

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/06/2011 02:38 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools (U282M110013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Low-Income Demographic</b>		
1. Low-Income Demographic	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>School Improvement</b>		
1. School Improvement	5	0
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Promoting Diversity</b>		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	2
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the eligible applicant</b>		
1. Quality of the Applicant	50	44
<b>Educationally Disadvantaged Students</b>		
1. Assisting Students	10	8
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	10	8
<b>Quality of the management plan and personnel</b>		
1. Quality of Mngt. Plan	25	18
<b>Quality of the Evaluation Plan</b>		
1. Quality of the eval. plan	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>94</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel - 2: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Uncommon Schools (U282M110013)

## Questions

### Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Low-Income Demographic

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that at least 60 percent of all students in the charter schools it currently operates or manages are individuals from low-income families.

Individual from a low-income family means an individual who is determined by an SEA or LEA to be a child, ages 5 through 17, from a low-income family, on the basis of (a) data used by the Secretary to determine allocations under section 1124 of the ESEA, (b) data on children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, (c) data on children in families receiving assistance under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, (d) data on children eligible to receive medical assistance under the Medicaid program under Title XIX of the Social Security Act, or (e) an alternate method that combines or extrapolates from the data in items (a) through (d) of this definition (see 20 U.S.C. 6537(3)).

#### Strengths:

Applicant states that 99% of students currently enrolled in the CMO's school are "students of color" and 75% are low income (p e26). Also, the applicant stresses the CMO believes there is a "a moral and social obligation" to serve low income students" and outlines the recruitment strategies the CMO employs to target low income students, one of which is working with and through community organizations providing services to low income families (p.e27).

#### Weaknesses:

None identified.

Reader's Score: 10

### Competitive Preference Priority 2 - School Improvement

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), and as described in the notice of final requirements for the School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

#### Strengths:

None identified.

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not directly address how or whether it intends to connect with the LEAs in the specific locations of its schools. There is no detail included as to how its existing schools have established partnerships with LEAs in them or the nature of the partnerships if they exist. There are letters of support included from the NJ state superintendent and the Newark district superintendent as well as one from a Boston councilman (pp. e183-e187); but none address terms of

partnership.

**Reader's Score: 0**

### **Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Promoting Diversity**

1. This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding under this grant), taking active measures to--
  - (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;
  - (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and
  - (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

**Note:** An applicant addressing this priority is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

#### **Strengths:**

Application notes that 11% of the students currently enrolled in CMO schools are SPED and that 99% of students currently enrolled in the CMO's school are "students of color" (p. e26). Moreover, the application indicates that the CMO emphasizes a belief that it has "a moral and social obligation" to serve low income students" and it outlines the recruitment strategies the CMO employs to target low income students, one of which is working with and through community organizations providing services to low income families (p.e27).

#### **Weaknesses:**

Although the applicant states that providing necessary services to ELL students is a priority and outlines steps being taken to meet it, the application does not indicate the percent or absolute number of ELL students currently enrolled (pp. e27; e38-e39; e56). The application does not provide comparison data for its schools' ELL and SPED populations versus that of surrounding districts (pp. e26; e-38-e41).

**Reader's Score: 2**

### **Selection Criteria - Quality of the eligible applicant**

In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).
- (2) Either (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or

(ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

**Strengths:**

Applicant provides data summaries of student achievement over three years -- proficiency levels on state tests, SAT performance, graduation and college acceptance/persistence rates -- in chart and narrative form that describe the schools' overall record in helping students increase their academic achievement. Applicant states that in 2009, 1,000 of the CMO schools' 3rd through 8th grade enrollees in New York -- 99% African American and Latino -- outperformed the state's white students on the state ELA and math exams. Further, it states that 89% of the CMO school's 5th through 8th grade minority enrollees outperformed the state's white students. Finally, there were similar results -- a closing achievement gap -- in the Massachusetts school (pp. e38-e39). The applicant outlines similar results for 2008 (p. e40). The application provides a series of charts showing the CMO schools compare favorably and in many cases exceed the state and city percentages of students scoring "proficient" or "advanced" on state tests. Applicant says that the CMO schools "on average maintain a 96% attendance rate" (p.e26). Application includes charts showing that over six years the SAT results for one CMO school have steadily risen (pp. e34-35) and presents data showing that 91% of students completing 8th grade at a CMO graduate from high school within 5 years and 100% of these are accepted into a 4 year college.

