

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

Status: Draft

Last Updated: 08/12/2014 04:29 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Gestalt Community Schools (U282M140021)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Eligible Applicant		
1. Qual: Eligible Applicant	50	45
Significance		
1. Significance of Project	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	15
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management/Personnel Plan	20	12
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Evaluation Plan	5	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Low Income Demographic		
1. CPP 1	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
School Improvement		
1. CPP 2	4	4
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 3	5	0
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Promise Zones		
1. CPP 4	2	0
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		

1. Overall Comments

0

Total

121

97

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 84.282m - 1: 84.282M

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Gestalt Community Schools (U282M140021)

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: 45

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 has provided adequate evidence that they have consistently increased student achievement on state level achievement tests among all students in their member schools over the past three years.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

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:

The applicant has adequately demonstrated that they have reduced the achievement gap among African American and low income students in math and reading at higher rates than the state average in most of their schools.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Powercenter Middle school has not shown consistent academic achievement across the 3 years of data provided. This demonstrates lack of consistency on the part of the applicant.

Reader's Score: 10

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 applicant provided information that reflects an adequate consistent increase on statewide tests and student attendance, for educationally disadvantaged students in their schools over a 3 year period.

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:

The applicant has provided adequate evidence of a high quality turnaround plan to serve the educationally disadvantaged students identified in the proposal (the six additional schools that will be created as a result of the grant acceptance). This plan includes interventions, supports, and additional staffing and resources based on student needs of the ELL, disabled and other educationally disadvantaged students.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide evidence of how they will address college and career readiness goals for students.

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: 15

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 applicant has submitted an adequate plan that demonstrates specific, measurable and attainable goals with respect to enrollment projection, the academic plan and operations. The goals include school specific goals such as developing individual plans for post secondary success for each student.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

I have discussed this particular component of the application with my fellow peer reviewers, and this score is a reflection of my professional assessment.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant has provided a well thought out proposal, based on empirical research studies, that includes the tenets of their existing model. These tenets include differentiated instruction, additional extended learning time and service learning that will likely prove successful in the proposed location.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

I have discussed this particular component of the application with my fellow peer reviewers, and this score is a reflection of my professional assessment.

Reader's Score: 10

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: 12

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 applicant has provided a management plan to achieve the proposed project within budget and with defined personnel who are responsible for general tasks.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide timelines for any projects other than for the school opening. Additionally, no milestones were identified

Reader's Score: 2

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 applicant provided evidence of school and organizational level decision making responsibilities as they relate to key functions.

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not submitted a business plan or model that demonstrates how they will ensure the quality and performance of the replication schools beyond the initial funding period.

Reader's Score: 1

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 applicant provided evidence of a financial model that includes private funders to who have committed to help expand and sustain he network.

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not provided evidence of a commitment from current and future partners or support from stakeholders critical to the proposed project.

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 submitted an adequate proposal that includes a plan for closing the charter schools managed by the applicant that do not meeting high academic standards of quality.

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 4

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 applicant has included the qualifications of the key personnel who will be in charge of management of the charter schools. These personnel have extensive experience and education in leading change in charter schools and school leadership.

Weaknesses:

The CEO of the project does not appear to have past experience with charter school leadership.

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 has submitted a high quality plan that includes evaluation of the proposed project through achievement on the state assessments, daily attendance, norm referenced assessments, and interim assessments.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not include a plan that includes community feedback on the quality of education students receive; therefore, it is unclear how they will assess if the goals of the schools are in line with community needs.

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 applicant has adequately demonstrated that the schools they currently serve encompass over 90% of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. This is comparable to the demographics of the served community.

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). 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 adequately demonstrated that the proposed replication will occur in schools that are currently designated by the LEA as "failing" schools under the city wide designation.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

No response was submitted for how the applicant reduces racial isolation

The applicant did not provide information on how it serves ELL or special needs students at a rate comparable to that of the surrounding schools in the community.

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not offer a response to this competitive preference priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

1. Overall/additional comments

General:

Reader's Score:

Status: Draft

Last Updated: 08/12/2014 04:29 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/18/2014 01:16 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Gestalt Community Schools (U282M140021)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Eligible Applicant		
1. Qual: Eligible Applicant	50	41
Significance		
1. Significance of Project	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	11
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management/Personnel Plan	20	10
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Evaluation Plan	5	2
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Low Income Demographic		
1. CPP 1	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
School Improvement		
1. CPP 2	4	4
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 3	5	0
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Promise Zones		
1. CPP 4	2	0
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		

1. Overall Comments

0

Total

121

86

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 84.282m - 1: 84.282M

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Gestalt Community Schools (U282M140021)

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: 41

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 school that has three years of academic ratings has demonstrated a three year improvement of 27.3 points in math and 15.4 points in reading. The applicant states that similar gains have been made in the primary subgroups since nearly all students in that school are African American, and 81% are economically disadvantaged (p. e24).

