

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/12/2010 07:46 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation -- , (U282M100029)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	46
Contribution assisting disadvantaged		
1. Contribution	15	12
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of design	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	22
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
Total	100	90

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel - 2: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation -- , (U282M100029)

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:

Strengths: The applicant presents strong evidence of both overall achievement gains in reading and math across grades and over time and in low socioeconomic and minority groups. Comparisons are made both to the local districts and to the state data. Charts on attachments e15-18 show clear evidence of closing the achievement gap in Reading and Math with students of color and students defined as low socio economic related to state gap averages among the same populations. The schools serve 65% minorities and 75% low socioeconomic students and one of their stated main purposes is to address the substantial inequities and related achievement gaps. Student and staff retention figures are high. The design of the educational program is very solid, research based, and has been refined to be even more effective.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses: No data is presented related to students with disabilities, although the budget and personnel projections indicate that is a significant subgroup.

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:

Strengths: The overall data definitely supports the effectiveness of the model in assisting minority students and students who are low socio economically to meet state standards as measured by state testing as well as make adequate gains according to NWEA testing. No data is available at this time related to graduation rates, college acceptance rate, or college persistence rates, as the high school is relatively new (grade 12 will be added in the fall of 2010).

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses: No qualitative or quantitative data is presented related to the effectiveness of the model for special education students.

Reader's Score: 12

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:

Strengths: The goals are very clear (to expand one existing K-8 school by adding a high school, adding 4 new schools within the same urban area, and implementing their model at a troubled school in Delaware). The performance measures that the applicant has established for the new schools are clearly being accomplished at their existing sites. The project objectives table includes projective objectives; short term, intermediate and long term outcome measures; and progress measures. Because of the clarity of design and the clear performance measures, the project should inform others interested in similar strategies.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses: None noted

Reader's Score: 10

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:

Strengths: The foundation for the organization has enough money to provide an in kind contribution to the project of 25% and the financial plan does not depend on any additional funding other than public funding. There are multiple letters of support and partnership, and a parent letter of strong support is included. The management of the organization includes an educational advisory committee representing major local universities, and community organizations (page 8). Each school has its own school council which includes parents and community members. The statement is made that the central office staff (all of whom are well qualified) will guide all the project activities, and responsibilities will be similar to what they have done in the past. Based on their past experience they should be able to manage this project. The project includes a full-time implementation coach for the first 3 years (beginning in the planning year) to ensure fidelity. The curriculum is well designed and the core promising principles have already been proven. There is a plan for the closing of an underachieving school.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses: A Project Director is not specifically designated in the application and the project activities are not clearly assigned or have specific timelines.

Reader's Score: 22

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:

The applicant did an excellent job of presenting the case for the effectiveness of the design and the organization of Propel. The plan for replication is very clear and attainable, and designed to close the achievement gap for students who are educationally disadvantaged.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/12/2010 07:46 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/24/2010 06:39 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation -- , (U282M100029)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	38
Contribution assisting disadvantaged		
1. Contribution	15	11
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of design	10	8
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	21
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
Total	100	78

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel - 2: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation -- , (U282M100029)

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:

Propel currently operates four K - 8 schools and one high school (Priorities, p. e0).

Propel lists three CMO-wide goals: academic excellence, community service, and personal power (Abstract, p. e0). These are supported by six "Promising Principles": agile instruction, embedded support, culture of dignity, fully valued arts program, vibrant teaching communities, and quest for excellence.

Propel students are 22% more likely to perform at grade level than students in the surrounding district schools (Section 5, p. e1). More Propel students are performing at grade level in math than the state average for all students (Section 5, p. e1).

Propel's achievement gaps by income are significantly smaller than the state average: 15 v. 26 points in reading and 8 v. 23 points in math (Section 5, p. e1). Propel's achievement gaps by race - African American compared to white - are significantly smaller than the state average: 16 v. 24 points in reading and 8 v. 22 points in math (Section 5, p. e1).

Propel students in all subgroups significantly outscore students in the same subgroups in their host districts (Section 5, p. e2).

The trajectory of Propel student scores, in comparison with surrounding districts, indicates that they are steadily approaching the state average (Section 5, p. e3). Economically disadvantaged Propel students are on a similar trajectory (Section 5, p. e5). Additional achievement data is clearly elaborated in the attachments (Section 5, pp. e9 - e19).

