

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/13/2013 11:07 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Catalyst Schools (U282B130063)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	13
2. Disadvantaged Students	3	3
3. Strategy for Achievement	15	13
4. Community Support	8	7
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Quality of Personnel	22	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	18	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Performance Contract	16	13
2. Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 1		
1. Rural/SPED/ELL	4	4
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 2		
1. Promoting Diversity	2	2
Competitive Priority 3		
1. Military Families	3	0
Total	109	91

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - Panel - 3: 84.282B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Catalyst Schools (U282B130063)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. I. 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 outlines curriculum and instructional practices to be used at the charter school that are adequate to accelerate learning and prepare student for graduation and college. The curriculum is designed to meet Common Core State Standards, is college-preparatory, and has been replicated with fidelity at a nearby Catalyst elementary school (page e25). Instruction will be delivered in large and small group formats as well as individually. Teachers work with parents/guardians and the scholar to create an individualized Personal Goals for Achievement (PGA) plan, which consists of the student's, identified areas of strength and growth, measurable goals, and strategies for him or her to meet during the coming academic year. Character educations will permeate the curriculum and school day. Teachers direct scholars to take responsibility for themselves and others by embodying in their everyday behavior the Character Counts! Six Pillars of Character (page e26). The Singapore Math for grades 3-5 and the Carnegie Learning Math Series for grades 6-8 will also be utilized, adequate to identify weaknesses in each individual student's mastery of mathematical concepts (page e27). Middle school scholars (6-8 grades) will be introduced to Catalyst-Maria's Project Lead the Way STEM curriculum (page e 28, e 34-e39). Weekly Renaissance Enrichment classes, which introduce elementary-level scholars to the arts, music, dance and other creative pursuits will also be provided (page e28).

Weaknesses:

No clear explanation is provided for how the applicant will align its program on state standards. Such information would ensure alignment with state performance targets.

Reader's Score: 13

2. 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 presents a sufficient demonstration that the Charter will assist educationally disadvantaged students in meeting state content and academic achievement. Data is shown depicting the success trajectory of Catalyst Schools' economically and educationally disadvantaged scholars (pages e 39-40). For example, a class of 2012 (at a Catalyst school) fifth graders, were in the sixteenth percentile in reading and twelfth percentile in math. By eighth grade graduation, they had improved dramatically, coming within five percentage points of the national average in reading and

eleven percentage points in math, and 98 percent are now in high-performing high schools with track records of college placement (paged e 40-e41). It has been noted by the NEWA that At all Catalyst elementary schools, the percentage of scholars performing above the 50th percentile improved nicely from the fall to the spring sessions (e42). The Charter school program design will mirror that of described Catalyst schools to include curriculum and instructional practices (paged e42-e49). Assisting educationally disadvantaged students is at the heart of the Catalyst philosophy. In addition to academically underperforming students, Catalyst-Maria has a commitment to serve students identified as ELL (English Language Learners), Special Education, or Physically Disabled by following laws governing the instruction for these groups (page e 46). The Catalyst Schools believes that a structured English immersion program should be built into the general curriculum and help ELL students master the language (page e46-e47).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The applicant describes the use of sound assessments for determining student academic achievement in Catalyst schools. The Charter activities will mirror successful efforts in other Catalyst schools (pages e49-e52). For example, Catalyst-Maria Elementary measures academic progress by using STEP (K-2), NWEA (K-8), ISAT (3-8), Fluent Reader (K-8), and EXPLORE (8).As part of the school plan, data is used daily, weekly, monthly, and annually to drive instruction, plan professional development, and monitor the progress of the school and its scholars.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a description of how the Charter's overall goals will be assessed. Increased academic achievement is only on aspect of the goals set for the Charter. Non academic objectives are unclear.

Reader's Score: 13

The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points); and**
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).**

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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.