Weaknesses:

The network only has one school that has three years of data which makes it difficult to evaluate the consistency of the network's academic achievement.

While the applicant states that the three year gains it claims for the one school with three years of data is comparable because it has a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, the applicant does not provide the three year gains for just that segment of the student body. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students is 81% which is low enough to potentially result in different scores than the ones claimed by the applicant.

Reader's Score: 18

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

Sub Question

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:

The network's one mature school has demonstrated significantly higher scores among all subgroups over the comparison school, the local district, and the state with the exception of students with disabilities in reading in 2012-2013 (p. e17).

In the charts the applicant provides, there are examples from the mature school that demonstrate the closing or reversing of the achievement gap among some subgroups and in some years.

Weaknesses:

The one mature school in the network has not shown consistently significant gains in student academic achievement over the three years of data provided (p. e16-18).

The one mature school in the network has not closed or reversed the achievement gap for all subgroups across all three years of data. This demonstrates a lack of consistency on the part of the applicant (p. e16-18)

Reader's Score: 8

- 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 applicant has provided some data to show significant gains in academic achievement compared to the state averages, specifically in 2012-2013 at PCAMS (p. e16).

The applicant describes significant three year gains at PCAMS among the economically disadvantaged subgroup over three years of data (p. e25).

The applicant demonstrates significantly lower attrition rates and higher attendance rates than the state averages over the three years (p. 16-19)

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:

The applicant has made significant gains in the academic achievement of its educationally disadvantaged students. The network's Power Center Academy Middle School students in 2013 outperformed the comparison school in math by over 44 points and in reading by over 43 points. The same students are even outperforming state averages by 10-15 points in both subjects.

The applicant uses the Response to Intervention method to address disadvantaged students and uses an inclusive environment for its special student populations (p. e26-27).

The applicant indicates that it will be taking over the operations for 6 schools in the Achievement School District in Tennessee and expanding 8 schools during the project period in that same geography (p. 133).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address what efforts it will take to promote college- and career-readiness.

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) 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 applicant will be serving the same population of students that are currently in low-performing schools that are part of the Achievement School District (p. e21, e29).

Sub Question

The applicant provides some measurable goals and objectives around student achievement.

Weaknesses:

The applicant's goals, as stated, are not all measurable, specifically the GCS Lenses of Excellence. If those objectives are measurable, they are not explained within the narrative.

The applicant does not provide any goals, objectives, or outcomes regarding human capital, financial, or operational matters. This does not provide any information or context to evaluate the ongoing financial or operational sustainability of the charter management network or the schools it serves.

I have discussed this particular component of the application with my fellow peer reviewers, and this score is a reflection of my professional assessment.

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 provides a logic model that describes the inputs, outputs, and outcomes for most aspects of the project described within the narrative that are aligned with the projects goals and objectives (p. e75).

Weaknesses:

The logic model does not include inputs or outputs on human capital matters.

I have discussed this particular component of the application with my fellow peer reviewers, and this score is a reflection of my professional assessment.

Reader's Score: 8

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: 10

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).

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant provides a timeline of its school openings (p. e52) and defined the responsibilities of its leadership team (p. e53-54).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide timelines for anything but the school openings, and there are no milestones or project tasks to evaluate.

Reader's Score: 1

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 applicant describes its governance structure and provides a table of school- and organizational-level decision-making responsibilities as they relate to key functions (p. e54-55).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not really provide a business plan or any detail on how the applicant will ensure the success of its schools after the grant period.

Reader's Score: 1

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 applicant provides examples of a number of community partnerships and the support of the Charter School Growth Fund with a letter of support from the Fund. Gestalt has relationships with the University of Memphis, the Memphis Grizzlies, Shelby County Schools, and SunTrust Bank. Presumably, these partnerships provide financial support as well as operational support (p. e57).

The applicant indicates that the network has a multi-year financial model that has each school becoming self-sufficient five years after opening. The CMO fee is reasonable and set at the industry standard rate. The schools open one to two grade levels at a time (p. 56).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide any other letters of support or indications of support from the Local Educational Agency, community leaders, elected officials, or stated partners. This prevents reviewers from properly evaluating the level of support provided by the state partners and understanding the relationships between the partners.

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).**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant discusses how it would manage or close a school that does not meet high standards of quality. It would work with the LEA, community members, and other high performing schools to transition the students into other schools (p. e64-65).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

There are members of the team who have the relevant training and experience to make them suitable for their roles. Specifically, the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief Financial Officer have deep experience in their areas of responsibility and have relevant and impressive postgraduate degrees (p. e88-96).

