

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/09/2015 12:20 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Vision Academy Charter School (U282B160011)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Curriculum and Instructional Practices		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	15
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Achievement Standards	5	5
Assessing Achievement of School Objectives		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	10
Community & Parental Support & Comm. Involvement		
1. Community Support	10	10
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	22	18
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	12
Existence & Quality of Charter or Performance Con.		
1. Existence of Charter	15	15
Degree of Flexibility Afforded by the SEA/LEA		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	2
Sub Total	100	87
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students - 1		
1. CPP 1	3	2
Supporting High-Need Students - 2		
1. CPP 2	3	0
Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments		
1. CPP 3	2	0
Sub Total	8	2
Total	108	89

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 6: 84.282B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Vision Academy Charter School (U282B160011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Curriculum and Instructional Practices

1. The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(1)).

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.

Strengths:

Vision Academy's curriculum and instructional practices have been designed to meet the specific needs of their student population, are research-based to ensure that students meet the state's achievement and content standards, and are directly tied to the school's comprehensive logic model (p.5). The school's program, based on the Core Knowledge Sequence, will thoughtfully supplement the use of direct instruction with a flipped classroom model (p. 9) and project-based learning as students matriculate into the upper grades (p. 6). The delivery of the curriculum will be supported by the posting and monitoring of regimented content teaching maps by the school administration, ensuring fidelity of implementation (p. 8). The application provides a thorough description of its curriculum in each of the core curricular areas; all of the materials are aligned with the state standards.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 U.S.C. 7221c(a)(1)).

Strengths:

The school has a well-articulated plan for assisting the educationally disadvantaged beyond the provision of federally mandated services to students who meet eligibility criteria (e.g. Special Education). Vision Academy will employ a Response to Intervention process, students in all tiers will receive differentiated instruction, and the school has established a Child Study Team (CST). Potential interventions available through the CST include, but are not limited to, counseling, mentoring, and personal education plans. Other notable features include the utilization of the McGraw Hill Fast Cycle or Corrective Reading program for remediation (p. 12). Additional initiatives that are available to all students as needed include: one-on-one tutoring, extended English Language Arts (ELA) and math instructional time, Homework Club, and Saturday Academy.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Assessing Achievement of School Objectives

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

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school s objectives, inclusive of developing 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 Section VI.4. Performance Measures 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:

Vision Academy presents a comprehensive plan for assessing the school's academic and operational objectives. Reputable leaders in charter school education and management created the frameworks for the school's assessment plan, Framework for Academic Quality and Framework for Operational Quality. The school has not only established goals and objectives that include how student performance will be measured using state assessments, they also include measures for younger students who are not yet administered state assessments (i.e. DIBELS in kindergarten), subgroup performance goals (e.g. Special Education), and goals regarding specific-features of the school's programs (e.g. student participation in Curriculum Nights) (p. 22-27).

Weaknesses:

While the application articulates performance measures related to academic and non-academic achievement, it does not include project-specific performance measures and targets tied to grant activities (for instance, if grant funds will support professional development for teachers and other staff, the applicant should include measures related to the outcomes of the professional development).

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Community & Parental Support & Comm. Involvement

Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.

The extent of community support and parental and community involvement (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(3); 20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(3)(E)).

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

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--**

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

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.

Strengths:

Vision Academy demonstrates an exemplary level of community support. Evidence of support includes 200 pre-enrollment applications prior to the school's charter being approved, a petition signed by 1,400 individuals supporting the charter after the original submission was rejected by the local educational agency (LEA), and capacity enrollment with a waitlist of 500 students upon opening (p. 28). This breadth and level of support is crucial to a school's ability to open and operate successfully.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

2. **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) How parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 5 points).

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.

Strengths:

Vision Academy was created by a group of local community leaders including an Assistant Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, the founder of an afterschool program for youth-at-risk, an educator working in the foster system, and other business and community leaders. Input was sought from the community regarding curriculum and instructional practices during the planning phase. The community was consulted. The school will continue to include parents and the community in the planning, program design, and implementation of the school in a number of ways. More specifically the school has established a Community Advisory Committee, participation on the Board of Trustees, participation on subcommittees of the board, and through parent surveys related to school operations and teacher performance (p. 28-30).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.

