

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

# Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - 84.411B Panel - 12: 84.411B

Reader #4: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools Project (U411B110024)

## Questions

### Summary Statement - Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the project. In determining the need for the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(3) The importance and magnitude of the effect expected to be obtained by the proposed project, including the extent to which the project will substantially and measurably improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. The evidence in support of the importance and magnitude of the effect would be the research-based evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project.

**Note Linking Magnitude of Effect to Presented Evidence:** The Secretary notes that the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with the research evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project is relevant to addressing the third factor of Selection Criterion A and, therefore, will be considered by the Secretary in evaluating the importance and/or magnitude of the impact expected to be obtained by the proposed project.

**Strengths:**

n/a - scored by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

Reader's Score: 0

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are  
(a) Aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and  
(b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

(3) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.

(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.

Note: The Secretary considers cost estimates both

(a) To assess the reasonableness of the costs relative to the objectives, design, and potential significance for the total number of students to be served by the proposed project, which is determined by the eligible applicant, and  
(b) To understand the possible costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach the scaling targets of 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students for Validation grants. An eligible applicant is free to propose how many students it will serve under its project, and is expected to reach that number of students by the end of the grant period. The scaling targets, in contrast, are theoretical and allow peer reviewers to assess the cost-effectiveness generally of proposed projects, particularly in cases where initial investment may be required to support projects that operate at reduced cost in the future, whether implemented by the eligible applicant or any other entity. Grantees are not required to reach these numbers during the grant period.

(5) 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 Validation grant.

**Strengths:**

n/a - scored by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

Reader's Score: 0

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

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the project evaluation. In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will include a well designed experimental study or a well designed quasi-experimental study.

(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 so as to facilitate 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.

**Note: We encourage eligible applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation: (1) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook and (2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers.**

**Strengths:**

This is a multi-faceted, well thought out design that uses both an experimental component and a quasi experimental component. At the school level, a staggered entry experimental design will be used wherein 6 of 18 schools are randomly selected to participate in the initial treatment group. In subsequent years, other of the remaining 12 schools will be randomly selected and added in years 2 and again in year 3. This procedure assures that all schools eventually receive treatment while allowing them to serve as control schools for a portion of the time. This is a proven way of gaining support from schools to participate in control groups. A companion quasi experimental study will look at 18 comparison schools (p22). Schools will be matched on outcomes of interest such as algebra II enrollments and then on characteristics such as school size and poverty (p28). The use of outcomes of interest as a first level sort is an excellent refinement to school matching.

The impact evaluation will examine specific outcomes. This will be done by looking at several important aspects such as course enrollment data and course completion data (p44). Focusing on completion data as well as enrollment data will provide useful information.

Data analysis will be students nested in schools with grade 8 level covariates included (p24). The inclusion of grade 8 covariates will increase the strength of the resulting analysis.

The project will serve over 21,400 students (p20) over 5 years (p34). 1000 teaching staff from treatment and comparison schools will be surveyed. A subset will be interviewed. 70 students will be interviewed. Deidentified student data from 36 schools (18 treatment, 18 comparison) will be collected (p17). Informed consent is to be obtained. The sample size is sufficient for the purposes of the study.

The budget of \$1,320,172 for 5 years (p202 and 51) represent 8.8% of the total budget. This amount appears conservative but manageable in light of the extensive evaluation planned. If classroom observations are added, an increase might be needed.

SERVECenter, the University of North Carolina is to serve as the project evaluator. Resumes for 2 SERVECenter staff are included and these individuals are experienced and qualified.

The projects influence on state policy will be reviewed through project staff interviews and a review of state board minutes (p48). This is a worthy attempt to assess something which is probably affected by a plethora of influences other than the project.

Program implementation will be assessed through staff surveys, a review of records and interviews (pp47-48). Case studies will also be conducted. This rich array of thoughtful procedures will inform not only the project but those wishing to replicate the project in the future.

**Weaknesses:**

College enrollments will be tracked through data from the state's community college system (p49). It is unclear how students who might enroll in 4 year institutions, out of state colleges and career schools will be tracked. Additional follow-up methods would enhance the study.

A basic logic model is presented on page 42. The logic model would be improved with the addition of the inputs needed to implement the strategies.

