

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/25/2014 05:17 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Aspire Public Schools (U282M140005)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Qual: Eligible Applicant	50	49
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance of Project	10	9
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	15	13
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel Plan	20	16
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Evaluation Plan	5	3
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Low Income Demographic</b>		
1. CPP 1	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>School Improvement</b>		
1. CPP 2	4	4
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Promoting Diversity</b>		
1. CPP 3	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 4</b>		
<b>Promise Zones</b>		
1. CPP 4	2	0
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
<b>Overall Comments</b>		

1. Overall Comments

0

0

**Total**

121

109

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 84.282m - 2: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Aspire Public Schools (U282M140005)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Eligible Applicant

#### 1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant (50 points)

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

(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)

Reader's Score: 49

#### Sub Question

- 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:

Of the 24 California Elementary schools, 12 are the highest-performing schools within their local districts. Four high schools are the top performing high schools in their districts. All of the network second year schools scored higher API scores (a combination of state assessment scores in language arts and math) in their second year than their first. The average API score for all schools in the network in California was 816 in 2013, with 800 being the proficiency target. Over the past three years, in math state testing, network students scored an average of 61% proficient and above compared to 43% district and 51% state. In English Language Arts, network 58%, district 48%, and state 56%.

#### Weaknesses:

It is too early to determine success in the new schools in Tennessee, where all the growth for the project is planned.

Reader's Score: 19

#### 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).

## Sub Question

### Strengths:

In 2011-12, the last year the State ranked schools with similar demographics, the network averaged 7.6 out of 10 (the highest), with 16 schools scoring a 9 or 10. From 2002 to 2013, in English Language Arts on state testing, the percentage of low-income students and students of color scoring proficient or above increased from 12% to 53% and in math low-income from 17% to 56% and students of color from 23% to 56%. In 2013, all subgroups scored significantly above district and state peers in both math and language arts (page e27-28) From 2011-2013, the percentage of students in the network completing coursework required for admission to a University of California or California State University college increased from 90 to 98%. For students of color from 88 to 98% and for low-income students 90 to 99%. This compares statewide to 44% for all students.

### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were 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:

The CMO serves more than 13,600 students in 37 schools in California and Tennessee. Overall attendance rate is 96%, attrition 3.5%, graduation rate 83% (California state average 79%) in 2013, and college attendance for 2012-13 was 87%. The graduation rate for network students from low-income families was 84% compared to the state average for that group of 73%. For the past four years, 100% of graduates have been admitted to at least one four-year college or university.

### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 15

## Selection Criteria - Significance

### 1. Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students (10 points)

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.

Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

**Strengths:**

The new schools opened in Tennessee and the proposed new schools are all in districts that are similar to district currently served in California, related to low performing schools and students with high educational needs. In the California schools served, from 2005 to 2013, the percentage of students with disabilities and ELL students scoring proficient and above on state assessments increased from 9% to 29% in English Language Arts. In math, from 2005-2013, ELL students scoring proficient and above increased from 22% to 46%. When compared to their district and state peers, both groups scored significantly higher in both areas. The instructional model used by the applicant includes targeted learning goals, frequent monitoring of data to inform instruction, and differentiated instruction in both language arts and math. A comprehensive list of available supports and strategies is on pages e10-11. The programming for ELL students is research based, supported by budget resources and professional development, and evaluated regularly. The extent of need for students achieving below grade level is determined through a Response to Intervention model.

**Weaknesses:**

In state assessments in math, from 2005-2013, students with disabilities scoring proficient and above only increased from 34% to 35%.

**Reader's Score: 9**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design****1. Quality of the Project Design (15 points)**

**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 following factors:**

**(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)**

**Reader's Score: 13**

**Sub Question**

- 1) 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 (5 points).**

**Strengths:**

The goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable (pages e46-50). The populations and demographics to be served are similar to those in schools currently served. The applicant has already opened three schools in Tennessee.

