

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/12/2012 09:13 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arts and College Preparatory Academy (U282P120007)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Record and potential for success of collaboration		
1. Success of collaboration	15	15
Quality of the lead applicant		
1. Lead applicant quality	15	10
Quality of the project design		
1. Design quality	15	12
Potential for scalability		
1. Scalability	15	15
Innovation		
1. Innovation	15	10
Quality of the Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	7
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	6
Sub Total	95	75
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Persistently Lowest-Achieving School Turnarounds		
1. Turn Around Schools	5	1
Sub Total	5	1
Total	100	76

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Collaboration Awards - 2: 84.282P

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Arts and College Preparatory Academy (U282P120007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Record and potential for success of collaboration

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant's past or existing collaboration has improved educational outcomes and operational practices; and
(2) The extent to which the applicant's proposed collaboration and dissemination plan will achieve one or more of the following demonstrable results:
 - (i) Improved operational practices and productivity among all partners in such areas as financial performance and sustainability, governing board performance and stewardship, and parent and community engagement;
 - (ii) Improved student achievement (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications);
 - (iii) Improved student attendance and retention, and improved high school graduation rates;
 - (iv) Improved rates of college matriculation and college graduation;
 - (v) Improved rates of attendance and graduation from other postsecondary (i.e., non-college) institutions or programs.

Strengths:

The charts on page 8 detail stronger attendance and graduation rates at applicant school when compared with the surrounding city and state.

The data provided by the applicant school, on disciplinary incidents per 100 students, shows that the applicant school has very few disciplinary events when compared to the surrounding school district (p9).

The past four years of the Equality Project collaboration resulted in marked positive outcomes in educational and operational outcomes for students. The applicant's rating grew "from Academic Emergency the first rated year, to Effective from 2005-2009, to Excellent in 2010 and has since stayed Excellent (p7)."

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of the lead applicant

1. (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement (as defined in the NIA) and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school.
(2) Either--
 - (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter school; or
 - (ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been

significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter school and to which significant gains in student achievement (as defined in this notice) have been made with all populations of students served by the charter school.

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including, where applicable and available, performance on statewide tests, student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for students from low-income families and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school that are above the average academic achievement results for such students attending other public schools in the State.

Strengths:

The chart on p.14 details that the applicants overall school achievement that is stronger than the state.

The charts on p.18 show the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools.

Figure 12 (page 17) shows how that the graduation rate for the applicants economically disadvantaged students is 23 percentage points higher than the average rate for economically disadvantaged students in Ohio, and that there is not a significant gap between the graduation rate of economically disadvantaged students at the school as compared to their non-economically disadvantaged peers.

Economically disadvantaged students at the applicant school had an overall 85% proficiency rate, while disadvantaged students in the state averaged 70%, for a 15 percentage point difference. Black students at the applicant school averaged 80% proficient, while Black students in the state averaged 63% proficient, for a difference of 17 percentage points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant schools population is only 55% economically disadvantaged and the applicant school would have a stronger case if they were working with schools that had a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

The charts provided on pages 16-17 show a slight decrease in math, reading and social studies performance in 2011 compared with 2010 at the applicant school.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the project design

- 1. The extent to which the applicant proposes a high-quality plan to use its Collaboration Award funds to improve educational outcomes and operational practices in public schools, including public charter schools.**

Strengths:

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Equality project, students at the four sites will be randomly assigned into two groups, using a cluster-randomized control design (p 18-19).

Project plan detailed on pages 18-21 appears to be thoughtful, achievable and designed to improve outcomes and practices in the participating schools. For example, on pgs 20-21 the applicant notes Treatment and control group students will be compared in their attendance rates throughout the year as well as whether they advance (to the following grade). Finally, end-of-year state standardized test scores for treatment and control group students will be compared.

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not discuss how they would measure and/or track improved attendance of participating schools or improve outcomes for student achievement at participating schools per the criteria.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Potential for scalability

- 1. The extent to which the applicant's proposed collaboration can be replicated or adapted beyond the participating partners by other public schools or LEAs, including public charter schools and charter school LEAs, and sustained over the long-term.**

Strengths:

There are few costs to implementing this program at a school other than training your existin personnel. Given the low cost of implementing this program the applicants proposed collaboration can be replicated or adapted beyond the participating partners by other public schools or LEAs, including public charter schools and charter school LEAs, and sustained over the long-term.