**Weaknesses:**

The data summaries are not disaggregated by ELL and SPED (pp. e34-e40). Further, the New York City data for ELA shows a drop in percentages from 2009 to 2010 (p.e31-e32). Neither the application narrative, nor the chart showing SAT performance detail, showed how many CMO students took the SAT in any one year either as a percent of enrollment or as absolute numbers (pp. e34-e35). Additionally, the retention rate identified (p. e26) is aggregated therefore it is not clear what individual schools' rates are.

**Reader's Score: 44**

**Sub Question**

1. (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

**Strengths:**

Applicant provides data summaries of student achievement over three years -- proficiency levels on state tests, SAT performance, graduation and college acceptance/persistence rates -- in chart and narrative form that describe the schools' overall record in helping students increase their academic achievement. Included in these data summaries are references to student ethnicity (pp. e34-e40).

**Weaknesses:**

The data summaries are not disaggregated by ELL and SPED (pp. e34-e40).

**Reader's Score: 17**

## Sub Question

2. (2) Either (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or (ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

### Strengths:

Applicant states that in 2009, 1,000 of the CMO schools' 3rd through 8th grade enrollees in New York -- 99% African American and Latino -- outperformed the state's white students on the state ELA and math exams. Further, it states that 89% of the CMO school's 5th through 8th grade minority enrollees outperformed the state's white students. Finally, there were similar results -- a closing achievement gap -- in the Massachusetts school (pp. e38-e39). The applicant outlines similar results for 2008 (p. e40). Application lists a number of special achievements, awards, and recognitions the CMO schools have received that commend the CMO schools for showing impressive achievement results for low income, minority students and for closing the minority/majority achievement results gap (pp. e40-e41).

### Weaknesses:

None identified.

**Reader's Score:** 15

3. (3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).

### Strengths:

The application provides a series of charts showing the CMO schools compare favorably and in many cases exceed the state and city percentages of students scoring "proficient" or "advanced" on state tests. Some of this data is presented as comparisons by city or by school versus state (pp. e29-e37).

Applicant says that the CMO schools "on average maintain a 96% attendance rate" (p.e26). Application includes charts showing that over six years the SAT results for one CMO school have steadily risen (pp. e34-35). Applicant indicates that the CMO tracks high school graduation, college acceptance, and college completion of its 8th grade graduates: the data presented show that 91% of students completing 8th grade at a CMO graduate from high school within 5 years and 100% of these are accepted into a 4 year college. Further, the applicant states that 52% of students completing 8th grade at a CMO school are either currently enrolled or have graduated from college (pp. e37-e38).

### Weaknesses:

The New York City data for ELA shows a drop in percentages from 2009 to 2010 (p.e31-e32). Neither the application narrative, nor the chart showing SAT performance detail, showed how many CMO students took the SAT in any one year either as a percent of enrollment or as absolute numbers (pp. e34-e35). Additionally, the retention rate identified (p. e26) is aggregated therefore it is not clear what individual schools' rates are.

**Reader's Score:** 12

## Selection Criteria - Educationally Disadvantaged Students

### 1. Contribution in assisting economically disadvantaged students

**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. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.**

#### **Strengths:**

As noted, application indicates the currently operated schools' enrollment reflects 75% low income students (p. e26). The application goes on to state that the currently operating schools "outperform schools, rank in the top of their cities, and are among the states' top performing schools" (p. e24). The application provides evidence for this statement in a series of charts showing the CMO schools compare favorably and in many cases exceed the state percentages of students scoring "proficient" or "advanced" on state tests. Some of this data is presented as comparisons by city or by school versus state (pp. e29-e37).