**Weaknesses:**

The goals and objectives do not address operations or finances.. although these are priorities of the organization. The measurement, less than 3% rate of expulsion, under a strong sense of community, is unusual and could be expanded to include in school and out of school suspensions, or disciplinary actions for less than 3% of students.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Sub Question**

- 2. 2) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by evidence of promise (as defined in this notice) (10 points).**

**Strengths:**

A complete Logic Model is presented on pages e82-84, with references. Several examples are also provided with more complete information on pages e50-51.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

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

**Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (20 points)**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

**(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)**

**Reader's Score: 16**

**Sub Question**

- 1. 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 (4 points).**

**Strengths:**

The CMO is governed by a Board of Directors whose primary role is to serve as partners as the management and staff work to design and implement the organization's strategies. The Senior Leadership Team will use student, school, and organization-wide data to inform progress on goals. The charts on pages e54-55 include the roles of the regional home office staff, the type of support provided to the school site and its frequency. A plan for opening new schools is also included on pages e59-61.

**Weaknesses:**

It is not clear what the central office staff does. On page e54 it is mentioned that the regional team can seek input from them. A management plan specific to the project is not provided.

**Reader's Score: 3**

- 2. 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**

**Sub Question**

**schools (4 points).**

**Strengths:**

The purpose of the regional office is to provide finance, accounting, vendor management, professional development, and data analysis so schools can focus on students. The applicant received a federal grant to enrich and expand its teacher effectiveness work. It has developed a teacher observation protocol which explicitly defines rigorous instruction. Teacher performance, professional development, leadership opportunities, and compensation are based on student achievement, these observations, and teacher and parent surveys (page e36). The applicant also has its own teacher and principal residency programs. The organization has developed Strategies and priorities in the areas of college readiness, people, financial stewardship, and Catalyze Change to increase, sustain, and ensure the quality and performance of its schools (paged e61-66),

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 4**

- 3. 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 projects long-term success (4 points).**

**Strengths:**

A three year financial and operating model is provided on page e85 and is broken down by state. The CMO has received significant multi-year funding from the Hyde Family Foundation, the Charter School Growth Fund, and an anonymous foundation for the Tennessee schools. In addition, the ASD in Memphis shares crucial resources.

**Weaknesses:**

No letters of support are included.

**Reader's Score: 3**

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

**Strengths:**

The network has a clear and comprehensive set of procedures to follow should a school close. It also has protocols for monitoring schools to determine risks to closure. This is designed to identify issues early enough to prevent the need for closure.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not state how it will close a school if it does not respond to the interventions that are in place as a result of the risk analysis and detection.

**Reader's Score: 2**

- 5. 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 (4 points).**

**Strengths:**

The Executive Director of the regional home office in Memphis will serve as the project director. She and the regional director of business and operations and the chief financial officer have the training and experience to direct

**Sub Question**

this project. Key personnel are well qualified.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score:** 4

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

**1. Quality of the Evaluation Plan (5 points)**

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:**

General measures for replication and fidelity are planned that include objective measures and both quantitative and qualitative measures.

**Weaknesses:**

A clear connection between project goals, objectives, and outcomes (page e14) is not presented on pages e72-76 with responsibilities and timelines.

**Reader's Score:** 3

**Priority 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 (as defined in this notice).**

**Note 1: The Secretary encourages an applicant responding to this priority to describe the extent to which the charter schools it currently operates or manages serve individuals from low-income families at rates that are at least comparable to the rates at which these individuals are served by public schools in the surrounding area.**

**Note 2: For charter schools that serve students younger than 5 or older than 17 in accordance with their State's definition of " elementary education" or " secondary education," at least 60 percent of all students in the schools who are between the ages of 5 and 17 must be individuals from low-income families to meet this priority.**

**Strengths:**

Of the students currently served by the network (13,600) 79% of students between 5 and 17 years of age are from low-income families, compared to 74% in the districts they come from.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were 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 (as defined in this notice) 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).

