

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/21/2014 03:20 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Concept Schools (U282B140034)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Curriculum	15	13
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Achievement Standards	5	5
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	15
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Community Support	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	22	18
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	10
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Existence of charter	15	15
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Improving Achievement and High School Graduation</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP 1	4	4
<b>Support for Military Families</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
1. CPP 2	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>94</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 8: 84.282B

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

Applicant: Concept Schools (U282B140034)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

#### 1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices. (15 points)

**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 and content 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 a program that is based on providing individual and personal structures to facilitate an environment for making students college and career ready (pages 24-29). The applicant uses sources of research to supports it use of nine instructional elements for its program. These include establishing a personalized education plan; supporting continuous relationships with teachers and mentors; enforcing high standards and high performance on assessments as students, parents, teachers, and staff will create and reinforce a culture of achievement and support through a range of formal and informal rewards and consequences for academic performance and behavior; adaptive pedagogy; multicultural teaching; knowledgeable and skilled teachers; collaborative planning; family and community connections; democratic decision making; and authentic curriculum. The applicant provides an in-depth description of its literacy, math, science, social studies and other program curriculums (pages 31-39) with emphasis on concepts that will be taught. Additionally, the applicant describes the STEM curriculum.

#### Weaknesses:

Absent from the narrative is a clear discernment of how academic concepts will be differentiated among grade and skill levels. It is unclear how the applicant provides for different levels of instruction along it backward design. It is unclear, for example, how STEM concepts are formatted for 9th grade versus 11th grade. The applicant indicated that "eligible students" will take advanced courses (page 9); however, it is unclear how students will become eligible for such courses since the applicant does not explain levels of instruction.

Reader's Score: 13

### Selection Criteria - Significance

#### 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. (5 points)

#### Strengths:

The applicant establishes goals and metrics to assist economically disadvantaged students in meeting state academic content standards. The applicant uses the state assessment as a metric with baselines and performance targets for the five years of the project as a method to ensure student performance is appropriately measured. Performance indicators include grades served, reading percentage meeting or exceeding standards; math percentage meeting or exceeding standards; composite percentages meeting or exceeding standards and graduation rates. The applicant's plan is

substantial for assisting students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic and achievement standards (pages 43-46). The curriculum plan is aligned with common core and state academic standards. Disadvantaged students will be placed in RtI before being placed in special education. Diagnostic tests will help ensure proper placements of students.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

**1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school s objectives. (15 points)**

**Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school 's objectives, including developing of performance measures and performance targets for its proposed grant project that are consistent with those objectives. The applicant should clearly identify the project-specific performance measures and performance targets in its plan and should review the Performance Measures section of the notice for information on the requirements for developing those performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant may choose to include a discussion of the project-specific performance measures and targets it develops in response to the Performance Measures requirements when addressing this criterion.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant describes detailed mechanisms for assessing achievement of its students (pages 46-48). Specific assessments include informal, formal, state and national assessments that use data for informing student achievement. In addition to the state standardized test, the applicant administers its authentic formative assessments that are aligned with the state standards and the schools' curricula to all of their students in grades 3 through 11. Teachers are trained to analyze and use the assessment data for guiding plans for student achievement. Reasonable performance measures are described to achieve objectives.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. 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:**

**(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)**

**Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of 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.**

**(10 points total)**

**General:**

Information is included in the narrative.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Sub Question**

**1. (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 5 points).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant used a community outreach plan to secure and sustain community support (pages 53-54). Additionally, the applicant conducted multiple activities to reach out to the community. These included reaching out continually to community leaders; seeking partnership opportunities with organizations, universities, and businesses; creating a database for sustainable relationships; creating a digital and print newsletter for community members; extending services such as parent classes in larger communities; inviting community organizations and businesses to parent meetings and conferences; organizing community events, such as breakfasts, luncheons, and leadership series; and utilizing social media effectively to reach to more people (pages 55-59).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**2. (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 5 points).**

**Strengths:**

Substantial evidence was provided to demonstrate community support for the application (pages 51-53). Multiple meetings were held with various stakeholders to gather feedback on application development. The applicant started its application in October 2013 providing ample opportunities for input.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

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

**(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)**

**Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel's skills, experience, and success in the following areas: launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; managing or leading a non-profit organization; establishing or maintaining school governance by board of trustees; developing and implementing an effective curriculum; recruiting and evaluating effective educators; and strengthening fiscal management.**

**(22 points total)**

**General:**

Information is included in the narrative.

