

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2012 09:57 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Southland College Prep Charter School, Inc. (U282B120052)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Curriculum		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	15
Assisting Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	3	2
Assessing Achievement		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	8
Community Support		
1. Community Support	8	6
Parental and Community Involvement		
1. Parental Involvement	3	3
Quality of the Personnel		
1. Quality of the Personnel	22	18
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	16	12
Charter or Performance Contract		
1. Performance Contract	15	15
Degree of Flexibility		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Sub Total	100	82
Total	100	82

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel - 1: 84.282B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Southland College Prep Charter School, Inc. (U282B120052)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Curriculum

1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the quality of 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. If the curriculum and instructional practices have been successfully used in other schools operated or managed by the applicant, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the implementation of such practices and the academic results achieved.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes an advanced college prep charter school to assist students in earning a high school and college diploma. Notable curriculum components include a Freshman Academy to ensure students are college bound (p6), student community service and leadership position requirements (p7), and an extended school day and school year (p6). The focus on STEM (p23) and integrated technology (p23) are best practices for ensuring students are engaged and meet challenging academic standards. The focus on establishing a school band (p16), an anomaly in most charter schools, and the last class program (p22) are particularly noteworthy. The applicant also intends to offer various academic supports for students. The use of the Navariance Succeed system (p6), embedded tutoring (p22), teams of teachers assigned to monitor a student cohort (p30), summer academies (p31) and enrichment academies will increase the likelihood that students meet standards. The presence of defined course descriptions are also a strength of the application (p e197-e214).

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Disadvantaged Students

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The applicant provides evidence that the project will assist educationally disadvantaged students. In the target district, 72% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch (p2). In the target area 64% of families live beneath the poverty line compared to 48% of families in the state who live beneath the poverty line (p12). The school will serve students with special needs and intends to hire two special education teachers and two paraprofessionals to address student needs (p25-27).

Weaknesses:

The applicant states that all students are expected to enroll in AP classes (p28), but does indicate how students will be prepared for the rigor of AP classes. More detail is needed to address supports and options available to students who are educationally disadvantaged and may not be ready for the rigor of AP courses.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Assessing Achievement**1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school's objectives.****Strengths:**

The applicant notes that the complement of ACT assessments will be used to measure the achievement of school objectives (p4, 28). Basing the entire school's development on ACT/PLAN/EXPLORE data is a notable approach to school assessment. The use of real-time formative classroom assessments (p6), formative feedback from counselors and teachers, and student academic enrichment sessions (p6) will also likely inform the school's progress toward meeting project objectives.

Weaknesses:

While the intent to use ACT assessments to guide school development is notable, the applicant should ensure that the way data is reported will inform school, program and course development. Also, the applicant mentions that students will take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (p5), but does not mention how it results will be used to measure achievement of school objectives (p28). Finally, the applicant does not clearly delineate specific, measurable project goals. The narrative states that project goals are provided in an attached copy of the charter application (p44), however, appendix D only contains a copy of the charter certificate. More detail is needed.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Community Support**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.

The applicant is also encouraged to describe and provide evidence of community support for the proposed project.

Strengths:

The applicant provides evidence of community support in the appendix. Three letters of support are included from members of the state's federal legislative delegation. Another letter is provided, signed by three mayors of local villages, indicating support for the school. One particularly strong support document is a letter from a parent of a child currently enrolled in the school expressing satisfaction with the program. Perhaps the strongest indicator of community support is provided by the Southland College Prep Foundation. Its ability to raise funds to support school operation, as evidenced by its latest \$50,000 fundraiser, is strong evidence of community support (p34). The applicant addresses its lottery process (p34-35) and enrollment procedures to confirm that students are provided a fair opportunity to enroll in the school.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant addresses some steps in its lottery process (p34-35), more detail is needed. The narrative addresses dates of the enrollment period and application drop off times, but does not address the details of the lottery process. More discussion of process steps would have strengthened this section of the proposal.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Parental and Community Involvement

1. The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community 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 narrative states that the school was established by a team of community stakeholders (p36). The establishment of the school via a grassroots initiative is a strength of the proposal. The superintendent of the target district is also the CEO of the charter school, which is further evidence that the charter school is supported by various elements of the community (p36). Moreover, the narrative states that parents serve on the school PTSO and are involved in periodic review of curriculum and student policies (p37). Also, parents are involved in student academic concerns via the schools web portal, Edline, where they can check grades daily and communicate with teachers (p37).