One exemplary Propel school - McKeesport - reports proficiency scores that exceed a number of more affluent districts

(Section 5, p. e6).

The core curriculum appears to be well developed and thoughtful (Narrative, pp. 33 - 38). The high school design, based on EdVisions, reflects many elements of high quality schools (Narrative, pp. 39 - 43).

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how growth scores are calculated and how they are benchmarked against state scores (Narrative, p. 46).

Overall, Propel students are scoring below the state average: 71% at grade level v. 74% (Section 5, p. e4).

The table in Section 5, p. e2 is unclear: RaMP is an aggregate of math and ELA, but this was not defined. Also, RaMP achievement = percent scoring at grade level, but this was not defined.

It is unclear which elements of the curricular program will be required of all schools.

Reader's Score: 38

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:

73.5% of current students qualify for FRL (Priorities, p. e0 and Narrative, p. 2). 16% of students in Propel schools are identified as in need of special education (Narrative, p. 43).

Propel seeks to provide individual support through in-school and after-school programs (Narrative, pp. 28 - 29). This support time is differentiated, so students who are not struggling engage in different activities from those that are struggling.

Propel has indicated that families are integral to the work, and endeavors to involve them in students' learning (Narrative, pp. 25 & 30).

Weaknesses:

Propel has still not completely closed the gaps in its existing schools.

Propel did not provide a clear rationale for how the six principles are related to gap-closing.

It is unclear how robust the intervention and support system is and how students are identified for these supports.

Propel's first high school opened in 2008, so they present no college data.

Reader's Score: 11

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:

Propel's ultimate goal is to develop schools marked by high student achievement (Narrative, p. 3). The objectives describe opening the schools, and the schools implementing the Propel six "Promising Principles" (Narrative, pp. 4 - 5). These objectives align with the overarching goal. Outcomes and measures are clearly described in the Project Objectives Table (Section 7, pp. e1 - e2).

Academic Objectives include reading and math growth that exceeds national norms (NWEA) and exceeding the state averages in percent proficient on state assessments.

Non-academic objectives include parent satisfaction, expanded opportunities for disadvantaged students, teacher retention, and student retention (Narrative, pp. 5 - 6). These are aligned with their overarching goal.

In addition to expanding its own schools, Propel is partnering with a charter school in Wilmington, DE that has been identified for improvement by the DOE, which provides an opportunity to test their model in a non-new school, where there are often challenges not typically associated with start-up (Priorities, p. e1).

Weaknesses:

Propel does not provide a detailed timeline.

One progress measure states that student scores on math and reading assessments will equal or exceed expected gains against national norms ("expected RIT growth") - this is not a particularly ambitious goal (Section 7, p. e9). One long-term goal is for the percentage of Propel students achieving proficiency on the state tests to exceed the state average - also not particularly ambitious (Section 7, p. e2).

Propel's measurement of non-academic experiences is a bit vague (Section 7, p. e9). One measure is that there are expanded opportunities for students engaged in a creative arts block, including the number of hours per day/week - this is very specific and may constrain some schools.

The strategic plan states that Propel wants to engage with other educators, but this appears to only be happening at the principal level, and through policy discussions (Section 7, p. e18). Propel could describe in more detail how some processes and tools might be more deliberately shared with others.

The strategic plan states that Propel wants to engage with other educators, but this appears to only be happening at the principal level, and through policy discussions (Section 7, p. e18). Propel could describe in more detail how some processes and tools might be more deliberately shared with others.

Reader's Score: 8

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:

Propel has only operated for seven years, so their go-slow approach makes sense.

The leadership team represents a range of expertise, with lots of experience in various school settings (Section 1, pp. e1 - e20). Roles and responsibilities are clearly laid out (Narrative, p. 7 - 18). A Director of Replication and Expansion and an Outreach Coordinator are important additions (Narrative, p. 55).

Selection and ongoing development of teachers is carefully attended to (Narrative, pp. 32 - 33). Schools will be developed in clusters to enable high-touch, focused supports (Section 7, p. e20).

The budget is clearly laid out and articulates the links between expenditures and proposed activities (Budget Narrative, pp. 1 - 7).