Application lists a number of special achievements, awards, and recognitions the CMO schools have received that further demonstrate that CMO schools show impressive achievement results for low income, minority students and also close the minority/majority achievement results gap (pp. e40-e41).

Applicant describes its expansion plan and lists the schools to be expanded as well as the extent of the expansion (pp. e45-e47). There are also descriptions of two of the expansions schools' locations and the CMO's plans for financing them (pp. e60-e61). In addition the applicant provides overviews of the cities where the proposed expansions will occur and outlines their population demographics. These show general, city-wide needs (p. e28).

#### **Weaknesses:**

The charts presented, that show student math performance in New York, do not disaggregate the data by school or city (p. e30) and where the New York data is disaggregated by city for ELA it shows a drop in percentages 2009 to 2010 (p. e31-e32). None of the charts disaggregate the data to show SPED and ELL performance (pp. e29-e37).

**Reader's Score: 8**

## 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 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 must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

#### **Strengths:**

Application presents a set of project goals along with strategies (pp. e66-e70). Some are clearly measurable -- e.g., the student goals (p.e68). In addition the Project Plan chart presented by the applicant (pp. e7-e10) and the narrative descriptions on pp. e66-e70 provide additional detail as regards activities, milestones, timelines, and responsibilities. Many of the milestones presented can be seen as objectives (pp. e7-e10).

#### **Weaknesses:**

The Project Plan chart presented (pp. e7-e10) show activities, milestones, timelines, and responsibilities and notes the project performance will be closely monitored (p. e67); however it does not include details about how the success of the goals or activities and milestones will be monitored or measured (pp. e66-e70; e7-e10). Marketing, student recruitment, and community outreach are not in the project plan although marketing is listed as a cost in the budget narrative (p.e228).

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the management plan and personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) 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.

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools.

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success.

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

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

#### Strengths:

Although the application states that the CMO has never had a school perform so poorly that it required closing; it still presents the CMO's procedures for closing schools including the steps to be taken before reaching the decision to close (pp. e52-e53).

The application states that the CMO engaged consultants in 2007-08 to develop a five-year growth plan including attention to issues of financial sustainability and provides a very general overview of that plan (pp. e43-e44). The applicant notes its business planning in the past has aimed to make all schools -- and the CMO support services -- sustainable on public funds based on the per pupil allotments associated with their locations and their projections for full enrollment as well as on the economies of scale a CMO brings to bear on some expenses. The projection stated for full sustainability is 3-4 years for elementary, 3 at middle and at high school, 450 students (pp. e59-e60).

The application outlines the CMO and school governance systems as well as its HR structure and procedures (pp. e73-76) and its intended activities (pp. e54-e55; e63-65). A multi-year financial model is included. It reflects the grant period revenues and expenditures (pp. e193-e194).

Applicant lists partnerships and individuals and organizations that are partners and/or supporters of their expansion plans and includes letters from them (pp. e77-e78; e182-e187). Also included are the resumes of the key staff that will be establishing and running the expansion schools (pp. e87-e93; e191-e192). The individuals identified have qualifications and backgrounds adequate for their tasks and responsibilities.

#### Weaknesses:

Despite asserting that the financial projections show sustainability within three to four years and solely on public funds (pp. e59-e60); the applicant does not provide details of those projections that would give evidence the enrollment targets will be reached. There is no description of the financial contingencies should the targets not be reached (pp. e41-e46; e59-e60). Although enrollment projections are included (pp. e85-e86), the applicant does not provide a history of enrollment growth before 2010-2011 -- even for the schools that have been open since 2004, 2005, 1999, 1996.

**Reader's Score:** 18

#### **Selection Criteria - Quality of the Evaluation Plan**

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.**

**Strengths:**

The application includes discussion of the student, school, and management operations evaluation approaches, measures, and processes as well as the way the data is used for adjustments (pp. e79-82; e196-e197; e198-e223; e224-e225).