The NCNSP Common Instructional Framework emphasizes that "every student reads, writes, thinks, and talks in every classroom every day" (p192). Program implementation will be assessed through surveys, a review of documents, interviews with staff and students, and case studies (p48). These techniques will assist in gathering overall perceptions of the program. The evaluation would benefit from the addition of classroom observations made by trained observers using rubrics to ascertain if this lofty goal is being attained.

The design would benefit from a clear statement of procedures to be used in selecting teachers for surveys (even if it is all teachers), and how students will be selected to participate in interviews.

Reader's Score: 22

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

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

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

(3) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a State or regional level (as appropriate, based on the results of the proposed project) working directly, or through other partners, either during or following the end of the grant period.

#### Strengths:

n/a - scored by another reviewer

#### Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 0

#### Priority Questions

##### Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6

1. Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (zero or one 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:**

**Reader's Score:**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Innovations that Support College Access and Success (zero or one 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:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 8**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (zero or one 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:**

**Reader's Score:**

## Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 9

### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 9 - Improving Productivity (zero or one point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in this notice), or other strategies.

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

## Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 10

### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 10 - Technology (zero or one point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 9/14/11 12:00 AM

# Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - 84.411B Panel - 12: 84.411B

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

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools Project (U411B110024)

## Questions

### Summary Statement - Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the project. In determining the need for the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(3) The importance and magnitude of the effect expected to be obtained by the proposed project, including the extent to which the project will substantially and measurably improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. The evidence in support of the importance and magnitude of the effect would be the research-based evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project.

**Note Linking Magnitude of Effect to Presented Evidence:** The Secretary notes that the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with the research evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project is relevant to addressing the third factor of Selection Criterion A and, therefore, will be considered by the Secretary in evaluating the importance and/or magnitude of the impact expected to be obtained by the proposed project.

#### Strengths:

1. This applicant makes a compelling case for the magnitude of the need of the project. The project proposes to extend early college strategies to 18 traditional, comprehensive high schools in eight partner LEAs currently serving more than 12,200 students in eight rural low-income districts (p. 12). These include some of the poorest and most rural districts in North Carolina. Many of these schools lack the staff to offer a range of honor or advanced classes either face to face or on-line. (p. 5) At-risk students have few avenues or expectations for attending postsecondary institutions.

2. The project offers an innovative approach to improving achievement and high school graduation rates while ensuring that rural students in some of the poorest districts in the target state have access to, and take advantage of, early college enrollment while still in high school.

The project intends to implement Early College High Schools (ECHS) into traditional high schools that have many at-risk students. In addition to the ECHS concept, the project proposes to support the initiative with their own Integrated Design Principles through a System of School support Services, strategies that are

particularly designed for students at-risk, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Particularly noteworthy is the avenue for the targeted student population to obtain up to 21 college course credits (p. 2), and if enrolled for a fifth year in the program, to obtain an Associate Degree (p. 8). In addition, the project proposes that the target state will enact legislation and policy changes to expand access to college courses for high school students (p. 13), a potentially far-reaching change effect.

3. The research that has been undertaken so far of this design model is impressive; even though the study is not yet complete (students have not completed high school and college enrollment). If the data trends continue, the potential impact on high school graduation rates could be an increase of at least 10 percentage points (pp. 11-12) and significant increase college entrance rates (through dual enrollment).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are**  
**(a) Aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and**  
**(b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.**

**(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

**(3) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.**

**(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.**

**Note: The Secretary considers cost estimates both**

**(a) To assess the reasonableness of the costs relative to the objectives, design, and potential significance for the total number of students to be served by the proposed project, which is determined by the eligible applicant, and**  
**(b) To understand the possible costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach the scaling targets of 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students for Validation grants. An eligible applicant is free to propose how many students it will serve under its project, and is expected to reach that number of students by the end of the grant period. The scaling targets, in contrast, are theoretical and allow peer reviewers to assess the cost-effectiveness generally of proposed projects, particularly in cases where initial investment may be required to support projects that operate at reduced cost in the future, whether implemented by the eligible applicant or any other entity. Grantees are not required to reach these numbers during the grant period.**

**(5) 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 Validation grant.**

**Strengths:**

1. The project design includes goals and specific strategies aligned to project priorities. The strategies lead to both intermediate and long term outcomes. Understanding of the design is enhanced through the use of a logic model (p. 21 - evaluation section).