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Personnel

1. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers-

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of its skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant nonprofit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

Strengths:

See strengths noted below

Weaknesses:

See weaknesses noted below

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. 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

Sub Question

origin, gender, age, or disability

Strengths:

None noted

Weaknesses:

While the applicant states that employment practices will follow non-discrimination policies (p14), it does not state that persons will be recruited from underrepresented groups. Specific strategies detailing efforts to recruit personnel from underrepresented groups are needed.

Reader's Score: 0

2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel

Strengths:

The narrative contains clear documentation that the Board of Directors has most skills and resources needed to advance school design and implementation. Board members have training or experience in law, education, arts, higher education or charter school development. The plan to expand administrative and teaching staff is noted and will likely facilitate school development (p42-44).

Weaknesses:

The narrative does not clearly indicate that members of the Board of Directors has substantial experience management/leadership of a non-profit organization or finance (p41). While several members have experience in education and business, the skills and resources provided by a member familiar with the challenges and obstacles faced by nonprofit organizations is not evident. Perhaps more detail regarding additional Board members' backgrounds may have provided needed support.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan.

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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.

Strengths:

The applicant presents a developed organizational chart (p e216) that is reflected in program design noted in the narrative. The timeline for future school development is noted on pages 42- 44 and is evidence that the school has considered projected growth through its fourth year of operation. The management plan also indicates parental input (p20, 24, 36), most notably on curriculum, coursework and school policies (p 37). The budget is conservative and reflects foci noted in the narrative.

Weaknesses:

The narrative nor the budget, noted as exhibit six, provides documentation for grant funds noted in budget (p e215). Some indication of the likelihood of receiving these funds should have been addressed in the narrative. It is also not clearly stated why the applicant is requesting only one year of funding. Also, more detail is needed regarding the role of the

school's CEO. On page 36, the Superintendent is listed as both the CEO of the Southland College Prep Charter School and the Superintendent of SD 162. Text clearly describing the separation of roles and responsibilities and the feasibility of serving in both capacities may have provided needed clarity. Finally, it is not clearly stated why parents are not included on the Board of Directors (p41, e189). While a PTSSO is noted on page 37 and parents are provided the opportunity to comment on school components (p37), it is not clearly stated why parental representation is not part of the school's main governing body.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Charter or Performance Contract

1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency.

The existence of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency and the extent to which the charter or performance contract describes how student performance will be measured in the charter school pursuant to State assessments that are required of public schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to discuss whether its proposed project has been denied a charter from its authorizing agency and, if so, how the applicant plans to revise its charter application before resubmitting its charter application to the authorizing agency. The applicant is also encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter contract, if applicable.

Strengths:

The applicant received its charter contract in 2010. A copy of the certificate is provided on page e119 in the appendix. The charter is valued until June 30, 2015.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Degree of Flexibility

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 the flexibility afforded under its State's law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and in terms of whether charter schools are exempt 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 state of Illinois exempts charter schools from many state regulations and laws. The charter has flexibility regarding school operation, course curricula, and the number of credits required to graduate (p48). The applicant provides the citation for the Illinois state charter law in the narrative which asserts that charter schools are exempt from all state laws

beyond those required for safety and well-being (p46).