**Weaknesses:**

The chart presented as the project design does not address performance measures or specific criteria for successful implementation other than for student achievement (e7-e10).

**Reader's Score:** 4

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**Last Updated:** 09/06/2011 02:38 PM

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## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools (U282M110013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Low-Income Demographic</b>		
1. Low-Income Demographic	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>School Improvement</b>		
1. School Improvement	5	0
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Promoting Diversity</b>		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	3
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the eligible applicant</b>		
1. Quality of the Applicant	50	44
<b>Educationally Disadvantaged Students</b>		
1. Assisting Students	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	10	10
<b>Quality of the management plan and personnel</b>		
1. Quality of Mngt. Plan	25	25
<b>Quality of the Evaluation Plan</b>		
1. Quality of the eval. plan	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>107</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel - 2: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Uncommon Schools (U282M110013)

## Questions

### Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Low-Income Demographic

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that at least 60 percent of all students in the charter schools it currently operates or manages are individuals from low-income families.

Individual from a low-income family means an individual who is determined by an SEA or LEA to be a child, ages 5 through 17, from a low-income family, on the basis of (a) data used by the Secretary to determine allocations under section 1124 of the ESEA, (b) data on children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, (c) data on children in families receiving assistance under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, (d) data on children eligible to receive medical assistance under the Medicaid program under Title XIX of the Social Security Act, or (e) an alternate method that combines or extrapolates from the data in items (a) through (d) of this definition (see 20 U.S.C. 6537(3)).

#### Strengths:

The applicant currently operates schools which, on average, serve 75% students from low-income families (e26).

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

### Competitive Preference Priority 2 - School Improvement

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), and as described in the notice of final requirements for the School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

#### Strengths:

No strengths noted. Applicant did not meet this priority.

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant did not indicate that it is partnering with a LEA for the proposed replication.

Reader's Score: 0

### Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding under this grant), taking active measures to--

- (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;
- (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and
- (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

**Note:** An applicant addressing this priority is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

#### **Strengths:**

The application describes a thorough approach to conducting targeted student recruitment for all its campuses in order to reach low-income students from the highest needs communities. The process includes translating marketing materials to Chinese and Spanish to reach families who do not speak English, explaining transportation options, and creating a common application. The applicant also described thorough efforts to recruit a diverse staff to serve its school communities.

#### **Weaknesses:**

The applicant did not provide specific disaggregated enrollment data by school, networks, or states that would explain the racial and ethnic diversity of its student population, the percentage of students with disabilities or who are English learners. It also lacks data on its student diversity compares to other schools in their respective regions and states.

**Reader's Score:** 3

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the eligible applicant

In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

(2) Either (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or (ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high

**school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has demonstrated tremendous results as evidenced by all the fact that all current schools are outperforming comparable schools in their respective regions and states. In New York , the students outperform the state average by 21 percentage points and the average scores of white students in the state by 11 percentage points (e30). In New Jersey, the students outperform the stage average by 13 percentage points and average white students by 3 percentage points (e32). 100% of the North Star High School 11th graders scored Advanced-Proficient or Proficient on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Exam. The applicant's students in Massachusetts outperformed its peers at comparable schools and ranked first among all eight graders on the MCAS (e35).

In all current schools, the applicant has demonstrated its ability to not only outperform comparable schools on state achievement exams, but also close the achievement gap for low-income minority students by outperforming the average scores of white students across their respective states. At North Star in New Jersey, the high school students have demonstrated significant progress towards closing the achievement gap on SAT tests over the past 2 years as demonstrated by the fact that they are now only 70 points away from their white counterparts.

All of the schools currently operated by the applicants have not only met but also exceed state assessment standards, outperforming comparable schools in the region as well as schools from more affluent communities in their respective states. The applicant has also thoroughly tracked high school graduation, college matriculation, and college graduation rates. The data indicated that in 2010 "91% of students who completed 8th grade at an Uncommon School had graduated high school within five years" and "100% of high school graduates had been accepted to a four-year college" (e37).

