

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/11/2010 02:04 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Jamaa Learning Center (U282B090018)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Comments		
Summary Comments		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
Selection Criteria		
The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.		
1. QUESTION 2	20	14
The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.		
1. QUESTION 3	10	10
The extent of community support for the application.		
1. QUESTION 4	20	14
The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.		
1. QUESTION 5	10	7
The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.		
1. QUESTION 6	20	17
The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives ...		
1. QUESTION 7	10	7
The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.		
1. QUESTION 8	10	8
The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.		
1. QUESTION 9	10	8
The contribution the charter school will make ...		
1. QUESTION 10	20	16
Total	130	101

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel 2: 84.282B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Jamaa Learning Center (U282B090018)

Questions

Summary Comments - Summary Comments

1. Summary Comments

General:

This planning grant application is for the Jamaa Learning Center. The curriculum is still in development though influenced by the KIPP approach. A February 2010 approval is anticipated.

The grades to be served are K-8, with a total of 300 students. The school will start with kindergarten and third grade; the following year 6th grade will be added. Year 1: k-40 (2 classes); 3rd (36, 2 classes); year 2 adds 6th grade w/ 30 (2 classes)

The application provides details of the location and students to be served in St. Louis.

A tremendous amount of community service is featured. It is unclear what primary focus is of the school: education or community services.

|

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.

1. The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the educational program to be implemented by the proposed charter school, including how the program will enable all students to meet challenging State student academic achievement standards, the grade levels or ages of students to be served, and the curriculum and instructional practices to be used.

Strengths:

Jamaa is described as a full-service community school. The school's mission gives equal attention to education and social services. Page e2

The application details how as a K-8 at full growth, Jamaa will contain three 'villages': K-2; 3-5; and 6-8. To foster relationship between students, families and teachers, looping for each village will take place. Application states that studies and research have shown the advantages to looping. Page e11

Jamaa will be modeled after KIPP, Uncommon Schools and Achievement First, successful charter school networks.

Assurances are repeatedly stated that the curriculum, still in development, will be fully aligned to Show-Me standards. Page e4 The school will have academic rigor, high expectations and a challenging curriculum.

The curriculum will emphasize literacy, math, social sciences, arts, tech and empowerment. Everyday Math is described

as the intended math component.

Focusing on the whole child and community, the application describes the 5 "E"s for students and family: Academic Entitlement; Cultural & Arts Enrichment; Health and Beauty Enhancement; Financial Empowerment; Emotional & Spiritual Enlightenment.

Weaknesses:

The schools to be emulated are successful but what exactly the model is and how it will work with the intended population isn't provided. There is no evidence that this approach will work. The lack of data makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of the program.

There is a wealth of information provided but the criterion was not fully addressed: "how the program will enable all students to meet challenging State student academic achievement standards and the curriculum" that will be used to do so. There is no curriculum provided to assess the program.

The curriculum, yet to be developed, will emphasize literacy, math, social sciences, arts, tech and empowerment. It is not clear if science will also be a concern. Page e9

There is sparse language on addressing remediation and bringing up students academically behind, especially those joining the school in grade 6. Remediation is mentioned in passing under technology; page e15

Statement is made that "during the school week, all students will engage in 6 to 7 hours of standards-based instruction including ELA, Math, Social Studies, and Science" a week. Page e12 It is unclear if that is 6-7 hours per subject or 6-7 hours total for all core subjects. If that is the case, then this is insufficient time.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a description of how the State's law establishes an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and exempts the charter school from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy the charter school will have over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operation, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

The application quotes the law and statues and describes how the school will use it. Autonomy and flexibility is clearly explained and understood.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - The extent of community support for the application.

1. The extent of community support for the application.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school, and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Strengths:

The applicant has created a sound founding team of 12 members from the community.

There is a detailed explanation of the school's governing board responsibilities and skills required for the board.

The application describes that about 100 supporters of the Jamaa have committed to assisting in the development of the school. Page e22

Jamaa plans to seek partnerships with community based organizations and service organizations that are aligned with Jamaa's mission.

Direct community outreach has begun with a picnic which will become an annual event. As a result of the picnic, signatures of interest were gathered and provided as an attachment. Letters of support were also provided.

A clear enrollment and recruitment plan is provided. The enrollment is open but the neighborhood of the Ville will be targeted.

Weaknesses:

The extent of community input into the creation of the school is lacking. Though 100 supports have committed to the school, there is no evidence of this. Partnerships and outreach will be done but the application is vague on what has been done with the direct input of the community.