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: **3**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2012 09:57 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2012 10:58 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Southland College Prep Charter School, Inc. (U282B120052)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Curriculum		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	15
Assisting Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	3	3
Assessing Achievement		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	15
Community Support		
1. Community Support	8	6
Parental and Community Involvement		
1. Parental Involvement	3	3
Quality of the Personnel		
1. Quality of the Personnel	22	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	16	14
Charter or Performance Contract		
1. Performance Contract	15	15
Degree of Flexibility		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Sub Total	100	94
Total	100	94

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel - 1: 84.282B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Southland College Prep Charter School, Inc. (U282B120052)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Curriculum

1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the quality of 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. If the curriculum and instructional practices have been successfully used in other schools operated or managed by the applicant, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the implementation of such practices and the academic results achieved.

Strengths:

The application proposes rigorous college prep STEM focused curriculum with intensive intervention and remediation serving high school students grades 9 ~ 12. Courses of study and course description are clearly defined in the application (pp. e197) with measurable learning objectives and performance expectations.

The charter school employs a range of additional instructional best practices such as extended school year, integrating technology into all aspects of the educational program, and programs to educate a whole child (pp. e38). The opportunities of after school extracurricular activities and electives are available to the students.

The curriculum and instructional practices are proven to be successful supported by the results of Matteson School District 162 which have demonstrated significant improvement in academic achievement (pp. e35).

The charter school believes reviewing student performance data on a continuous basis raises student achievement. Appropriate daily intervention strategies are crafted in a collaborative manner supporting each student. An academic support system gives students struggling with specific skills in any subject additional support outside of the daily classroom environment. Through this system, all students shall be able to meet the challenging standards. (pp. e39)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Disadvantaged Students

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The application proposes supports and services to the students with special needs identified through structured procedures and process (pp. e23). The special education department has two FT special education teachers and two FT paraprofessionals who are licensed and state certified. (pp. e24) Special education students are to be educated in the least restrictive environment with supports provided to ensure their success. Currently, the charter school provides support and services to nineteen students with disabilities and three students with section 504 Plans. The charter school

is committed to educating all students. (pp. e23)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Assessing Achievement

1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school's objectives.

Strengths:

The application proposes multiple measures to assess students academic performance such as college readiness exams ACT series. A multi-tiered academic support system is in place when students struggle. For example, the academic probation system is created for students who earn lower than a 2.0 GPA on a quarterly report card for a minimum of one quarter. (pp. e45)

Learning objectives and performance expectations are clearly defined in the application. The charter school proposes a structured system to measure the success of the students and achievement of the charter schools objectives. A student graduate profile is established for all students to meet the standards such as obtaining 25 ~ 32 on ACT and 1100 ~ 1200 on SAT; participating in two extracurricular activities; achieving 60 ~ 90 hours of community service; maintaining 95% attendance rate. (pp. e114) Timelines for achieving the proposed goals are provided. (pp. e43)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Community Support

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.

The applicant is also encouraged to describe and provide evidence of community support for the proposed project.

Strengths:

The application proposes lottery process to provide an equal opportunity for students to attend the school. The implementation process of lottery is evident in the application (pp. e49). A detailed initial registration procedure is in place for enrollment. (pp. e50)

Letters of support from political leaders and parents are evident in the application which serves as evidence that the charter school has obtained community support. (pp. e229)

Weaknesses:

It is recommended to the charter school to provide other strategies to inform the community about the charter school such as holding information session in the community and sending materials via media. The charter school is encouraged to further develop the lottery management process.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Parental and Community Involvement

1. The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community 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 charter school has secured the involvement of a wide range of community supporters such as political leaders, stakeholders, and parents.

An active Parent-Teacher-Student Organization meets on a regular basis to provide input for continued school development. Parents are invited for periodic review of all curriculum, coursework, and policies. Such efforts have provided a solid evidence that the charter school encourages parental and community involvement in planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school. (pp. e52)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Personnel

1. Quality of project personnel.

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers-

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of its skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant nonprofit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

Strengths:

The application proposes sound board governance which consists of personnel who have the expertise and experience in operating a successful charter school such as professions in school leadership, curriculum development and implementation, fiscal management, legal and business management (pp. e53). Resumes and biographies of key committee members highlight the leadership teams broad educational experience in developing innovative school design, directly related non-profit organization management & leadership, effective curriculum development & implementation, and strong fiscal management. Some of the team members are: former Deputy Chief Education Officer of Chicago Public Schools, Attorney, Financial Advisor in Theobald Associates, Director of Facilities in SD 162.

