

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/17/2010 01:10 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Mastery Charter High School -- Mastery Charter School,Innovation Division (U282M100039)

**Reader #1:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	48
<b>Contribution assisting disadvantaged</b>		
1. Contribution	15	14
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of design	10	9
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	25
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
<b>Total</b>	100	96

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Panel - 5: 84.282M

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Mastery Charter High School -- Mastery Charter School, Innovation Division  
(U282M100039)

## 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:

Mastery is clearly focused on providing a rigorous college preparatory curriculum to a predominantly low income (84%), high minority (95%) population in Philadelphia. Mastery demonstrates a unique skill in turning around failing district schools and creating highly successful charter schools.

Mastery has a consistent track record of exceeding citywide averages, meeting or exceeding state averages at every one of their schools by year 4, has closed or is approaching closure of achievement gaps and has received several national awards (Exemplar Charter School & EPIC). Additionally, Mastery has created safe learning environments whereby students can focus on their learning. The demand from the community is clear by the fact that parents at five failing schools chose Mastery to take over the campuses (Priorities e4).

Mastery has also significantly increased retention and attendance rates at each of its schools.

The academic program was presented clearly and there are high expectations for all students and mastery schools.

Teachers are given frequent feedback on their performance that used for coaching and evaluation.

The organization is operationally sound and has demonstrated sound fiscal management as evidenced by clean fiscal audits. They also demonstrated strong community partnerships including a clear partnership with the public school district in Philadelphia.

The proposal clearly articulated the goal of creating 15 new schools in Philadelphia and Camden, NJ over four years and the request of \$8M is in line with up-front investment needs of other charter school expansion strategies nationally. The strategy to document Mastery's capacity building processes to guide other charters to scale up in the future (E0) was a welcome addition to the proposal. Mastery demonstrated a matching commitment of \$2M from New School Venture Fund and a private donor (Sect. 2 Letters of Support).

**Weaknesses:**

Mastery did not provide sufficient data or criteria that substantiated the decision to expand into New Jersey.

**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:**

Mastery serves a high needs population in Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey (see e2, Priorities) and stated that they focus on no school that serves fewer than 60% FRSL students. Mastery demonstrated a special focus on serving students and staff with special needs. The structures for identifying students with special needs and the interventions offered were compelling and there is a focus on providing the least restrictive environment for students (GEPA8) where push in services are a priority. The focus on special education has resulted in 25% increases in proficiency of students with special needs at 3 of 4 campuses (e22, 23).

Mastery partnered with the National Clearinghouse and the data show that college participation and persistence rates are higher than national averages for similar students. 93% of students enrolled in college and persistence rates are now as high as 85% of students continued onto their sophomore year. It is too early to measure graduation rates.

**Weaknesses:**

The college going rate was significantly lower than college acceptance, but the Mastery figures are still higher than district and statewide averages.

**Reader's Score: 14**

**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 project budget is well articulated and Mastery is planning to leverage several sources of funding to drive expansion over the next five years.

Mastery provided clear and quantifiable goals, objectives and measures of success for each new school (e29, 30). The goals include goals for each school, the site leadership, the teachers and the parents.

In anticipating the growth of the organization, Mastery has created a robust human capital strategy that will provide teacher, site leaders and central office staff that are generally highly effective. The Apprentice School Leaders provides a robust leadership pipeline for the organization.

Mastery has developed a strong 7-12 curriculum and is proactively testing the curriculum against the recently adopted

Common Core standards. They also partnered with Achievement First, a high performing CMO focused on elementary schools and the two organization's are sharing curriculum.

Mastery also has a strong data management system and seems to effectively use frequent benchmark assessments to monitor academic progress for each student every six weeks.

Mastery has also implemented an extended day and school year to increase instructional minutes.

Mastery has developed strong partnerships with several key stakeholders.

**Weaknesses:**

The case for expansion in Philadelphia was much clearer than New Jersey. Letters of support from New Jersey and a New Jersey specific expansion strategy would have improved the application.

**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:**

The biographies of the management team were well presented and demonstrate that each project team member has the necessary experience to be successful with this grant. The Project Director has specific experience in managing federal grants. The organization has strong back office systems, robust curricula, a robust human capital strategy and consistent management necessary to successfully expand in the years ahead. The Apprentice Schools Leaders appears to have the necessary site level leadership in training. The HR team was recently expanded in anticipation of the hiring of more teachers. The central office team appears to be experienced and the fiscal team has managed \$22M in federal and state funding with no Title I audit findings. The facilities team has the experience and capacity to prepare new schools for occupancy. The board governance strategy where members served staggered multi-year terms is a best practice. Mastery stated a willingness to close down low performing schools as early as the third year of operation.