**Note:** Applicants in States operating under ESEA Flexibility that have opted to waive the requirement in ESEA section 1116(b) for LEAs to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, their Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more consecutive years may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (see the June 7, 2012, "ESEA Flexibility" guidance at [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)). The Secretary encourages such applicants to describe how their proposed projects complement the efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in States' approved requests for waivers under ESEA Flexibility.

#### Strengths:

The applicant currently partners with the Tennessee Achievement School District. This district was formed through a Race to the Top grant to transform schools in the bottom 5% (lowest performing) schools in the State into schools in the top 25%. Two schools were established by the applicant in this district in the fall of 2013 and a third will open in the fall of 2014. All were previously operated by the Memphis City Schools and were identified as priority schools pursuant to the State's ESEA Flexibility waiver. In addition, the network has been authorized to open schools in Shelby County's Innovation Zone (iZone), similar to the ASD, next year, and will seek to partner with other LEAs operating priority schools in the future.

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 4

### 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 1:** An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting Diversity, is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would 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, or to avoid racial isolation.

**Note 2: For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice entitled, " Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>.**

**Strengths:**

The network monitors the racial and ethnic balance among its students annually and engages in a variety of strategies to try to achieve a student population that reflects the community while honoring parent choice. Currently, 8% of its students have disabilities compared to 12% in surrounding districts, and 28% are ELL compared to 25% in local districts. The statement is made on page e20 that the racial and ethnic make-up of the total school population mirrors the make-up of the communities served.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Promise Zones**

- 1. This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.**

**Note: Applicants should submit a letter from the lead entity of a designated Promise Zone attesting to the contribution that the proposed activities would make, and supporting the application. A list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations can be found at [www.hud.gov/promisezones](http://www.hud.gov/promisezones).**

**Strengths:**

No strengths were noted.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant did not address this priority.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Overall Comments - Overall Comments**

- 1. Overall/additional comments**

**General:**

The CMO currently serves schools primarily in California, but has 2 new schools in Tennessee and will start a third this fall. This project proposes to expand those three schools and start seven new schools in Tennessee. It currently has a CSP grant in California and funds from this grant will not be used in that state. The network will use a weighted lottery as permitted under state law, to rank educationally disadvantaged students higher. The proposal includes preschool, with little detail provided related to that.

**Reader's Score:** 0

---

**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/25/2014 05:17 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/20/2014 10:24 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Aspire Public Schools (U282M140005)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Qual: Eligible Applicant	50	39
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance of Project	10	8
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	15	11
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel Plan	20	14
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Evaluation Plan	5	2
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Low Income Demographic</b>		
1. CPP 1	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>School Improvement</b>		
1. CPP 2	4	4
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Promoting Diversity</b>		
1. CPP 3	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 4</b>		
<b>Promise Zones</b>		
1. CPP 4	2	0
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
<b>Overall Comments</b>		

1. Overall Comments

0

**Total**

121

93

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 84.282m - 2: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Aspire Public Schools (U282M140005)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Eligible Applicant

#### 1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant (50 points)

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

(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)

Reader's Score: 39

#### Sub Question

- 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 is a PK – 12 school that has obtained a 71 point higher score on the average academic performance index that low income students statewide.

#### Weaknesses:

Applicant does not make clear the 3 year positive consistent trend of improvement across all subgroups, grade levels and students. Applicant states spurts and excerpts of performance. Appendix contains a detailed chart however there is no summary data and some schools do not appear to have positive trends.

Reader's Score: 15

#### 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:

From 2005 – 2013 the % of student with disabilities and are English language learners increased in ELA proficiency levels from 9 – 29%. Increases are similar amongst low-income students in mathematics from 2002 – 2013 showing

### Sub Question

from 17% to 56%

#### **Weaknesses:**

Applicant does not make clear the 3 year positive consistent trend of improvement across all subgroups, grade levels and students. Applicant states spurts and excerpts of performance. Appendix contains a detailed chart however there is no summary data and some schools do not appear to have positive trends.