Within the methods of enrollment, the only media mentioned is advertisements in local community publications. It's not clear that other means, such as a web presence, will also be used. Page e26

The enrollment plan includes a student interest form; this is confusing. It is not clear if the interest form is the same as an enrollment application. It is also ambiguous if the home visit is mandatory before a student is enrolled in the school. It seems tied to the registration form and a condition of enrollment.

The Lottery, Recruitment and Admission Policy provided as an attachment has conflicting dates with the application. Enrollment will begin in January 2010 yet the anticipated charter approval will happen in February 2010.

The parent signatures provided contain a number of parents who have children who would be ineligible to enroll in Jamaa because of their ages (too old or too young).

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.

1. The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the objectives for the charter school and how these grant funds will be used, including how these funds will be used in conjunction with other Federal programs administered by the Secretary, in meeting these objectives.

Strengths:

The applicant provides clearly stated goals and the assessments that will be used to measure the goals.

Academic goals include students achieving an average of 1.1 year academic growth in all core content areas and that students enrolled in Jamaa for three consecutive years will be at or above grade level in all core contents areas.

Other non-academic goals such as organizational soundness and character development are also provided.

A detailed explanation is provided of how the grant funds will be used, along with other federal monies such as Title I and Title II.

Weaknesses:

The academic goals are modest. The projection is that by year 3, 70% of students tested will be proficient in Reading and Math. It is not clear which grades will be tested either by the MAP or the NWEA.

Academic goals fall short of the 100% proficient mandated by NCLB.

There are no objectives for other core subjects such as social studies or science.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.

1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.

Strengths:

A number of assessments were presented; Jamaa will use NWEA, Stanford 10 and MAP for assessments; NWEA will be administered three times a year.

Social assessments will be administered as well, such as a 360-feedback evaluation and surveys.

A clear discussion of a SIS system and useful data collection and analysis is included.

Application specifically states that assessments will be also used to 'evaluate the effectiveness of the academic performance in an effort to make immediate course-corrections as well as to assess the effectiveness of the multi-year looping component". Page e32

Weaknesses:

It is not clear for which grade which assessments will be used. It is not stated or which grades MAP will be administered.

There are no assurances that the assessments will be aligned to the curriculum.

For the teacher derived assessments, there's no indication that professional development will be provided to support teachers.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives ...

1. The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students during and after the period of Federal financial assistance.

Strengths:

There is a convincing likelihood that the school will improve the education results for students.

Jamaa will use research, school visits to see best practices, and attending conferences.

The non-academic goals are reasonable and obtainable.

Weaknesses:

Given the intended student population, specifics on how students will get to proficient were lacking.

It is difficult to ascertain without a curriculum in place if students will be proficient in three years.

It is unclear how the cited school models will work to make students proficient. No empirical evidence is provided on KIPP, Uncommon Schools and Achievement First. The intended student population will be diverse but how the proposed model and the social services offered will work and their effectiveness is not indicated.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.

1. The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school.

Strengths:

Parental engagement in the development of Jamaa will take place through Parent Village focus group. Page e38

Parent involvement will be encouraged through student support and academics, such as regular teacher-parent contact.

Other means of parent engagement that Jamaa will use are specified. Parent surveys will be conducted twice a year, serving on the Parent Village advisory committee, volunteering, and other means are provided.

Further engagement would occur through the social and community services that will be offered through the school.

Weaknesses:

The current Parent Village includes 4 parents; as the school is not established, it is not clear how these parents are parents of Jamaa students if the student body hasn't been determined yet.

Of the parent engagement means listed, parent involvement in governance is not mentioned. There are no statements that parents may participate on the Board. Not clear if there will be a parents association.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.

- 1. The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director; and the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.**

Strengths:

The background and resume of the lead applicant is strong. She is familiar with the students and the proposed area of Jamaa.

The founding team is comprised members from the community. An adequate description of the board's role and responsibilities has been provided.

Adequate job description and qualifications for a school leader is provided; plan is to fill the position in December 2009.

Weaknesses:

The only current staff member is the CEO. She has extensive experience in administration and management though not necessarily as an educator.

Given that the curriculum still needs to be developed, hiring a Head of School should be done as soon as possible.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - The contribution the charter school will make ...

- 1. The contribution the charter school will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve to State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.**

Strengths:

Good statistics on population is provided, along with the information that the only elementary school in the neighborhood has closed.