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. (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).

**Strengths:**

No strengths noted.

**Weaknesses:**

Absent in the narrative is a description of how the applicant will encourage applications from underrepresented groups. It is unclear how the organization has or will use community resources to staff the new charter school. It is unclear, for example, if applications will be provided in multiple languages. This information would inform the project of ensuring equal access and opportunity.

Reader's Score: 0

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant explains the qualifications and relevant experience of the key leadership personnel (pages 66-76). Persons who are internal to the organizational structure have longevity and experience implementing schools within the network. Individuals are described from the design team to the advisory board of the area charter school.

**Weaknesses:**

The narrative is unclear as to administrators who will be responsible for conducting day to day duties at the new school. It is unclear if new board members have been appointed for the new charter. It is unclear how the area management team is structured for this school. Specifically, it is unclear as to what persons will serve in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 management positions.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. 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. (15 points)

**Strengths:**

The charter will be managed by a charter school management company that has extensive experience managing charters. An onsite principal will help oversee the school along with an advisory committee. The governing board had a major role in development and implementation of the charter (pages 66-76).

**Weaknesses:**

The narrative is unclear as to the clearly defined roles, responsibilities, timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks (pages 66-76). The applicant does not designate who will fill key roles such as the Director of Education or the Director of Special Education. This information is relevant to evaluating the management plan.

Reader's Score: 10

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school 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. (15 points)

**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 application before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.

#### **Strengths:**

The applicant provides substantial evidence to meet this criterion. Specifically, the applicant was granted its charter in January 2014 (page 76). The signed agreement is provided and clearly outlines how student performance will be measured.

#### **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 15

### Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. **The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school. (3 points)**

**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, curriculum, and personnel in accordance with its State s charter school law.

#### **Strengths:**

The applicant adequately explains the latitude provided through the charter granting state legislation (page 76). For example, the applicant has the flexibility and autonomy needed to structure key aspects of schooling such as curriculum design and instruction, school calendar with longer school days and a longer school year, budgeting for a STEM-based focus, a centralized CMO office, and staffing decisions regarding hiring, contracts and salaries. The applicant demonstrates such flexibility.

#### **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

## Priority Questions

### Improving Achievement and High School Graduation - Competitive Preference 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 the 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:** The Department encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this Competitive Preference Priority.

#### Strengths:

The target population in the narrative is described as both predominantly Hispanic and African Americans who come from border communities. The target population is at-risk and program activities are addressed to increase graduation rates among these students. The population also includes students with disabilities. Therefore, it is a majority minority school. The applicant's charter school will improve academic achievement, high school graduation and college completion rates for several specialized populations such as students with special needs, English Language Learners (ELL), high-needs students, and students from high-poverty homes and communities (page 1). Moreover, the applicant provides data on its success on graduation rates among special populations (page 2). Specifically, the applicant enjoys an average 90% --95% high school graduation rate with 100% of those students accepted to college; 2012-13 was a huge success with over a 90% college acceptance rate and \$18,000,000 merit based; scholarships; and out of all Concept graduates, 80% are first generation college students in their families.

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 4

### Support for Military Families - Competitive Preference Priority 2

#### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Support for Military Families.

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

**Note:** To receive points under this priority, an applicant's project must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policies and practices must comply with the State's 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 describes the possible needs of military families (pages 23-24). It indicates that it will be ready to serve those students affected by deployment or other military operations. The applicant will develop an educational plan designed to meet the social and emotional needs of individual military families and their children. Some families may need counseling services. Others may need financial assistance.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not address this priority. Specifically, the applicant does not identify members of this population within the narrative. The applicant does not provide specific services to be provided to military families.

**Reader's Score:**     **1**

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## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Concept Schools (U282B140034)

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Curriculum	15	14
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Achievement Standards	5	4
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	13
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Community Support	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	22	20
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	13
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Existence of charter	15	15
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	2
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Improving Achievement and High School Graduation</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP 1	4	3
<b>Support for Military Families</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
1. CPP 2	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>97</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 8: 84.282B

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Concept Schools (U282B140034)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

#### 1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices. (15 points)

**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 and content 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 has a historical commitment to STEM curriculum which was originally designed with input from scientific practitioners.