**Reader's Score:** 12

- 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:**

100% of graduates have been admitted to colleges. Aspire student attendance rates are 96%

#### **Weaknesses:**

Applicant does not make clear the 3 year positive consistent trend of improvement across all subgroups, grade levels and students. Applicant states spurts and excerpts of performance. Appendix contains a detailed chart however there is no summary data and some schools do not appear to have positive trends.

**Reader's Score:** 12

### Selection Criteria - Significance

#### **1. Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students (10 points)**

**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.**

**Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.**

#### **Strengths:**

Aspire school facilities are ADA accessible. For special education students the school offers Bran compatible instruction, positive behavior strategies, appropriate research based systematics instructional strategies for specific learning disabilities, alternate modes of access to content such as online resources, environmental accommodations and support, after school, zero period, response to intervention, co-teaching, collaborative teaching models, continuous assessment and others.

**Weaknesses:**

The application would benefit from clear information on how 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. Specific graduation rates from campuses not included. State assessments from 2005 – 2013 only increased from 34% to 35%.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. Quality of the Project Design (15 points)**

**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 following factors:**

**(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)**

**Reader's Score: 11**

**Sub Question**

- 1. 1) 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 (5 points).**

**Strengths:**

Small schools PK- 8 structure, looped grouping, advisory groups and more learning time are key pillars of the program. The goals listed are replication and fidelity to the model. Objectives and outcomes are clear and measurable. For example the applicant states that 80% of students will meet annual growth goals on district assessments as evidenced on MAP and 80% of teachers will score a 3 or above on the AIR rubric.

**Weaknesses:**

The application would also benefit from detail on operational and fiscal goals to support instructional initiatives.

**Reader's Score: 3**

- 2. 2) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by evidence of promise (as defined in this notice) (10 points).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant states 1 study on Dreambox Learning that makes clear the impact of the Dreambox and mathematics achievement in the elementary school. The applicant states that research conducted on New York schools have furthermore shaped the direction of their program.

**Weaknesses:**

The application would benefit from research based information on selected instructional methods and personalized research to demonstrate the programs promise.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (20 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)

Reader's Score: 14

Sub Question

1. 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 (4 points).

**Strengths:**

A timeline is provided for key activities and the business plan clearly identifies initiatives to promote graduation rates, the solicitation of highly effective teachers, managing reliable financial resources, meeting fund milestones and how it will continue its support from parents and stakeholders.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant provided timelines and activities that were vague. Furthermore the management plan was not applicable to the project.

Reader's Score: 3

2. 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 (4 points).

**Strengths:**

A timeline is provided for key activities and the business plan clearly identifies initiatives to promote graduation rates, the solicitation of highly effective teachers, managing reliable financial resources, meeting fund milestones and how it will continue its support from parents and stakeholders.

**Weaknesses:**

The application would benefit fro greater business detail and clarity.

Reader's Score: 3

3. 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 projects long-term success (4 points).

## Sub Question

### Strengths:

Responsibilities of the Regional Director of Business is included; this person is a key constituent in facilities etc. A timeline is provided for key activities and the business plan clearly identifies initiatives to promote graduation rates, the solicitation of highly effective teachers, managing reliable financial resources, meet fund milestones and how it will continue its support from parents and stakeholders.

### Weaknesses:

The application would benefit from additional information on the board and stakeholder support.

**Reader's Score: 2**

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

### Strengths:

The applicant has a protocol for monitoring schools to determine risk to closure and closely monitors schools during the 3rd and 4th year of their existence. The school has a clear strategy for the process of closing schools and the dissolution of assets.

### Weaknesses:

The applicant did not give a clear determination regarding when the school will close.

**Reader's Score: 3**

#### 5. 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 (4 points).

### Strengths:

Each school is an independent school governed and managed by the Aspire Board of Directors. Each school site is run by a principal and a chart is included to demonstrate the kind of support provided to each school site and leader. Responsibilities of the Regional Director of Business is also included.

### Weaknesses:

The application would benefit from additional information on the leadership team.