Weaknesses:

Encouraging applications for employment from traditionally underrepresented groups is not evident.

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

- 1. 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:

No strengths

Weaknesses:

Encouraging applications for employment from traditionally underrepresented groups is not evident.

Reader's Score: 0

- 2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

Strengths:

The application proposes sound board governance which consists of personnel who have the expertise and experience in operating a successful charter school such as professions in school leadership, curriculum development and implementation, fiscal management, legal and business management (pp. e53). Resumes and biographies of key committee members highlight the leadership teams broad educational experience in developing innovative school design, directly related non-profit organization management & leadership, effective curriculum development & implementation, and strong fiscal management. Some of the team members are: former Deputy Chief Education Officer of Chicago Public Schools, Attorney, Financial Advisor in Theobald Associates, Director of Facilities in SD 162.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan.

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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.

Strengths:

The application proposes a detailed management plan including timeline, budget projections, and milestones for measuring the success of the charter school and students academic achievements. Roles and responsibilities of the leadership team are clearly defined. (pp. e56)

Parent-Student Handbook has clearly defined the schools purpose and expectations.

The budget narrative has outlined one year budget projection since the charter school applies for one year funding only.

The budget projection is itemized with detailed explanation (pp. 218) and reasonable.

Weaknesses:

The roles and responsibilities of some board members are not clearly defined whether they hold positions in the district and charter school at the same time. It is recommended to the charter school to provide further clarification on the board structure.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Charter or Performance Contract

1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency.

The existence of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency and the extent to which the charter or performance contract describes how student performance will be measured in the charter school pursuant to State assessments that are required of public schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to discuss whether its proposed project has been denied a charter from its authorizing agency and, if so, how the applicant plans to revise its charter application before resubmitting its charter application to the authorizing agency. The applicant is also encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter contract, if applicable.

Strengths:

The approved charter contract is included in the application. The charter school proposes that all junior students take PSAE (Prairie State Achievement Exam) to meet the required standards (pp. e43).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Degree of Flexibility

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 the flexibility afforded under its State's law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and in terms of whether charter schools are exempt 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:

A citation of the state charter school law is presented. (pp. e61) The application proposes a detailed description of the degree of autonomy the charter will have. To just name a few, the flexibility includes extended school hours and days, total credits to graduate, and use of grant funds.

The application did not provide any description of the autonomy the charter will have over budget, expenditures, and personnel. But it is understood the charter school will be provided the flexibility it needed to be innovative and creative in developing an overall structure and plan.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2012 10:58 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/30/2012 10:19 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Southland College Prep Charter School, Inc. (U282B120052)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Curriculum		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	15
Assisting Disadvantaged Students		
1. Disadvantaged Students	3	3
Assessing Achievement		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	12
Community Support		
1. Community Support	8	6
Parental and Community Involvement		
1. Parental Involvement	3	3
Quality of the Personnel		
1. Quality of the Personnel	22	17
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	16	12
Charter or Performance Contract		
1. Performance Contract	15	15
Degree of Flexibility		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Sub Total	100	86
Total	100	86

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel - 1: 84.282B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Southland College Prep Charter School, Inc. (U282B120052)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Curriculum

1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the quality of 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. If the curriculum and instructional practices have been successfully used in other schools operated or managed by the applicant, the Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the implementation of such practices and the academic results achieved.

Strengths:

The school opened in 2010 (e74). The first two years of its four-year curriculum are described in detail (e197 e214); the second two years are referred to only by title within a marketing document (e885 e116). These presentations suggest that their curriculum is sound and orderly without being innovative and it is aligned to the common core standards (e19). Specifically, the curriculum focuses on foreign languages, the arts and STEM. Technology is taught across the curriculum (e38). In addition, a program of electives is available either within or outside regular school hours (e39). The strength is not so much in its content but rather in the schools strategies for effective delivery in the quest to achieve 100% college entry and 100% college graduation for its own graduating students.