Concept began with a 6-12 grade design, but has expanded to a k-12 design in order to recruit students earlier and equip them with academic and social skills necessary for a college preparatory curriculum in secondary grades.

The proposed site will be a part of the continued STEM focus, Robotics, and CONSEF (Concept Schools Science and Engineering Fair) which brings together schools in network for an engineering and science fair.

The site, HSA (Horizon Science Academy) will have a dedicated STEM Coordinator to provide support for integrating technology in instruction.

The curriculum framework is "mapped backwards" from college readiness standards.

There is data to illustrate the implementation of practices used by Concept in other schools in the midwest and Chicago area.

The curriculum has been conceived in-depth and engages best practices from current leaders in the field (eg., Lucy Calkin's Writers Worksho, and more).

Common Core Standard are being implemented across the network and this site will benefit from previous successful implementation of state standards.

#### Weaknesses:

The curriculum and instructional practices section was very comprehensive, thorough, and ambitious.

A detailed implementation plan with specific timelines for each subject area and grade level would be useful.

Reader's Score: 14

## Selection Criteria - Significance

### 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. (5 points)

#### Strengths:

Baseline data has been provided to anticipate prospective student demographics within a 2 mile radius.

The Concept Board of Directors will develop a rubric for achievement goals to track educationally disadvantaged students.

The schools track record includes several area schools with a 90% poverty rate with an immense growth in number of students who met or exceeded academic goals. Significant jumps in closing the achievement gap have been seen in this school launched in 2013 (a 30 to percent increase!).

#### Weaknesses:

There could perhaps be more of a comparison of the demographics, poverty level, etc., at the newly proposes site with existing successful charters.

Reader's Score: 4

## Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

### 1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school s objectives. (15 points)

**Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school 's objectives, including developing of performance measures and performance targets for its proposed grant project that are consistent with those objectives. The applicant should clearly identify the project-specific performance measures and performance targets in its plan and should review the Performance Measures section of the notice for information on the requirements for developing those performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant may choose to include a discussion of the project-specific performance measures and targets it develops in response to the Performance Measures requirements when addressing this criterion.**

#### Strengths:

The project design is data driven and in addition to state standardized testing, authentic formative assessments will be used that align state standards and school curriculum in grades 3 through 11.

Professional development is provided to assist teachers in analyzing date to guide instruction. Teachers are provided time to collaborate and this is embedded in the school calendars.

A matrix is provided that shows types or assessment administered at each grade level. Calendar times for assessments and types of assessment are also provided.

An annual report is prepared for parents and other constituencies regarding student progress,

#### Weaknesses:

The formative assessment section was non-specific.

The extra layer of assessments beyond state and district and AP testing, etc., may be overwhelming for students and parents.

Reader's Score: 13

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. 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:

(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)

**Note:** In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of 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.

(10 points total)

#### General:

This proposal demonstrates a strong possibility for Concept Schools to continue its successful charter school track record.

Reader's Score: 10

#### Sub Question

1. (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 5 points).

#### Strengths:

The Concept School's vision to build productive community partnerships within the first few years of the school is clearly evident.

Planning and development phases involved engaging community aldermen, provide focus groups, and begin to build partnerships with organizations with record of enabling inner city high school students to success.

A full-time community was hired in fall 2013 to facilitate process of engaging community in every phase of charter development.

Concept schools provides a network wide public relations and communication plan to help each site use social media and other means of engaging the community.

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses apparent.

Reader's Score: 5

2. (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 5 points).

#### Strengths:

A series of actions to encourage parental and community involvement begin with the planning phase and continue to encourage effective school/parent/community partnerships.

The front office staff will be trained in customer service skills to maintain a friendly and open environment.

### Sub Question

A school website, newsletter, home visits will provide ongoing dialogue with parents. Parent University sessions will provide workshops on parenting issues and greater opportunities for communication with staff.

The primary focus in this section was on parental involvement although the hiring of a community organizer is certainly a bold step.

#### **Weaknesses:**

No major weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 5**

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

**(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)**

**Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel's skills, experience, and success in the following areas: launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; managing or leading a non-profit organization; establishing or maintaining school governance by board of trustees; developing and implementing an effective curriculum; recruiting and evaluating effective educators; and strengthening fiscal management.**

**(22 points total)**

#### **General:**

The project personnel have the training and experience required to launch a successful implementation plan in year one.

