

**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: Shearwater Education Foundation (U282B090008)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.</b>		
1. QUESTION 2	20	10
<b>The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.</b>		
1. QUESTION 3	10	8
<b>The extent of community support for the application.</b>		
1. QUESTION 4	20	15
<b>The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.</b>		
1. QUESTION 5	10	8
<b>The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.</b>		
1. QUESTION 6	20	13
<b>The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives ...</b>		
1. QUESTION 7	10	6
<b>The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.</b>		
1. QUESTION 8	10	8
<b>The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.</b>		
1. QUESTION 9	10	5
<b>The contribution the charter school will make ...</b>		
1. QUESTION 10	20	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>88</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel 2: 84.282B

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

Applicant: Shearwater Education Foundation (U282B090008)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

Shearwater proposes to enroll 180 students between the ages of 17-21 in St. Louis. The curriculum is still in development, though the charter has been approved by the authorizer.

Though the intentions are admirable, the grades to be served in first year and each subsequent year are unclear. If Shearwater is to be an un-graded school, with students coming in with and accumulating necessary credits in order to graduate, that would have been helpful to know.

The relationship between Shearwater Education Foundation and Shearwater High School is undefined. No clear distinction was made between the Foundation and the school.

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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 intends to apply various teaching methodologies and will incorporate a longer school day and school year for the intended population of 17-21 students.

Assurances are provided that the Shearwater curriculum will be "interdisciplinary, academic rigorous, and easy to tailor" and that "Volunteer group comprised of experienced teachers, administrators, and counselors, has worked and will continue to work on developing the school's curricular framework and course offerings." (page 8).

The description of the Course catalog to be offered is a unique way to provide high school students with a choice of subjects, (page 8).

The applicant understands the population that the school will serve has financial constraints. The inclusion of paid internships for all students is an innovative method of engaging students.

**Weaknesses:**

There is no curriculum description provided or, at this point, developed.

It is unclear how the various methodologies will work with the curriculum to have these challenging students meet State Standards. There was also no evidence that these methods will work with this population.

It would have been helpful to the reviewer to see an example of a course description and an explanation of how the course catalog choices will be aligned to State Standards. There was no evidence that student choice will be directed/monitored by an advisor to ensure appropriate coursework and credits needed for graduation.

It is unclear how national standards, that haven't been developed yet, will benefit the intended population. The list of methodologies provided did not specifically or adequately address the remediation needs of students who are on the verge of, or have dropped out of, school.

Details and examples were lacking on where student internships will take place. There was no indication of what 'high-growth industry' in St. Louis would offer paid internships to Shearwater students.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**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 adequately stated the Charter Law and statutes. The relationship between the charter sponsor and the school was clearly defined.

The application articulated the benefits of being a charter school under Missouri law.

**Weaknesses:**

The application did not provide a description of flexibility given to charter schools under Missouri Law or what the school will do with this flexibility.

There was no description of the autonomy as a charter school in regards to hiring, curricular approach, financial responsibilities and the like.

**Reader's Score: 8**

## **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 application provides evidence of community support through numerous letters of support, including many not-for-profit organizations that serve this proposed area in St. Louis.

Application affirms parent demand for the creation of this school, (page 18).

As an indication of demand, Shearwater planners state that they have met with professionals and "regularly meet with an area youth council comprised of 10-20 older youth", (page 19).

Application assures that the enrollment and recruitment process will be open to all eligible students in St. Louis and will especially target 17-19 year olds.

#### **Weaknesses:**

Though the application provided information about a school in the proposed area that has closed, there are no specific demographics given for area. Given the targeted population, it would have been useful to see how many students would be eligible for the school.

In many letters of support, there wasn't a clear distinction between the foundation and the school. It is unclear which organization is being supported.

The statements of parental demand and frequent community meetings are not substantiated with any evidence. Information on how many parents have demanded the school and how often community meeting have been held was not provided.

Though it was probably not the intent, the admission policy seemed to be almost prohibitive with an interview process and survey in addition to the admission form, (page 21). To make the policy more compliant, the application should have contained a statement that these steps were optional and that eligible students who choose not to interview or participate in the survey would be given equal access.

**Reader's Score: 15**

## **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 application is very ambitious in its objective of students graduating with a diploma and having: admission to a post-secondary education institution; or full-time employment; and/or a business plan, (Page 22).

The organizational objectives for Shearwater are clear and well stated.

The applicant clearly conveys the use, and restrictions, of these funds.

**Weaknesses:**

The lack of a curriculum that is aligned to State Standards and graduation requirements makes it difficult to assess the graduation objective. Though there is mention of paid internships and mentoring, there is little information on how students will achieve full-time employment or develop realistic business plans.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**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:**

It is clearly stated that teachers will be trained in all assessments to be used in the school.

The Assessment table provided presents a clear timetable of when and what assessments will be administered, (page 37).

