

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/19/2010 10:49 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Project YES, Inc. -- Home Office, (U282M100019)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	48
Contribution assisting disadvantaged		
1. Contribution	15	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of design	10	7
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	20
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
Total	100	88

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - Panel - 3: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Project YES, Inc. -- Home Office, (U282M100019)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:
 - (i) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including educationally disadvantaged students, served by charter schools operated or managed by the applicant.
 - (ii) The degree 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).
 - (iii) The degree to which the applicant has achieved results for low-income and minority students that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State.Applicants are invited to submit objective data that they believe would provide relevant information in support of these three factors, along with comparison data for similar schools, where available. In particular, the Secretary is interested in the following data: (1) Performance (school-wide and by subgroup) on statewide tests of all charter schools operated or managed by the applicant as compared to all students in other schools in the State or States at the same grade level, and as compared with other schools serving similar demographics of students; (2) annual student attendance and retention rates (school-wide and by subgroup), and comparisons with other similar schools; (3) where applicable and available, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates (school-wide and by subgroup) of students attending schools operated or managed by the applicant. When reporting data for schools in States that may have particularly demanding or low standards of proficiency (for example, see the report available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/201456.pdf>), applicants are invited to discuss how their academic success might be considered against applicants from across the country.

Strengths:

On page 6, the proposal notes a strong emphasis on the 100% graduation rate. Further, a positive history in HISD is well-documented on page 10. Next, on page 22, data points suggest a strong positive effect of schools within district, community, family and students. Favorably, the emphasis on college-ready and 100% of graduates accepted to 4-year post secondary institutions is described on page 10. Along this vein, pages, 13, 15, 17 and 40 discuss a program that assists students get into college and successfully navigate through college through Impact Partnerships and Alumni Programs. Page 18 highlights the 0% dropout rate and the 5% remediation rate at university levels compared to HISD 55%. Finally, pages 20-29 provide good data on YES schools compared to HISD and comparable feeder schools.

Weaknesses:

Also on pages 20 to 29, the state level data provided could be strengthened with the inclusion of comparison data including: neighboring schools, feeder schools, district and state thresholds.

Reader's Score: 48

Selection Criteria - Contribution assisting disadvantaged

1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.

Strengths:

The mission of the school and data support need and ability to positively affect disadvantaged children, as described on page 34. A strong emphasis on parental involvement and community support is evidenced on page 36. Further, pages 6 and 34-37 describe the work with special education students, which resulted in high pass rates and levels of commitment. Finally, page 22 outlines the strong emphasis on first year gains. The student gains, the parental and community support and the first year outcomes provide a context for preparing students to be college and career-ready.

Weaknesses:

Page 34 mentions targeting disadvantaged students but provides no strategies.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers--**
 - (i) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable. Applicants proposing to open schools serving substantially different populations than those currently served by the model for which they have demonstrated evidence of success should address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**
 - (ii) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.**

Strengths:

The strategic growth plan is well-documented with historical underpinnings. The applicant provides both quantitative data (tables and charts) and qualitative data (case studies). These include three strategies of growth: open new schools, grade-level expansion and human capital development, and are described on pages 42 - 51. Taking up on pages 51, and referenced earlier on page 31, the proposal outlines the human capital development system designed to provide work force necessary to continue to address excellence in working with disadvantaged students. Human capital development utilizes teaching excellence, fellowships and partnering strategies in the classroom are articulated on pages 44 - 47. Project objectives and performance measurements are thoughtfully identified on pages 49-54.

Weaknesses:

Project objectives and performance measurements are not linked with anticipated effects on human capital development and overall goals and timelines are not provided.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers--**
 - (i) 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.**
 - (ii) The business plan for increasing, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools opened under this program beyond the initial period of Federal funding, including, but not limited to facilities, financials, central office, academics, governance, oversight, and human resources of the schools.**
 - (iii) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, as well as a demonstrated**

commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success.

(iv) A plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality.

