

Status: Submitted  
Last Updated: 06/21/2010 3:59 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396C100242)

**Reader #1:**

	<b>POINTS POSSIBLE</b>	<b>POINTS SCORED</b>
<b>Summary Statement</b>		
1. Summary Statement	N/A	N/A
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)	25	22
2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)	25	25
3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)	5	4
4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)	10	10
5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference</b>		
1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)	2	2

## Technical Review Form

**Development 43: 84.396C**

**Reader #1:**

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396C100242)

### Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement

This is a strong proposal from a network of schools in New England. It includes urban, suburban, and rural schools. It focuses on changing participating schools' schedules, culture, and environment to support teams of students and teachers in developing and implementing personalized, inquiry-oriented instructional systems. The organization has a history of success. The management plan is well-developed and clear. The personnel have appropriate expertise. The project has a likelihood of sustainability.

### Selection Criteria

#### 1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)

**In determining the need for the project and quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).**

**(2) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project clearly specified and measurable and linked to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet.**

## **Strengths**

The proposal presents the following hypothesis: "A network of schools, working together to create authentic tasks and common rubrics to measure uncommon assessment tasks, will foster personalized learning resulting in higher student achievement, as demonstrated by lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates and demonstrable success after high school." To assess this hypothesis would require understanding the role of the network, the nature of making tasks 'authentic' tasks, as well as how to measure them both through rubrics, performances, and traditional measures of student achievement and attainment. The proposal then takes care to define what it means when describing personalized learning and common rubrics. This is a good indication that the proposed project has identified the core issues it will address and how to measure them.

The proposal's focus at four levels of innovation--student, teacher, school, and project--is described clearly. It appears to take into account important considerations at each level, such as managing school schedules and the school culture among administrators and teachers. These are all significant strengths.

## **Weaknesses**

The proposal describes the activities of within-school teams of teachers, including developing inquiry-oriented curriculum modules and developing related assessments. However, there is a great deal of variation in how teachers may conceptualize the appropriate curriculum or prepare assessments. Curriculum development is greatly dependent on both content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, and neither is discussed with any detail in the proposal. Additionally, assessment development can be very difficult, particularly if a variety of related but unique tasks are required. This difficulty is only amplified if the tasks are performances rather than questions or items.

**Reader's Score: 22**

### **2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)**

**In determining the experience of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The past performance of the eligible applicant in implementing projects of the size and scope proposed by the eligible applicant.**

**(2) The extent to which an eligible applicant provides information and data demonstrating that -**

**(a) In the case of an eligible applicant that is an LEA, the LEA has -**

**(i) Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA, or significantly increased student achievement for all groups of students described in such section; and**

**(ii) Made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and principals, as demonstrated with meaningful data; or**

**(b) In the case of an eligible applicant that includes a nonprofit organization, the nonprofit organization has significantly improved student achievement, attainment, or retention through its record of work with an LEA or schools.**

**Strengths**

The proposal describes the organization's prior experiences in implementing a variety of grant activities both internally and with partner organizations. The schools have also demonstrated ability to increase student performance overall, to reduce gaps between subgroups of students and the larger student body, and to boost postsecondary enrollment for students in its technical education program.

**Weaknesses**

None.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)**

**In determining the quality of the strategy and capacity to further develop and bring to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

**(1) The number of students proposed to be reached by the proposed project, and the capacity of the eligible applicant and any other partners to reach the proposed number of students during the course of the grant period.**

**(2) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or to work with others (including other partners) to ensure that the proposed practice, strategy, or program can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.**

**(3) The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student**

populations. Evidence of this ability includes the availability of resources and expertise required for implementing the project with fidelity, and the proposed project's evidence of relative ease of use or user satisfaction.

(4) The eligible applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes the start-up and operating costs per student per year (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project. The eligible applicant must include an estimate of the costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students.

(5) The mechanisms the eligible applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

#### **Strengths**

Initial estimates of the cost of curriculum materials are at \$800 per student, but with this cost reduced as materials are produced and can be used subsequently (to about \$100 per student). This is very low cost, especially in the out-years when the materials are stable.

The proposal indicates that the project will be able to affect 11,000 students by the end of the grant period through its Network. This is a very large number and indicates the potential for impact of a multi-school program. Furthermore, the proposal suggests that the states in which the network schools are located have committed to implementing the program more widely if the results are favorable.