The quality of project personnel (34 CFR 75.210(e)(1), (e)(2), and (e)(3)(ii)).

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

- 1. 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 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).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel 's training and experience in activities related to the planning, program design, and initial implementation of a charter school.

Strengths:

Vision Academy has created a staff-recruiting plan that demonstrates its commitment to diversity in employment. The school has successfully recruited and hired employees who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. Currently the school has 20 faculty members; thirty percent are minorities, 40% are first generation college graduates, and 20% are multilingual (p.38).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 2

- 2. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel 's training and experience in activities related to the planning, program design, and initial implementation of a charter school.

Strengths:

Vision Academy has compiled an impressive team of individuals with significant experience in teaching, school administration, and financial management (p. 33-38 and Appendix B). The leadership team combines 54 years of teaching and school leadership serving disadvantaged students in both traditional and charter school settings. The

Sub Question

experience of the school's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), [REDACTED], includes four years as the superintendent of Sonoran Science Academy Schools. The district included seven PreK - Grade 12 schools with more than 200 faculty and staff. This breadth of knowledge and experience will support a smooth start-up of the new school.

Weaknesses:

While the members of the leadership team at Vision Academy have experience working in charter schools, the project personnel has limited experience related to the planning, design, and initial implementation of a charter school.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**1. The quality of the management plan (34 CFR 75.210(g)(1) and (g)(2)(i)).**

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:

As a currently operating school, Vision Academy has established an exemplary management plan to achieve the overall objectives of the opening of the school. The plan reaches beyond general implementation tasks to include professional development, curricular resource development, technology development, marketing, and facility improvements. These areas were not simply identified by the Board of Trustees and administration, but also via teacher, student, parent, and consultative feedback (p. 48). This type of cooperative goal setting, supported by the identification of clear tasks, points of contact, and deadlines (Appendix C) will lead to goal attainment and strong stakeholder buy-in.

Weaknesses:

The application does not present a management plan for the proposed project as it relates to the funds requested for this Charter Schools Program Non-SEA Grant. More specifically a high quality management plan would include defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing tasks related to the project as it is outlined in the budget narrative (Appendix D), such as the purchase of equipment and supplies and professional development).

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Existence & Quality of Charter or Performance Con.**1. Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.**

The existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency (20 U.S.C. 7221i(1)(L)).

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub Question

1. The Secretary considers--

(i) Whether a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency exists (up to 10 points);

Note: In considering whether there is a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency, the Secretary will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether the school has received preliminary, conditional, or other intermediate approval to operate from the authorized public chartering authority, if applicable. An applicant should submit documentation regarding the status of any such approval and clearly describe the authorizer 's approval process under applicable State law.

Strengths:

Vision Academy has an approved charter contract with the William Penn School District (p. 48) for a period of five years beginning July 1, 2015 and ending June 30, 2020 (Appendix A3).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The Secretary considers--

(ii) 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 (up to 5 points)

Note: In considering whether there is a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency, the Secretary will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether the school has received preliminary, conditional, or other intermediate approval to operate from the authorized public chartering authority, if applicable. An applicant should submit documentation regarding the status of any such approval and clearly describe the authorizer 's approval process under applicable State law.

Strengths:

According to the applicant, Vision Academy's charter contract with the William Penn School District "includes the rigorous outlined goals and objectives stated earlier in this proposal " (p. 49). These goals and objectives (p. 24-27) not only include how student performance will be measured in the charter school using state assessments, they also include other measures for younger students who are not yet administered state assessments (i.e. DIBELS in kindergarten), subgroup performance goals (e.g. Special Education), and goals regarding specific-features of the school's programs (e.g. student participation in Curriculum Nights).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Degree of Flexibility Afforded by the SEA/LEA

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(2)).

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.

Strengths:

Vision Academy is granted a large degree of autonomy in areas such as budgeting, curriculum, operating procedures, facilities and teacher evaluation under Pennsylvania law (p. 49-50). The state's charter school law (24 P.S. §§ 17-1701-A to 17-1751-A) grants the school "all powers necessary or desirable for carrying out its charter." This flexibility ensures the school's ability to implement innovative practices.