2. The cost per student is estimated at \$715, 18.3% of which is for college tuition and textbooks. The project will serve 21,000 students who will have access and be enrolled in college coursework at the time of graduation (p. 19). In addition, high school graduation rates are estimated to increase by 10% (p. 18). In terms of the objectives, design, and potential significance of student and community-wide benefit, these costs are reasonable.

3. The applicant demonstrates a wealth current and up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice using the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide (pp. 18, 81-83) and other sources including studies related to this project (pp. 85-135).

4. The applicant provided adequate projections of the total cost of this project is \$15 million for 21,000 students at approximately \$715 per student with approximately one fifth (18.3%) of the budget is allocated for college tuition and textbooks. The applicant estimates that extending the project another 100,000 students will cost \$71,500,000. The cost of reaching 250,000 students is considered to be \$178,750,000 and 500,000 students is \$357,500,000. (p. 19).

5. The applicant notes a history of working with school districts to implement the ECHS since 2002 and indicates that partners have demonstrated their willingness to sustain the projects objectives after the grant ends (p. 19).

#### **Weaknesses:**

Although the costs are reasonable in relation to the potential outcomes, information is needed concerning cost per student per year for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project. The rationale for the contract fees for leadership coaches for retired master superintendents and principals (p. 46) should be explained or considered for reviewed for alignment with service contract remunerations for similar personnel/duties from other states/entities.

**Reader's Score: 21**

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

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the project evaluation. In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will include a well designed experimental study or a well designed quasi-experimental study.**

**(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 so as to facilitate 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.**

**Note: We encourage eligible applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation: (1) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook and (2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers.**

#### **Strengths:**

n/a -scored by another reviewer

#### **Weaknesses:**

Reader's Score: 0

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

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

(3) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a State or regional level (as appropriate, based on the results of the proposed project) working directly, or through other partners, either during or following the end of the grant period.

#### Strengths:

1. Detailed tasks/milestones were listed along with persons responsible and time periods for the first year (p. 32).
2. All currently assigned personnel are well qualified and experienced in managing complex projects with impressive credentials and resumes. The project director remains to be hired (pp. 30-31).
3. The applicant is well qualified and experienced in the area of introducing, implementing, and supporting innovative strategies and programs such as ECHS.

#### Weaknesses:

1. Sufficient information on the management plan for Year 2 and subsequent years should be provided. Although a similar pattern of management is proposed for Years 2 and 3, data is needed for Years 4 and 5, particularly as related to sustainability and scalability of the project.
2. A definitive job description is needed to gauge the appropriate qualifications and education requirements for the project director.
3. Although the applicant is experienced in implementing innovative program such as those proposed in this project, specificity concerning funding sources and management plans/tasks related to scaling up is needed.

Reader's Score: 18

### Priority Questions

#### Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6

1. Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (zero or one 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 scored.

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7**

##### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Innovations that Support College Access and Success (zero or one 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 project's innovative Design Principles and use of the ECHS concept provide the framework needed for students to access and succeed in college. Providing access to college coursework while in high school eases pending transitions and provides the support network many students will need to be successful. The ECHS is designed to address student's preparedness and expectations for college. The program includes avenues for addressing with students and parents the issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application process. Of particular note is the support to students from peers and adults through wraparound services, including academic support and advising (pp. 2-3).

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:** 1

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 8**

##### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (zero or one 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:**

A significant strength to the program involves the strategies that will be employed for students with disabilities and students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). These strategies will be applied through instructional coaching that helps teachers implement a common instructional framework, using approaches that are proven to work with these populations of students. In addition, tutoring, pre-readiness instruction for college courses and immersion in a college-going atmosphere provide supports that encourage students to seek further college experiences (p.3).

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:** 1

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 9**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 9 - Improving Productivity (zero or one point)**

**We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in this notice), or other strategies.**

**Strengths:**

Not scored.

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 10**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 10 - Technology (zero or one point)**

**We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.**

**Strengths:**

Not scored.