(v) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, CEO/organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The management plan, discussed on pages 52-54 is based on historical and current organizational capacity. As such, this applicant provides a plan that is well-suited for replication and provides a strong capacity for realization of this project via evidence of the following: letters of support from multiple educational stakeholders; listing of board of directors and advisory/governing members; and CVs and resumes provide demonstration of current realized commitment level. All of these factors have allowed the applicant to have built a network of existing schools that have demonstrated effects in achievement and engagement.

Weaknesses:

There is no listing of lessons learned and obstacles overcome that can assist replication project in realizing its goals and objectives. Further, there is no mention of strategies that were previously employed that needed to be refined and/or changed that might have an impact on the replication strategies.

Reader's Score: 20

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

1. Please provide a summary of comments for this application. There are no points awarded in this section. Please enter 0 for the minimum and maximum scores.

General:

This application demonstrates a strong historical basis for replication. The applicant has successfully crafted a narrative that effectively details the need for the replication project. The applicant also identifies how the organization has been responsive in the past in order to hold high standards and continue to provide a quality educational service to a much-needed community of at-risk students. The applicant documents the need for replication of schools, expansion of grade structures and a human capital development component. All three components demonstrate an overall picture that will address the organizational, educational and instructional needs of a replication project.

Reader's Score: 0

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Project YES, Inc. -- Home Office, (U282M100019)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	45
Contribution assisting disadvantaged		
1. Contribution	15	9
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of design	10	5
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	20
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
Total	100	79

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - Panel - 3: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Project YES, Inc. -- Home Office, (U282M100019)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:
 - (i) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including educationally disadvantaged students, served by charter schools operated or managed by the applicant.
 - (ii) The degree 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).
 - (iii) The degree to which the applicant has achieved results for low-income and minority students that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State. Applicants are invited to submit objective data that they believe would provide relevant information in support of these three factors, along with comparison data for similar schools, where available. In particular, the Secretary is interested in the following data: (1) Performance (school-wide and by subgroup) on statewide tests of all charter schools operated or managed by the applicant as compared to all students in other schools in the State or States at the same grade level, and as compared with other schools serving similar demographics of students; (2) annual student attendance and retention rates (school-wide and by subgroup), and comparisons with other similar schools; (3) where applicable and available, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates (school-wide and by subgroup) of students attending schools operated or managed by the applicant. When reporting data for schools in States that may have particularly demanding or low standards of proficiency (for example, see the report available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/201456.pdf>), applicants are invited to discuss how their academic success might be considered against applicants from across the country.

Strengths:

Applicant has been recognized for strong performance the state of Texas, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report and the U.S. Department of Education (page e0)

Additionally, the applicant provided strong evidence of its ability to increase achievement as compared to the local district schools. (p e9)

Further data provided by the applicant indicates that the numbers of college bound students are impressively high which provides this reviewer with confidence that the quality of the applicant is high. (e12)

Applicant produced positive results from the TAKS test comparing the Special Education sub-group scores not only to the local district schools but also to other charter schools serving similar students. (e 6)

The applicant has partnered with several prestigious organizations such as Bridgespan, Nonprofit Finance Fund, and Charter School Growth Fund. These partnerships have provided strategic guidance to the applicant in order to plan for high growth. (e8)

Applicant did a thorough job of describing the severe need for its programs citing the grim educational crisis within Houston Independent School District. (e 10)

Applicant provided achievement data for its program impact upon economically disadvantaged students as well as its comparison of these same students in other local schools and charter schools in the area. (e22)

Weaknesses:

Since every student is required to be accepted to college in order to graduate (e9), this reviewer would have been interested in reading a detailed description of the college access and advising services offered the students. For example, it is unclear what the guidance process is to help a student choose a college and a description of the research done to establish a "good fit" between the school and the student.

This reviewer remains concerned about this graduation requirement. If a student is not accepted into a college then withholding a high school diploma sounds particularly harsh and detrimental to the student's future.

It would have been helpful to see data surrounding the success rate of the students after they get to college, given the college acceptance requirement.