#### **Weaknesses**

While the proposal describes the costs as being low for materials, it does not estimate the cost of the personnel required for institutional support and change. A reading of the proposal makes it clear that the intervention is not simply in the creation of materials (whether curricula or assessments). Rather, the majority of the investment is in transition support teams at the school and project level, programs to alter the school culture to support cooperation and personalized instruction, and changes to the schedule and physical spaces for teachers to meet in teams and groups both for planning and instruction. These are ignored in the calculation of costs, but would be essential for any successful implementation to scale.

**Reader's Score: 4**

#### **4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)**

**In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that it has the resources, as well as the support from stakeholders (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions) to operate the project beyond the length of the Development grant.**

**(2) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the eligible applicant and any other partners at the end of the Development grant.**

**Strengths**

The project will likely be sustainable. The purpose is to reframe the culture, schedule, and operation of the participating schools. The project describes ways that these changes would be maintained once the grant ends, through changes in the school leadership and through collaboration with other partners whose involvement is not contingent on grant funding (e.g., CSSR). Furthermore, the project has support from other partners--such as state education agencies and other external entities--that will help it continue.

**Weaknesses**

None.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)**

**In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

**(1) 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.**

**(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.**

**Strengths**

The management plan is very clear in describing the milestones that the project will set for itself and the activities that it will conduct to meet these goals. Both the milestones and the activities are appropriate. Reaching the milestones will be advanced and reviewed by internal teams and by a Performance Assessment Review (PAR) board. The board members identified are highly qualified and respected, and the plan lists the specific capabilities that will be sought for other PAR members not yet

identified. The other project personnel have extensive experience in school leadership and change.

**Weaknesses**

None.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Competitive Preference**

**1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs. To meet this priority, applications must focus on:

- (a) improving young children's school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive readiness) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects (as defined in section 9101(11) of the ESEA);
- (b) improving developmental milestones and standards and aligning them with appropriate outcome measures; and
- (c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade.

**Strengths**

None. This is not addressed.

**Weaknesses**

This is not addressed.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to enable kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students, particularly high school students, to

successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two- or four-year college. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that

- (a) address students' preparedness and expectations related to college;
- (b) help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and
- (c) provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.

**Strengths**

The proposal describes the project's focus on preparing students academically for college. This is an important part of increasing college access.

**Weaknesses**

The project provides little or no information on how it would address students' understanding of financial considerations or support structures related to college entrance and completion.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, including those who are assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students. To meet this priority, applications must provide for the implementation of particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes, close achievement gaps, and increase college- and career-readiness, including increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

**Strengths**

The proposal asserts that the personalized approach may allow students with disabilities to develop skills and abilities.

**Weaknesses**

Beyond the statements summarized above in Strengths, there was little information on the specific actions that students with disabilities or English-language learners would perform to support their development and

achievement.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA (as defined in this notice) and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and principal effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

**Strengths**

The proposal includes Network members from multiple rural LEAs in New Hampshire and Maine and appears to be attentive to the ways that rural schools' needs would differ from urban and suburban schools.

**Weaknesses**

None.

**Reader's Score: 2**

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 06/21/2010 3:59 PM

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/23/2010 6:37 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396C100242)

**Reader #2:**

	<b>POINTS POSSIBLE</b>	<b>POINTS SCORED</b>
<b>Summary Statement</b>		
1. Summary Statement	N/A	N/A
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)	25	23
2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)	25	25
3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)	5	5
4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)	10	10
5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference</b>		
1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)	2	2

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## Technical Review Form

**Development 43: 84.396C**

**Reader #2:**

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396C100242)

### Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement

Strengths:

The applicant represents an alliance of schools with a demonstrated need. Enrollment and achievement data is provided in support of need, particularly for high-need students.

A collaborative network of schools proposes to work together to engage in innovative efforts to improve teaching and learning. The approach is similar to Coalition of Essential Schools but is also tied to state standards for academic achievement.p3 This is an unusual collaboration that crosses state borders and invites outside experts to observe, assess and advise schools for program improvement. Peer site visits and consultations are also planned and represent an open invitation for constructive criticism, collaboration and improvement. The needs of students with disabilities is addressed early in the narrative; personalized learning experiences and high expectations are woven into this program. Overall improvement goal is stated with reference to program "strands" and a graphic illustration of the process for implementation and improvement. Outcomes are clearly stated in the evaluation plan with measurable outcomes for graduation rate and college admissions, logic model and evaluation chart.