Shearwater student assessments will be tracked in Individualized Achievement Plan for each student and it is described that the plans will be differentiated per student.

**Weaknesses:**

Though professional development training will be offered, how it administered, when and if it is ongoing was not described.

There was no assurance that assessments are linked to curriculum or State standards.

Individualized Achievement Plan are adjustable to meet the needs of individual students but it is not explained how the instruction will be differentiated and what specific measures will be used to bring students that are below grade level (which is assumed to be most of the targeted student) to grade level in core subjects.

It would have been helpful to see a staff rollout per year to gauge teacher:student ratios.

**Reader's Score: 13**

**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 student population that Shearwater intends to work with, it is very likely that their educational results will improve.

It is evident that the school planners are strongly and passionately committed to these students.

**Weaknesses:**

Based on what has been, and has not been, provided in this application, it is not evident that the curriculum has been developed to support the academic goals.

**Reader's Score:** 6

**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:**

The school founders are taking a realistic approach to their intended population. The application clearly addresses the challenges of parental involvement. A surrogate parent will be designated for any student that does not have, or chooses to not have, a relationship with a biological parent.

The school will encourage parents within the school with an open door policy and a parent welcome area.

The school founders have established a number of relationships with nonprofits organizations. The university and community college partnerships are especially compelling.

**Weaknesses:**

It is not clear if there is a financial relationship with the nonprofits listed on page 44. There is little information on the paid internships that students will have or the organizations that will offer them. As a major component of the school model, this lack of information is troubling.

The application states that Shearwater "frequently elicits feedback and input from community members" (page 45) but it does not provide details on how this is done. Though the Mentorship Program Committee is 'meeting with area youth,' detail on how often and what sort of feedback the committee has received is lacking.

**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 President/CEO is strong. She has extensive experience in working with the intended student population.

Shearwater has a Board of Directors of 11 members from the community. An adequate description of the board's role and responsibilities has been provided.

**Weaknesses:**

The only current staff member is the President/CEO.

Detailed information on board composition was not provided. As board members are described as performing direct outreach to the community, it would have been useful to know who they are and their affiliations.

Though brief responsibilities for a business manager and principal were provided, actual job descriptions and qualifications were not. Given the intended student population of at-risk youths, specific qualifications of the principal are lacking.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**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 application makes assurances that it will work with Special Education students and ELL students. It has also focused on an educationally disadvantaged population.

The application describes some of the means that will be used (small classes, a longer school day and longer school year) to work with these challenged students. Students will also receive social supports through mentorships and internships.

**Weaknesses:**

How Shearwater High School will assist these students 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 these methodologies will work with this particular student population.

**Reader's Score: 15**

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## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Shearwater Education Foundation (U282B090008)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
<b>Summary Comments</b>		
1. QUESTION 1	0	0
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices.</b>		
1. QUESTION 2	20	13
<b>The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school.</b>		
1. QUESTION 3	10	7
<b>The extent of community support for the application.</b>		
1. QUESTION 4	20	13
<b>The ambitiousness of the objectives for the charter school.</b>		
1. QUESTION 5	10	7
<b>The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of those objectives.</b>		
1. QUESTION 6	20	16
<b>The likelihood that the charter school will meet those objectives ...</b>		
1. QUESTION 7	10	9
<b>The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement.</b>		
1. QUESTION 8	10	8
<b>The quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.</b>		
1. QUESTION 9	10	7
<b>The contribution the charter school will make ...</b>		
1. QUESTION 10	20	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>97</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - Panel 2: 84.282B

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

Applicant: Shearwater Education Foundation (U282B090008)

## Questions

### Summary Comments - Summary Comments

#### 1. Summary Comments

##### General:

Over all the application would have been strengthened by providing in depth student demographic information and district/community statistical information to support the need and desire for this school. Also more information could have been provided documenting evidence-based support for the use of specific assessments, products such as Big Picture Matrix and PowerSchool.]

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 instructional practices to be implemented were clearly described. The practices include project based learning, problem-based learning, direct instruction, and cooperative learning and will be complemented by internship opportunities with community based organizations. (pages 7-8)

The proposed extended school day schedule will allow students to participate in paid internships, accrue academic credits and increase the students' exposure to high growth industries. (page 9)

##### Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly describe how it will develop its curricular content and how this content will align to its state's high school standards. There is no specific curriculum described.

The applicant states it will be working with high growth industries but does not adequately describe which industries are included in the high growth label, or how the students' exposure to such industries helps meet the state career development educational standards.

Reader's Score: 13

**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's state law provides for its autonomy in operations in relationship to state statutes and exempts the applicant from all laws, rules, policies, and regulations that relate to public schools, school districts, and school district governing boards. (page 16)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant states on page 16 that it has freedom in operations that are regulated and managed based on a state-approved contract that it has signed with its sponsor "(to review a copy of this contract, see Project Narrative - Other Attachments)." In reviewing the copy of the contract, it is not clear exactly how much autonomy from its sponsor the applicant actually has. On pages 9 and 10 of the attachment, with exception of the provisions dealing with employment, it appears the sponsor exercises ultimate control over all decisions made by the applicant.

