

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/21/2013 05:43 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Independent School District #625 (U351D130039)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	15	14
Significance		
1. Significance	10	9
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	28
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	22
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	9
Sub Total	100	92
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference		
Priority Four - Technology		
1. Technology	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	105	97

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - AEMDD FY 2013 Application Reivew - 6: 84.351D

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Independent School District #625 (U351D130039)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.

(b) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.

Strengths:

(a) The proposed project is designed to promote the benefits of implementing media arts into core-academic curricula in elementary and secondary schools as a way to improve teaching and learning on the part of at-risk students. The applicant also plans to increase the number of well-trained, art educators in a targeted, school district and beyond. This will also include increasing the number of arts-infused courses across multiple- academic disciplines, thereby providing a PreK-12 Arts, focused pathway from preschool to graduation from high school. The applicant notes that the target, student population is centered on meeting the academic needs of at-risk students whose academic skills and achievements are well-below national standards.

(b) The applicant has an understanding concerning some of the educational, achievement gaps that exist in the student population that it serves (p. 4-5 & 7-10)). By combining explicit teaching of media, arts standards and students' use of new digital technologies based on common core standards, it will have the effect of increasing student academic achievements in literacy/reading and math. To do so, the project will help close the educational, achievement gaps that currently exist and provide the assurance that all students are well-prepared for college and are equipped with the academic skills and abilities leading to a productive career in a chosen field of endeavor.

Weaknesses:

(a) No weaknesses are noted.

(b) The applicant failed to adequately describe the professional development gaps that exist in regard to the teachers who will be participating in the project. In addition, the gaps that are identified by the applicant concerning the students that it serves, are too generalized and lack appropriate data to substantiate the identified gaps that are identified.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project by considering the following factor:

The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.

Strengths:

The proposed project will provide an opportunity to advance the practice and assessment of arts integration in the targeted schools and develop an understanding and working knowledge of what works for schools and districts seeking to expand their arts, integration efforts. The applicant notes that while many states have technology standards and some have arts standards, few examples of complete sets of standards exist to guide the training and instruction of teachers in the use of technology in an arts context. Through the process of designing and implementing project elements, the applicant plans to create a nationally-accessible repository of standards-aligned products in the area of arts teaching and learning in such areas as technology-driven, Writing/ELA and math curricula (p.11). This will include developing standards-aligned, media arts units of study; creating an effective media-arts integration in core, academic subjects; designing models for the use of teachers in the process of instructing students who are in tune with the digital age; and developing a framework for professional development that blends new technology into classroom instruction and incorporates hands-on access for teachers in regard to the teaching tools they need in an advancing, technology-driven society (p. 11). During the third year of the project, the External Evaluator is to develop an article about the project for publication. The purpose of this activity is to also distribute nationally information availability on effective models that integrate arts with standards-based, educational programs (p.50).

Weaknesses:

The applicant failed to provide examples of the journals in which the proposed article of the project would be published. Also, lacking is an outline of the topics that would be covered in such an article, including a discussion of possible users in a variety of other settings who could benefit by implementing the developed, arts-infused, training module.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**
 - (a) The extent to which the design of the proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices.**
 - (b) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.**
 - (c) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.**

Strengths:

(a) The research studies referenced in the subject proposal, suggest that the planned educational activities that the applicant will implement are based, in part, on an extensive analysis and assessment of the literature concerning the integration of arts as an effective tool for improving student-educational outcome and the classroom instruction skills of teachers.

(b) The project is designed to strengthen arts programming and infuse media arts in the ELA and Math curriculum in schools with art specialists, but no formal arts focus. Further, the project is, also, designed to bring the arts into the classroom in schools with no current, arts programming. The intent of these strategies is to increase student success and

exposure to effective, research-based, technology-oriented opportunities based on arts learning with a focus on enhancing Writing/ELA and Math curriculum (p.14).

(c) The applicant notes that the proposed project centers on both the process and the resulting arts-oriented, ELS and math, curriculum product. This plan of action is based on the premise of creating a sustainable and replicable framework for arts integration, which will support future, district-arts, integration efforts including other school districts through the country. This includes the creation of a nationally-accessible repository of standards-aligned, educational products that infuse best practices in arts teaching and learning across the curriculum, thereby becoming a sustainable, educational model for continued, arts integration and implementation in multiple, classroom settings.