Weaknesses:

The outcomes provided state improvement efforts for both teachers and students but some outcomes do not include baseline or measurable statements.

### Selection Criteria

## 1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)

In determining the need for the project and quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).

(2) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project clearly specified and measurable and linked to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet.

### Strengths

1)The applicant represents an alliance of schools with a demonstrated need. Enrollment and achievement data is provided in support of need, particularly for high-need students.

A collaborative network of schools proposes to work together to engage in innovative efforts to improve teaching and learning. The approach is similar to Coalition of Essential Schools but is also tied to state standards for academic achievement.p3 This is an unusual collaboration that crosses state borders and invites outside experts to observe, assess and advise schools for program improvement. Peer site visits and consultations are also planned and represent an open invitation for constructive criticism, collaboration and improvement. The needs of students with disabilities is addressed early in the narrative; personalized learning experiences and high expectations are woven into this program. p. 4

2)Overall improvement goal is stated with reference to program "strands" and a graphic illustration of the process for implementation and improvement. p6/7. Outcomes are clearly stated in the evaluation plan with measurable outcomes for graduation rate and college admissions, logic model and evaluation chart (all provided on P.18 and in appendix).

### Weaknesses

1) No weaknesses

2) The applicant does not provide clearly stated objectives with measurable outcomes. The outcomes provided state improvement efforts for both teachers and students but some outcomes do not include baseline or measurable statements.p. 8, 18 and appendix.

**Reader's Score: 23**

## 2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)

In determining the experience of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The past performance of the eligible applicant in implementing projects of the size and scope proposed by the eligible applicant.
- (2) The extent to which an eligible applicant provides information and data demonstrating that -
  - (a) In the case of an eligible applicant that is an LEA, the LEA has -
    - (i) Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA, or significantly increased student achievement for all groups of students described in such section; and
    - (ii) Made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and principals, as demonstrated with meaningful data; or
  - (b) In the case of an eligible applicant that includes a nonprofit organization, the nonprofit organization has significantly improved student achievement, attainment, or retention through its record of work with an LEA or schools.

### Strengths

- 1) The applicant has demonstrated success in managing large school improvement efforts. Currently, they are managing a 1.2 million Smaller Learning Comm. grant with evidence of success stated with data support improvement in teaching and learning. p. 12
- 2) Data provided indicates improved academic achievement for student in math and English and includes the improvement of high need student populations and decreased dropout rates. p12

### Weaknesses

- 1) No weaknesses
- 2) NO weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 25**

## 3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)

In determining the quality of the strategy and capacity to further develop and bring to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

**(1) The number of students proposed to be reached by the proposed project, and the capacity of the eligible applicant and any other partners to reach the proposed number of students during the course of the grant period.**

**(2) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or to work with others (including other partners) to ensure that the proposed practice, strategy, or program can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.**

**(3) The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations. Evidence of this ability includes the availability of resources and expertise required for implementing the project with fidelity, and the proposed project's evidence of relative ease of use or user satisfaction.**

**(4) The eligible applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes the start-up and operating costs per student per year (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project. The eligible applicant must include an estimate of the costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students.**

**(5) The mechanisms the eligible applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

#### **Strengths**

1) The proposed project will serve 11,000 students in the participating school districts. The project design is collaborative and attentive to reaching all students. p. 17

2)As described, this program has the capacity and the thoughtful planning to ensure further development and expansion to more schools in a consistent effective manner. A steering committee is particularly charged with leading these efforts. p. 17 The evaluation plan is all designed for continuous improvement to allow for further development. p. 17

3) Resources and expertise for this project are diverse and range from proven leadership models for urban, suburban and rural schools; innovative use of technology; peer consultation for teacher effectiveness and engaging students in inquiry based learning; and outside expertise for content and pedagogy. p. 18

4)Cost per student is initially \$800 for \$1500 students. As the project expands the costs will be reduced to \$100 per student. Much of the cost is professional development.