**Reader's Score: 3**

## Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

### 1. Quality of the Evaluation Plan (5 points)

**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 applicant intends to use attendance and expulsion rates to monitor success. The Tennessee value added assessment system is also used in addition to MAP, student and parent survey results.

**Weaknesses:**

The application would benefit from a more extensive evaluation plan. It is unclear how data will be used and how the quality of the schools will be measured. Furthermore the project goals on page e14 are not aligned to the schools evaluation plan.

**Reader's Score:** 2

**Priority 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 (as defined in this notice).

**Note 1:** The Secretary encourages an applicant responding to this priority to describe the extent to which the charter schools it currently operates or manages serve individuals from low-income families at rates that are at least comparable to the rates at which these individuals are served by public schools in the surrounding area.

**Note 2:** For charter schools that serve students younger than 5 or older than 17 in accordance with their State's definition of "elementary education" or "secondary education," at least 60 percent of all students in the schools who are between the ages of 5 and 17 must be individuals from low-income families to meet this priority.

**Strengths:**

The school was established to provide education to a historically underserved population. 78% of the students are from low-income families. 74% of students located in the district are from low-income communities.

**Weaknesses:**

None found

**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 (as defined in this notice) 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).

**Note:** Applicants in States operating under ESEA Flexibility that have opted to waive the requirement in ESEA section 1116(b) for LEAs to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, their Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more consecutive years may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (see the June 7, 2012, "ESEA Flexibility" guidance at [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)). The Secretary encourages such applicants to describe how their proposed projects complement the efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in States' approved requests for waivers under ESEA Flexibility.

**Strengths:**

The school partners with ASD to operate schools under a restart model. The school also partners with Shelby County Schools to create I zone schools.

**Weaknesses:**

None found

**Reader's Score:** 4

**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 1:** An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting Diversity, is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would 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, or to avoid racial isolation.

**Note 2:** For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice entitled, " Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>.

**Strengths:**

Across Aspire's 37 schools 69% are Latino, 17% are African American, 7% are white, and 4% Asian American. 8% are students with disabilities and 25% are English language learners. Applicant is clear, through outreach methods, on how it plans to bring together students from different backgrounds to attain benefits from a diverse student body

**Weaknesses:**

None found

**Reader's Score:** 5

**Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Promise Zones**

1. This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

**Note:** Applicants should submit a letter from the lead entity of a designated Promise Zone attesting to

the contribution that the proposed activities would make, and supporting the application. A list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations can be found at [www.hud.gov/promisezones](http://www.hud.gov/promisezones).

**Strengths:**

No response provided.

**Weaknesses:**

No response provided.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Overall Comments - Overall Comments**

**1. Overall/additional comments**

**General:**

**Reader's Score:**

---

**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/20/2014 10:24 AM

Status: Draft

Last Updated: 08/20/2014 11:01 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Aspire Public Schools (U282M140005)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Eligible Applicant</b>		
1. Qual: Eligible Applicant	50	43
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance of Project	10	8
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	15	12
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel Plan	20	16
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Evaluation Plan	5	3
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Low Income Demographic</b>		
1. CPP 1	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>School Improvement</b>		
1. CPP 2	4	4
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 3</b>		
<b>Promoting Diversity</b>		
1. CPP 3	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 4</b>		
<b>Promise Zones</b>		
1. CPP 4	2	0
<b>Overall Comments</b>		
<b>Overall Comments</b>		

1. Overall Comments

0

**Total**

121

101

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - 84.282m - 2: 84.282M

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

Applicant: Aspire Public Schools (U282M140005)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Eligible Applicant

#### 1. Quality of the Eligible Applicant (50 points)

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

(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)

Reader's Score: 43

#### Sub Question

- 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 application provided detailed academic data for all of Aspire's schools. The Academic Performance Index, California's indicator for state test results, was 816 in 2013. That score is higher than the 745 score for low-income students statewide.