**Weaknesses:**

The application did not disaggregate achievement data for students with disabilities and who are English Learners. The application also did not specify the percentage of its students who took the SAT for the SAT average scores provided (e34-35).

The application lacked disaggregated data on attendance by school and how it compares to local schools (e26). The application also did not provide retention rates. The current metrics for college success does not benchmark the applicant's college success data with other comparable school systems and does not yet account for all students who graduated from the applicant's 8th grade, regardless of whether or not they continue with the organization through high school (e38). In addition, the applicant does not currently track college persistence rates (e.g. freshmen to sophomore retention) and admits that it will need to restructure its current alumni support model in order to better serve its alumni enrolled in college (e58).

**Reader's Score: 44**

**Sub Question**

- 1. (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has demonstrated tremendous results as evidenced by all the fact that all current schools are outperforming comparable schools in their respective regions and states. In New York , the students outperform the state average by 21 percentage points and the average scores of white students in the state by 11 percentage

### Sub Question

points (e30). In New Jersey, the students outperform the state average by 13 percentage points and average white students by 3 percentage points (e32). 100% of the North Star High School 11th graders scored Advanced-Proficient or Proficient on the New Jersey High School Proficiency Exam. The applicant's students in Massachusetts outperformed its peers at comparable schools and ranked first among all eight graders on the MCAS (e35).

#### **Weaknesses:**

The application did not disaggregate achievement data for students with disabilities and who are English Learners. The application also did not specify the percentage of its students who took the SAT for the SAT average scores provided (e34-35).

**Reader's Score:** 17

2. **(2) Either (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or (ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).**

#### **Strengths:**

In all current schools, the applicant has demonstrated its ability to not only outperform comparable schools on state achievement exams, but also close the achievement gap for low-income minority students by outperforming the average scores of white students across their respective states. At North Star in New Jersey, the high school students have demonstrated significant progress towards closing the achievement gap on SAT tests over the past 2 years as demonstrated by the fact that they are now only 70 points away from their white counterparts.

#### **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 15

3. **(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).**

#### **Strengths:**

All of the schools currently operated by the applicants have not only met but also exceed state assessment standards, outperforming comparable schools in the region as well as schools from more affluent communities in their respective states. The applicant has also thoroughly tracked high school graduation, college matriculation, and college graduation rates. The data indicated that in 2010 "91% of students who completed 8th grade at an Uncommon School had graduated high school within five years" and "100% of high school graduates had been accepted to a four-year college" (e37).

#### **Weaknesses:**

The application lacked disaggregated data on attendance by school and how it compares to local schools (e26). The application also did not provide retention rates. The current metrics for college success does not benchmark

**Sub Question**

the applicant's college success data with other comparable school systems and does not yet account for all students who graduated from the applicant's 8th grade, regardless of whether or not they continue with the organization through high school (e38). In addition, the applicant does not currently track college persistence rates (e.g. freshmen to sophomore retention) and admits that it will need to restructure its current alumni support model in order to better serve its alumni enrolled in college (e58).

**Reader's Score: 12**

**Selection Criteria - Educationally Disadvantaged Students****1. Contribution in assisting economically disadvantaged students**

**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. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.**

**Strengths:**

The application includes exhaustive details about the Newark, NJ and Boston, MA communities where the applicant proposes opening new schools to build upon its current success in serving students in those communities. The demographical data and needs assessment provided clearly justifies the contribution the new schools will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students. The applicant has proven successful in helping that population of students meet or exceed the New Jersey and Massachusetts academic content standards and achieve a record of impressive college admissions and matriculation rates. The applicant also describes a concerted effort to disseminate their best practices to other schools.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**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 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 must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

**Strengths:**

The project design presented clear and attainable goals and objectives that are specific and measurable. All measures include quantitative metrics such as "opening 9 additional schools, serving a total of 3,200 additional educationally disadvantaged students in Newark and Boston" and "90% of 12th graders will graduate high school" (e7-10). In particular, the attachments of examples of specific tools such as the Managing Director Dashboard, Inspection Protocol, and Balanced Scorecard are strong examples of a sophisticated project design that has been tested and continues to be iterated based on feedback. The attachments are the well documented and valuable tools for leaders and board members to track the progress of the replication project.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 10

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the management plan and personnel**

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) 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.