**Reader's Score: 7**

**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 includes a viable description of how it plans to inform the community about its existence. Strategies or public information include the use of youth recruiters, outreach sessions, local radio exposure, signage in local nonprofits and neighborhood organizations and print media advertisements. (page 20)

The applicant currently meets with a local area youth council. (page 19)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant states that it will hold sessions at community organizations where prospective students or adults who know them attend (page 20) but there are no details as to the community organizations they will be meeting with. It is not clear what community support there is for this applicant absent more detail on who they intend to work with in recruiting students.

The enrollment application process described on page 21 appears to be rather cumbersome for the type of student this school intends to serve. The applicant states all prospective students will be "invited" to complete a written admissions survey but does not clarify if this is a requirement for enrollment, or merely a suggestion. For many at risk students this

would be seen as a barrier to admission. More discussion on how the school intends to work with these at risk students to ensure their successful enrollment would have strengthened the application.

**Reader's Score: 13**

**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 clearly describes three objectives for educational performance and three objectives for its organizational viability. Each description includes achievement targets for each year of the grant as well as a list of measurement tools. (pages 22-34)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant states it intends to devote the majority of state money to support Title I purposes, plans to hold schoolwide Title I status and will supplement training of staff through Title II funding, but does not provide compelling evidence that they understand exactly what the purposes or uses of these funds are. Again, the application would have been strengthened had it included more details as to how the applicant planned to use grant funds in conjunction with other Federal programs.

**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:**

The applicant provided a clearly defined timeline for measuring the progress of student achievement. (page 37)

Strategies for measuring student achievement include a description of how the applicant plans to report student progress as well as the internal and external measures planned for student assessment. (pages 38-39)

The applicant intends to create a full School Accountability Plan that will be used to identify school or student needs and to develop a School Improvement Plan. (page 40)

On-going monitoring and evaluation of the organization's financial management systems will be handled through the establishment of a Finance and Audit Committee. School development will be monitored by a Fund Development and Community Relations Committee. (page 41)

**Weaknesses:**

Absent a clearly defined curriculum makes it difficult to ascertain how the measurement tools listed will adequately and appropriately measure students' academic growth. The application would have been strengthened had it provided more detail on how the academic measurement tools (NWEA and PowerSchool) actually align to state standards and the grade levels of students the applicant plans to serve.

**Reader's Score:** 16

**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:**

The applicant acknowledges the challenges facing its intended student population and has developed its objectives around improving these students' education and life skills. As demonstrated on pages 29 - 42, the applicant describes its objectives for the duration of the grant.

**Weaknesses:**

The application would have been strengthened by including some narrative as to how it intends to sustain itself after the period of Federal financial assistance.

**Reader's Score:** 9

**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:**

The applicant recognizes that many of the prospective students will have weak or no parental ties and will develop student support teams to work with those students missing active biological parent ties. (page 42)

The applicant includes letters of support from numerous community organizations, many of whom are also involved with the applicant's active committee structure. (pages 43-44 and attachments)

**Weaknesses:**

Although the applicant states it will be innovative in choosing and developing strategies for parental engagement, there is no detail other than the creation of a comfortable parent welcome area given to demonstrate its innovation and strategy. The application would have been strengthened by providing more information as to how the school will provide outreach to parents and/or the student support teams that are intended to serve as surrogates.

**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:**

A resume for the President/CEO was included in the attachments which helps to demonstrate her qualifications and relevant training and experience in organizational development.

**Weaknesses:**

No one other than the President/CEO was identified within the application. There was no description of the current board of directors or anyone else working on the development of the school.

Although the applicant includes a list of duties for the future business manager and school principal, there was no clearly defined job descriptions or qualifications provided for these key individuals.

**Reader's Score:** 7

**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 RISE Model for Success is the core of the applicant's school design. It is intended to reengage students through a combination of Instruction, Social Development and Economic Development activities. (pages 5-6)

It is very evident throughout the application that the applicant is passionate about assisting students who have dropped out or whose level of disconnection from school makes high school graduation improbable. By designing a program that combines a quality high school education with internships and instruction on college campuses, the applicant intends to provide students with the chance to thrive both socially and economically so that they may experience success as students and adults.

The applicant acknowledges its responsibilities to assist educationally disadvantaged students including those with limited English proficiency and those identified as having special needs. The applicant states that the implementation of its RISE Model for Success will enable any student with special needs to learn in the least restrictive environment. (pages 11-14)

**Weaknesses:**

Without a better description of the curriculum and course of study to be provided, it is difficult to determine how well the students will be able to achieve the state academic standards and state student academic achievement standards.

**Reader's Score:** 17

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