Reader's Score: 45

Selection Criteria - Contribution assisting disadvantaged

- 1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.**

Strengths:

The applicant explained in adequate detail the types of educationally disadvantaged students the program serves. The range of these types of students (homebound, pregnant, learning disabled and more) is a daunting task. Listing these types of students demonstrates that the applicant truly understands its target population of students.

The applicant explained, in adequate detail, the results of its program upon low-income and minority students. The nationally normed test results indicate significant achievement gains for students enrolled in the applicant's current programs. (e 6,7)

Again, the applicant demonstrated its knowledge of its student profile by breaking apart the type of ESL instruction from a new arrival immigrant student from the continuing ESL student. These students have vastly different instructional needs and acknowledging the differences strengthened this application. (e8)

The applicant provides a detailed account of its historical commitment to serving and educating educationally disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

The applicant attempted to provide an encouraging picture of how the program identifies and assists special education students (e4, e33). However, this reviewer found the description(s) to be inadequate and not completely representative of best practices. For instance, the applicant lists pregnancy, homeless, and 504 students as a special education student. While the applicant may, in fact, not have meant to indicate these students as special education students, they were listed under the section of how the applicant assists special education students.

The applicant described a general description of its Response to Intervention strategy (p 34). However, it did not state the interventions that are provided for the student, an important component of the RtI process.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers--**
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 - (ii) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.**

Strengths:

Applicant provides well-written goals and objectives of the project. This allows for the applicant to clearly articulate the outcomes of the project. (e 43)

The details of the design of the project were well defined. It was helpful to see the design unfold as Growth Initiatives A, B, C (e46)

The intended outcomes and goals of the project were well defined (e 52).

The project objectives were identified and matched with specific tasks. (e 53).

Weaknesses:

Even though the applicant provided goals and objectives of the project, the application would have been considerably strengthened by the addition of the strategies the applicant was going to engage in to meet the objectives. In other words, the application provided what was going to be done but not how it was going to be done.

The applicant did not make the project evaluation plan entirely clear. It seems that student enrollment is the singular evaluation measure. This singular evaluation method may be too narrow to determine measurable progress.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers--
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 - (iv) A plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality.
 - (v) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, CEO/organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths:

Applicant provided details regarding who will be in charge of the project. All are familiar with the organization and its mission and have a strong history in education.

As part of the application, applicant has provided for the creation of a plan to recruit high-quality teachers (e0). In a school serving such a high-needs population of students and families, the quality of the teacher becomes paramount to the success of the program. This reviewer applauds the applicant for recognizing and planning for this critical component.

Weaknesses:

Additional letters of support would have strengthened this application. The applicant is proposing creating a much broader presence within the HISD. If funded, the applicant is going to need a relatively larger network of community support to help accomplish its goals.

Reader's Score: 20

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

1. Please provide a summary of comments for this application. There are no points awarded in this section. Please enter 0 for the minimum and maximum scores.

General:

This application proved a need for this type of educational option for students. It clearly made its case for the high priority that needs to be placed upon these economically and educationally disadvantaged youth. In addition, it made the case for the success of its program and the impact of the methodology upon these typically hard to serve youth.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/20/2010 07:25 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/19/2010 09:04 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Project YES, Inc. -- Home Office, (U282M100019)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	46
Contribution assisting disadvantaged		
1. Contribution	15	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of design	10	7
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	21
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
Total	100	84

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - Panel - 3: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Project YES, Inc. -- Home Office, (U282M100019)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Eligible Applicant

1. In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:
 - (i) The degree to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including educationally disadvantaged students, served by charter schools operated or managed by the applicant.
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Strengths:

The applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement on the Texas state assessments and NWEA MAP. The data show that Yes Prep scores higher than the district and state overall (p. 17 and Section 5 attachment). In addition, the passing rates for Yes Prep are higher for minority students, economically disadvantaged, and special education students are higher than the district and state averages. In addition, Yes Prep shows significant numbers of its graduates completing college degrees.