School climate programs can be supported by other public schools through the use of their Title 1 and Race to the Top funds (p23). This provides other schools a simple way to adapt this program and not pay for it using general operating funds.

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Innovation

- 1. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that its proposed collaboration, as well as its dissemination plan, are either (i) substantially different from other efforts in its area of focus; or (ii) substantially more effective than similar efforts in its area of focus.**

Strengths:

In 2010, the National Best Cooperative Practices Between Charter and Traditional Public Schools Conference profiled two dozen practices where charter and traditional schools partner. The profiled practices are not similar to The Equality Project.

The Equality Project has been selected as a Best Practices winner to be profiled at the 2012 National Best Cooperative Practices Between Charter and Traditional Public Schools Conference.

Weaknesses:

The applicant used limited points of reference around benchmarking by primarily looking at comparable programs though the National Best Cooperative Practices Conference. A broader effort to benchmark beyond that one data source would have strengthened this section.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the 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 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 factors:

- (i) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and**
- (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

A strong team with diverse backgrounds and complimentary skill sets are detailed on pages 26 & 27.

The principal investigator holds a PhD, and serves as a Senior Researcher at the College of Education and Human Ecology in the Department of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University (p.26).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address if they encouraged applications from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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.

Strengths:

A project table provided on pages 28-29 outlines timelines, activities and responsible parties.

The budget for the proposed project is reasonable and aligned with achieving the objectives of the proposed project.

Weaknesses:

The management plan in the table referenced above does not show how the activities help applicant achieve the objectives of the proposed project.

The management plan noted lacks milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Reader's Score: 6

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Persistently Lowest-Achieving School Turnarounds

1. Turning Around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools

Note: In order to receive preference under this competitive preference priority, the applicant must specify that it is responding to this competitive preference priority.

To meet this priority, projects must be designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Improving student achievement (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications, or NIA) notice) in persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in the NIA).

(b) Increasing graduation rates (as defined in the NIA) and college enrollment rates for students in persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in the NIA).

(c) Providing services to students enrolled in persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Note: For purposes of this priority, the Department considers schools that are identified as Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants Program (see 75 FR 66363) as part of a State's approved FY 2009 or FY 2010 applications to be persistently lowest-achieving schools. A list of these Tier I and Tier II schools can be found on the Department's Web site at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>.

Strengths:

One of the four school partners is low achieving as defined by the competitive priority.

Weaknesses:

Only 1 of the 4 partners identified is a persistently low achieving school, the other three schools in this application are high performing and not responsive to the competitive preference guidance.

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/12/2012 09:13 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/11/2012 01:37 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arts and College Preparatory Academy (U282P120007)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Record and potential for success of collaboration		
1. Success of collaboration	15	11
Quality of the lead applicant		
1. Lead applicant quality	15	13
Quality of the project design		
1. Design quality	15	9
Potential for scalability		
1. Scalability	15	13
Innovation		
1. Innovation	15	10
Quality of the Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	7
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	8
Sub Total	95	71
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Persistently Lowest-Achieving School Turnarounds		
1. Turn Around Schools	5	2
Sub Total	5	2
Total	100	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Collaboration Awards - 2: 84.282P

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Arts and College Preparatory Academy (U282P120007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Record and potential for success of collaboration

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant's past or existing collaboration has improved educational outcomes and operational practices; and
(2) The extent to which the applicant's proposed collaboration and dissemination plan will achieve one or more of the following demonstrable results:
 - (i) Improved operational practices and productivity among all partners in such areas as financial performance and sustainability, governing board performance and stewardship, and parent and community engagement;
 - (ii) Improved student achievement (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications);
 - (iii) Improved student attendance and retention, and improved high school graduation rates;
 - (iv) Improved rates of college matriculation and college graduation;
 - (v) Improved rates of attendance and graduation from other postsecondary (i.e., non-college) institutions or programs.

Strengths:

The applicant has had increased academic success as measured by the states evaluation tool, since its beginning in 2004. The charter school has earned the highest academic mark in the state while educating a population that is over 40% economically disadvantaged. As indicated on the chart, partner schools have experienced increased academic growth since participating in the project. Pg. 7 - 8

Graduation rates and attendance rates as compared to the local school district and the state indicate the charter school s program has a positive influence on these student

Weaknesses:

There is very little specific information about how the information gained from this project will be disseminated. The applicant should have presented a plan for this piece of the project.