Weaknesses:

The degree of autonomy and flexibility regarding local rules and policies (e.g. discipline, enrollment age of kindergartner, transportation) afforded to Vision Academy from the LEA, William Penn School District, is unclear. Furthermore, the applicant does not provide a description of the permissibility of request for waivers in the event restrictions do exist. Providing a copy of the school's charter contract with the LEA would have been of benefit.

Reader's Score: 2

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students - 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Supporting High-Needs Students (Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, English Learners)

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:

- (a) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies
- (b) Students with disabilities
- (c) English learners

Note: 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:

Vision Academy will provide services to students with disabilities (12% of the enrolled population) and English learners (EL). The applicant provides a brief description of these services and some of the means by which they ensure compliance with federally mandated requirements. Some of these requirements for students with disabilities include the implementation due process timelines for evaluation, appropriate instructional modifications, and education within the least restrictive environment (p. p. 19-20). The school's EL program is described as a standards-based program supported by the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. The SIOP allows for information to be presented in a comprehensible way for language learners within the mainstream setting (p. 18).

Weaknesses:

While the applicant will provide services to students with disabilities and English learners, it does not provide a detailed explanation of how the project meets this priority.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students - 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Supporting High-Needs Students (Federally Recognized Indian Tribes)

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes and learning environments for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Strengths:

The project is not designed to improve academic outcomes for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes, therefore no strengths are noted.

Weaknesses:

The project is not designed to improve academic outcomes for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes, therefore no weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments

Projects that are designed to improve early learning and development outcomes across one or more of the essential domains of school readiness for children from birth through third grade (or for any age group within this range) through a focus on including preschool, whether offered in school or community-based settings, as part of elementary education programs and systems in order to expand opportunities for preschool students and teachers.

Strengths:

The project is not designed to improve early learning outcomes, therefore no strengths are noted.

Weaknesses:

The project is not designed to improve early learning outcomes, therefore no weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 11/09/2015 12:20 PM

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Vision Academy Charter School (U282B160011)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Curriculum and Instructional Practices		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	15
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Achievement Standards	5	4
Assessing Achievement of School Objectives		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	10
Community & Parental Support & Comm. Involvement		
1. Community Support	10	8
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	22	18
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	15
Existence & Quality of Charter or Performance Con.		
1. Existence of Charter	15	12
Degree of Flexibility Afforded by the SEA/LEA		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Sub Total	100	85
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students - 1		
1. CPP 1	3	2
Supporting High-Need Students - 2		
1. CPP 2	3	0
Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments		
1. CPP 3	2	0
Sub Total	8	2
Total	108	87

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 6: 84.282B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Vision Academy Charter School (U282B160011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Curriculum and Instructional Practices

1. The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(1)).

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.

Strengths:

The application cites comprehensive research to support the quality of the proposed instructional program, which includes direct instruction in the early grades, project based learning, and a flipped classroom. There is also a thorough description of a standards aligned curriculum to be used in each subject. The applicant presents a strong logic model that clearly articulates inputs, outputs, short-term outcomes, long-term outcomes (page 5). In addition, there is a thorough discussion regarding how ongoing professional development will be used to support instruction. See pages 6 to 17.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 U.S.C. 7221c(a)(1)).

Strengths:

The application provides comprehensive details of the research-based strategies that will be used to identify, serve, and monitor educationally disadvantaged students, including English Learners and students with disabilities. The application discusses how differentiated instruction will be provided during class time as well as after school through activities such as tutoring, individualized learning programs, extended learning time, homework club, and Saturday Academy. In addition, the application thoroughly discusses how goals will be set for individual students, how goals will be tracked, and how interventions will be retooled if there has not been progress at the end of the marking period. See pages 19 to 22.