Clear statement that 'Jamaa's educational program and curriculum is designed to aid high-risk and educationally disadvantaged students. ' page e46

Jamaa describes completing a needs assessment periodically to determine the current needs of students and families.

Language is included regarding Special Education students; ELL students are mentioned along with the homeless and Gifted and Talented.

Weaknesses:

How Jamaa will assist the educationally disadvantaged to achieve State Standards is difficult to evaluate since there is no curricular content provided.

It is not clear on how the strategies described, working individually and in conjunction, will raise students academically. No evidence has been provided that support the supposition that the school model to be adopted will work with this student population. Given the student population, information on remediation is sparse.

Reader's Score: 16

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 02/11/2010 02:04 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/11/2010 02:04 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Jamaa Learning Center (U282B090018)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Comments		
Summary Comments		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
Selection Criteria		
The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.		
1. QUESTION 2	20	16
The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.		
1. QUESTION 3	10	10
The extent of community support for the application.		
1. QUESTION 4	20	16
The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.		
1. QUESTION 5	10	9
The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.		
1. QUESTION 6	20	18
The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives ...		
1. QUESTION 7	10	10
The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.		
1. QUESTION 8	10	8
The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.		
1. QUESTION 9	10	9
The contribution the charter school will make ...		
1. QUESTION 10	20	20
Total	130	116

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel 2: 84.282B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Jamaa Learning Center (U282B090018)

Questions

Summary Comments - Summary Comments

1. Summary Comments

General:

A well thought out and written application. The holistic approach to addressing the needs of each student should prove effective in creating a positive learning center and increased student achievement. |

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.

1. The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the educational program to be implemented by the proposed charter school, including how the program will enable all students to meet challenging State student academic achievement standards, the grade levels or ages of students to be served, and the curriculum and instructional practices to be used.

Strengths:

The school is designed to serve grades K-8. In year one it anticipates enrolling 40 students in grades K-2 and 36 in grades 3-5. In year two it anticipates enrolling the same numbers and adding 30 students in the 6th grade. Ultimately it will serve 300 students. (page e5-e6)

The school curriculum will be designed using the Missouri Show-Me Standards as its foundation. (page e10)

The applicant supplies adequate information concerning the content of its intended curriculum for each of the core content areas, its intention to align to Missouri Show-Me Standards and use of high quality programs such as University of Chicago Mathematics. The intended structure should enable all students to meet the challenging State student academic achievement standards. (page e11-e18)

Substantial student demographic information is provided in criteria IX of application.

Weaknesses:

In an effort to create and sustain a longitudinal relationship of student to teacher, the applicant proposes to institute 3 year looping. The applicant claims that case studies and research show this to be an effective instructional practice but does not provide any data to support this assertion. The application would have been stronger had it included more information on the research and case studies it is basing this practice on.

The applicant states that the curriculum will be designed using the state standards and further developed based on models commonly used at high-performing schools across the United States but does not describe those models or give any data to support the success of the models it hopes to emulate.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to include a description of how the State's law establishes an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and exempts the charter school from significant State or local rules that inhibit the flexible operation and management of public schools.

The Secretary also encourages the applicant to include a description of the degree of autonomy the charter school will have over such matters as the charter school's budget, expenditures, daily operation, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly describes Missouri's charter school law and demonstrates an understanding of the flexibility and autonomy the school has over its hiring, budgets, curriculum and school design. (pages e16-e20)

The applicant understands that it will be established and will operate as a local educational agency and that the primary administrative relationship between school and sponsor is that the sponsor acts as the accountability agent ensuring compliance with all elements of the charter, monitoring the effectiveness of the school's operations, governance and financial management. (page e 19)

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - The extent of community support for the application.

1. The extent of community support for the application.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be informed about the charter school, and how students will be given an equal opportunity to attend the charter school.

Strengths:

The applicant will inform parents of members of community through a series of community outreach events including annual back to school picnics, and by partnering with multiple large local service agencies. (page e22-e23)

The applicant includes methods for informing parents and community about the school. These methods include personal outreach within the target geographic area, parent information sessions, and placement of advertisements in local community publications. (page e26)

If the number of student interest exceeds the capacity of the school, a random selection process (lottery) will be

conducted in early March to ensure all applicants have an equal chance of gaining admittance to the school. (page e27)

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant states they have signatures of 30 parents on their parent interest sign-up sheet, there is no evidence of this in the attachments or any other indicators provided that show the extent to which parents agree to the need for and interest in developing a school in this neighborhood.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.