The information provided in the graph of disciplinary incidents on page 9 does not present a positive correlation in most of the partner schools. If the program is successful it would be assumed that discipline incidences would decrease instead of increase. The graph indicates that incidents have actually increased each year at St. Marys and Groveport schools. This data should be further explained in the narrative.

Reader's Score: 11

Selection Criteria - Quality of the lead applicant

1. (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement (as defined in the NIA) and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school.

(2) Either--

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter school; or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter school and to which significant gains in student achievement (as defined in this notice) have been made with all populations of students served by the charter school.

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including, where applicable and available, performance on statewide tests, student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for students from low-income families and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school that are above the average academic achievement results for such students attending other public schools in the State.

Strengths:

The graphs on page 14 demonstrating percentage of students at or above proficiency in reading and math and the following narrative demonstrate how the applicant has consistently outscored the state average for all students and specifically for educationally disadvantaged during the last three years. Additionally, information presented indicates that achievement of educationally disadvantaged students has been consistent with that of the school group as a whole, therefore, closing an achievement gap for this group of students. Pg. 14 - 16

Since the inception of the project, the charter schools graduation rate for all students, including economically disadvantaged, have surpassed the state averages. In the last reported year, the gap between the state and the charter school has widened even further with the group of educationally disadvantaged students having a graduation rate that is 23 points higher than the statewide group. Additionally, the applicant indicates there is very little difference between the educationally disadvantaged student and the entire charter school student population. This indicates that the charter school as a whole is providing an excellent education. Pg. 17

Weaknesses:

The applicant should have included the total school data for the graph on page 16. This would have made the comparison of the subgroups easier to understand if there had been a frame of reference.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of the project design

- 1. The extent to which the applicant proposes a high-quality plan to use its Collaboration Award funds to improve educational outcomes and operational practices in public schools, including public charter schools.**

Strengths:

The project will begin working with district and charter schools to bring each school their own Equality Project. The applicant will support these schools through meetings, website postings and through the sharing of research findings. This process is outlined, with explanation of events that will happen during specific time frames. Pg. 18

Weaknesses:

Even though research findings through the use of pre/post testing and surveys will be helpful in determining success of the project, the applicant did not discuss the other types of data that are more accessible that could also provide useful information. i.e. number of discipline incidences, increase in state test scores, attendance rates.

There seems to be more information provided on how the research aspect of the project will be handled than on the positive outcomes that could manifest from the project itself.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Potential for scalability

- 1. The extent to which the applicant's proposed collaboration can be replicated or adapted beyond the participating partners by other public schools or LEAs, including public charter schools and charter school LEAs, and sustained over the long-term.**

Strengths:

There is a great possibility for replication because the project is not expensive to implement and it does not require extensive work on the part of new participating schools. Through the use of the applicants website and the program manual, new participants could conceivably work through and make the project successful in any school setting. Pg. 22-23

As indicated in the narrative, this project is necessary due to increased responsibility on public schools to address the bullying issue. Through this project, public schools will be provided a creative and proven method to help address the bullying problem and other school climate problems that will cost little money. Pg. 22

Weaknesses:

The applicant should have provided more specific details of the plan to replicate this project. While the narrative indicates it is relatively inexpensive to use this program, there will need to be a plan in place to offer assistance to schools upon program implementation. It is not always possible to travel to other schools to provide help. Some discussion surrounding methods in which the charter school can offer support inexpensively would have been helpful.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Innovation

- 1. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that its proposed collaboration, as well as its dissemination plan, are either (i) substantially different from other efforts in its area of focus; or (ii) substantially more effective than similar efforts in its area of focus.**

Strengths:

The collaboration described will assist in promoting a positive school climate, which will, in turn, produce favorable academic results. This type of project, while being recognized as a Best Practice for charter schools and public school collaboration, is not a common area of focus when discussing school collaborations. For these reasons this project provides a very different approach. Pg. 24

It is obvious that the applicant studied the design of other collaborations before designing this project.