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools.

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success.

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

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

**Strengths:**

The application presents a well-organized and thorough management plan with clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing the tasks and goals (e7-10). The comprehensive multi-year financial and operating model includes evidence of broad support from key stakeholders as evidenced by the many letters of support (e183-187). The narrative accompanying the budget clearly justifies the organization's ability to sustain high quality schools beyond the initial grant period because the schools will largely be sustainable on public dollars at full-enrollment (e59) and many line items are primarily associated with early start-up costs such as building out a library, etc. The applicant also indicated that it already secured capital funds for facilities. The application adequately discusses the plan it has in place to shut down any schools which do not meet the high standards of quality should that become necessary. Finally, the application provided the resumes of the key project personnel which demonstrated substantial institutional experience as well as expertise in education, charter schools, finance, and management. The applicant's leadership team consists predominantly of staff with a long commitment and track record of success with the organization. The application also placed a strong emphasis of succession planning for its leadership team.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 25

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Evaluation Plan**

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.

**Strengths:**

The project includes a thorough evaluation plan that is both quantitative (e.g. enrollment data, academic assessment data) and qualitative (e.g. interviews with faculty, a 360 degrees assessment) and involves a comprehensive inspection of each school (e69). The application provided detailed documents to support the evaluation plan including school inspection guidelines, dashboards, and balanced scorecards.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**     **5**

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**Status:**             Submitted  
**Last Updated:**    09/06/2011 10:26 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/06/2011 05:25 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Uncommon Schools (U282M110013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Low-Income Demographic</b>		
1. Low-Income Demographic	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>School Improvement</b>		
1. School Improvement	5	0
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Promoting Diversity</b>		
1. Promoting Diversity	5	3
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the eligible applicant</b>		
1. Quality of the Applicant	50	43
<b>Educationally Disadvantaged Students</b>		
1. Assisting Students	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	10	10
<b>Quality of the management plan and personnel</b>		
1. Quality of Mngt. Plan	25	25
<b>Quality of the Evaluation Plan</b>		
1. Quality of the eval. plan	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>106</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel - 2: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Uncommon Schools (U282M110013)

## Questions

### Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Low-Income Demographic

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that at least 60 percent of all students in the charter schools it currently operates or manages are individuals from low-income families.

Individual from a low-income family means an individual who is determined by an SEA or LEA to be a child, ages 5 through 17, from a low-income family, on the basis of (a) data used by the Secretary to determine allocations under section 1124 of the ESEA, (b) data on children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, (c) data on children in families receiving assistance under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, (d) data on children eligible to receive medical assistance under the Medicaid program under Title XIX of the Social Security Act, or (e) an alternate method that combines or extrapolates from the data in items (a) through (d) of this definition (see 20 U.S.C. 6537(3)).

#### Strengths:

Project plan shows commitment to serving 3200 economically disadvantaged students. The applicant notes on p.3 that the schools serve an economically disadvantaged population of 75% and their target market are low income urban districts. Uncommon schools does targeted recruitment in low income urban districts through channels likely to reach this population methods such as advertising on public transportation and in churches are widely employed (p.4).

#### Weaknesses:

No deficiencies noted.

Reader's Score: 10

### Competitive Preference Priority 2 - School Improvement

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that its proposed replication or expansion of one or more high-quality charter schools will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA), and as described in the notice of final requirements for the School Improvement Grants, published in the Federal Register on October 28, 2010 (75 FR 66363).

#### Strengths:

No specific strengths are noted.

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not specifically target attendance zones from schools that are in corrective action, subject to closure, or restructuring; nor does the applicant address a specific partnership with districts, thus, the applicant is ineligible for this competitive priority.