Weaknesses:

Some of the roles described, from the information contained in the resumes, indicate that the person does not have extensive and relevant experience in their area of responsibility, specifically the CEO who has only experience managing this one network for a few years. There is no evidence that the CEO has the qualifications and experience needed to manage a project of the same size and scope as being proposed.

The project director for this grant is not indicated in the application.

Reader's Score: 2

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 provides some information as to how it will report out on objectives and measures including board presentations, annual progress reports to its authorizer and the Commissioner of Education, and internally. This ensures that relevant stakeholders are aware of the school's progress and its student performance (e.63-64).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not delineate who is responsible for the evaluation plan to properly evaluate its quality.

The applicant does not provide adequate evidence of evaluation methods that produce qualitative data.

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 applicant provides statistics that show its free and reduced lunch rate at well above 60% which is in line with student demographics in neighboring public schools.

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). 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 provides evidence on p. e23 and e26 that it is partnering with the Achievement School District in Memphis to turnaround failing schools as part of its operating model, and all schools will be part of this model. Gestalt will take over

the operation of the District's failing schools, those that are in the bottom 5% of schools statewide with the commitment to move them to the top 25%.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide the regional/district levels of SPED students served to compare the applicant with the surrounding area.

The applicant also does not discuss how it will decrease racial isolation and promote racial diversity among its overwhelmingly African American population.

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this criterion in its application.

Reader's Score: 0

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

1. Overall/additional comments

General:

Reader's Score:

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/18/2014 01:16 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/24/2014 01:54 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Gestalt Community Schools (U282M140021)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Eligible Applicant		
1. Qual: Eligible Applicant	50	45
Significance		
1. Significance of Project	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	13
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management/Personnel Plan	20	14
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Evaluation Plan	5	2
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Low Income Demographic		
1. CPP 1	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
School Improvement		
1. CPP 2	4	4
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Promoting Diversity		
1. CPP 3	5	0
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Promise Zones		
1. CPP 4	2	0
Overall Comments		
Overall Comments		

1. Overall Comments

0

0

Total

121

96

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 84.282m - 1: 84.282M

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Gestalt Community Schools (U282M140021)

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: 45

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:

Ample success over a three year period of GCS flagship school was demonstrated with the TN SCORE prize awarded for highest performing middle school (e23). The middle school has three years of growth data that demonstrate gains each year on the TN state assessment showing that all students gained 27.3 points in math and 15.4 points in reading. All students in aggregate consistently outperformed their peers in the comparison schools, district and state (e16-18).

Students attending Power Center Middle and High schools have consistently outperformed the state (all students and African American students) in reading and math.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 20

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

Sub Question

students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant (15 points).

Strengths:

At the flagship middle and high school where trend data is available, African American students have shown consistent annual gains and have outperformed their peers in the district and state (e24). The same trends were documented for low-income students who in 2013 bested their state peers in math by almost 32% and 27.6% in reading (e25).

Weaknesses:

Three year assessment data for Power Center Academy Middle School shows that students with disabilities did not achieve higher than their peers in the district or the state. Further, the gains realized in 2011-12 of 30.8% over 13.6% in 2010-11 were not maintained the following year (2012-13) where the achievement rate was only 19% (pp. 2-4).

Reader's Score: 10

- 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:

Students at all four schools outpaced the comparison school, district and state in attendance. At the high school, attrition rate again was well below the comparison entities-1.5 compared to 13.6 for the comparison school (e20). The high school is adding 12th grade in the coming year; therefore, no graduation data available.

Weaknesses:

No weakness 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:

GCS currently services two impoverished communities, Hickory Hill community in southeast Memphis with households that are 7.6% below the county poverty level and North Memphis Crosstown where 30% residents are below the poverty level.

GCS plans to open six new schools (3 elementary, two middle and one high) in the same Memphis zip code. Grades will be expanded (3 at Klondike and 1 at the Power Academy HS) over the five year grant (e32 & e52).

Applicant provided a detailed description of RTI and the academic and behavior interventions and supports provided to students whose assessment results place them in that tier. The interventions and accommodations described in each tier are appropriate and have a likelihood of being successful.

The applicant states they use a full inclusion model and coordinate their efforts with the LEA Exceptional Children Division. Special education teachers serve as a resource to the regular education teacher, and regular progress monitoring is in place to support referral, extra support and prescribed interventions for IEP or 504 plans. All strategies are in-line with IDEA requirements and together should result in increased growth and achievement of students with disabilities (e27-30).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not discuss their plans for preparing middle and high school students for career and college.

