teachers will also have access to the district's Education Value-Added Assessment System, which allow teachers to take a holistic look at student performance over time.

b)Feedback from the HomeBase data system, the value added-system and student's personalized education plan will provide teachers with actionable information to modify lessons, assessments, high-quality learning resources and fine tune their own requests for additional professional development. The applicant's inclusion of these processes and tools will likely increase the teacher's ability to customize every facet of the instructional process for students in the small learning communities.

c)Members of the administrative team and teachers in the project will participate in training provided by the NC New School Project. This training will provide them with the knowledge, skills and resources to maintain fidelity to the early college model and to be highly effective as an instructional coach in the classroom. The combination of the early college model, blended instruction, instructional coaching and small learning environments will ensure that teachers are prepared to execute the project as described in the narrative. The investment in teacher preparation is a strength of the proposal. The inclusion of dedicated time for teacher involvement in a professional learning community will provide them with a framework to assess, discuss and continually improve their professional practice and student performance in the classroom.

d) The project's inclusion of opportunities for advanced professional development (NC New Schools Project), adoption of a framework that provides the option to earn college credit in high school (early college), and the integral use of data to drive instruction and assessment (HomeBase system) increases the likelihood that students in the project will be taught by effective and highly effective teachers. All students in all district schools will participate in the project after the pilot phase is completed.

The project intends to provide advanced training for teachers and administrators in the project. The response to the selection criteria scores in the high range.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>a)The narrative notes that practically every division in the district office will provide supports for the project. The project will be guided by a project leadership team and receive support from the division of instructional services, accountability and technology and business operations. Members of the district office staff have experience with the early college model and strategies to advance professional development, two integral parts of the proposed project. There is ample evidence in the narrative that this project will receive support from the LEA.</p> <p>b)The narrative clearly states that schools sites have the autonomy to revise school operations to suit a personalized learning environment. Decisions regarding staffing, bell schedules, teaching models and budgets are site-based and granted by state statute.</p> <p>c-d)The proposed project's use of data to drive decision making and the use of Common Core standards are a benchmark for performance are examples of how this project will give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in the classroom. The project intends to offer a blended learning environment, so students will be able to acquire knowledge and demonstrate mastery through online assessments, performance-based assessments or standardized state assessments.</p> <p>e)The use of the digital device to deliver virtual, customizable instruction is a strong example of how this project will provide resources that are varied and accessible by all students. Project components (i.e., translated materials, self-paced instruction, small classes will facilitate the delivery of accommodations needed by students with disabilities or ELL students.</p> <p>The supportive nature of the LEA and the availability of resources for the project are strengths of the application. This response scores in the high range.</p>		
<b>(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b>		
<p>a)The narrative contains evidence that all students will have access to project components regardless of income. A contract with Greenlight is being explored to provide students that do not have internet access at home, access at a discounted rate. The 1:1 pairing of a student with a digital device also ensures that all students can fully participate in the</p>		

project as described.

b) The applicant provides for student and family technical support through a variety of strategies. For instance, Parent Academy workshops are planned to provide instruction and troubleshooting techniques for school-based hardware and software. The assistance of the district office technology staff and site-base Instructional Technology Facilitators are supports the applicant intends to offer as support for families experiencing difficulty accessing the digital components of the personalized learning environment.

c)The applicant’s HomeBase student information system allows parents access to real-time student performance and school data. The narrative notes that the system will allow parents to export data using a unique login and that the HomeBase suite is compatible with other learning applications. However, the applicant does not name the compatible applications or identify data parents are allowed to export.

d) The narrative states that the LEA uses data systems that are interoperable. The text clearly notes that the HomeBase system and PowerSchool are interoperable. The ease with which teachers and administrators can access data to make decisions is a strength of the proposal.

The manner in which the applicant’s infrastructure supports the project’s plan for personalized learning is evident and scores in the high range. However, the lack of specific information regarding other compatible learning applications and the ability to export information in an open data format weakens this section.

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

	Available	Score
<b>(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>
<p><b>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant has a high-quality plan for continuous improvement with most required elements noted. The narrative contains a matrix that details activities, deliverables, persons responsible and progress indicators. The items noted in the matrix provide a holistic view of what will be expected from the project and who is responsible for executing activities. The delineation of responsibilities increases the likelihood that activities occur as proposed in the narrative. Personnel hired by the grant (i.e, CAPS Plan Lead coordinator, Middle School and High School coordinators) will ensure that the project is executed as proposed. Assistance will also be provided by the district grants administrator, who will oversee project monitoring and implementation. Weekly team meetings, electronic communication and project plans for each school site will further ensure that improvement indicators are addressed quickly. The matrix does not, however, indicate a timeline for activities. While frequency is alluded to (e.g., monthly, ongoing, weekly, pre/post surveys), there is no clear indication of when activities will begin and end. The lack of quantitative benchmarks for indicators noted and a process by which qualitative feedback will be assessed is also not clearly discussed in the narrative.</p> <p>Although the response lacks references to activity start and stop time frames and specific measurement benchmarks, the plan addresses major project activities, involves various stakeholder groups, and indicates a continuous assessment of project progress. The response scores in the middle range.</p>		
<b>(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</b></p> <p>The applicant provides a list of communication strategies to ensure that the project is transparent and encourages stakeholder engagement. Monthly meetings, web announcements, online surveys and leadership provided by a communication subcommittee are best practices to ensure that communication and engagement are ongoing. Strategies are specific to this project and list frequency of engagement and stakeholder groups. While meeting frequency is noted for some activities, other activities have no timeframe noted (i.e., information about CAPS plan at site staff meetings, presentations at Superintendent’s Student Advisory Committee, project information on robocall/parent newsletter). There is also no clear indication of when activities will begin, rationales for the types of activities included, deliverables, and who specifically will conduct the activities noted (i.e., subcommittee members, project coordinators, principals, etc.) .</p> <p>The applicant provides a detailed list of intended strategies, but the absence of several components of a high-quality plan weaken this section of the application. The response scores in the middle range.</p>		
<b>(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The applicant includes ambitious performance measures, in that several benchmarks require intensive student supports to achieve, including Algebra I by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, increases in IB exams/AP passage rate, and a dropout prevention measure. Yet, the annual increases are achievable based on supports in the application and incremental annual benchmarks similar to anticipated increases for LEA-wide performance measures in the narrative. However, the performance measures related to the entire population (i.e., number of highly effective and effective educators) do not use the correct sub-groups (as defined in the notice). The applicant also does not provide text detailing the rationale for each measure, a discussion of how each measure will provide formative project feedback, or a description of how each measure will be revised, if needed.