Weaknesses:

The dissemination plan lacks specificity. In addition to a website and program guide, the applicant should have provided additional ways of promoting replication and outreach. There is no explanation about the National Best Cooperative Practices conference. It should not be assumed that all people understand what this is and how it impacts educational practice. Pg. 24

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the 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 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 factors:**
 - (i) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and**
 - (ii) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

The project director has worked at this charter school since 2008 and was the individual behind the creation of the original idea. She has worked with other schools to help them develop this program, as well. She has years of theatre experience that can provide schools wishing to implement their own Equity Project some assistance in bringing together all aspects of the production.. Pg. e107

The applicant will utilize the expertise of individuals from the Ohio State University to manage and evaluate the project. In addition, there will be assistance provided from the state charter school association to market the project once it is developed.

Weaknesses:

There is no discussion relative to encouraging applications from underrepresented groups of people.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a timeline for project implementation that is well defined with timeframes for completion and responsible parties listed. Pg. 28

The management plan includes tasks that are aligned to the project goals. These tasks will make measurement of the goals easier as they are well outlined and defined. Pg. 28

The budget is closely aligned to the management plan and the pieces of the project implementation. Appendix

Weaknesses:

The management plan does not have milestones along the way to indicate tasks are in the process of being completed. This type of information would be helpful for all parties involved so that the smaller pieces of the overall goals could be more closely monitored.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Persistently Lowest-Achieving School Turnarounds

1. Turning Around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools

Note: In order to receive preference under this competitive preference priority, the applicant must specify that it is responding to this competitive preference priority.

To meet this priority, projects must be designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

- (a) Improving student achievement (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications, or NIA) notice) in persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in the NIA).
- (b) Increasing graduation rates (as defined in te NIA) and college enrollment rates for students in persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in the NIA).
- (c) Providing services to students enrolled in persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Note: For purposes of this priority, the Department considers schools that are identified as Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants Program (see 75 FR 66363) as part of a State's approved FY 2009 or FY 2010 applications to be persistently lowest-achieving schools. A list of these Tier I and Tier II schools can be found on the Department's Web site at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>.

Strengths:

The applicant states that one of the schools it will partner with is considered a Tier I school and has extremely poor academic performance. Pg. 12

Weaknesses:

Very little information is given relative to the low performing school that will be serviced by this project. Even though the school is identified as a Tier I school there should be specific information provided about student academic achievement, graduation rates, and/or student enrollment

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/11/2012 01:37 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/11/2012 11:46 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arts and College Preparatory Academy (U282P120007)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Record and potential for success of collaboration		
1. Success of collaboration	15	14
Quality of the lead applicant		
1. Lead applicant quality	15	13
Quality of the project design		
1. Design quality	15	12
Potential for scalability		
1. Scalability	15	13
Innovation		
1. Innovation	15	12
Quality of the Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	8
Sub Total	95	80
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Persistently Lowest-Achieving School Turnarounds		
1. Turn Around Schools	5	1
Sub Total	5	1
Total	100	81

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Collaboration Awards - 2: 84.282P

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Arts and College Preparatory Academy (U282P120007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Record and potential for success of collaboration

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant's past or existing collaboration has improved educational outcomes and operational practices; and
(2) The extent to which the applicant's proposed collaboration and dissemination plan will achieve one or more of the following demonstrable results:
 - (i) Improved operational practices and productivity among all partners in such areas as financial performance and sustainability, governing board performance and stewardship, and parent and community engagement;
 - (ii) Improved student achievement (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications);
 - (iii) Improved student attendance and retention, and improved high school graduation rates;
 - (iv) Improved rates of college matriculation and college graduation;
 - (v) Improved rates of attendance and graduation from other postsecondary (i.e., non-college) institutions or programs.

Strengths:

- Over the past 2-3 years, education outcomes have improved (based on the Ohio state performance index) at all 6 participating schools in The Equality Project (TEP) (p.8).
- ACPA's state Performance Index (a weighted average of state assessment results) increased from 93 (or equal to the state) in 2008 to 107 in 2012 (which ACPA anticipates will be 10 points higher than the state) (p.7).
- Given the improvements ACPA has achieved in collaboration with other TEP-participating schools over the past 2-3 years, it is promising that existing and future TEP participants will not just improve in student achievement, but also in attendance and graduation rates similar to the gains ACPA has made in these areas (p.8).
- ACPA presents data pointing toward improvement in school climate as an improvement in operational practices. Specifically, data shows far fewer discipline infractions at ACPA and its 6 participating schools compared to the district (p. 9).
- ACPA also cites many research studies showing that improvement in school climate leads to academic achievement (p. 11).
- The Equality Project explores themes of inequality, exclusion, insecurity, and judging others through personal monologues, scenes, choreography, and music as well as the need for social justice (p.4). It is convincing that these themes impact school climate.