5)The network of schools in this application and the partnership organizations are experienced in replication successful programs and widely disseminating information and findings. p. 18

**Weaknesses**

1)through 5) No weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 5**

**4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)**

**In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that it has the resources, as well as the support from stakeholders (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions) to operate the project beyond the length of the Development grant.**

**(2) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the eligible applicant and any other partners at the end of the Development grant.**

**Strengths**

1) The applicant explains a wide range of resources and the intentional design for sustainability and continuous improvement. Stakeholder support is evident through other project successes, involvement of stakeholders and in letters of support. p. 18 and appendix.  
2) The project purposes, activities, and benefits are designed and implemented to become an ongoing and expanding part of education in the participating schools. p. 18

**Weaknesses**

1) and 2) No weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 10**

**5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)**

**In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

**(1) 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.**

**(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and**

**scope of the proposed project.**

**Strengths**

- 1) The management plan is detailed and describes a thoughtful and deliberate approach to planning and implementing project components in each school . Responsibilities are described for each milestone and key activities. Timeline is described by academic year and summer activities. p. 21
  - 2) Qualifications and experience of the project director and key personnel are described with reference to their responsibilities. Qualifications are well suited to the project roles as stated. p. 21
- Resumes are provided and are appropriate for the responsibilities.

**Weaknesses**

- 1) No weaknesses.
- 2) No weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Competitive Preference**

**1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)**

**We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs. To meet this priority, applications must focus on:**

- (a) improving young children's school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive readiness) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects (as defined in section 9101(11) of the ESEA);**
- (b) improving developmental milestones and standards and aligning them with appropriate outcome measures; and**
- (c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade.**

**Strengths**

Not applicable.

**Weaknesses**

Not applicable

**Reader's Score: 0**

**2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to enable kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students, particularly high school students, to successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two- or four-year college. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that

- (a) address students' preparedness and expectations related to college;
- (b) help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and
- (c) provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.

**Strengths**

This project is innovative and includes collaborative, inquiry based strategies to improve academic achievement for all students and increase graduation rates and access to college.

**Weaknesses**

No weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 1**

**3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, including those who are assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students. To meet this priority, applications must provide for the implementation of particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes, close achievement gaps, and increase college- and career-readiness, including increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

**Strengths**

The personalized learning experiences included in this program are designed to reach students at all levels and all circumstances. Serving students with

disabilities, language learners or other difficulties is specifically addressed by the applicant.

**Weaknesses**

No weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 1**

**4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA (as defined in this notice) and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and principal effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

**Strengths**

This program includes several school districts that work collaboratively and with outside experts for content and pedagogy. Several rural schools are included and program components will specifically address the needs of these school populations.

**Weaknesses**

No weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 2**

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 06/23/2010 6:37 PM

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/24/2010 3:29 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396C100242)

**Reader #3:**

	<b>POINTS POSSIBLE</b>	<b>POINTS SCORED</b>
<b>Summary Statement</b>		
1. Summary Statement	N/A	N/A
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)	25	20
2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)	25	25
3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)	5	5
4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)	10	10
5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)	10	10
<b>Competitive Preference</b>		
1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)	2	0

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## Technical Review Form

**Development 43: 84.396C**

**Reader #3:**

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396C100242)

### Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement

#### Selection Criteria

##### 1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)

**In determining the need for the project and quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).**

**(2) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project clearly specified and measurable and linked to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet.**

#### Strengths

Project describes an exceptional approach - design of authentic learning tasks and common rubrics across a four-state region, with uncommon assessment tasks allowing for personalized learning.

Also unique and important is the cross state collaboration and focus on statewide standards, with the attention paid to moderation studies.

Built upon results from NY Performance Standards Consortium - evidence-based programming.

Common rubrics for authentic learning tasks are an important way to maintain nationally (or regionally) consistent high standards; the authentic learning tasks should make the learning more relevant, engaging, and deeper for students.

Supportive, collaborative professional development is important and often unavailable in rural schools; this project addresses that need.

Goals are explicit, driven by strong hypothesis. "Decrease # of dropouts, increase # of graduates." Four strategies clearly identified towards achievement of these goals, with a timeline for achievement of objectives.

Attention paid to changing school culture, very important and often overlooked consideration.

Needs assessment was conducted on network teachers and students, and results suggest a value they attribute to the implementation of this project.

### **Weaknesses**

lack of information/specificity about scope/focus of intended curriculum revisions and lack of implementation strategies.  
Which disciplines are involved? How will students interact with the revised curriculum?