Weaknesses:

The proposed homogeneous skill grouping could be incompatible with growth for struggling students if they do not have higher achieving role models. There is insufficient discussion on use of specific assessments to monitor progress of educationally disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Assessing Achievement of School Objectives

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

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school's objectives, inclusive of developing 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 Section VI.4. Performance Measures 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 plans to use the research-based Building Charter School Quality framework to assess achievement of objectives. The framework includes formative, interim, and summative assessments to track student achievement. Specific goals and metrics are provided for state and local assessments that measure proficiency, growth, and compare the charter school to other schools in the district. In addition, the applicant plans to have a comprehensive staff evaluation program that includes formal observations, informal observations, and daily walkthroughs. The framework is comprehensive in that it also measures non-academic goals, including financial performance and stability, board performance, and parent and community engagement. See pages 22 to 26.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide baseline data for the school district or the target population. This makes it difficult to assess whether the goals and metrics are sufficiently rigorous or are too ambitious. The application also lacks a specific goal for growth on State assessments. In addition, the application fails to include performance measures and performance targets for staff development, which is part of the proposed grant project.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Community & Parental Support & Comm. Involvement

1. Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.

The extent of community support and parental and community involvement (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(3); 20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(3)(E)).

Strengths:

No strengths found.

Weaknesses:

Community support for the application is not discussed, and no letters of support are mentioned or attached.

Reader's Score: 8

Sub Question

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--

Sub Question

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

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.

Strengths:

The original charter application included significant community support. The charter application was initially denied and 1,400 signatures were provided as part of the appeals process. In addition, the charter school had 200 pre-enrollment applications before the school was approved. See page 28.

Weaknesses:

Community support for the proposed project is not discussed, and no letters of support are mentioned or attached.

Reader's Score: 4

2. 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) How parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 5 points).

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.

Strengths:

Parents and community members have a significant role in the implementation of the charter school. The board includes a parent member, there is a Parent Teacher Organization, and there is a Community Advisory Committee with broad membership from within and outside the school. Parents will also be part of board committees and will have input into teacher evaluations. See pages 28 to 30.

Weaknesses:

The application does not discuss how parents and community members will specifically have a role in planning or program design.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.

The quality of project personnel (34 CFR 75.210(e)(1), (e)(2), and (e)(3)(ii)).

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 18

Sub Question

1. **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 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).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel 's training and experience in activities related to the planning, program design, and initial implementation of a charter school.

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates that it encourages applications for employment from traditionally underrepresented groups. Staff selection is based on identifying the best-qualified personnel without regard to race, religion, color, creed, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, marital status, or disability. The current faculty is diverse and includes 30 percent minorities, 40 percent first generation college graduates, and 20 percent multilingual speakers (page 38).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

2. **In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel 's training and experience in activities related to the planning, program design, and initial implementation of a charter school.

Strengths:

The application demonstrates that key staff members have relevant experience. The Chief Executive Officer has a Masters' degree in Education, has been a principal in Arizona from 2004 to 2006, and was a charter superintendent from 2006 to 2010. The director of instruction has been a principal. The special education coordinator and counselor have applicable experience in their fields. See appendices B2 to B5.

Weaknesses:

The CEO has not yet been a principal in Pennsylvania and does not yet have certification.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The quality of the management plan (34 CFR 75.210(g)(1) and (g)(2)(i)).**

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 project management plan is well organized and will help ensure that the proposed project is completed on time and within budget. The project management plan includes a comprehensive chart that is organized by focus area (Appendix C). The focus areas are aligned to the items to be funded in the proposed project, which include staff development, curriculum development, technology improvements, and improvements in furnishings (pages 50 and 51). Each focus area has multiple strategies and each strategy has clearly defined activities. Under each activity, there is a responsible party, timeline, and a space to track the status of the activity.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Existence & Quality of Charter or Performance Con.**1. Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.**

The existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency (20 U.S.C. 7221i(1)(L)).

Strengths:**Weaknesses:**

Reader's Score: 12

Sub Question**1. The Secretary considers--**

(i) Whether a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency exists (up to 10 points);

Note: In considering whether there is a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency, the Secretary will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether the school has received preliminary, conditional, or other intermediate approval to operate from the authorized public chartering authority, if applicable. An applicant should submit documentation regarding the status of any such approval and clearly describe the authorizer 's approval process under applicable State law.