Thus the school will use specific assessments (e19) to create differentiated learning plans and monitor the student rank at the national level (e19). Motivation will be developed by developing a college-bound culture in students from their arrival as freshmen (e21). To support this, Southlands has adopted Naviance Succeed, a program which focuses on college readiness education (e21). A target profile of the Southland brand is provided to indicate the areas in which success will be measured.

Weaknesses:

No weakness

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Disadvantaged Students

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards.

Strengths:

The Southlands program is designed to accelerate learning for all students, including those with disadvantages (e23). Disadvantage is used to refer to all categories of high need (e26). Such students will have the benefit of additional services to enable them to meet the academic goals of the school. Special education students have already the support of a highly qualified team of professionals and paraprofessionals in the field (e23); plans to accommodate other groups of

at-risk students are in place and meet all statutory requirements (w24 e26).

Weaknesses:

No weakness.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Assessing Achievement

1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school's objectives.

Strengths:

The application presents a clear picture of the strategy for evaluating the ongoing progress through the high school years using a regular program of formative and summative assessment (e43). Southland students will take standardized assessments such as PSAT, ACT and SAT (e43) and while expectations are implicit in the student profile (e22).

Weaknesses:

The overall weakness is a lack of precision. No precise measurements are given to indicate the point at which goal success has been achieved. It might be interpreted that the mission to achieve 100% college entry and 100% college graduation will be the ultimate standards for measuring attainment of the schools goals but this is not addressed explicitly. Nor is any reference made to students who might not graduate thus it appears that the schools own graduation rate is not included in the assessment of goal achievement. The text refers to the fact that 100% of students will be expected to reach grade level on state standardized test in 2013 - 2014 for the school to meet AYP, but this fact is not accorded any role in measuring success. Basically, this criterion should be addressed more analytically.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Community Support

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.

The applicant is also encouraged to describe and provide evidence of community support for the proposed project.

Strengths:

Southland was created with the unanimous support of the Illinois State Board of Education, local community leaders and key stakeholders (e18). Five letters of support for the current application are included (following e228). To ensure equal access for students the school adheres to a strict non-discriminatory policy, requiring no identification of disability (e10) nor academic performance (e49) prior to acceptance. Oversubscription is resolved by a transparent lottery procedure (e49).

Weaknesses:

The application fails to address the criterion relating to dissemination of information about the school and how children will be given equal opportunity to attend. Evidence of parental/guardian support is not explicit but since the school has full enrollment it must be assumed.

Reader's Score: 6

Selection Criteria - Parental and Community Involvement**1. The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community 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 was created out of the concern felt by a wide range of stakeholders at the routine fall in academic achievement as children moved from middle school to high school (e51). Thus representatives of political leaders, community organizations and parents/guardians were involved from the start (e51) in program design and program implementation (e52). Measured in terms of attendance rate, such involvement is increasing with respect to formal and informal association (e52.4).

Weaknesses:

No weakness

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Personnel**Quality of project personnel.**

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers-

Note: The applicant is encouraged to provide evidence of its skills and experience in the following areas: successfully launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; relevant nonprofit organization management and leadership; sound board governance; effective curriculum development and implementation; and strong fiscal management.

Strengths:

The founders and the faculty appointed to date represent a wealth of experience, qualification and commitment.

Weaknesses:

Since the leadership team is drawn so heavily from the local public school district there is some danger that the school will rely on tried curricular content and pedagogical styles without being truly open to the innovation that a charter school invites.

Reader's Score: 17

Sub Question

- 1. 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:

At the interview stage the hiring process seeks diversity independently of ability (e55).

Weaknesses:

Applications for employment are drawn initially from a nationwide website pool therefore specific encouragement cannot be extended to groups underrepresented traditionally (e55).