The absence of an accompanying detailed narrative for each proposed measure weakens this section of the narrative. The response scores in the middle range.

<b>(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
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**(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant presents strategies for how it will evaluate effectiveness, but does not include all elements of a high-quality plan in the narrative. The applicant intends to hire an external evaluator to assess the effectiveness of the project's activities. A mixed methods approach will be used and involve both quantitative and qualitative data. The CAPS Coordinator and Grants Administrator will guide data collection and oversee the process. The applicant provides a brief discussion that suggests feedback will be used to revise both annual and post-grant operations. However, the district does not present a plan with rationales for suggested activities, timelines or deliverables. While intended activities by the external evaluator are delineated, they do not describe how they will be conducted (i.e., how will collaboration with the CPLT occur, how will collaboration be tracked, which stakeholder groups receive feedback from the evaluation, etc.).

The lack of details regarding evaluation activities and missing elements of a high-quality plan weakens this section of the application. The response to this selection criteria scores in the middle range.

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

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

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

The applicant lists all funds that will be used to support the project. The budget is reasonable and sufficient to cover the activities noted in the narrative. Investments reflect priorities related to the early college model (i.e., professional development by the NC New Schools Project, 1:1 technology, instructional technology facilitators), which will ensure that the model is implemented with fidelity. An investment in professional development from an organization knowledgeable of the early college model is especially critical in ensuring that the academies reflect early college principles (advanced student supports, accumulation of college credits, personalized learning plans, etc) and do not continue to operate as traditional schools. The narrative and line item annotations indicate which proposed expenditures are one-time investments versus recurring investments.

The budget contains reasonable costs to support the implementation of the early college model. Investments reflect components in the narrative and priorities in the model. The score for the budget is in the high range.

<b>(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
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**(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant does not present a high quality plan with rationales for suggested activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties. There is also no clear discussion of how project the project will use assessments to restructure or review any future investments. The absence of details weakens this section of the narrative in that broad statements about post-grant activities do not provide concrete evidence of project extension beyond cessation of funds. Including activities without stating who will be responsible for them or when they will occur increases the likelihood that activities are not conducted. However, the narrative does provide some intended strategies for sustainability. Project duties will absorbed by full-time district staff. Post-grant training provided by staff certified during the project (i.e., participants in the train-the-trainer workshops) will also continue under the professional learning community's framework. Local advisory board community members will provide project guidance after cessation of funds and the district will address equipment/leasing

costs and options.

The response to this selection criteria scored in the middle range. The lack of a clearly delineated plan that includes a timeline, deliverables, and personnel responsible for carrying out the plan calls into question the applicant's ability to extend the project post-funding.

### Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
<b>Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

**Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant intends to partner with two entities to provide additional family and student supports. Both the partnership with NC New Schools Project (early college high school, principal leadership, instructional coaching, professional development) and Wilson 2020 (K-12 achievement, safety, out-of-school activities, workforce education, health and wellness). The narrative indicates three areas in which educational desired results will be measured, and one family/community desired result. The partnership intends to use results to allocate resources, replicate the model in other sites to benefit district children, and leverage personnel and resources from local education and social service agencies. The possible use of the results and best-practices for students in pre-K sites is one strategy the partnership has identified to scale the model and continue to offer additional services to the community over time. The applicant provides only a cursory description of how it would assess and build staff capacity in participating schools. The lack of detail regarding how the project will specifically assess need, identify strategies unique to students in participating schools, create a decision-making process indicating how all entities would work together in the partnership, engage families and routinely assess the applicant's process weakens this section of the proposal. The applicant also does not clearly identify its annual performance measures for the partnership. The chart detailing desired results and methods of tracking (i.e., state testing, EXPLORE testing, etc.) does not clearly indicate numeric benchmarks for performance. The lack of benchmarks will likely limit the applicant's ability to gauge how successful the proposed partnership

The partnership described in the narrative is encouraging. However, the lack of detail regarding several sub-indicators weakens this section. The response scores in the middle range.

### Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

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

**Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:**

The applicant meets absolute priority one. The applicant proposes a personalized learning environment using the early college high school as a framework. The district adopted the Common Core standards, uses interoperable data systems, trains and develops its staff and has a history of turning around lowest-performing schools. The narrative consistently references its alignment efforts with college and career-ready standards and graduation requirements, improve student achievement, meeting academic needs, increasing educator effectiveness and student access to effective educators and decreasing achievement gaps and increasing graduation and college enrollment rates.

<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>162</b>
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