Weaknesses:

(a) No weaknesses are noted.

(b) No weaknesses are noted.

(c) No estimate is provided by the applicant indicating the number of schools and/or school districts that would be interested in accessing the proposed repository created to promote the use of the developed products. In addition, no information is provided concerning the possible products that would be included in such a repository, including protocol procedures and instructions for their use. In addition, would there be a charge to gain access to such a repository? Further, would consulting services be made available to a school/or school district interested in establishing a similar, arts program modeled after the one that is developed by the applicant?

Reader's Score: 28

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

In addition, the Secretary considers the following factor:

The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

The project director holds a B.A. degree in Spanish, a B.A.S. degree in Elementary Education and ELS, and a Masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction. She also holds a Superintendent's license from a state university. Her background of experience includes serving as a principal of a middle-school where she developed a Spanish-Language, Dual-Immersion program within a diverse, urban school. She is currently the Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development for a school district in the North Eastern part of the U.S.

The other individuals who are identified as key personnel have excellent academic credentials and educational experiences in arts-oriented, academic areas including teaching, project administration and evaluation, and educational research. Of particular note, is the individual who will serve as the Manager of Program Evaluation. This individual is a doctoral-level researcher and evaluator with more than 15 years' experience in program evaluation and more than 20 years' experience teaching and developing courses at the university level

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

(a) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

(b) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

(c) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

(a) The management plan is based on the achievement of the stated objectives. It is based on a structure that is intended to ensure that all of the objective-oriented activities will be carried out in logical and sequential order. Specific responsibilities are assigned to each member of the management team. The plan is team-oriented, i.e., each member of the key management staff will serve as a leader of an operational team composed of project- staff members who will be responsible for implementing a specific set of objective-oriented activities. A project, roll-out schedule is also provided by the applicant. It covers each year of the project, beginning with the implementation of the project in year one, 2013, and ending in year 2017, with the project being implemented district wide.

(b) Time commitments are provided for key members of the project staff.

(c) The feedback activities for the project include four meetings that will be held each year by the members of the Guidance Team and Arts Integration Team. They will discuss and determine the progress that is being made toward the accomplishment of each, project objective. A team of Lead Teacher from the four-pilot schools will provide input concerning curriculum assessments including professional, development modules. The key-staff member responsible for managing the overall-evaluation plan for the project will work directly with the members of this team in the process of developing curricular assessments for students, analyzing, and reporting the outcomes of collected student assessments and survey data.

Weaknesses:

(a) Although the applicant's proposal narrative lists the duties and responsibilities assigned to each team leader, the applicant failed to include the name of each, team leader in the rollout schedule who will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of each, listed activity.

(b) The time commitment of one-hour-per week for the project director is not considered adequate to effectively managing the project, as a whole. This concern is also extended to four-other members of the management team, who are listed at a 5% time commitment in support of the project. Such time commitments are not considered adequate in light of the activities to be carried out, particularly during the first year and subsequent years of the project.

(c) It is unclear what role the project director will play in the feedback activities described in the subject proposal, particularly the procedures that will need to be followed to assure continuous improvement of the project (p. 42).

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

(b) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

(a) The evaluation plan includes both a formative and summative component. The evaluation activities to be implemented are designed to determine the progress that is being made on a periodic basis to achieve each of the stated objectives, including intended outcomes.

(b) The evaluation plan includes a list of benchmarks for each objective. They are designed to demonstrate student proficiency on standardized assessments of Math and Reading and to demonstrate student proficiency in arts-integrated curricula. Benchmarks related to teacher-training activities are designed to determine teacher effectiveness in designing, delivering, and measuring arts-integrated learning on the part of the students. The applicant plans to use SPSS data analysis software to analyze quantitative and qualitative data that is collected on an annual basis. The applicant presents a statistical model to assess longitudinal data that will be collected from an experimental group of students who will be participating in the project and a control group of non-participating students.