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: 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 applicant presented a comprehensive and detailed description of their instructional approach, supports and strategies that would clearly lead to increased student growth and achievement. They employ an array of strategies such as integrated technology, high expectations for academic achievement, service learning opportunities, extended time, school climate conducive to focused learning, and parent and student orientations (e33-34/e38). These strategies are all noted as inputs on their logic model (e75).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

I have discussed this particular component of the application with my fellow peer reviewers, and this score is a reflection of my professional assessment.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The objectives are measurable, have identified measures and accompanying reporting requirements (e63-64). Further, the objectives are referenced in the logic model as short-term or medium outcomes providing a road map for progress monitoring and project execution.

GCS's instructional design was extensively described accompanied with convincing research-based citations. Constructivist teaching complimented by cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, service learning all aided by extra time form a conducive and productive learning environment (e39-47). A complete bibliography with 25 text cited references was attached (e73).

Weaknesses:

No description or strategies were discussed as to how school-based staff (principals, teachers, support staff) were to be recruited, trained, supported and evaluated through professional development or related activities. The emphasis was all on student outcomes, but research also shows that an effective teacher is critical to realizing student growth and achievement.

I have discussed this particular component of the application with my fellow peer reviewers, and this score is a reflection of my professional assessment.

Reader's Score: 8

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: 14

Sub Question

- 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 applicant provided a table showing their plan for school scale up and expansion (e52). The discussion indicated the principal has a fair amount of autonomy in establishing school-based priorities with the central office overseeing academic design, human capital and recruitment (e555).

Weaknesses:

A 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 was not provided.

Reader's Score: 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 key function table accompanied by outlined management responsibilities of the central office and school-based personnel is provided. They further stated a goal to have each school be self-sufficient by their fifth year of operation, provided enrollment targets are met (e55-56). GSC has a robust recruitment and marketing plan that calls for outreach to community and faith-based organizations, Human Service and partnerships with youth serving organizations, PSAs and open houses (e60-61).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not discuss their plan for ensuring financial sustainability once the federal funding ends. Only one letter of support was provided.

Reader's Score: 2

- 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:

Financial oversight, compliance and reporting is provided by the GCS central office in close coordination with the school principal and in alignment with the school's improvement plan. The model requires each school to be self-sufficient in 5 years (e56). Additionally, GCS indicate they have secured and anticipate receiving additional financial support to expand the network of schools from local and national foundations such as the Walton Foundation, local Community Development Corporation, Sun Trust Bank, and Methodist Health Care (e57).

The applicant listed an array of school district, city and county, community, business and denominational partners and elaborated on how they support the CMOs efforts to publicize and recruit students, and offer student enrichment opportunities (e57). Parents and student families are other partners who are provided with multiple avenues for both input and information retrieval (e59).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

A multi-year financial and operating model was not presented. The only reference made was that schools would be self-sufficient in five years and add one grade annually. The partners are community based and not tasked with fundraising.

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:

If current schools are underperforming, GCS has two proposed approaches. The first would be to forestall opening or expanding grades and redirect resources to the underachieving school – which is a logical step. Second, a fresh-start approach to an existing school wherein resources and staff assignments are reevaluated. Only if and when the LEA revokes the charter, would the school be closed (e64).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 4

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 four principal GCS central office leaders provide, at present, centralized oversight and support to the currently operating CMO (e53). Their resumes are attached (e88-96). The role and functions of the school based leadership teams were also outlined (e53).

Weaknesses:

It was not clearly specified who would be the lead project director.

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 presented performance goals linked to measurable objective performance measures related to intended outcomes. They further described the interim and external achievement data that is regularly collected to inform student progress. Teachers, parents and students have ready access to multiple measures of student data and will be included in evaluation processes (e63-65).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not describe the evaluation questions, methodology for collecting and analyzing data, and the type of data to be collected.

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:

Applicant provided FRL data for their four current schools documenting that well over 60% of their enrolled students qualify-81%, 99% and 100% respectfully (e22 and e16-21). The middle and high school students classified as economically disadvantaged typically performed 40 to 50 points above a local comparison school and 20 to 30 points above the state average (2012-13 data).

Weaknesses:

No weakness 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). 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:

Two of the applicant's schools (Humes and Klondike Preparatory Academies) meet the criteria in that they operate as turnaround schools (e23). Gestalt CS is a transformation partner with the Achievement School District (ASD Handbook e128). ASD is an LEA created by the state of Tennessee to provide turnaround support for schools in the bottom 5% statewide (e26).

Weaknesses:

No weakness 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:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

Comparative enrollment demographic data was not provided. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if the applicant currently serves, or intends to serve in their expansion schools, students in identified subgroups at rates comparable to

schools in the surrounding area.

Achievement School District Handbook refers to "priority" groups in reference to the lottery process; however, priority groups are not defined.

Reader's Score: 0

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.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not seek points for this competitive preference priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Overall Comments - Overall Comments

- 1. Overall/additional comments**

General:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/24/2014 01:54 PM