Reader's Score: 0

### Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Promoting Diversity

1. This priority is for applicants that demonstrate a record of (in the schools they currently operate or manage), as well as an intent to continue (in schools that they will be creating or substantially expanding under this grant), taking active measures to--

- (a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation;
- (b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area; and
- (c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.

In support of this priority, applicants must provide enrollment data as well as descriptions of existing policies and activities undertaken or planned to be undertaken.

**Note:** An applicant addressing this priority is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project will encourage approaches by charter schools that help bring together students of different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The applicant should discuss in its application how it would ensure that those approaches are permissible under current law.

#### Strengths:

In the GEPA document, the applicant specifically provides for promotion of a diverse population of students via a variety of marketing methods. The GEPA document also promotes diversity through a commitment to a diverse faculty and staff.

On p.4, the applicant notes several targeted marketing methods likely to draw from a diverse population of students.

P.28 the applicant describes processes related to compliance with laws and mandates pertaining to special education and addresses hiring an appropriate staff to operate a fully comprehensive program.

#### Weaknesses:

The only deficiency noted is a statement on p. 29 related to serving students with special needs that are outside the means of the charter and relying on the districts to serve these students.

Reader's Score: 3

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the eligible applicant

In determining the quality of the applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).

**(2) Either (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or (ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).**

**(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).**

**Strengths:**

The data provided by the applicant demonstrates sustained growth in student achievement over time across the Uncommon Schools network as a whole, and in the traditionally underperforming subgroups. The applicant provides comparative data to both the district and the state as evidence of performance.

**Weaknesses:**

Disaggregated data for all subgroups should be provided, as well as comparable demographics for the district(s) and state.

**Reader's Score: 43**

**Sub Question**

**1. (1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students, including, as applicable, educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (20 points).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant serves 75% population of economically disadvantaged youth and provided quantitative evidence of consistent performance in serving all students including this subgroup. For example, the applicant showed steady upward progress of the North Star network (p.11), demonstrated a #1 ranking in math for 2 years in a row in Massachusetts (p.12), and showed on p. 14 that 91% of Uncommon Schools 8th graders served graduated high school and 100% of the graduates were accepted into colleges.

**Weaknesses:**

Specific breakout of economically disadvantaged performance compared to the state or other urban schools would have been helpful.

**Reader's Score: 17**

**2. (2) Either (i) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has demonstrated success in closing historic achievement gaps for the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant, or (ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students**

**Sub Question**

**described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).**

**Strengths:**

Uncommon Schools consistently outperformed or performed at the same level as state averages, even when cut scores were raised (p.9-11). The applicant noted that the schools are only 70 points from closing the achievement gap in reading and have already closed the gap in math. Data presented shows a positive upward trend in student achievement longitudinally.

According to the applicants, black and Latino students bested the state by 15% and by 8% of white students in the state and scored proficiency at 80% higher than the Commonwealth schools as a whole (p. 12).

**Weaknesses:**

The scores in 2010 for Uncommon Schools, like other schools in the state, fell; however, their scores fell at a slightly disproportionately higher rate than other districts, the state, and specifically white students in the state.

**Reader's Score: 14**

3. **(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which the applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State (15 points).**

**Strengths:**

On p. 7 the applicant shows that proficiency at Uncommon Schools far exceeds districts and state averages in New York by 21%. Further performance data showed on p. 15-17 demonstrates consistent and pervasive success over time for the Uncommon Schools networks compared to state data. In Massachusetts, Roxbury Prep. is performing in the top 10 schools in the state.

**Weaknesses:**

Economically disadvantaged data was not specifically disaggregated in comparison, which would have been helpful.

**Reader's Score: 12**

**Selection Criteria - Educationally Disadvantaged Students**

1. **Contribution in assisting economically disadvantaged students**

**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. When responding to this selection criterion, applicants must discuss the proposed locations of schools to be created or substantially expanded and the student populations to be served.**

**Strengths:**

On p. 25, the applicant states that their mission is to prepare students to graduate and to be prepared to attend post-secondary educational institutions.