Weaknesses:

- While there is a fuller discussion of dissemination methods (e.g. website, program manual, legislative support), the methods appear to be more passive than proactive; the application would be strengthened by a stronger marketing plan, for example, through state and national education departments.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of the lead applicant

1. (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement (as defined in the NIA) and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school.

(2) Either--

(i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter school; or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter school and to which significant gains in student achievement (as defined in this notice) have been made with all populations of students served by the charter school.

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including, where applicable and available, performance on statewide tests, student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates) for students from low-income families and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school that are above the average academic achievement results for such students attending other public schools in the State.

Strengths:

- ACPA's student performance has improved according to State standards from an "Academic Emergency" rating in 2002 to "Effective" from 2005 to 2009 and "Excellent" from 2010 to 2012 (p.7).
- ACPA's State rated Performance Index (a weighted average of state assessments) has increased from 93 (same as State) in 2008 to 107 in 2012 (likely 10 points above the State) (p.7).
- ACPA's attendance rate remained above both the State and Columbus City between 2007 and 2011. ACPA's attendance rate was significantly above both the State and Columbus City for 4 of 5 years (p.8).
- ACPA's graduation rate remained at or significantly above both the State and Columbus City rate between 2007 and 2010 (p.8).
- ACPA demonstrates increasing student performance in most of the 4 core subjects of reading, math, social studies and science over the past three years. They also outperform the state and Columbus City in these areas for most of this period (p.14-15).
- ACPA shows that it has mostly closed the achievement gap among Black and economically disadvantaged students during 2009-2011. The gap was completely closed in 2009 and 2010. These subgroups' performance on state assessments also averaged significantly higher than the state (p.16).
- ACPA also charts how its non-economically disadvantaged and its economically disadvantaged students outperform the state in graduation rates (p.17).

Weaknesses:

- ACPA has conflicting figures when referencing the percent of students economically disadvantaged. ACPA on page 7 says it has 40% (+) economically disadvantaged students, but then says 55% are economically disadvantaged on page 13.
- ACPA did not break down non-Black or non-economically disadvantaged student performance for comparison (p.16).

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of the project design

1. The extent to which the applicant proposes a high-quality plan to use its Collaboration Award funds to improve educational outcomes and operational practices in public schools, including public charter schools.

Strengths:

- ACPA has a two-year plan for partner schools based on when they joined The Equality Program. The Year 1 plan is broken down into tasks over 5 key months from the beginning to the end of the school year using a treatment and control group.
 - The plan tasks includes: recruitment and random assignment to the treatment and control groups, pre-testing, writing prompts, performances, synthesis and writing, developing local performances, conducting the performances and post-testing.
 - The treatment and control groups will be assessed using locally developed assessments and finally state standardized test scores (p.20-21).
- Ohio State University researchers will design pre- and post- measures approved by the Institutional Review Board to collect and analyze data and will publish their research findings (p.13).

Weaknesses:

- The rigor of the pre- and post-tests is unclear. It is also confusing what will be measured and how these measurements tie into student performance on State assessments.
- The Year 2 plan is not well documented; there is no monthly breakdown, for example.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Potential for scalability

- 1. The extent to which the applicant's proposed collaboration can be replicated or adapted beyond the participating partners by other public schools or LEAs, including public charter schools and charter school LEAs, and sustained over the long-term.**

Strengths:

- The Equality Program's focus on anti-bullying is supported by school and district administrators as well as legislation and programs to address bullying. This established need has proven to be a driver in requests for the program by other schools (p.22).
- The support from legislators, and specifically the chair of the senate education committee, has good potential to help bring attention by potential partner-schools (p.23 and Attachment L).
- There are few costs to partner-schools other than personnel. Further school climate funding can come from Title 1 and Race to the Top funds (p.23).
- ACPA also has a list of target grantors to seek funding for scaling The Equality Project (p.23).