Weaknesses:

No disaggregated data were presented for ELL students (see Section 5 attachment). ELL students represent a sizable proportion of its students and so should have been reported separately in the proposal.

Reader's Score: 46

Selection Criteria - Contribution assisting disadvantaged

1. The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.

Strengths:

The applicant accepts students with the expectation that all will graduate from high school and be admitted into college (p. 9) which affirms its intentions to meet high content and academic achievement standards. The charter provides an instructional program with small classes with additional support to prepare them for college. The instruction is aligned with the state standards (p. 10). Common assessments are used to track student progress and when necessary provide remediation or support (p. 11). A significant amount of support and college counseling is provided (p. 12) which is necessary for most of Yes Prep students who will be the first from their families to attend.

Weaknesses:

Few details were provided about the curriculum and instructional program (pp. 10-11). For example, it was not clear whether the program relies on specific curriculum packages or uses computers in the classroom. As Yes Prep thinks more about replication, it will have to specify details about its curriculum and pedagogical approaches.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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 - (ii) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project.**

Strengths:

The applicant is committed to increasing the number of college graduates in Houston and thus transforming the city (p. 37). Yes Prep has a well-thought out design for expansion, particularly in providing new school principals a year to plan and organize before enrolling students (Year Zero, p. 40-41)). This is an asset as the applicant moves forward with expansion plans. The applicant's plan for the Leading Excellence (p. 45-46) and Teaching Excellence Programs (pp. 43-44) also provide a pipeline for well-trained administrators and teachers for expansion charter schools. Yes Prep has identified four objectives and measurable indicators for each one (pp. 49-51). The outcomes have a high likelihood of being achieved given their past success.

The business plan (pp. 1-2) suggests that the charters will become self-sustaining in 2016 as long as 9000 students are enrolled. This is very important as Yes Prep looks to expand.

Weaknesses:

The indicators of success focus primarily on the end results (pp. 49-51). For example, Objective 2 strives to increase the achievement results of educationally disadvantaged students. However, the indicators focus on attendance and persistence from one year to the next and student achievement expectations. No indicators have been identified to determine whether the program is on track throughout the year to attain these.

With seven charter schools and a waiting list of between 4000 and 6000 (p. 7), it is clear that there is a need for expansion. Besides its Leading and Teacher Excellence training programs, few details are provided for how Yes Prep will achieve its proposed expansion. A more thorough expansion plan with clearly defined procedures and guidelines and benchmarks or milestones will facilitate growth. Yes Prep is currently large enough to have developed many of these procedures. Explicit guides will be critical to support future replications.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and expand high-quality charter schools. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers--
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 - (iii) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, as well as a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success.
 - (iv) A plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality.
 - (v) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, CEO/organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The applicant uses a home office to support and oversee the network of charter schools (pp. 51-52). The home office is an important mechanism for maintaining standards of excellence and providing support to individual buildings as needed. The home office also provides important resources that individual schools could not afford.

The applicant has developed a professional development plan and career ladder to support its personnel (pp. 43-46). This is a strong asset to the CMO as it attempts to grow.

The applicant has developed a business plan to expand the number of charters and become financially self-sustaining (p. 2). The CMO has received help from both the Charter School Growth Fund and the Nonprofit Finance Fund in developing its plans (p. 56).

The CEO and key personnel have worked with this CMO for a number of years, are personally committed to its success, and qualified to carry out their responsibilities.

Weaknesses:

No financial audit information was presented in the applicant materials.

Few letters of support were included in the application, particularly from Houston.

Reader's Score: 21

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

1. Please provide a summary of comments for this application. There are no points awarded in this section. Please enter 0 for the minimum and maximum scores.

General:

This applicant has a strong record of operating charter schools for disadvantaged students. Student performance data are very strong for most sub-groups. In addition, the applicant has tracked graduates as they enrolled and completed college, and have high success rates on these indicators as well. It has a plan for self-sustainability by 2016 for expansion schools. Its Leading Excellence and Teaching Excellence training programs are a strong asset and may merit particular attention.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/19/2010 09:04 AM