General:

n/a

Reader's Score: 7

Sub Question

1. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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 describes strategies to involve and inform the community about the Charter (page e53). The applicant will continue to promote the school through established relationships with local agencies and organizations. The school's Community Outreach coordinator, who is fluent in English, Spanish, and French, will attend selected public meetings of church groups, community organizing meetings, and meetings conducted by the aldermen and political officials. Additionally, the applicant will continue to run newspaper ads in local publications. Spots on local English and Spanish radio stations will build recognition of the Catalyst brand. Marketing, enrollment and application materials are in English and Spanish. Students will be selected for attendance at the Charter using a random and computer generated lottery (page e53).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 4

2. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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 describes sound strategies that serve to inform parents and students about the Charter and engage parents in Charter functions. Word-of-mouth from satisfied parents plays the most significant role in providing information about the Charter (page e54). To ensure parent involvement at the Charter, parents will be mandated to attend all orientation sessions at or before the beginning of the school year to get an overview of school policies, student expectations, and parental involvement strategies; encouraged and supported by Catalyst staff through regular recognition opportunities (i.e., get to know you breakfasts, a student/parent brunch, holiday party, and volunteer awards); encouraged to volunteer in classrooms, attend field trips, help with fundraisers, etc.; and

Sub Question

expected to attend all report card and progress report dates, and to keep abreast of news concerning their child (ren) and their Personal Goals for Achievement (page e54). Additionally, the applicant will utilize innovative methods such as using technology (ConnectEd) every Sunday to send a message in both English and Spanish to remind families of events, important deadlines, programs for the upcoming week, and weather-related school closings (page e54).

Weaknesses:

Specific information is not provided as to how parents were involved in the planning and development of the application prior to the events stated.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project 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--

- (i) 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 (up to 2 points); and**
- (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).**

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

General:

n/a

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

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--

- (i) 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 (up to 2 points); and**

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

Information is not presented in the application to determine the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons and groups that have traditionally be underrepresented.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 0

2. 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--

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

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

Strengths:

The applicant describes qualified individuals assigned to work with the Charter as evidenced by the resumes presented in the Appendix. Resumes are included for a Network Leadership Team and an Academic Leadership Team. The Network Leadership Team will be comprised of a Chief Executive Officer, Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, Director of Information Technology, Director of Mission and Communications, and a Director of Human Resources. Roles and responsibilities are related to start-up and implementation of the Charter and are clearly specified (pages e55-e57). The Academic Leadership Team will be comprised of a Principal, a Director of Scholar Support and Enrichment, a Dean of Culture and Instruction, and a Director of Instruction (pages e57-e58). Qualifications are also evidenced by resume in the appendices. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Staffs described are sufficient to develop and implement the Charter.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

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 applicant outlines a strong management structure to ensure proper management of the Charter. The Charter will be governed by a board of directors as required by statute for Illinois charter schools (page e58). Board roles and responsibilities are clearly outline to include assistance in developing policy aligned with the overall mission and independent appraisal of progress against goals, and implementation of the Catalyst mission by raising funds and awareness, and creating and implementing strategies for financial management and oversight (pages e59). An Academic Committee will collaborate with school leadership to set and review challenging yet realistic performance goals for each school (page e59). Members of the Academic Committee are local leaders in the field of education. At the network level, the Board manages the recruitment and hiring process for the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO in turn manages that process for his leadership team, which includes the Principals, the Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, Catalyst Finance Office, and the Directors of Information Technology, Human Resources, and Mission and Communications. The proposed structure is sufficient to the management of the Charter.

Weaknesses:

Timelines and milestones were not noted in the narrative. Specific responsibilities were not designated to personnel. This makes the project unclear as ensuring if tasks will be completed on time and within budget.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter schools and its authorized public chartering agency. The existence of a written 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 other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school. Note: The applicant is encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter or performance contract. If the applicant has had an application for a charter denied, the applicant should describe the circumstances surrounding such denial and how it plans to revise the charter applicant before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.**

Strengths:

The applicant's charter has been approved by the local education agency. The charter has been in effect since December 14, 2011 (page 49).

Weaknesses:

Performance measures are not indicated in the narrative. It is unclear how the applicant's charter outlines student performance goals.

Reader's Score: 13

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

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the flexibility afforded under its State's charter school law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency, and 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 operations, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

The applicant cites its flexibility allowed to charters. For examples, charter schools have flexibility in curriculum design as long as it is aligned with state standards. Charter schools have flexibility in personnel choices and school scheduling (pages 49-50).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates [Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners]

This priority is for projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the notice).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities.

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for English Learners.