Strengths:

A written charter between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency exists.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The Secretary considers--

(ii) The extent to which the charter or performance contract describes how student performance

Sub Question

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 (up to 5 points)

Note: In considering whether there is a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency, the Secretary will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether the school has received preliminary, conditional, or other intermediate approval to operate from the authorized public chartering authority, if applicable. An applicant should submit documentation regarding the status of any such approval and clearly describe the authorizer 's approval process under applicable State law.

Strengths:

The narrative states that the charter contract includes the rigorous goals and objectives outlined in the proposal, which includes student achievement based on state assessments as well as other measures of determining a quality academic program and overall school operations. See pages 48 and 49.

Weaknesses:

The full charter contract is not included in the application so there is insufficient information available to determine how well the contract describes how student performance will be measured.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Degree of Flexibility Afforded by the SEA/LEA

- 1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(2)).**

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.

Strengths:

The State Educational Agency provides substantial flexibility to charter schools. Pennsylvania provides complete autonomy in selection of staff, evaluation model, budgeting and facilities, length of school day, and curriculum (page 50).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students - 1

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Supporting High-Needs Students (Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, English Learners)**

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:

- (a) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies**
- (b) Students with disabilities**
- (c) English learners**

Note: 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 project is designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities using a Response to Intervention process that involves identification and intervention (pages 14, 19, and 20). The project is also designed to serve English Learners using a research-driven content-based model that uses the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol for both language and content teachers (page 17 and 18).

Weaknesses:

There is insufficient discussion on use of specific assessments to monitor progress of students with disabilities and English Learners.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students - 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Supporting High-Needs Students (Federally Recognized Indian Tribes)

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes and learning environments for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Strengths:

This competitive priority is not addressed.

Weaknesses:

This competitive priority is not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments

Projects that are designed to improve early learning and development outcomes across one or more of the essential domains of school readiness for children from birth through third grade (or for any age group within this range) through a focus on including preschool, whether offered in school or community-based settings, as part of elementary education programs and systems in order to expand opportunities for preschool students and teachers.

Strengths:

This competitive priority is not addressed.

Weaknesses:

This competitive priority is not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/09/2015 12:20 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/12/2015 05:52 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Vision Academy Charter School (U282B160011)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Curriculum and Instructional Practices		
1. Quality of Curriculum	15	14
Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students		
1. Achievement Standards	5	5
Assessing Achievement of School Objectives		
1. Assessing Achievement	15	12
Community & Parental Support & Comm. Involvement		
1. Community Support	10	9
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	22	19
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	15	14
Existence & Quality of Charter or Performance Con.		
1. Existence of Charter	15	10
Degree of Flexibility Afforded by the SEA/LEA		
1. Degree of Flexibility	3	3
Sub Total	100	86
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Supporting High-Need Students - 1		
1. CPP 1	3	3
Supporting High-Need Students - 2		
1. CPP 2	3	0
Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments		
1. CPP 3	2	0
Sub Total	8	3
Total	108	89

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - Non-SEA Charter Schools - 6: 84.282B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Vision Academy Charter School (U282B160011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Curriculum and Instructional Practices

1. The quality of the proposed curriculum and instructional practices (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(1)).

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.

Strengths:

The applicant plans to use Core Knowledge Sequencing to integrate subjects so for example when students are reading Shakespeare's "Midsummer's Night Dream" they are also studying about the great engineers of that time such as Galileo (p. e22).

A quarterly content teaching map will be posted on a wall in the teacher's lunch area to ensure that everyone stays on track and is teaching the content that should be covered (p. e22).

The sixth, seventh and eighth grades will be using project based learning so that they are collaborating on accomplishing a specific goal which will teach them how to collaborate, communicate and work in a team environment (p. e22).

The applicant says it will employ a "flipped classroom" model that will task teachers with developing on-line instruction and classroom time will be devoted to working on projects, lab work, etc which will provide an enriched and robust curriculum that increases absorption of material thus increasing student test scores (p. e23-24).