Weaknesses:

(a) No weaknesses are noted.

(b) The applicant failed to describe the characteristics of and the number of students who will make up the control group. The applicant failed to spell out the words represent the term SPSS. In addition, no information is provided concerning whether the applicant plans to administer or not to administer a pre- and post-test to the participating teachers

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference - Priority Four - Technology

1. **Projects that are designed to improve student achievement (as defined in the notice) or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.**

Strengths:

The budget for the proposed project includes a list of the digital tools that will be purchased. This will include the purchase of a number of 15" Macbook Pros for district-wide teacher and student use; projectors for teacher and student classroom use; the purchase of Apple TVs for teacher and student use in the classroom; and iPads (with covers) for teacher and student use, including iPad carts.

Weaknesses:

No information is provided by the applicant concerning how the costs were determined for the types of digital equipment that will be purchased and used in the training and education activities of the teachers and students.

Reader's Score: 5

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Independent School District #625 (U351D130039)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	15	13
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	28
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	19
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	9
Sub Total	100	87
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference		
Priority Four - Technology		
1. Technology	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	105	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - AEMDD FY 2013 Application Reivew - 6: 84.351D

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Independent School District #625 (U351D130039)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.

(b) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.

Strengths:

The proposal provides data indicating clear achievement gaps between students of color and white students and between low-income and middle-to-upper income students. The proposal gives data for the St. Paul Public School district that shows much greater ethnic diversity than the state average and 73% of students receiving free and reduced priced lunch. This all indicates that students ate at risk of educational failure.

Gaps in services are indicated by the fact that not all schools in the district are "arts-rich and some lack basic levels of arts programming" specifically for low-income students of color who then lack access to the tools that develop creative thinking and are linked to improved academic outcomes. The project cites that Maxfield Elementary and Humboldt Middle lack an arts focus (16).

Weaknesses:

The proposal gives general demographic information for the district, but does not give specific information for students in grades 3-8.

More specific data about the amount of arts teachers in the proposed schools, the amount of arts offerings, and the level of existing arts integration would be helpful to demonstrate the gap that the proposed project will fill.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project by considering the following factor:

The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.

Strengths:

The media arts units, the integration processes, the new assessments, and the professional development modules are all products with a high likelihood of utility. That these products are being created within a district that has a long-standing commitment to the arts furthers the likely utility. Additionally, that Minnesota is one of the few states with already

articulated media arts standards, and that DigitalWorks is involved in the national conversation about arts integration sets the proposed project up to be a model for the nation. The project intends to have a repository of standards-aligned media arts units that include assessments of student learning that focus on student ability to apply knowledge and skill in context. It also will have online galleries of student digital work, as well as digital PD modules accessible to teachers nationwide.

Weaknesses:

This criterion was thoroughly discussed and no weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The extent to which the design of the proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices.

(b) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

(c) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.

Strengths:

The project design reflects up-to-date-knowledge from research regarding focused arts integration; student centered, hands-on personalized learning; professional development; teacher-led curriculum development; coaching to insure implementation effectiveness; and student technology use. (17-18) A clear bibliography is included at the end of the proposal to provide further details on the extensive supporting research.

DigitalWorks builds on the SPPS district's Strong Schools, Strong Communities strategic plan to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students by aligning closely with new Common Core ELA and Math standards. ELA and math coaches are part of the curriculum arts integration team. Additionally, both ELL and Special Education teachers will be included in the curriculum writing teams and the arts-integrated curriculum is expected to be particularly effective for these students for who traditional text-based teaching is not working.

A key component of the project is professional development of teachers, and the proposal presents a strong model for doing this. It includes on-site follow-up mentoring of teachers, after the training. Building teacher capacity will yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.

Weaknesses:

Project-based learning is mentioned repeatedly throughout the proposal, but no specific details are provided about how this training will occur.

The proposal does not indicate how many hours of professional development teachers will receive.

Reader's Score: 28

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.**

In addition, the Secretary considers the following factor:

The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

The Project Director and Program Manager both have many years of relevant training and experience that includes serving as Project Manager for two U.S. Department of Education grants. The proposal includes the SPPS district on non-discrimination, which demonstrates the applicant's awareness for finding applications for employment from members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented.