Note: This competitive preference priority encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants will receive up to four points for how well they address priority areas (a) through (c). Applicants may choose to respond to one, two, or three of the priority areas but, in order to receive the maximum available points, it is not necessary for applicants to respond to more than one priority area.

Strengths:

The applicant provides narrative to support increasing graduation rates for students in SPED, ELL, and other groups. Specifically, the applicant implements rigorous and relevant curriculum in science and math at all grade levels to improve academic performance and accelerate learning (pages 20-23). These strategies in turn will also be used to improve graduation rates by providing additional academic supports.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity.

Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would help bring together students from different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body, or to avoid racial isolation.

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

Strengths:

The applicant outlines a plan that to ensure its student population is representative of a diverse population. It is the intent of the applicant to follow a race-neutral enrollment policy, taking only into consideration whether the student applicant lives within City of Chicago target District and in a neighborhood experiencing high poverty and limited quality school choice (pages e23-e24). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Chicago Lawn population is 49 percent African American, 45 percent Latino, 4 percent Caucasian, and 2 percent Asian and other ethnicities, thus allowing for a cultural mix is students. Recruitment policy is described (e-10).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 3**1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Support for Military Families.**

This priority is for projects that are designed to address the needs of military-connected students (as defined in this notice).

Note: For purposes of this program, projects meeting this priority must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant s recruitment and admissions policy must comply with its State charter school law and CSP program requirements (for information on admissions and the lottery under the CSP, see Charter Schools Program Nonregulatory Guidance at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/nonregulatory-guidance.html>).

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/13/2013 11:07 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/22/2013 10:12 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Catalyst Schools (U282B130063)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	13
2. Disadvantaged Students	3	3
3. Strategy for Achievement	15	13
4. Community Support	8	7
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Quality of Personnel	22	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	18	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Performance Contract	16	8
2. Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 1		
1. Rural/SPED/ELL	4	4
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 2		
1. Promoting Diversity	2	2
Competitive Priority 3		
1. Military Families	3	0
Total	109	86

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - Panel - 3: 84.282B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Catalyst Schools (U282B130063)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. I. 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:

From the abstract (e13), through the in-depth description of the educational program, the applicant demonstrates a clear focus for both the outcomes sought for students and the educational program design to achieve those outcomes (e25-39). The application is strengthened by easily understood graphical and numeric reports of performance of the applicant's existing schools (e13, e25-39). The grade levels, curriculum and instructional practices are outlined (e25-39).

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant provided detailed information on the educational program, there was not a clear articulation of how their program will help students meet state specific standards.

Reader's Score: 13

2. 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 lists the demographic trends of current and anticipated students in the Catalyst schools, and compares the performance of educationally disadvantaged students in the applicant's schools to national standards (e20-23, 39-43). A clear connection is drawn between the proposed use of grant funds and helping educationally disadvantaged students increase their proficiency (e42-47).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The applicant is already experienced as a school operator in assessing achievement of school objectives (e49-50). The application describes how student academic achievement is measured – from differentiated lesson planning which facilitates measuring individual progress, to school and network level analysis (e50-52).

The application shows when students will be assessed and what instructional adjustments will be made based on those results (e52).

Weaknesses:

There are no non-academic objectives included in the application.

Reader's Score: 13

4. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points); and**
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).**

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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.

General:

Strengths and weaknesses are listed in the following sections.

Reader's Score: 7

Sub Question**1. The extent of community support for the application.**

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points)**

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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 provides evidence of community support with the demand for the limited number of seats in the applicant's existing schools (e52-53). Bilingual staff and publications are used to promote the school across the service area (e53). The applicant's process for recruiting students demonstrates how all students are given an equal opportunity to attend the school (e47-48).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 4

2. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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:

Orientation for parents, provision of parent and graduate resource handbooks, and connections with teacher counselor teams are described (e54). Attendance expectations at progress report meetings are outlined, bilingual reminders are communicated weekly, and parents have tools to monitor students' progress remotely (e54-55). Parents are given opportunities to volunteer, and attend programs (e55). Parent engagement rates are measured for each school (e55).

Weaknesses:

There is no discussion of parent and community involvement in program design.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project 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--

(i) 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 (up to 2 points); and

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

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

General:

Strengths and weaknesses are listed in the following sections.

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

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--

(i) 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 (up to 2 points); and

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this criterion.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this criterion.