#### Weaknesses:

The data provided shows a decline in the overall achievement levels in both math and ELA for students with disabilities and ELL students. (p. e79-80) Additionally, there was a slight decline overall in the percent proficient/advanced in ELA and math.

Reader's Score: 15

#### 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).

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

The documentation demonstrated lower achievement gaps than district schools and significant increases for ELL, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged groups.

**Weaknesses:**

There are some schools in the network which do not demonstrate significant gains in academic achievement.

**Reader's Score: 13**

- 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:**

Extensive data was provided in order to demonstrate that Aspire's results are significantly above the results of similar students in the state. This data included increases in proficiency for English Language Arts (ELA) from 22% in 2005 to 46% in 2013, a 96% attendance rate, and 83% graduation rate. For the low income students there was an increase in ELA proficiency from 17% to 56%. (pp e27-28, e.79)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Selection Criteria - Significance**

- 1. Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students (10 points)**

**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.**

**Note: The Secretary encourages applicants to describe their prior success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners. In addition, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how they will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education and how the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, in mastering State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.**

**Strengths:**

Aspire's plans include opening seven new schools and expanding three existing schools. A thorough description of curriculum and instructional practices is included in the application. Aspire will align their practices and curriculum to the Tennessee state assessments. Research based methods for working with ELL students in its core programs was discussed.

**Weaknesses:**

The explanation for this section is lacking specific details of how this project will ensure that all eligible students with disabilities will receive services. The application restated the IDEA law, as opposed to providing details.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. Quality of the Project Design (15 points)**

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 following factors:

(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)

**Reader's Score: 12**

**Sub Question**

- 1) 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 (5 points).

**Strengths:**

Throughout the document the goals and objectives are feasible and consistent. Outcomes are defined and measurable. Their logic model is consistent with the project design and is supported by research.

**Weaknesses:**

No operational and fiscal objectives and measures included with the project

**Reader's Score: 3**

- 2) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by evidence of promise (as defined in this notice) (10 points).

**Strengths:**

Their logic model is consistent with the project design and is supported by research associated with the practices they are implementing. Various studies were cited to support the individual practices in the educational model.

**Weaknesses:**

There was not a study or research cited that demonstrated all of the practices are working together to increase student achievement.

**Reader's Score: 9**

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

## 1. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (20 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel to replicate and substantially expand high-quality charter schools (as defined in this notice). In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.)

Reader's Score: 16

### Sub Question

1. 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 (4 points).

#### Strengths:

The application provides a description of how Aspire will partner with the districts in Tennessee. Thorough discussion of the existing organization and governance structure is included. (pp. 36-37) The explanation provides responsibilities for the various groups and the types of support provided.

#### Weaknesses:

The management plan provided is general in nature and not clearly tied to the objectives. Specific timelines and milestones for each year of the project are not included.

Reader's Score: 3

2. 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 (4 points).

#### Strengths:

The business plan describes the priorities for the organization and covers most of the requested areas. Priorities related to each of the areas are defined and thorough. An explanation of how Aspire will use the potential grant funds is clearly explained. This noteworthy because they have existing grant funding and they are ensuring the will not be any comingling of the funds. (p. 50)

#### Weaknesses:

The plan does not address how facilities and governance will be implemented.

Reader's Score: 3

3. 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 projects long-term success (4 points).

#### Strengths:

The application provides an extensive discussion of the operational model. There is broad support of Aspire by foundations, authorizers, and parents. (pp. 50-51) The support includes both financial and resources support.

## Sub Question

### Weaknesses:

A very limited discussion of the financial model was provided. It is unclear how the schools will be financially successful with just state, local, and federal funds. The application states there is a local family foundation that has provided ten years of funding, however this is undocumented. (p. 51)

Reader's Score: 3

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

### Strengths:

A comprehensive discussion of early risk detection and close monitoring of low-performing schools was provided, as well as the actual closure procedures.

### Weaknesses:

When and how the decision is made to close an underperforming school is not clear.