Weaknesses:

It seems that the success of the project depends primarily on the Arts Integration Team, comprised of Arts Integration Coaches and Lead Teachers who have yet to be selected. It is unclear what kind of relevant training and experience these key personnel will bring to the project.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

(a) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

(b) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

(c) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The proposal presents a Project Timeline with clear milestones, dates and designated personnel responsible. The timeline includes benchmarks within each year with specific responsibilities assigned to each member. Each member of the key management staff will serve as leader of an operational team responsible for a specific set of activities. The proposal gives percentages of FTE time for all key project personnel.

The SPPS district has experience collecting and using data for decision-making and continuous improvement through two comprehensive initiatives (MTSS, PAE, and the Project Early Kindergarten Model) (41). Its Department of Research Evaluation, and Assessment has worked with external research organizations, such as Cooperative Ventures, in the past. The proposal indicates a plan for the key personnel of the project to meet together at least four times a year to monitor progress and recommend adjustments as needed by members of the Guidance Team and Arts Integration team. A team of Lead teachers will provide input about curriculum, assessments and professional development modules.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how the project will reach all schools in the district. The proposal states that it will work with 4 pilot schools in the first year of the grant, and reach the rest of the schools in the district by the last year of the grant. However, the management plan shows that the last two years will disseminate the program district wide, with professional development followed by implementation of arts integration units for 4th and 6th grades (Year 3) and 5th and 7th grades (Year 4). There is no indication when professional development and implementation of arts integration units for 3rd and 8th grades will occur.

The time commitments of key project personnel seem too limited to carry out a project in which every teacher in the district goes through the proposed program. The Project Director will only provide 1 hour a week and the Project Manager will only provide 4 hours per week. The time commitment for the Director of Technology is also not sufficient. The rest of the Project Guidance Team (Literacy Program Administrator, Math Program Manager, and Director of Information Technology) will provide 2 hours per week. Arts Integration Coaches, who are Teachers on Special Assignment and only work half time, will implement the day-to-day responsibilities of the project. It is unclear whether they will be able to commit all of their 0.5 FTE to this particular project. The proposal states that these Arts Integration Coaches will be part of an Arts Integration Team that will also comprise of Lead Teachers, however it does not indicate how much time the Lead Teachers will dedicate to the project. Given that the Lead Teachers will be full-time classroom teachers at the same time, there is concern that they will not have enough time to commit to this project outside of their existing responsibilities.

Given the limited time commitments of key project personnel, it is unclear how rigorously they will be able to implement a continuous improvement model.

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

(a) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

(b) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

The proposal indicates specific objective performance measures, including standardized math and reading assessments; curricular assessments of arts-integrated Media Arts, math and ELA; and improved teacher effectiveness in designing, delivering and measuring arts integrated student learning. The proposal includes quantitative targets for the outcome of the project, such as greater proficiency on standardized test data in ELA and Math in comparison with the previous year, and proficient scores on classroom arts-integrated assessments. Qualitative and quantitative data will be used in teacher pre- and post-surveys. Additional objective performance measures include teacher backgrounds, the number of hours of arts-integrated instructional time, the quality of arts-integrated units of instruction, and a measure of student engagement and motivation. It is appreciated that there will be an experimental as well as a control group.

The methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback at the end of each year (regarding standardized test data in ELA and Math and arts-integrated assessments), which will permit assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Weaknesses:

The only qualitative data collected seems to be from teachers on the pre- and post-surveys. It would be helpful to also include qualitative data from students. It would also be helpful to describe the characteristics and number of students who would make up the control group.

Reader's Score: 9

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference - Priority Four - Technology**

- 1. Projects that are designed to improve student achievement (as defined in the notice) or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.**

Strengths:

The project depends highly on technology and incorporates high-quality tools such as laptops, iPads and wifi cameras into the curriculum. It is appreciated that these tools will be used by the students themselves, rather than solely by the teacher. The project also includes specific training to prepare teachers how to use technology in their instruction.