**Reader's Score: 20**

## **2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)**

**In determining the experience of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The past performance of the eligible applicant in implementing projects of the size and scope proposed by the eligible applicant.**

**(2) The extent to which an eligible applicant provides information and data demonstrating that -**

**(a) In the case of an eligible applicant that is an LEA, the LEA has -**

**(i) Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA, or significantly increased student achievement for**

all groups of students described in such section; and

(ii) Made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and principals, as demonstrated with meaningful data; or

(b) In the case of an eligible applicant that includes a nonprofit organization, the nonprofit organization has significantly improved student achievement, attainment, or retention through its record of work with an LEA or schools.

**Strengths**

Applicant in second yr of successfully implementing USDOE \$2.5 million grant for high school transformation. First year evaluations show increased achievement in students' MCAS scores, increased # of students from technical high schools entering postsecondary education, reduction in achievement gaps between groups of students.

Plymouth South HS recognized as one of 11 MA high schools reducing drop out rate in 2009.

**Weaknesses**

Reader's Score: 25

**3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)**

In determining the quality of the strategy and capacity to further develop and bring to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) The number of students proposed to be reached by the proposed project, and the capacity of the eligible applicant and any other partners to reach the proposed number of students during the course of the grant period.

(2) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or to work with others (including other partners) to ensure that the proposed practice, strategy, or program can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.

(3) The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations. Evidence of this ability includes the availability of resources and expertise required for implementing the project with fidelity, and the proposed project's evidence of relative ease of use or user satisfaction.

**(4) The eligible applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes the start-up and operating costs per student per year (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project. The eligible applicant must include an estimate of the costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students.**

**(5) The mechanisms the eligible applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

**Strengths**

11,000 students will participate in minimum two inquiry-based projects over 5 years.

Participating schools within network are part of larger systems (state, etc.) that can be used for wider dissemination and replication.

Cost per student drops to \$100 by year 5

Project Evaluation team from national ed research organizations, further dissemination possible in this way.

**Weaknesses**

**Reader's Score: 5**

**4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)**

**In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that it has the resources, as well as the support from stakeholders (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions) to operate the project beyond the length of the Development grant.**

**(2) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the eligible applicant and any other partners at the end of the Development grant.**

**Strengths**

Cost per student drops to \$100 by year 5

Proposal focuses on changing school cultures, making it more likely that change will continue beyond grant funding.

Project Steering Committee will be comprised of wide range of stakeholders, including NEASC, State DOE reps, local school and community reps, Congressional and union reps.

**Weaknesses**

**Reader's Score: 10**

**5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)**

**In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

**(1) 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.**

**(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.**

**Strengths**

Plymouth Supt. Of Schools will serve as Project Director.  
Objectives, timeline and milestones clearly defined.

**Weaknesses**

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Competitive Preference**

**1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)**

**We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve**

educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs. To meet this priority, applications must focus on:

- (a) improving young children's school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive readiness) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects (as defined in section 9101(11) of the ESEA);
- (b) improving developmental milestones and standards and aligning them with appropriate outcome measures; and
- (c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade.

**Strengths**

**Weaknesses**

Not addressed.

**Reader's Score: 0**

## **2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to enable kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students, particularly high school students, to successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two- or four-year college. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that

- (a) address students' preparedness and expectations related to college;
- (b) help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and
- (c) provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.

**Strengths**

Increasing student engagement and relevancy of assessment tasks in high school better prepares students for college. One must complete high school before one can enter college.

**Weaknesses**

**Reader's Score: 1**

**3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, including those who are assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students. To meet this priority, applications must provide for the implementation of particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes, close achievement gaps, and increase college- and career-readiness, including increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

**Strengths**

**Weaknesses**

Not addressed.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA (as defined in this notice) and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and principal effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

**Strengths**

**Weaknesses**

Not addressed.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 06/24/2010 3:29 PM

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Status: Submitted  
Last Updated: 07/24/2010 3:38 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396D100242)

**Reader #1:**

	<b>POINTS POSSIBLE</b>	<b>POINTS SCORED</b>
<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>		
1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)	10	6
2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)	15	8
<i>SUB TOTAL</i>	25	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	25	14

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## Technical Review Form

**Development Tier 2 Panel 07: 84.396D**

**Reader #1:**

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396D100242)

### 1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)

The Secretary considers the strength of the existing research evidence, including reported practice, theoretical considerations, and the significance and magnitude of any effects reported in prior research, on whether the proposed project will improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout

**rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. Eligible applicants may also demonstrate success through an intermediate variable that is strongly correlated with improving these outcomes, such as teacher or principal effectiveness.**