Reader's Score: 0

2. 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--

(ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

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

Strengths:

The project personnel have experience in all of the relevant areas (e55-58, 68-91). The founding network team has experience in fundraising and recruitment, real estate (including ADA compliance), philanthropy, information technology design and installation, school leadership, and K-12 school leadership (e55-58). They also have experience and training in non-profit management, operations, grant oversight, and human resources.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

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 includes an overview of the governing board's support for operations (e58-59). Committee roles are also detailed (e60-61). Partnerships with organizations adept at supporting the applicant – such as professional development and school improvement – are in place (e60-61). The applicant's experience and prior success enabled it to secure a \$1 million reserve to draw upon. The budget notes how funds will be spent and when (e98).

Weaknesses:

The skills of the project personnel suggest the applicant will be able to execute the proposed project on time and within budget. However, there are no clearly defined timelines or responsibilities for the grant expenditures.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter schools and its authorized public chartering agency. The existence of a written 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 other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school. Note: The applicant is encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter or performance contract. If the applicant has had an application for a charter denied, the applicant should describe the circumstances surrounding such denial and how it plans to revise the charter applicant before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.**

Strengths:

The applicant has a performance contract with the chartering agency (e94-95).

Weaknesses:

The contract does not describe how student performance will be measured.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the flexibility afforded under its State's charter school law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency, and 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 operations, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

The applicant breaks down the autonomy provided through state law around educational design and delivery, service provision and measurements of student learning (e64). It is clear the applicant understands the flexibility provided, and

has considered how to use that flexibility for the proposed school's specific goals (e63-64).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates [Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners]

This priority is for projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the notice).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities.

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for English Learners.

Note: This competitive preference priority encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants will receive up to four points for how well they address priority areas (a) through (c). Applicants may choose to respond to one, two, or three of the priority areas but, in order to receive the maximum available points, it is not necessary for applicants to respond to more than one priority area.

Strengths:

The applicant's Section 427 statement reflects a carefully thought out approach to helping accelerate learning of students with disabilities and English learners. E10. The applicant already serves students in groups (b) and (c) (e13) and demonstrated in its application how it has helped those students improve in reading and math (e-20-22). The applicant articulates how the project will accelerate learning and improve graduation rates for students with disabilities and English learners (e22-23, e47-48).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity.

Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would help bring together students from different

backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body, or to avoid racial isolation.

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

Strengths:

The applicant's Section 427 statement shows how students from different backgrounds are invited, welcomed and supported at the applicant's schools (e10). The applicant describes the benefits of the diverse student body (e24).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Support for Military Families.

This priority is for projects that are designed to address the needs of military-connected students (as defined in this notice).

Note: For purposes of this program, projects meeting this priority must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policy must comply with its State charter school law and CSP program requirements (for information on admissions and the lottery under the CSP, see **Charter Schools Program Nonregulatory Guidance** at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/nonregulatory-guidance.html>).

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/22/2013 10:12 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/15/2013 09:43 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Catalyst Schools (U282B130063)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	13
2. Disadvantaged Students	3	3
3. Strategy for Achievement	15	13
4. Community Support	8	8
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Quality of Personnel	22	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	18	12
Quality of Project Design		
1. Performance Contract	16	7
2. Flexibility	3	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 1		
1. Rural/SPED/ELL	4	4
Competitive Priority		
Competitive Priority 2		
1. Promoting Diversity	2	2
Competitive Priority 3		
1. Military Families	3	0
Total	109	85

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - Panel - 3: 84.282B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Catalyst Schools (U282B130063)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. I. 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 includes numerous strategies for student achievement.(p.12). Character education is included (p.12). The applicant is partnering with Erickson Institute for a balanced literacy program. Many research based strategies including Singapore Math, Carnegie Learning, blended learning, and Project Leads The Way will be curriculum elements (p.27). A detailed outline of how common core, and college prep ,standards will be met is included. (p.12).

Weaknesses:

There is no information included on how the applicant plans to meet state standards.

Reader's Score: 13

2. 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:

Graphs are provided to show that academic achievement exceeded the local public school averages. The applicant's schools outperformed 83% of the nation;s schools in mathematics. (p.42).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this area.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Strengths:

The applicant discusses academic goals and expected gains on Cambridge testing (e51-52). Goals for graduation and acceptance to college are discussed on e52.