**Reader's Score: 20**

### Sub Question

1. **(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).**

#### **Strengths:**

A GEPA statement was included in introductory pages. Biographies of design team indicate a diverse team representing founder and CEO, organizational representatives from Concept, teachers, and more.

The foundation of the school relies on Concept's successful track record of administering schools in the Midwest through a regional approach to schools in the network. Most of the personnel involved in HSA school design have a solid educational background and experience with Concept or other strong initiatives (such as Literacy for Life).

#### **Weaknesses:**

No apparent weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 2**

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

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

Biographies for personnel were included and indicated that administrators and teaching staff selected for the school were qualified and well familiar with charter school legislation and implementation in addition to the Concept approach which has been very successful in the region.

Many staff members have a strong science background which contributes to the STEM focus on learning along with robotics, computer science, and more.

One member is Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Literacy for Life which provides professional development support for continued school improvement.

**Weaknesses:**

The history of the successful organization is cited, but correlates only indirectly to training and experience of key project personnel.

**Reader's Score: 18**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

- 1. 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. (15 points)**

**Strengths:**

Management is on a three tiered leadership approach which is codified and shared across each school site.

The on-site school principal will be responsible for establishing a strong Concept School culture in the building, analyzing student data, enhancing instruction through support of teachers and implementing all Concept School initiatives.

An Advisory Committee comprised of community leaders, parents, citizens provides input as to specific needs in the region but do not make policy decisions.

Management relies on the historical success and strong leadership of the CMO.

**Weaknesses:**

There wasn't a lot of depth in terms of a plan for this particular site and its particular demographics and community.

**Reader's Score: 13**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

- 1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school 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. (15 points)**

**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 application before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.**

**Strengths:**

The charter is attached and HSA was authorized to open by the Chicago Public Schools Board of Directors no later than January, 2014.

Autonomy is afforded for decision making on areas such as, curriculum design and instruction, school calendar with longer school days and a longer school day, budgeting for a STEM based focus, a centralized CMO office and staffing decisions regarding hiring and merit based pay.

The charter was in fact, highly lauded and met with enthusiasm in the region.

**Weaknesses:**

No apparent weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

**1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school. (3 points)**

**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, curriculum, and personnel in accordance with its State s charter school law.**

**Strengths:**

The SEA and LEA will provide HSA with flexibility and autonomy needed to structure key aspects of school design, unique to Concept Schools, including curriculum and instruction, school calendar, longer school days and school year, budgeting for STEM related focus and a centralized CMO office.

**Weaknesses:**

A centralized CMO may not always be sensitive to the unique school culture that begins with full implementation.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**Priority Questions**

**Improving Achievement and High School Graduation - Competitive Preference 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 the 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: The Department encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this Competitive Preference Priority.**

**Strengths:**

Concept Schools has a high percentage of high school graduate rates and college enrollment.

80% of all Concept graduates are first generation college students in their families.

There are many strategies incorporated into the school day to emphasize college access for students and college representatives are frequent visitors to the school providing workshops for parents and students.

Early review and development of scholarship applications are encouraged.

A minimum of two site visits to colleges begins in grade 10; 11th grade students attend ACT camps; and students are encouraged to take free college classes at local universities.

By their senior year students are assigned mentors to support the college admission process. Counselors work with no more than 35 students, and more.

A Director of Specialized Services provides professional development for staff.

**Weaknesses:**

The number of students with disabilities and English Language Learners is relatively small with an average of 9% special needs and 6% ELL although the percentage at the proposed site will be close to 50%.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Support for Military Families - Competitive Preference Priority 2**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Support for Military Families.**

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

**Note: To receive points under this priority, an applicant's project must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policies and practices must comply with the State's 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:**

A policy has been developed to first identify students living in military families and then providing an education plan to meet the unique social and emotional needs of these students.

Responses might include counseling, financial guidance, communication with deployed family members,

Staff will be educated on effect of military life, deployments and PTSD on the entire family. The school will develop a pen pal program and other ways to acknowledge and celebrate the children of military families.