**In determining the strength of the existing research evidence, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that there are research-based findings or reasonable hypotheses that support the proposed project, including related research in education and other sectors.**

**(2) The extent to which the proposed project has been attempted previously, albeit on a limited scale or in a limited setting, with promising results that suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted.**

**(3) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that, if funded, the proposed project likely will have a positive impact, as measured by the importance or magnitude of the effect, on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates.**

#### **Strengths**

The New England project is based on the New York Performance Standards Consortium and its success on dropout and graduation rates and on student success after high school. The cited research supports the use of performance assessments and inquiry-based learning compared to traditional assessments and instructional delivery.

Evaluations specifically on the New York Consortium high schools post higher graduation rates, higher daily attendance, and more students headed for college. On the other hand, students served by the Consortium tend to be lower performing students of color from lower socio-economic status. A graph of all NYC school ratings compared to Consortium ratings on student progress and achievement shows higher progress ratings for the Consortium schools.

A longitudinal study that began in 2001 follows the path of Consortium students into college. Preliminary results of the study show greater percentages of students who persist in attending 2- and 4-year colleges compared to national rates.

#### **Weaknesses**

The research findings on inquiry-based learning have several qualifications

that could dilute the possible impact of the program in broader-based replications. The type of student who is successful in this type of program may need to be capable of understanding "highly specified"(p.8) content such as genetics or macroeconomics. Typically, struggling students are more inclined to register for basic level courses.

In general, the results of the research are presented out of context. It is difficult to understand the significance of the data without a comparable control group. For example, "59% of those attending two-year institutions re-enrolled for a second year"(p10). Fifty-nine percent could be a good or bad number depending on the goal. In some cases the Consortium-related research numbers are compared to a national or state rate. Comparisons that show the impact of the program need to be based on groups of matched students taking a broad range of classes.

**Reader's Score: 6**

## **2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)**

**In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors.**

**(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the size and scope of the proposed project.**

**(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

**(3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings.**

**(4) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.**

### **Strengths**

The process measures are fully adequate (observations, meeting notes, interviews, etc) and should be sufficient for documenting the implementation of the program. The Performance Assessment Review Board will serve to validate the school activities and the school process providing a quality assurance team of experts with different perspectives (education and business) on the successful implementation of the program. The PAR will spend time in the field with students and teachers to gain a first-hand look at the program in action. The Project Steering Committee will serve to monitor time, budget and progress toward goals. The combination of these two

boards watching the quality and the quantity of the program will provide an important oversight role to keep the project moving along and in tack. Evaluation reports will be due three times per year. The final, yearly report will synthesize the year's findings for both process and outcome objectives. The evaluation design includes a wide range of variables (attendance, classroom observations, surveys, interviews) to measure the implementation process. The variety of measures from different sources will serve to improve the overall interpretation of the results. The outcome measures are on graduation rates and postsecondary enrollment. These data, operationally defined, will provide credible information about the critical impact of the program on student achievement.

### **Weaknesses**

The evaluation methods focus heavily on program implementation. Since the New York Consortium alone has 24 participating schools, the focus in the New England design could better support the program's potential by further emphasizing measures of student achievement.

Both curriculum and performance assessments will be developed for use by teachers and students. There is no explanation of why assessments from other Consortium participants couldn't be used in this effort. Also, there is a process research question that specifically asks the extent to which the Performance Assessment Review Board functions effectively. There is no comparable question that relates to the validity of the performance assessments themselves. The rubrics for scoring the performance assessments will be written by teachers and students in the Summer Institute. No methods to validate the newly written performance assessments are mentioned.

The evaluator will wait until Year 5 to write an overall summary of the data collected, including achievement success and fidelity of implementation. The proposal is unclear about the extent to which each year's report will be comprehensive.

The outcome measures specify a 4% or 10% annual increase. There is no available rationale or documentation that supports the selected rate of change.

The evaluation will be conducted by a four person team under the direction of an identified member of the UCLA SMP staff. The qualifications of the 4-person team are not included in the proposal. The experience of the senior evaluator is more heavily focused on descriptive studies. The analysis of student achievement may require a more robust statistical approach.

The evaluation budget of \$120,000 per year may not be sufficient for a four person team to collect and synthesize the heavy volume of process data.