Weaknesses:

No non academic goals are included. The applicant does not discuss a plan for ensuring that students meet state standards.

Reader's Score: 13

4. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points); and
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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.

General:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 8

Sub Question**1. The extent of community support for the application.**

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

- (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 4 points)

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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:

Community and parent meetings were well attended. There was a high demand for enrollment (e52). The applicant continues to establish partnerships with community organizations (e53).

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses for this section.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 4

2. The extent of community support for the application.

The Secretary considers the extent of community support for and parental and community involvement in, the charter school. In determining the extent of community support for, and parental and community involvement in, the charter school, the Secretary considers--

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 4 points).

Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the charter school, 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 school is utilizing local newspaper, radio, and television to inform parents and community(e53). The school has held meetings with local officials and community organizations to discuss the proposed school and enlist their support (e53).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses for this section.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project 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--

- (i) 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 (up to 2 points); and
- (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

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

General:

The board members for this school have the knowledge and skills needed to manage the school. The applicant did not include a plan to ensure employment of underrepresented groups.

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

1. Quality of project personnel.

Sub Question

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--

- (i) 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 (up to 2 points); and

Strengths:

There are no strengths in this section.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not include a plan to recruit and hire underrepresented groups.

Reader's Score: 0

2. 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--

- (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).

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

Strengths:

Proposed charter personnel and board members have the knowledge and skills needed to successfully manage the school (e55-61). Qualified persons have been identified and their qualifications are included (e56-58).

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

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:

Board members are qualified to govern the school. Duties of the board members are clearly stated (e58). School leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the school.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not include a management plan with details of timelines and milestones for implementation of the program.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter schools and its uauthorized public chartering agency. The existence of a written 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 other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school. Note: The applicant is encouraged to submit a copy of its approved charter or performance contract. If the applicant has had an application for a charter denied, the applicant should describe the circumstances surrounding such denial and how it plans to revise the charter applicant before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.**

Strengths:

A performance contract is included in the application.

Weaknesses:

Performance measures are not included in the contract.

Reader's Score: 7

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

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to describe the flexibility afforded under its State's charter school law in terms of establishing an administrative relationship between the charter school and the authorized public chartering agency, and 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 operations, and personnel in accordance with its State's charter school law.

Strengths:

The degree of flexibility afforded to the school is outlined on e63-64.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1--Improving Achievement and High School Graduation Rates [Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, and English Learners]

This priority is for projects that are designed to address one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice) and college enrollment rates for students in rural local educational agencies (as defined in the notice).

(b) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for students with disabilities.

(c) Accelerating learning and helping to improve high school graduation rates (as defined in the notice) and college enrollment rates for English Learners.

Note: This competitive preference priority encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants will receive up to four points for how well they address priority areas (a) through (c). Applicants may choose to respond to one, two, or three of the priority areas but, in order to receive the maximum available points, it is not necessary for applicants to respond to more than one priority area.

Strengths:

92% of at risk students currently attending this school graduate (p5). School serves primarily low income African American students and have 97.8% on track to graduate and 69% now attending college. Information chart detailing student growth is included on p. 6-7.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 4

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity.

Projects that are designed to promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.

Note: An applicant addressing Competitive Preference Priority 2--Promoting Diversity is invited to discuss how the proposed design of its project would help bring together students from different backgrounds, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, to attain the benefits that flow from a diverse student body, or to avoid racial isolation.

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

Strengths:

The school has a race neutral policy (p.23). The diverse population of the school mirrors the Chicago Lawn public school population. The campus offers college exploration programs featuring workshops that celebrate cultural differences (p. 10).

Weaknesses:

More specific information is needed on strategies to bring together students from diverse backgrounds.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Priority - Competitive Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Support for Military Families.

This priority is for projects that are designed to address the needs of military-connected students (as defined in this notice).

Note: For purposes of this program, projects meeting this priority must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policy must comply with its State charter school law and CSP program requirements (for information on admissions and the lottery under the CSP, see Charter Schools Program Nonregulatory Guidance at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/nonregulatory-guidance.html>).

Strengths:

This priority was not addressed.

Weaknesses:

This priority was not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/15/2013 09:43 AM