All students in grades 6 - 8 will receive a laptop as a part of their equipment which will allow increased learning experiences after the instructional day is over and promote on-line collaboration and a paperless environment (p. e24).

Singapore math will be implemented by the applicant to help students visualize numbers in math problems. This program is highly regarded and recognized (p. e28-29).

The applicant adequately describes the equipment that will be used for the technology module such as smart boards, computers and laptop carts (p. e31).

Several clubs and enrichment activities will be offered to students during the school's extended day such as: art club, book club, community service club, dance club, drama club, first Lego club, Geography bee, etc (p. e35).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not outline the curriculum and/or digital programs that will be used in its technology module such as Adobe Photoshop, Canva, Haiku, Blackboard, etc.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. **The extent to which the proposed project will assist educationally disadvantaged students and other students in meeting State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards (20 U.S.C. 7221c(a)(1)).**

Strengths:

The applicant provides an excellent logic model which more than adequately explains how it will service those who are educationally disadvantaged (p. e19).

The applicant outlines that it will provide core knowledge curriculum, an extended day, project based learning, flipped classroom format which focuses on sensory learning such as lab projects and students watch lectures on-line at home (p. e19).

The McGraw Hill Direct Instruction called "Fast Cycle" is a strong curriculum that will help students who are struggling to decrease their learning gap by two years in less than 12 months (p. e26).

Students who are struggling will also be given an extended school day support, Saturday support, and group tutoring support further reduce any learning gaps (p. e26, e27).

Socratic group discussions will be used so that peer to peer tutoring will increase student engagement and students can encourage one another as they progress (p. e28).

EL students will be instructed utilizing the McGraw Hill ELA curriculum which is aligned with Core Knowledge and further help to decrease learning gaps quickly (p. e28). EL students will be instructed utilizing the RTI approach which will help them to achieve proficiency quickly (p. e29, e31). The applicant will use the SIOP model which uses innovative strategies to help students absorb the instruction quicker (p. e32).

Student with disabilities will utilize the RTI Model and be given individualized 504 plans by which to guide instruction (p. e33). Students will be provided a comprehensive program that includes: one on one instruction, extended learning time, and Saturday academy along with counseling (p. e34).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Assessing Achievement of School Objectives

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

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to propose a comprehensive plan for assessing the achievement of the charter school s objectives, inclusive of developing 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 Section VI.4. Performance Measures 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 plans to benchmark its program using both national and local assessments including: NWEA MAP, McGraw Hill Reading Mastery Placement, 4Sight Benchmark, PSSA practice tests, DIBELS, etc (p. e37).

The results from these assessments will be discussed during teacher's professional learning development and individualized learning plans will be created based on results for each student which is a strong plan in order to monitor student progress and track achievement (p. e37).

Weaknesses:

There are not any project specific measurement objectives. Also missing from the application is any baseline data to prove assumptions that the curriculum is solid and show that targets for improvement are set for the future in order to increase student achievement.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Community & Parental Support & Comm. Involvement

Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.

The extent of community support and parental and community involvement (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(3); 20 U.S.C. 7221b(b)(3)(E)).

Strengths:

The answers are provided in the sub-questions below.

Weaknesses:

The answers are provided in the sub-questions below.

Reader's Score: 9

Sub Question

- 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--**

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

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.

Strengths:

The applicant has built relationships with local universities and professional to help volunteer to lead several of its clubs which increases community engagement and models for students the expertise that these individuals offer (p. e35).

The founding board diverse and comprised of community members such as: a professor from the University of Pennsylvania, founder of an at risk youth program, an educator in foster care system, and community business leaders (p. e41).

Two hundred pre-enrollment applications were completed and 1400 signatures on a petition were gathered to

Sub Question

demonstrate community support for the application which is more than sufficient (p. e42). Five hundred students are currently on the waiting list for the applicant's school which again emphasizes the community demand for the school (p. e42).

Marketing materials to reach all demographics of the community include: direct mailings, posting of flyers at youth centers, open house night, etc (p. e45).

The parents were involved in the planning of the school as outlined on page e42 when the applicant states "the community was consulted for input during multiple informational meetings that outlined the proposed curriculum and instructional practices and gathered feedback (p. e42).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. 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) How parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of the charter school (up to 5 points).