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 9/19/11 12:00 AM

# Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - 84.411B Panel - 12: 84.411B

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

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools Project (U411B110024)

## Questions

### Summary Statement - Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the project. In determining the need for the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(3) The importance and magnitude of the effect expected to be obtained by the proposed project, including the extent to which the project will substantially and measurably improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. The evidence in support of the importance and magnitude of the effect would be the research-based evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project.

**Note Linking Magnitude of Effect to Presented Evidence:** The Secretary notes that the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with the research evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project is relevant to addressing the third factor of Selection Criterion A and, therefore, will be considered by the Secretary in evaluating the importance and/or magnitude of the impact expected to be obtained by the proposed project.

#### Strengths:

The applicant has proposed that eight rural LEAs in North Carolina are in need of the ECHS Early College High School strategies and the NCNSP Design Principles. It was noted that the schools often lack the staff to offer a range of honors and advanced classes. Whereas this proposed program could assist with that need. The proposed project will assist with the expenses for high school students to take college courses which would reflect the identified need of 42.6% to 76.2% of targeted students who qualify for free and reduced lunches (page 5).

The applicant intends to address Absolute Priority 5. It will provide accelerated learning opportunities by providing college level classes to high schools, and allowing them to earn two years of college credits while still in high school. The eight targeted rural LEAs will benefit by the use of online courses for students, teachers and administrators. This will allow youth and adults opportunities to participate in college level classes and professional development opportunities. The applicant also intends to address Absolute Priority 3. In particular it effectively demonstrates that it has the potential to increase the success of under-represented student populations in academically rigorous courses. The existing ECHS programs have targeted students

traditionally underrepresented in colleges (minority, economically disadvantaged, or first generation in family to attend college). These programs have demonstrated lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, higher enrollment and achievement in rigorous college preparatory courses (page 8). There is another example of how the proposal thoroughly addresses Priority three. The program will require participating schools to align their class activities to high standards. Those standards are state standards and alignment to post secondary courses. (page 2)

The project has the potential to improve student achievement by making numerous college level courses available to high school students. By providing a fifth year of enrollment and college dual credit enrollment opportunities, the students are able to complete an Associate's Degree while still in high school. The applicant provided adequate research citations to verify that the early college program participants took courses they needed to be ready for college. Therefore the program is likely to positively influence college enrollment. Also more students remained enrolled in school as compared to students in a traditional high school. This verified the potential to increase high school graduation rates (page 12).

Research citations referenced factors relating to school engagement that were positively impacted by early colleges. Students in early colleges demonstrated higher attendance and lower suspensions (page 130). North Carolina's Early College High Schools demonstrated little or no gap separating the performance of non-minority youth from underrepresented minorities in core 9th grade subjects (page 74). This evidence supports the project's intent to close achievement gaps.

#### **Weaknesses:**

The comparison of the state average of 5% of students taking college prep courses with the target schools' rate of 0-5% did not seem to be statistically significant. The target populations' statistics did not indicate a substantial need for the project (page 5). The applicant did not compare the algebra I end-of-course exam results (average of 70%) to any regional or state data. Therefore the magnitude of need was not clearly defined. (page 5)

**Reader's Score: 23**

#### **Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

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**(a) Aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and**  
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**(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.**

**Note: The Secretary considers cost estimates both**

**(a) To assess the reasonableness of the costs relative to the objectives, design, and potential significance for the total number of students to be served by the proposed project, which is determined by the eligible applicant, and**  
**(b) To understand the possible costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach the scaling targets of 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students for Validation grants. An eligible applicant is free to propose how many students it will serve under its project, and is expected to reach that number of students by the end of the grant period. The scaling targets, in contrast, are theoretical and allow peer reviewers to assess the cost-effectiveness generally of proposed projects, particularly in**

cases where initial investment may be required to support projects that operate at reduced cost in the future, whether implemented by the eligible applicant or any other entity. Grantees are not required to reach these numbers during the grant period.