**Weaknesses:**

N/A

**Reader's Score:**     **3**

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**Status:**           Submitted  
**Last Updated:**   08/25/2014 01:47 PM

Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Concept Schools (U282B140034)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Curriculum	15	15
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Achievement Standards	5	5
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	15
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Community Support	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	22	20
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	15	10
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Existence of charter	15	15
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Improving Achievement and High School Graduation</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
1. CPP 1	4	4
<b>Support for Military Families</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
1. CPP 2	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>97</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 8: 84.282B

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

Applicant: Concept Schools (U282B140034)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

#### 1. Quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices. (15 points)

**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 and content 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 comprehensively addressed the curriculum and instructional strategies in place for the proposed charter school. The mission of the Horizon Science Academy-Southwest charter school is to prepare students for college completion by creating an effective learning environment composed of higher standards and expectations along with a rigorous college preparatory curriculum that focuses on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). The applicant identified several research-based STEM curriculum programs that will be aligned with Next Generation Science Standards. Additionally, the applicant will coordinate the curriculum with the nationally recognized, application-based programs such as Project Lead the Way and Gateway to Technology. The program provide students with hands-on science classes, science fairs, math competitions, robotics and engineering programs that will give students a competitive edge and help them pursue college degrees and STEM careers. (pgs. 2-7)

HSA-Southwest will have a dedicated STEM Coordinator to assist faculty members at the school in enhancing learning through technology. The STEM Coordinator will create resources for teachers and students, provide training and additional support, and oversee the integration of technology in instruction. The applicant additionally effectively describes several instructional strategies that will be utilized with students. All of the strategies are developmentally appropriate and will provide a hands-on approach to teaching and learning. Such instructional strategies will include: (1) a personalized approach where student will have daily, individualized support for achieving milestones toward their own goals and school goals, (2) adaptive pedagogy where teachers will use multiple instructional strategies to adapt teaching to students' backgrounds, talents, interests, and the nature of their past performance. The teacher will not assume that students have mastered skills. Students will be taught how to study, how to approach academic tasks, and how to evaluate their own and others' work. (pgs. 5-10)

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

### Selection Criteria - Significance

#### 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. (5 points)**

### **Strengths:**

The applicant effectively demonstrates that plans and strategies are in place to assist educationally disadvantaged students meet state standards. For example, the applicant will utilize Response to Intervention (RTI), a three-tiered academic and behavioral support program as part of the Horizon Science Academies/Concept Schools model. Any student who is suspected of having a learning difficulty and behavior issues will be placed in the RTI prior to referral to special education.

The applicant indicated that most students will come to the charter school behind grade level in most cases and once enrolled at Horizon Science Academy-Southwest, students will be required to take diagnostic tests focusing on mathematics and reading to understand each student's academic background. Test results will be used to appropriately place students and develop a plan for teaching and learning. (pgs. 10-16) Students with serious academic background issues based on the data analysis will participate in the RTI program, where they will receive one-on-one and small-group, targeted, and effective assistance.

The percentage of ELL/bilingual students at HSA-Southwest will be close to 50% of the student body. The applicant will administer the Home Language Survey for ELL students and use the data to determine what services are needed for each qualifying student. Illinois is a WIDA Consortium state and therefore, WIDA standards will be used in ESL and bilingual classrooms. The ACCESS primer (MODEL test) in Grades K-12 and the ACCESS test—both developed by WIDA—are administered regularly and there is a file for each student who qualifies for language services. All of the services are effective measures for ensuring support is available for academically challenges students. (pgs. 16-19)

### **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

## **Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

### **1. The quality of the strategy for assessing achievement of the charter school s objectives. (15 points)**

**Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school 's objectives, including developing of performance measures and performance targets for its proposed grant project that are consistent with those objectives. The applicant should clearly identify the project-specific performance measures and performance targets in its plan and should review the Performance Measures section of the notice for information on the requirements for developing those performance measures and performance targets consistent with the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant may choose to include a discussion of the project-specific performance measures and targets it develops in response to the Performance Measures requirements when addressing this criterion.**

### **Strengths:**

The applicant clearly demonstrates that the proposed charter school applicant has a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school's objectives and performance measures. The applicant indicated past experiences as a charter management company whose priority is focused on data collection as evidence of success. The proposed program will utilize data from state standardized test and other authentic formative assessments that are aligned with the state standards and the schools' curricula for all grade levels.(pgs. 14-18) Formative assessments will be embedded in planning and instruction as content is being taught. Teachers will use formative assessments in day-to-day instructional activities to monitor student progress and modify instruction. Formative assessments, developed by collaborative teams and individual teachers, will be used to adapt teaching to meet the needs of learners.