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.

Strengths:

The school was fully enrolled at its opening which effectively demonstrates the demand for the school (p. e42).

A PTO organization will be encouraged in order to strengthen parent engagement with the school (p. e42). At least one parent will be a voting member on the board of trustees for the school (p. e43).

Parent and student engagement is encouraged at the school through home/school workshops, open houses, parent/teacher conferences, curriculum nights, etc. (p. e43).

Parents who are unable to attend parent teacher conferences will be offered the option of an at home visit which is a viable solution for parents who are housebound due to illness, etc (p. e43). This helps to ensure that all constituents are given equal access to important information about their student.

Parents will also be allowed participation in a teacher satisfaction survey (p. e44).

A quarterly school review will be published for all constituents to see how the school is tracking in performance (p. e44).

Parents will be allowed to view their students records at any given point in time (p. e44).

John Hopkins University National Network of Partnership Schools will be providing parent engagement programs for the school so the community and local higher educations will have a positive working relationship with the applicant which will help to increase student matriculation to a four year college (p. e44).

Sub Question

Weaknesses:

Parents will be present on subcommittees for the board of directors and according to the applicant be "involved in the control and management of the school by participation or representation on the sub-committees." Parents should have a voice on parent led school site committees that report directly to the principal but parents on the board of trustees can lead to political and personal agendas that supersede the good of the whole (p. e43).

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.

The quality of project personnel (34 CFR 75.210(e)(1), (e)(2), and (e)(3)(ii)).

Strengths:

See answers in sub-questions below.

Weaknesses:

See answers in sub-questions below.

Reader's Score: 19

Sub Question

- 1. 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 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).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel 's training and experience in activities related to the planning, program design, and initial implementation of a charter school.

Strengths:

The applicant states, "It is the policy of the Vision Academy Charter School to seek and employ the best qualified academic and administrative personnel without regard to race, religion, color, creed, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, marital status or disability" (p. 137).

The staff will be comprised of a school leader, a director of instruction, a nurse, ten classroom teachers, twelve specialized faculty for enrichment classes, and five administrative and operations personnel. This staffing plan is reasonable and should adequately provide for the instructional and management needs of the school (p. e67).

Weaknesses:

The application lacks detail about how it will reach out to the various demographics for recruitment marketing to achieve diversity in its staff (p. e137).

Reader's Score: 1

- 2. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (up to 20 points).**

Note: The Secretary encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the key project personnel 's training and experience in activities related to the planning, program design, and initial

Sub Question

implementation of a charter school.

Strengths:

The CEO of the school earned a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and served as the principal for a top school in Arizona and then served as Superintendent for seven charter schools serving K-12 grades and 200 staff. He also served as a monitor of Title I, II, and II programs (p. e48).

The back office services will be provided by Charter Choices so that the principal and his faculty can focus on the instructional aspects of the school (p. e49).

The Director of Instruction earned his degree from the Patterson Charter School of Science and Technology. He has also served as a vice principal, principal, dean of academics and biology teacher so he has the experienced required to run a successful academic department (p. e49).

Weaknesses:

The application is very vague about the person who has been assigned to the project director for the grant.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The quality of the management plan (34 CFR 75.210(g)(1) and (g)(2)(i)).

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 board of directors is correctly tasked as it states its purpose is to "ensure the charter's mission, select administrators, ensure adequate resources, support the administrator, monitor progress, etc. The board is mostly comprised of community members and has very few parents on it (p. e47, e116-e117).

The CEO of the school earned a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership and served as the principal for a top school in Arizona and then served as Superintendent for seven charter schools serving K-12 grades and 200 staff. He also served as a monitor of Title I, II, and II programs (p. e48).

The timetable for the project implementation is reasonable as outlined on p. e145-146.

The requests for technology, science lab equipment, and travel to charter, science, and math conferences are integral for increasing student achievement (p. e218).

The requests for curriculum are key to increasing student achievement and are reasonable in their requested amount and include such items as: software, curriculum development, science lab kits, Reading and Flex Curriculum, Reading Mastery Curriculum, Singapore Math Curriculum, etc. (p. e217-e225, e223, e224).