**Reader's Score: 8**

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 07/24/2010 3:38 PM

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Status: Submitted  
Last Updated: 07/23/2010 9:40 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396D100242)

**Reader #2:**

	<b>POINTS POSSIBLE</b>	<b>POINTS SCORED</b>
<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>		
1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)	10	7
2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)	15	10
<i><b>SUB TOTAL</b></i>	25	17
<b>TOTAL</b>	25	17

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## Technical Review Form

**Development Tier 2 Panel 07: 84.396D**

**Reader #2:**

**Applicant:** Plymouth Public Schools -- , - , (U396D100242)

### 1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)

The Secretary considers the strength of the existing research evidence, including reported practice, theoretical considerations, and the significance and magnitude of any effects reported in prior research, on whether the proposed project will improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout

**rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. Eligible applicants may also demonstrate success through an intermediate variable that is strongly correlated with improving these outcomes, such as teacher or principal effectiveness.**

**In determining the strength of the existing research evidence, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that there are research-based findings or reasonable hypotheses that support the proposed project, including related research in education and other sectors.**

**(2) The extent to which the proposed project has been attempted previously, albeit on a limited scale or in a limited setting, with promising results that suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted.**

**(3) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that, if funded, the proposed project likely will have a positive impact, as measured by the importance or magnitude of the effect, on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates.**

#### **Strengths**

**STRENGTHS:** The proposed project responds to Absolute Priority 3 and includes professional development for teachers to increase inquiry-based curriculum to create authentic tasks and common rubrics to measure uncommon assessment tasks to impact student outcomes. The hypothesis stated builds on the previous successful results of the New York Performance Standards Consortium research. The proposal includes research results on inquiry-based curriculum and cites positive outcomes in use for macroeconomics, genetics and science that improve student outcomes, including lower dropout rate, higher college-bound rate and higher daily attendance (p.9). A longitudinal study is cited that demonstrates student persistence in higher education (p.10). The results of the research indicate that more formal and systematic study is warranted that would test the model to determine further effectiveness. The operational definitions in the footnotes are helpful in providing meaning of the statistics presented.

#### **Weaknesses**

**WEAKNESSES:** It is not clear that the research findings cited on pages 9 & 10 are statistically significant although a comparison with national rates for student enrollment and completion are presented. More discussion is needed on how the lessons learned from the previous research will be applied to the proposed project. For example, the specific factors that contributed to the

success of the New York Performance Standards Consortium research that will be replicated in the proposed model to increase the likelihood of success should be discussed. Also, more discussion on the transferability of the findings from the research on macroeconomics, genetics and science to the proposed project's curriculum content needs to be included to make a direct link with the potential for success of the proposed project.

**Reader's Score: 7**

## **2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)**

**In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors.**

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the size and scope of the proposed project.**
- (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**
- (3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings.**
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.**

### **Strengths**

**STRENGTHS:** The evaluation plan proposes a five year longitudinal study to determine project impact (p.13). The evaluation will employ a mixed methods approach gathering both qualitative and quantitative data which should provide sufficient information for documenting the key project elements to determine project fidelity and impact. A sample of the evaluation process measures are listed on page 14 along with the evaluation questions and appear to align with the project hypothesis and objectives. Sample outcome measures are also included along with the data collection methods for each outcome measure to document project effectiveness through standardized instruments. The evaluation will be supported by a team of four evaluators from the UCLA School Management Program and the results will be examined by the Project Steering Committee comprised of external experts who have the leverage to ensure recommendations are used by the project implementers. The lead evaluator has significant experience in multi-site, multi-state education evaluation. She also has extended experience working in schools and with the current project team. The budget

for the evaluation appears to be adequate and aligns with the scope of work.

### **Weaknesses**

**WEAKNESSES:** The logic model in Appendix H is difficult to read and is missing the assumptions, resources and short-term outcomes of the project. It is unclear if the design is a one group pre/post test design or will have a comparison group. Further discussion of the specific research design to ensure validity of findings would improve the proposal. Likewise, more discussion on the instrumentation to be used including validity and reliability would help illuminate the appropriateness of the instrumentation with the outcomes. Although the fidelity of the project is discussed and there is information on collecting process data including various surveys, document reviews and observations, it is not clear how the key elements of the approach will be captured and documented to facilitate further development and replication. The outcome evaluation plan in Appendix H would be improved if the time points for data collection and the analysis methods were included in it.

**Reader's Score: 10**

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**Status:** Submitted

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