Reader's Score: 3

#### 5. 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 (4 points).

### Strengths:

The project team has a wide range of professional experience relevant to the project's implementation and success. Resumes were included with the application to document their qualifications. (pp. e87-96) In addition to education, their experience includes overseeing multimillion dollar projects, working with venture capital and start-up companies, and charter school operations.

### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

## Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

### 1. Quality of the Evaluation Plan (5 points)

**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:

An extensive discussion of goals, measures, and data to be gathered is provided. All are aligned to the Charter School Program goals and performance measures. Specific examples of qualitative and quantitative data are provided, including the methods for gathering that data. (pp. 56-59) The applicant has extensive experience with data collection and reporting, as demonstrated through the successful reporting related to a previous CSP grant and Teacher Incentive Fund grant. (p. 60)

**Weaknesses:**

The actual evaluation plan is ambiguous. It is unclear how the data that is collected will be used to inform decisions related to the project goals.

**Reader's Score:** 3

**Priority 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 (as defined in this notice).

**Note 1:** The Secretary encourages an applicant responding to this priority to describe the extent to which the charter schools it currently operates or manages serve individuals from low-income families at rates that are at least comparable to the rates at which these individuals are served by public schools in the surrounding area.

**Note 2:** For charter schools that serve students younger than 5 or older than 17 in accordance with their State's definition of "elementary education" or "secondary education," at least 60 percent of all students in the schools who are between the ages of 5 and 17 must be individuals from low-income families to meet this priority.

**Strengths:**

The documentation demonstrated that 78% of students attending Aspire are low income compared to 74% of schools in area. (p. e17) Additionally, Aspire schools have a low attrition rate. The schools were established to provide services to underserved populations.

**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 (as defined in this notice) 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).

**Note:** Applicants in States operating under ESEA Flexibility that have opted to waive the requirement in ESEA section 1116(b) for LEAs to identify for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, as appropriate, their Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two or more consecutive years may partner with LEAs to serve students attending priority or focus schools (see the June 7, 2012, "ESEA Flexibility" guidance at [www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility](http://www.ed.gov/esea/flexibility)). The Secretary encourages such applicants to describe how their proposed projects complement the efforts to serve students attending priority or focus schools described in States' approved requests for waivers under ESEA Flexibility.

**Strengths:**

The applicant has already identified and received approval from the Achievement School District to implement a restart model in one of the schools they will be opening. They will be working with priority and focus schools and the planned project aligns with Tennessee's ESEA waiver.

**Weaknesses:**

Not addressed

**Reader's Score:** 4

**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 1:** An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting Diversity, is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would 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, or to avoid racial isolation.

**Note 2:** For information on permissible ways to meet this priority, please refer to the joint guidance issued by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice entitled, " Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>.

**Strengths:**

The applicant discussed specific measures taken to monitor racial and ethnic balances in its schools. Those measures include monitoring the racial and ethnic balance of the schools and then revising their outreach plans as needed.

The racial diversity of the schools mirrors that of the communities where they are located: 85% of their students are Latino or African American. (p.e17)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 5

**Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Promise Zones**

1. This priority is for projects that are designed to serve and coordinate with a federally designated Promise Zone.

**Note:** Applicants should submit a letter from the lead entity of a designated Promise Zone attesting to the contribution that the proposed activities would make, and supporting the application. A list of designated Promise Zones and lead organizations can be found at [www.hud.gov/promisezones](http://www.hud.gov/promisezones).

**Strengths:**

Not Addressed

**Weaknesses:**

Not Addressed

**Reader's Score:** 0

**Overall Comments - Overall Comments**

1. Overall/additional comments

**General:**

Aspire Public Schools' application presents an example of schools that are specifically created to serve educationally disadvantaged students. Their plan to expand in Tennessee is based on the model they implemented in California. The leadership team has long-term experience in charter management and has been operating more than 30 schools.

**Reader's Score:**

---

**Status:** Draft  
**Last Updated:** 08/20/2014 11:01 AM