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 25**

**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:**

Mastery has a track record of strong performance and this application is a coherent robust plan that will improve the quality of education for thousands of Philadelphia and South New Jersey residents over the next several years.

**Reader's Score:**     **0**

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**Status:**           Submitted

**Last Updated:**   08/17/2010 01:10 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/15/2010 04:33 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Mastery Charter High School -- Mastery Charter School,Innovation Division (U282M100039)

**Reader #2:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	48
<b>Contribution assisting disadvantaged</b>		
1. Contribution	15	14
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of design	10	10
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	25
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
<b>Total</b>	100	97

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Panel - 5: 84.282M

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Mastery Charter High School -- Mastery Charter School, Innovation Division  
(U282M100039)

## 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:

Mastery Charter School is a high quality applicant. The organization has experience with operating charter schools that serve a high proportion of low-income (84.79%) , minority students (over 90%) in the city of Philadelphia. In addition to opening a new high performing charter school, Mastery has successfully turned around three low performing public schools (abstract). Mastery has been commended for its student achievement growth by the US Department of Education in receiving the Exemplar Charter School designation and an EPIC (Effective Practice Incentive Community) award (abstract). Of its four schools, all meet or exceed state average achievement scores in reading and math despite having a significantly higher proportion of at-risk students (p.e0 and p.e3/4). At its turnaround schools, Mastery has significantly improved student achievement, attendance and safety (p.e1). Test scores at the Turnaround schools have increased by an average of 52 points (p.e1). Mastery has secured funding from private sources to fund its expansion (p.e4). Mastery has a well developed and unique set of four Core Competencies to which it attributes much of its success (p.e5-15). These include continuous training, coaching and observation; research based instructional standards; a leadership pipeline; performance-based pay and career ladder; and data driven instructional tools and tracking. The Six Design Elements, which are similarly well developed and documented, guide academic culture of each school and maintain a focus on achievement and postsecondary education (p.e15). Mastery also has significantly higher graduation and college going rates than nearby schools. The organization is working with the National Student Clearinghouse to track college persistence rates among its graduates (p.e24). Mastery has raised significant private funds to support its programs (pe46).

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide data for the 2009-2010 school year which would be helpful.

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:**

Mastery is committed to opening schools with high percentages of low-income students and will not seek grant funding for any school with a low-income population of less than 60%. Letters of support in the appendix confirm Mastery's commitment to turning around low-performing schools with high percentages of at-risk students in Philadelphia and Camden. Because the majority of students enter Mastery schools below grade level and with other significant challenges, Mastery has developed a research-based, comprehensive structure of design elements and core competencies to guide its schools. The schools also employ numerous intervention strategies including ramp-up courses, differentiated instruction, and tutoring (p.e19 and e22) with the goal of having all students at grade level within three years (p.e19). These strategies have produced exceptional results.

Mastery has a well documented plan for implementing Special Education services (p.e1-10). Mastery serves a high proportion of students served under IDEA (p.e4). Student achievement among this population has increased significantly (p.e22). Because Mastery would like to see it improve to a greater degree (p.e4), the school has hired a Director of Special Education to guide improvements at each school (p.e4).

#### **Weaknesses:**

Based on the detailed description of the Special Education program at Mastery schools, the model does not seem to include a Response to Intervention team or protocols (p.e2-10).

Reader's Score: 14

### 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:**

The applicant demonstrates an understanding of how its short, intermediate and long term outcomes relate to input and outputs (p.e28). The application includes five measurable objectives for its new schools (p.e29-33). Given past performance, the goals appear reasonable and achievable. The goals are interrelated and support the mission of the organization. The application also includes a timeline, milestones and responsibilities (p.e35-37). Additionally, the applicant included a snapshot of what the organization is doing to prepare for the expansion (p.e38-41) and what the central office provides for the 8% that it will collect from partner schools(e41-43).

Mastery is committed to documenting its successes and challenges over the course of the grant and providing the information to the Department of Education. The organization would like to participate in a Learning Lab to share information with other grantees (p.e27).

**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.**
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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:**

The application includes a financial plan for expansion (p.e47 and appendix). The core executive team has strong blend of education and private sector experience (p.e48-50). The application names a project director who has abundant experience in overseeing federal grants (p.e49). The applicant also included descriptions of the positions that will need to be hired during the expansion (p.e50-52).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**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 application for federal funding under this grant is both clear and compelling. Mastery Schools are making a difference among educationally disadvantaged students in Philadelphia. The organization has achieved what few charter management organizations have accomplished, namely, it has turned around low performing schools and increased

student achievement dramatically. The application includes a well-designed management plan for its replication activities and the administration of this grant. Overall, this is an exceptional application representing an exceptional organization.