Current schools are financed with 100% public funds, and Propel plans for all its schools to eventually subsist on public funds (Narrative, p. 48). The Propel central office will also operate only off public funds, through a fee per school model. Propel reserves will be used to match \$1 million with the grant funds (Priorities, p. e2).

Propel will work with community groups to determine where to locate its new schools, utilizing focus groups to determine need (Narrative, p. 49). Families are engaged in several stages of the development process and as an integral part of the school once it is established (Narrative, pp. 49 - 54). They have letters of support from parents, district leaders, government leaders, education officials, and reform partners (Section 2, pp. e0 - e20).

They have a plan for closing schools (Narrative, pp. 20 - 21).

Weaknesses:

The responsibilities of the new Director of Replication and Expansion and Outreach Coordinator are not specified (Narrative, p. 55). It is unclear how responsibilities will be distributed regarding the management of the current schools and support for developing new schools.

Propel's formation of local organizing committees should be lauded, though it still reflects an outsider coming into a neighborhood versus a neighborhood inviting them in - different challenges obtain in these two situations.

Engaging in turnaround in Delaware is different from starting schools, and will require the development of an additional skill-set.

The plan for closing schools does not contain a clear process nor detailed roles and responsibilities.

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:

Propel is operating several relatively high-performing schools. It has wisely chosen to expand slowly, as they have not yet demonstrated breakthrough student performance, and there are a number of systems that it needs to refine.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/24/2010 06:39 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/17/2010 07:45 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation -- , (U282M100029)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	47
Contribution assisting disadvantaged		
1. Contribution	15	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of design	10	9
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	22
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
Total	100	91

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel - 2: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Propel Schools Foundation -- , (U282M100029)

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:

Propel Schools Foundation leads transformational programs which have demonstrated success in significantly increasing student achievement for all students and especially for HDS. They have a proven track record addressing achievement gaps across subgroups. They establish clear expectations for all participants in the learning process and use thorough data in their management and improvement of the learning process. They are boldly taking on all three aspects of quality schools replication by leading a turnaround school, a grade level expansion school, and the opening of four new schools. 65% of Propel students are students of color (mostly African American) and 75% qualify for free and reduced lunch programs. Attachment C dramatically shows that Propel students are significantly outperforming comparison districts, and statewide African American and low income students, as well as very close to outscoring statewide averages for all students in Pennsylvania. Their clearly articulated strategies for success are firmly grounded in their learned experience and are appropriate expectations for addressing the magnitude of the endeavor.

Weaknesses:

Propel is an outstanding CMO; however, their achievement levels do not yet rival the highest performing similar charters in terms of longevity and populations served. They also don't have significant populations of ELL, Special Education, or Hispanic students. Even if they have low percentages in these areas, they should have addressed their success and strategies for the few they have.

Reader's Score: 47

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:

Their project will make a bold contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students, as well as documenting a model that is unique in its "promising principles" incorporating "agile instruction, embedded support, culture of dignity, fully valued arts program, vibrant teaching communities and quest for excellence."

Weaknesses:

The program should have higher growth goals to increase the number of students reached by this excellent program.

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:

This is a strong project plan that fulfills the criteria of having goals, objectives and outcomes to be achieved clear, specific, measureable and attainable. It also addresses the strategies for new populations adequately.

Weaknesses:

This application would have been improved by more articulation of how the results will be assessed and communicated externally.

Reader's Score: 9

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:

This is a very strong management plan that inspires confidence that Propel will achieve its goals on behalf of all students, especially historically disadvantaged students. The concentration on developing such a strong focus on a culture of excellence, dignity, arts and data-supported collaboration is particularly compelling given the rich backgrounds of the individuals involved, both the staff and the community support. The plan is complete with regards to operations management and with regards to the team having the discipline to intervene when/if their schools are not performing.

Weaknesses:

The application would have benefited from a more explicit description of how the fundamental culture will be maintained beyond the period of the federal grant.

Reader's Score: 22

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:

Their project will make a bold contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students, as well as documenting a model that is unique in its "promising principles" incorporating "agile instruction, embedded support, culture of dignity, fully valued arts program, vibrant teaching communities and quest for excellence." They are boldly taking on all three aspects of quality schools replication by leading a turnaround school, a grade level expansion school, and the opening of four new schools.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/17/2010 07:45 PM