HSA-Southwest will use a combination of diagnostic, authentic, state-mandated standardized tests, and nationally recognized norm-referenced assessments to measure students' progress over time and the school's goals. The applicant provided a detailed table to illustrate the type of assessments and grades in which such assessments are administered. (pg.18)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

- 1. 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:**

**(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)**

**Note: In describing the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental and community involvement in the planning, program design, and implementation of 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.**

**(10 points total)**

**General:**

The applicant effectively demonstrates that discussions and outreach to parents and families have been a key focus of the applicant for the proposed charter school. The applicant developed a community outreach plan which included, but not limited to establishing a community focused website to distribute information about the proposed school. Interested parents sign-up through the website to receive information and email updates. (pgs. 32-26) Parents were invited to attend focus group meeting to discuss the mission and vision for the school. Additionally, plans are in place to continue working with prospective parents on school related issues, such as parental commitment to volunteer at the school and to become an active part of the student's educational journey. The applicant will hire a fulltime community organizer to establish a continued presence in the community.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Sub Question**

- 1. (i) The extent of community support for the application (up to 5 points).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant clearly demonstrates that meaningful discussions and collaboration has taken place with the community during the development of the charter school. Based on the fact that the charter school operated other schools in the region, the organization already had a reputation of excellence among the community. The applicant began implementing a two-phase, comprehensive community outreach and engagement plan in the targeted proposed school community to inform community stakeholders and parents/guardians of the proposed HSA-Southwest school and to solicit their feedback.(pgs. 24-37) During the meetings the applicant solicited ideas and leveraged support from community stakeholders. For example, the applicant shared their model for the proposed school and plans for meaningful and quality community engagement with the aldermen and asked for their support. The response was positive and each alderman was open to having a high-quality charter school in the community.

**Sub Question**

Other relationships have been developed with Hispanic organizations and non-profits. It appears there is support for the school in the community.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**2. (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 5 points).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant effectively demonstrates discussions and outreach to parents and families have been a key focus of the applicant for the proposed charter school. The applicant developed a community outreach plan which included, but not limited to establishing a community focused website to distribute information about the proposed school. Interested parents sign-up through the website to receive information and email updates. (pgs. 32-26) Parents were invited to attend focus group meeting to discuss the mission and vision for the school. Additionally, plans are in place to continue working with prospective parents on school related issues, such as parental commitment to volunteer at the school and to become an active part of the student's educational journey. The applicant will hire a fulltime community organizer to establish a continued presence in the community.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

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

**(Please provide your responses in sub-questions 1 and 2.)**

**Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel' s skills, experience, and success in the following areas: launching a high-quality charter school; developing an innovative school design; managing or leading a non-profit organization; establishing or maintaining school governance by board of trustees; developing and implementing an effective curriculum; recruiting and evaluating effective educators; and strengthening fiscal management.**

**(22 points total)**

**General:**

The applicant effectively demonstrates that the charter management organization leadership team has the experience and qualifications to administer the charter school. The team will serve as the key staff to organize, oversee the opening of the school and manage the funding for the school. (pgs. 38-40) The team brings a wealth of extensive experience in managing high-quality charter schools in the Midwest.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Sub Question**

### Sub Question

1. (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).**

**Strengths:**

No strengths noted.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not address the selection criteria. No information was provided to detail their plan for ensuring and encouraging 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.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant effectively demonstrates that the charter management organization leadership team has the experience and qualifications to administer the charter school. The team will serve as the key staff to organize, oversee the opening of the school and manage the funding for the school. (pgs. 38-40) The team brings a wealth of extensive experience in managing high-quality charter schools in the Midwest.