**Reader's Score:** 0

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/15/2010 04:33 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/20/2010 03:37 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Mastery Charter High School -- Mastery Charter School,Innovation Division (U282M100039)

**Reader #3:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Eligible Applicant	50	45
<b>Contribution assisting disadvantaged</b>		
1. Contribution	15	15
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of design	10	10
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Quality Management Plan	25	25
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
1. Overall Comments	0	0
<b>Total</b>	100	95

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Panel - 5: 84.282M

Reader #3: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Mastery Charter High School -- Mastery Charter School, Innovation Division  
(U282M100039)

## 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:

Mastery Charter School is a college prep K-12 school serving low-income, minority students in urban communities with charters in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Mastery student body is 95% minority with 84% identified as low-income. Their mission is to close the achievement gap of the students they serve. In 2009, the US Department of Education named Mastery as an Exemplar Charter School.

Mastery operates three turnaround schools in Philadelphia. In those schools, attendance and achievement rates have increased. The number of incidents per 100 students has declined. The Lenfest students (Mastery's first charter school) are out performing their peers. In addition, 95% of Lenfest's student body was accepted into college. All four schools made AYP in 2009. The 2010 preliminary student achievement results are mixed. Although, Lenfest and Shoemaker's 7th grade reading results dropped significantly in the percent of students proficient/advanced on the state test (67% to 55% and 71% to 64%, respectively), Mastery demonstrates that they recognize this drop by providing a growth table (Project Narrative, Section 5). Indicated on the growth tables are gains, slides and zero gains by school and subject area for each grade level. During the previous year, Mastery demonstrated tremendous growth.

Mastery has also closed the achievement gap with their population of ESE students. They have decreased the percent of ESE students scoring below basic from 47% to 13% in 2009 (Page e4).

#### Weaknesses:

Disaggregated data are not provided.

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:

Mastery utilizes an Academic Model with documented success. The components of their teacher training and coaching model are being implemented in states around the US. Benchmarks for student growth have been defined and are evaluated to ensure success for all.

Students at Mastery in the 10th grade are required to complete an 18-week internship program. Mastery created partnerships with various businesses (e.g., law firms, hospitals) to ensure the availability of internships for their students. Indicative of Mastery's self evaluation, the internship program was moved from the 11th grade to the 10th grade so that more focus could be placed on college admission in the 11th grade.

Mastery Charter ensures equal access and accommodations for staff and students with disabilities as outlined in IDEA (Page e0). Additionally, a systematic approach for the evaluation of students with a potential need for ESE services is outlined. Notably, Mastery presents a system whereby parents can request an evaluation of their child (Page e2).

#### Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 15

### 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:

Mastery currently operates four charter schools with three new schools slated for opening during the 2010-2011 school year (Page e0). Three of the four schools are turnaround schools. By 2014, Mastery proposes to open nine additional charters. With the additional schools, Mastery will increase the capacity of its schools to over 9,000 students by 2014.

Mastery has created a blueprint to make sure expansion schools become fiscally sustainable by the 3rd year of the grant based on per pupil dollars (Page e0).

Mastery uses a Logic Model to identify short term, intermediate and long term measurable outcomes as part of its expansion model. (Pages e27-e28)

**Weaknesses:**

NA

**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:**

It is noteworthy that Mastery has been pre-approved by the School District of Philadelphia to take over additional schools under the Mastery Model. They have also been granted an opportunity to take over a turnaround school in New Jersey.

Timeline for each objective, people responsible and completion dates are provided (Page 36). There is a financial management plan with philanthropic financial support.

Mastery has developed a performance-based teacher advancement system based on classroom observations, Mastery values and student performance instead of seniority (Project Narrative, Attachment 1, Page e14).

The Project Director has been identified. Mastery makes it explicitly clear that charter schools that fail children will be closed (Page e41). However, before a school is closed, Mastery is committed to providing the necessary support so that students are not affected.

**Weaknesses:**

NA

**Reader's Score: 25**

**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:**

Mastery Charter is well suited to increase its capacity to serve low-income, minority students. They have been recognized by the US Department of Education for their work. Mastery currently operates three turnaround schools for the School District of Philadelphia. Since the students at Mastery sites are excelling at a phenomenal rate, the School District of Philadelphia is granting Mastery more charters.

Mastery's instructional model and management plan are all designed to align with their mission - to help disadvantaged students excel and compete in the 21st century.

**Reader's Score:**     **0**

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**Status:**           Submitted  
**Last Updated:**   08/20/2010 03:37 PM