Reader's Score: 1

- 2. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

Strengths:

The leadership team has immense combined experience of education management with a context of success (e53), notably in narrowing the achievement gap (e17.4). Financial and legal expertise is present also. A selection of resumés is included (e65). Similarly, the three administrators cited each have the appropriate academic and professional qualifications and substantial experience to meet the high standards of a school seeking to build a culture of academic excellence (e54). Two resumés are attached (e71). The application describes the faculty as being well-rounded and dedicated. New appointees include teachers with experience of working in a variety of overseas locations (e55).

Score 17

Weaknesses:

The leadership team is drawn overwhelmingly from educators who have worked for Matteson School District, SD 162, the local education agency and are committed not to transferring their experience of curriculum and pedagogy to the high school level. While this may prove to be effective in terms of college entry for graduates, it will encourage a process of replication rather than a quest for innovation in keeping with the ideals of the founders of the charter school movement. The conclusion must be that the school is founded on functionality to the exclusion of idealism. The six board members are identified but while their job titles demand respect, too little personal information is given to permit a balanced judgment in the overall quality of the board.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the management plan.

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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.

Strengths:

An organizational chart is included in this application (e216) as is a timeline for the appointment of personnel and the implementation of programs (e57). Milestones for tasks to be accomplished with grant funds if this application were to be successful are summarized in table form (e59).

Governance is the responsibility of a board of directors, currently a body of six diverse members (e29). The CEO is listed as an undifferentiated member (e56). Accountable to the board is a leadership team referred to in 6 above. The prime responsibilities are planning a progressive educational program and evaluation if goals and objectives are being met (357). All other constituencies and individuals appear to be accountable to the leadership team.

Weaknesses:

The organizational chart is confusing, especially with respect to the position of the CEO. In the chart, the leadership team appears to be accountable to the CEO while in the text, that team is presented more as a body of equals including the CEO. The role and responsibilities of the CEO require more rigorous definition.

More generally, the application fails to define in useful details the powers and responsibilities of either the board or the leadership team. Expressions are used such as the plan includes a number of critical components (e56) but the components are not identified, forming a system of checks and balances without explaining how this is achieved (e56). No mention is made of teacher influence on or representation in the management plan. Similarly, despite all the claims made for parent/guardian involvement, these stakeholders are omitted from the formal presentation of the management plan. A budget plan is included (e227) but it is for one year only. Apart from that, financial information is sparse.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Charter or Performance Contract

1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency.

The existence of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency and the extent to which the charter or performance contract describes how student performance will be measured in the charter school pursuant to State assessments that are required of public schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school.

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to discuss whether its proposed project has been denied a charter from its authorizing agency and, if so, how the applicant plans to revise its charter application before resubmitting its charter application to the authorizing agency. The applicant is also encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter contract, if applicable.

Strengths:

Southland was granted a charter by the Illinois State Board of Education to operate with effect from August 2010. By the terms of this award, the school must enter its students for all the standardized tests which the state requires of students in regular public schools (e60). Similarly, the school will be subject to the same standards of achievement as schools in the regular public school system. The performance standards applied to sub-groups under the No Child Left Behind Act apply equally to Southland and while the state applied for a waiver from this requirement, Illinois had not been given such waiver by the date this application was submitted. The text provides a full and clear response to this criterion.

Weaknesses:

No weakness

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Degree of Flexibility

- 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 the flexibility afforded under its State's law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency and in terms of whether charter schools are exempt 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:

As a charter school, Southlands is accountable to federal legislation and the Illinois State Code on specified, fundamental matters such as non-discrimination, the education of persons with disabilities and labor law. Beyond these it enjoys such exemption from law as to permit substantial flexibility in matters such as finance, budgeting, daily operation curriculum and personnel selection. These freedoms are granted to allow the school to pursue innovative means of raising academic achievement standards (e63).

Weaknesses:

No weakness

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/30/2012 10:19 PM