Weaknesses:

The project timeline has not been updated past September 2013 (p. e146).

The budget requested is for three years, but the implementation grant is for two years (p. e227).

The budget line item request of \$7250 per year for the printing of brochures and manuals should be removed. This item doesn't directly impact student achievement and \$7200 is high for printing costs (p. e219).

The budget narrative from pages e217-e224 is not clearly presented.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Existence & Quality of Charter or Performance Con.

1. Please provide your responses in the sub-questions.

The existence and quality of a charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency (20 U.S.C. 7221i(1)(L)).

Strengths:

See answers in sub-questions below.

Weaknesses:

See answers in sub-questions below.

Reader's Score: 10

Sub Question

1. The Secretary considers--

(i) Whether a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency exists (up to 10 points);

Note: In considering whether there is a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency, the Secretary will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether the school has received preliminary, conditional, or other intermediate approval to operate from the authorized public chartering authority, if applicable. An applicant should submit documentation regarding the status of any such approval and clearly describe the authorizer 's approval process under applicable State law.

Strengths:

The applicant's charter was approved on 10/28/2014. The term of the contract is from 7/1/2015 through 6/30/2020 or five years.

The school opened in September 2015 with 200 students in Kindergarten through fourth grade.

Weaknesses:

No noted weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The Secretary considers--

(ii) 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 (up to 5 points)

Sub Question

Note: In considering whether there is a written charter or performance contract between the charter school and its authorized public chartering agency, the Secretary will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether the school has received preliminary, conditional, or other intermediate approval to operate from the authorized public chartering authority, if applicable. An applicant should submit documentation regarding the status of any such approval and clearly describe the authorizer 's approval process under applicable State law.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

The authorizer failed to outline the standards of performance in the charter agreement for the charter school (p. e211).

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Degree of Flexibility Afforded by the SEA/LEA

1. The degree of flexibility afforded by the SEA and, if applicable, the LEA to the charter school (20 U.S.C. 7221c(b)(2)).

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.

Strengths:

The applicant is given much flexibility and autonomy over several key functions such as: budgeting and facility, selection and evaluations of staff, and allowed to decide the length of the school day compared to district schools which are mandated to use a state generated evaluation system. Local districts are limited to content delivery and length of instructional time. (p. e64).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students - 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Supporting High-Needs Students (Rural Students, Students with Disabilities, English Learners)

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes and learning environments for one or more of the following groups of students:

- (a) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies
- (b) Students with disabilities
- (c) English learners

Note: 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 area the applicant is servicing is ranked 457th out of 468 school districts in the state of Pennsylvania (p. e17) with 92% of the school's population being African American, 93% of the student population are economically disadvantaged, 10% are considered EL, and 12% of the student population has been assessed as needing special education services (p. e17).

The applicant does not serve a rural community.

EL students will be instructed utilizing the McGraw Hill ELA curriculum which is aligned with Core Knowledge and further help to decrease learning gaps quickly (p. e28). EL students will be instructed utilizing the RTI approach which will help them to achieve proficiency quickly (p. e29, e31). The applicant will use the SIOP model which uses innovative strategies to help students absorb the instruction quicker (p. e32).

Student with disabilities will utilize the RTI Model and be given individualized 504 plans by which to guide instruction (p. e33). Students will be provided a comprehensive program that includes: one on one instruction, extended learning time, and Saturday academy along with counseling (p. e34).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Supporting High-Need Students - 2**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Supporting High-Needs Students (Federally Recognized Indian Tribes)**

Projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes and learning environments for students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments**1. Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Improving Early Learning Outcomes and Developments**

Projects that are designed to improve early learning and development outcomes across one or more of the essential domains of school readiness for children from birth through third grade (or for any age group within this range) through a focus on including preschool, whether offered in school or community-based settings, as part of elementary education programs and systems in order to expand opportunities for preschool students and teachers.

Strengths:

No noted strengths.

Weaknesses:

No noted weaknesses.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 11/12/2015 05:52 PM