The organization has a unique concept for school management at each individual school. The Concept Management organization contracts with local boards to manage the schools. Concept is responsible and involved in start-up, securing grants, financial management, assessment, curriculum alignment, marketing, human resources, professional development, public relations and community outreach, and more at the managed schools. Concept has more than 50 full-time employees in various departments who provide services to the Concept-managed schools. Concept strategically builds clusters of schools around large urban areas to provide the right level of impact on the community and to enable Concept to regionalize its support more effectively. Each cluster of 5-10 schools enables Concept to establish a regional office that provides leadership and operational support to the managed schools. In each region there is a superintendent who is supported by a regional treasurer, regional instructional coaches, and finance staff. (pg. 45)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 20**

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **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. (15 points)**

**Strengths:**

The applicant reasonably describes the management plan including strategies for ensuring the proposed objectives are accomplished on time and within budget. The Concept Board of Directors has two committees to govern HSA-Southwest. The governing board and the Advisory Committee. The governing board makes all of the operational decisions and the Advisory Committee is a diverse group of volunteers that offer advice and counsel to Concept's Board of Directors on

various aspects of school development and implementation and recommend resources to support the mission of the organization. (pgs. 45)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not provide in the narrative a management work plan that fully details the timeline for administering and implementing the project over the life of the grant. There were no milestones or benchmarks for meeting project tasks and activities. This information would have been helpful to determine what operational tasks will be needed to open the schools and when these activities will take place.

**Reader's Score:** 10

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

- 1. Existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school 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. (15 points)**

**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 application before resubmitting it to the authorized public chartering agency.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant effectively demonstrates the proposed Horizon Science Academy-Southwest was authorized to open by the Chicago Public Schools Board of Directors on January 22, 2014. (pg. 65) The applicant's charter indicates that the school will participate in all required state testing. The school must set annual performance target in their accountability plan. The accountability plan must include all assessments to be used and a timeline for achievement of performance standards as well as, procedures for corrective actions. (Appendix)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 15

**Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

- 1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school. (3 points)**

**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, curriculum, and personnel in accordance with its State s charter school law.

**Strengths:**

The applicant effectively demonstrates the proposed charter school will have the flexibility over daily operations, budget and curriculum. The applicant indicated that the flexibility and autonomy is afforded by the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/Art. 27A), the Illinois Board of Education, LEA and the Chicago Public Schools. The flexibility will provide the autonomy needed to structure key aspects of schooling at Horizon Science Academy-Southwest such as curriculum design and instruction, school calendar with longer school days and a longer school year, budgeting for a STEM-based focus, a centralized CMO office, and staffing decisions. (pgs. 70-75)

The only stipulation to the flexibility is that according to Illinois School Code, the school is required to follow a charter lottery, and comply with the Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Priority Questions**

**Improving Achievement and High School Graduation - Competitive Preference 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 the 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: The Department encourages the applicant to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) to which it is well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this Competitive Preference Priority.**

**Strengths:**

Horizon Science Academy Southwest (HSA-Southwest) is a new K-8 charter school starting its first year of implementation in 2014-2015 and is managed by Concept Schools, a charter management organization. The HSA-Southwest charter school's goal is to improve academic achievement, high school graduation and college completion rates for several specialized populations such as students with special needs, English Language Learners (ELL), high-needs students, and students from high-poverty homes and communities. The school will begin in August 2014 with 450 students in grades K-8, and then over the next 4 years, become a K-12 school with a projected enrollment of 725 students.

The applicant indicated the culture at HSA-Southwest will be all about college. Students and parents will be exposed to a college-bound culture through many strategic opportunities that the school will provide. Students will have classes such as

College Readiness and College Path as part of their academic program. Through these programs students will go through a formal college application process and apply to multiple colleges and for scholarships and financial aid.

At HSA-Southwest, eligible students will take free college classes at local colleges and universities through College Bridge and Dual Enrollment programs. These programs, established by CPS, are available to charter school students. The College Bridge program offers qualified juniors and seniors the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school. Students participate voluntarily after school or in the summer, earning a semester of transferable college credit and a semester of high school elective credit upon completion of the course. Several universities offer four-year scholarships to successful College Bridge students. Participating colleges include Chicago State University; the City Colleges of Chicago; DePaul University; Loyola University; National-Louis University; Roosevelt University; Northeastern Illinois University; North Park University; Northwestern University; and Roosevelt University.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Support for Military Families - Competitive Preference Priority 2**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Support for Military Families.**

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

**Note: To receive points under this priority, an applicant's project must target military-connected students who are current or prospective public charter school students. The applicant's recruitment and admissions policies and practices must comply with the State's 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:**

No strengths noted.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not adequately address the selection criteria.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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