The applicant notes that 52% of 8th grade graduates enrolled in college versus 9% on average statewide.

The abstract provides information pertaining to the location of the newly targeted replication schools in low socio-economic urban areas. This is reiterated again on p.3, where it is also noted that there is high demand for the school with 5200 distinct applications, more than 18,000 total (with multiple applicants sent to other Uncommon Schools within the network) and all schools at capacity.

The CMO's commitment to sharing best practices to provide a broader impact on teachers in urban areas, as well as in other environments is noted.

**Weaknesses:**

No specific deficiencies are noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**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 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 must address the attainability of outcomes given this difference.**

**Strengths:**

Project plan is specific, time bound, measurable, and attainable. The applicant provides milestones, timelines, and individuals responsible for supporting each phase of the plan. Appropriate activities such as training to assure continuity of the Uncommon Schools mission and plan, resource procurement, professional development, and restructuring of central services (home office) to meet new demands demonstrate an understanding of the full scope to successfully implement an academically successful and sustainable replication plan.

P. 3 notes that populations served will be consistent with other schools in the network.

**Weaknesses:**

No specific deficiencies are noted.

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the management plan and personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) 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.

(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools.

(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success.

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

(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

#### Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive replication plan including responsibilities delegated to individuals with experience and knowledge of the Uncommon School network, mission, and practices, reasonable and appropriate timelines, and milestones ensuring that the replications would be successful.

Goals provided are rigorous, measureable, specific, and attainable. Comprehensive monitoring plans are in place for achievement as part of the milestone activities. Activities include dashboards, surveys, monitoring of culture, succession planning, collaboration, professional development, data collection, and feedback.

The Business plan includes a comprehensive facilities plan cognizant of the available resources in each state (i.e., unused district facilities) and the schools' budgets (p.38). In addition, Uncommon Schools has secured additional capital funds to support the facilities plan.

The plan was developed with sustainability in mind, and the applicant noted on p. 36 that the schools would be fully sustainable on state funds in 3-4 year (or at 450 students for high school).

The human resources plan considers both appropriately qualified personnel to teach, lead, and manage the networks. Succession planning is a key commitment, and the applicant provides a number of growth ladders to promote within (p. 40). Structures are in place to ensure high retention rates of staff such as retention levers for teachers (p.40). The individuals placed in charge of replication efforts have the right combination of experience and skills as demonstrated on the resumes provided and on p. 49 as described.

The applicant provided for a full five year ramp-up plan and relevant budget to support the plan.

P. 19-21 outlines several notable activities to support a well-developed plan including benchmarking from others, slow growth of each school by grade level, commitment to quality versus quantity, a planned growth strategy developed in cooperation with an experienced organization, scaled up home office support, a comprehensive long range strategy, and

use of available resources and shared resources.

P.35 notes the use of the alumni network for long-term sustainability.

P.29 outlines partnerships with universities and other organizations such as TFA, KIPP, the governors office, etc. Letters of support from some key individuals (Newark Public Schools, New Jersey Commissioner, Mayor of New Jersey, Boston Chancellor, etc.) are provided.

The applicant clearly values and understands accountability and makes specific notes of the role of the governing board and the boards rights to terminate a contract (p.31). Furthermore the applicant develops an appropriate plan for closure of non-performing schools with remediation activities and due process in place.

P. 33-34 provides clearly the reflective nature of this organization and its commitment to continuous improvement processes.

**Weaknesses:**

No specific deficiencies were noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Evaluation Plan**

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.**

**Strengths:**

P. 56-58 describes a comprehensive evaluation plan including interim assessments, state tests, and graduation rates, all quantitative, objective data to measure the efficacy of the programs. The use of balance score cards and dashboards to monitor are included. Enrollment metrics and attrition rates are in place. The applicant has a financial accountability plan in place. The use of 360 degree assessment for staff will be utilized. And inspections will be conducted and feedback provided in a narrative format to measure qualitative factors.

**Weaknesses:**

No specific deficiencies were noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 09/06/2011 05:25 PM