Weaknesses:

This criterion was thoroughly discussed and no weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Independent School District #625 (U351D130039)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	15	14
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	29
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	22
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	10	10
Sub Total	100	95
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference		
Priority Four - Technology		
1. Technology	5	4
Sub Total	5	4
Total	105	99

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - AEMDD FY 2013 Application Reivew - 6: 84.351D

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Independent School District #625 (U351D130039)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.

(b) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.

Strengths:

Data from Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment and NAEP provide evidence to document the high need for the Applicant's school district. (p.7-8)

Applicant clearly discusses and provides evidence of educational disparities amongst students in SPPS, especially in reading and math (p. 8,9)

Applicant specifically demonstrates the high need for services for students of color, ELL student, low income students and students eligible for Special Education Services.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not provide supporting evidence that district is not able to meet required arts instruction

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project by considering the following factor:

The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.

Strengths:

Proposed project will create models a model of Digital Arts Instruction for a large school districts with and diverse student populations

Applicant cites and provides evidence that Minnesota and the state-developed media arts standards (one of the few states who have this articulation) is committed to and already playing a key role in shaping the direction of effective use of technology in an arts context nationwide. (p.10)

Applicant demonstrates prior experience in disseminating district successes and its participation, through the Superintendent, in the national educational conversation. (p.12)

Weaknesses:

This criterion was thoroughly discussed and the Reviewer did not find any weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The extent to which the design of the proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices.

(b) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

(c) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.

Strengths:

Program design is based on credible research and is aligned with the MN Districts academic standards (p 18, 19)

Applicant provides data about specific program participants and justification for student selection (16)

The proposed project is based on the Districts existing broad and long standing commitment to arts education.

Program design is aligned with strategies in the District's Strong Schools, Strong Communities strategic plan (p13)

Project places equal focus on student implementation and teacher professional development (p.20-23)

Applicant describes specific learning opportunities for educators using technology (25)

Applicant describes how products developed during grant period will be disseminated during and beyond the grant cycle. (p. 30)

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not discuss how proposed project will develop funding base beyond federal funding. (30)

Reader's Score: 29

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant

encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

In addition, the Secretary considers the following factor:

The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

Applicant provides curriculum vitae/resumes for key personnel

Applicant provides ample evidence that personnel has appropriate training and experience to implement project as outlined. (p31-35)

Applicant included a statement of non-discrimination further stating all vacant position openings target traditionally underrepresented individuals to apply (p.36)

Weaknesses:

This criterion was thoroughly discussed and the Reviewer did not find any weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

(b) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

(c) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The management plan is described in details with logical and related objectives for the proposed project. The Applicant provides a timeline that further describes specific tasks, timeframe and person responsible.

Timeframe in timeline is specific and includes benchmarks for each of the four years. (25,27-30)

Complexity of project tasks are reasonable to number of personnel and time allocation (p.36-38)

Applicant cites previous experience of utilizing project data to ensure continuous improvement including a partnership with the District's Dept. of Research, Evaluation and Assessment and external evaluators also (p. 41)

Applicant also has established model of collecting data, the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, that is already in place that integrates instruction, assessment and improvement (p. 41)

Weaknesses:

Applicant state that the Director of Information Technology will be responsible for aligning all aspects fo Digital Worlds project however time allocation is only 5% of this positions time. It is unclear if this is ample time given the heavy technology focus. (p. 38)

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project by considering the following factors:

(a) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

(b) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

Applicant outlines specific objectives and measurable benchmarks towards achieving these objectives
Appropriate and diversified qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are described in the evaluation plan.

Applicant has an established framework to provide performance feedback to track progress toward the program outcomes.

Weaknesses:

This criterion was thoroughly discussed and the Reviewer did not find any weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference - Priority Four - Technology**

1. Projects that are designed to improve student achievement (as defined in the notice) or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

Strengths:

Project proposes direct engagement with digital tools and a broad range of software programs
Applicant provides evidence of technology-driven learning opportunities
Applicant describes specific learning opportunities for educators using technology (p.25)

Weaknesses:

Proposal does not address how acquired technology will specifically improve teacher effectiveness (p.5)

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted

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