1. The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the objectives for the charter school and how these grant funds will be used, including how these funds will be used in conjunction with other Federal programs administered by the Secretary, in meeting these objectives.

Strengths:

The applicant lists four clearly defined and realistic academic goals/objectives for the proposed school. Students will show a 1.1 grade level growth after first year, students enrolled for three years will perform above grade level in all core content areas, within three years the school will develop into a strong school community, and all students will feel a sense of community and exhibit an increasing number of positive qualities. (pages e27-e29)

The applicant described clearly what other funding is available and to what extent it will use grant funds in conjunction with other Federal programs. (page e30-e31)

Weaknesses:

The applicant mentions that the goals/objectives set for the school may appear ambitious for based on the performance of public schools and the population the school will serve. The application would have been stronger had it included some statistical data to aid the reader in comparing and evaluating the ambitiousness of the goals.

The applicant did not include any objectives for the governance and operations of the school.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.

1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly understands the relationship between the quality of achievement and the need for quality measurements by which to assess the achievement. The applicant will rely on multiple assessment models for assessing the achievement of its objectives including use of Missouri's Assessment Program, a nationally norm-referenced test such as Stanford 10, benchmark assessments (NWEA) and locally developed assessments created by the teachers. (page e32)

Strategies for assessing achievement include use of the NWEA three times a year to establish a baseline and show student progress. (page e32) The applicant will use a comprehensive student information system for collection and maintenance of data. Assessments will be consistent and frequent in order to maintain a continual picture of student progress. (page e33)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe measurements for students not traditionally measured through state and national norm referenced testing (grades K-1) nor does it include strategies for assessing the non academic goals and objectives.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives ...

- 1. The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives and improve educational results for students during and after the period of Federal financial assistance.**

Strengths:

Given the strength of the academic goals and objectives created by the applicant and the high quality of measurement tools and assessment strategies the likelihood the charter school will meet these objectives and improve educational results for students is very high. Using both internal and external evaluations on a continual basis, researching and implementing best practices, and maintaining strong management and governance will ensure the school continues to meet its objectives during and after the period of the Federal assistance.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.

- 1. The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe how parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school.

Strengths:

A parent centered focus group, the Parent Village, will be created and meet monthly to help with the development and design of the school. (page e38)

The applicant realizes the challenges it will face working with its population and the inevitability of some students not having strong parental ties. It commits to working proactively with students to find solutions that accommodate specific needs. (page e 39)

The founding team consists of twelve local residents and community leaders. It is from this team that the board of directors and advisory council will be formed. (page e20)

Weaknesses:

It is not clear to what extent parents have been involved in the planning of the school. The applicant states there are currently four parents that have committed to the creation of the school, but there is no further information provided for them. The applicant ion would have been strengthened by including some information on how parents and the neighborhood came together with a desire and need to create the school and include letters of support from them.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.

- 1. The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director; and the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.**

Strengths:

It is the intent of the applicant to advertise both locally and nationally for the position of Head of School and is committed to recruiting highly-qualified minority staff through advertisements in local minority publications. (page e45) The school's recruitment strategies will target highly qualified teachers who have at least a bachelor degree and a proven track record of academic success with students. The application includes a job description and qualifications and characteristics for the Head of School. (page e43)

Weaknesses:

As evidenced through the narrative and attached resume, the project director has experience in developing a KIPP school in St. Louis. According to the resumes of the founding board members, they all appear to have extensive experience in program design and management. There does not appear to be anyone involved with the initial planning of this school that has a breadth and depth of educational experience, in teaching, curriculum design, assessments or administration.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - The contribution the charter school will make ...

- 1. The contribution the charter school will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students to achieve to State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides an extremely compelling need for a high quality school in the proposed neighborhood, given that the only district public school closed in June 2009. The applicant's list of strategies include modeling itself after successful public schools with proven track records of working with similar populations, longer school days, differentiated instruction, and annual year end field trips as incentives for high performance. (page e49-e50)

The applicant demonstrates a clear understanding of the special needs of the students it will serve including at-risk, English Language Learners, homeless students and gifted/talented. Strategies included for serving the needs of these students are educating students in a least restrictive environment, implementing a Response to Intervention model, and employing a full-time certified, and highly qualified special education teacher. (page e51)

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 20

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 02/11/2010 02:04 PM