Weaknesses:

- It is not clear how an established need for anti-bullying, expanding the website and creating a Program Manual will efficiently lead to demand and scalability. The program could be more pro-active in seeking out partners through state and national education organizations.
- Presentations and outreach to professional and community organizations is helpful but does not efficiently draw in more partner-schools.
- The application would be strengthened by a stronger marketing plan.
- An estimate of the cost per partner-school or per student cost would be beneficial.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Innovation

1. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that its proposed collaboration, as well as its dissemination plan, are either (i) substantially different from other efforts in its area of focus; or (ii) substantially more effective than similar efforts in its area of focus.

Strengths:

- The Equality Project has been selected as a Best Practices winner to be profiled at the 2012 National Best Cooperative Practices Between Charter and Traditional Public Schools Conference (p.24).
- Improving school climate (TEP's primary objective) appears to be unique in that school climate is the foundation of their reform initiative as opposed to instructional programs and curriculum which are the most common initiatives based on TEP's findings. (p.24-25).

Weaknesses:

- The dissemination plan needs to be stronger in order to express the innovative impacts and benefits of TEP on partner-schools. Again, the application would be strengthened by a stronger marketing plan.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of the 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 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 factors:
 - (i) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator; and
 - (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

- The Project Director founded, designed and implemented The Equality Project and therefore is well suited to fill this role. Her background and experience in drama and acting play a vital role in TEP's philosophy of change in which students act out anti-bullying performances on stage in front of their peers and others.
- Other key personnel include: a grant director, a director of evaluation, an assistant project director, the ACPA Administration (namely ACPA's superintendent and Co-founder), a marketing and development director and site coordinators (i.e. the partner-school Administrators) appear to form a comprehensive staff with the capacity to promote and implement The Equality Project. Their credentials and roles are appropriate to meeting the objectives of the Equality Project.

Weaknesses:

- There is no documentation suggesting the encouragement of applications from underrepresented groups in any key positions.

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. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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.

Strengths:

- ACPA has solid knowledge and experience with grants and financial management (p.27).
- ACPA has no audit compliance findings (p.27).
- ACPA's sound financial management enabled them to double the square footage of the school (p.27)
- ACPA has longevity in its leadership and staff. Its co-founder is still there after 10 years (p.28).
- ACPA has a two year timeline of activities assigned to responsible individuals or teams broken down monthly by tasks in considerable detail (p.28-29). The plan appears to be robust with partner check-ins, periodic reviews, data analyses, and project team meetings.
- The project leadership team meets quarterly to review progress on goals and finances, analysis of program data, and next step planning (p.30). The management plan and timeline appear reasonable and the project leadership appears to have the expertise to achieve objectives on time and within budget.

Weaknesses:

- Milestones are not clearly delineated which would help ensure the project objectives are being met and are on time.
- The application would be strengthened by including project objectives in the timeline so that they could be tied to timeliness and budget.

Reader's Score: 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Persistently Lowest-Achieving School Turnarounds

1. Turning Around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools

Note: In order to receive preference under this competitive preference priority, the applicant must specify that it is responding to this competitive preference priority.

To meet this priority, projects must be designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

- (a) Improving student achievement (as defined in the Notice Inviting Applications, or NIA) notice) in persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in the NIA).
- (b) Increasing graduation rates (as defined in the NIA) and college enrollment rates for students in persistently lowest-achieving schools (as defined in the NIA).
- (c) Providing services to students enrolled in persistently lowest-achieving schools.

Note: For purposes of this priority, the Department considers schools that are identified as Tier I or Tier II schools under the School Improvement Grants Program (see 75 FR 66363) as part of a State's approved FY 2009 or FY 2010 applications to be persistently lowest-achieving schools. A list of these Tier I and Tier II schools can be found on the Department's Web site at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>.

Strengths:

- The Tomorrow Center is a Tier I High School (p.12 and Attachment O and website).
- Four partner schools will implement an Equality Project at their site and help gather data to measure impact (p.12).

Weaknesses:

- ACPA does not explain in any detail how it will improve student achievement, increase graduation rates or provide services to students at the Tomorrow Center High School.

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/11/2012 11:46 PM