**(5) 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 Validation grant.**

**Strengths:**

The proposed goal of improving student outcomes will be adequately achieved by implementing Early College High School strategies and the NCNSP Design Principles into 18 schools in 8 LEAs. This goal will serve 12,200 students (page 14). Another strategy to address improved student outcomes includes the IS4 professional development and management support. This is likely to influence the goal outcomes because staff needs to be instructed in the details and philosophy of the program (page 14). The third strategy to address improved student outcomes is to enhance partnerships at the district level to assist students with college information. Partnerships strengthen the applicant's support for the program goals (page 15). The expansion of online college course taking is a strength related to improved student outcomes, as the current online programming has a 98% pass rate (page 15). The second goal of building capacity to sustain and grow will be adequately initiated by the use of the Design Principles Rubric for assessment along with restructuring activities. The inclusion of professional development opportunities will increase the likelihood of the goal to be achieved (page 16). The third goal of creating large-scale expansion will be adequately addressed with the strategies of documenting and disseminating program information to local, statewide and national organizations (page 17).

The applicant intends to provide services to high-need students. By financially providing for the cost of the tuition and books for participating students, it will definitely affect the participation of the students in a positive manner. The proposed project intends to increase graduation rates by 100% at each school which creates a significant impact. (page 18)

The proposed project references suggestions from the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide addressing college access and dropout prevention. The project intends to have similar philosophies as those identified in the WWC Practice Guide, therefore linking the proposed project to effective practices. The research citations on the Early College High Schools approach indicates that student absences are reduced, as well as dropout rates (page 93). Students of ECHS programs are also more engaged in their schools (page 130).

The applicant provided sufficient information regarding the startup and operating cost per student per year. The costs were defined for each of the individual targeted school districts (pages 36-68). The cost of the program per student will be \$715. This appears to be adequate given that the students' tuition and textbooks will be covered financially. The estimated costs for 100,000; 250,000; and 500,000 students appear appropriate (page 19).

The applicant has a history of creating and sustaining innovative alternative high school programs, therefore it has the likely potential to continue to manage the proposed project (page 19).

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal stated that each partner district committed to implementing and sustaining the ECHSs (page 19) however the letters of commitment in the appendix did not include any language about sustaining the program. Sufficient information regarding how the partners will continue the project after the funding has ceased was not discussed in the narrative. Once the program is over it is not clear how tuition and textbooks will be paid for, or how professional development opportunities will continue (page 19) and be paid for.

The proposal narrative did not provide justification for the wages of the Leadership Coaches to be \$1500 per day. This is a large sum of money for one day's worth of work, and further explanation of why the salary is so large would assist in the determination of whether the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and significance of their impact on the project.

**Reader's Score: 19**

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

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the project evaluation. In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will include a well designed experimental study or a well designed quasi-experimental study.

(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 so as to facilitate 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.

**Note: We encourage eligible applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation: (1) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook and (2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers.**

**Strengths:**

not scored

**Weaknesses:**

not scored

**Reader's Score: 0**

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

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

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

(3) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a State or regional level (as appropriate, based on the results of the proposed project) working directly, or through other partners, either during or following the end of the grant period.

**Strengths:**

The chart on page 32 sufficiently identifies who will be responsible for each of the tasks as well as when the tasks will occur. The time allotments of each of the key personnel are appropriate for their responsibilities. The Project Director warrants full time status as that person will oversee all of the day-to-day operations of the project.

The proposal provided a thorough description of qualifications for each of the key personnel including the co-leaders who have experience managing school systems and organizations. The Instructional Coach has experience as a classroom teacher and hold academic credentials that will support her responsibilities. The project director to be hired will have experience working with high need school districts, be a leader in school reform, and have administrative experience. These appear to be appropriate requirements for the job (page 34).

The NCNSP has the capacity to bring the proposed project to scale. Their experience demonstrates their capability to expand their program because they have created more than 100 innovative high schools across North Carolina since 2003. (page 35)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant noted that it had close ties with similar programs in other states and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (page 35), however it did not specifically clarify how those relationships will bring the project to scale.

The proposal did not include any management plan information for years 4 and 5 of the grant program. This is significant, given that activities pertaining to the sustainability of the project would be an important part of the project.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Priority Questions****Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6****1. Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (zero or one 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:**

**Reader's Score:**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7****1. Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Innovations that Support College Access and Success (zero or one 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 program will allow students to prepare for and complete classes that can be a college associate's degree. Volunteers will assist students and parents in college preparedness and application processes. Also the program will provide funding to make the college classes more affordable. (page 3)

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Reader's Score: 1**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 8**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (zero or one 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 applicant stated it would include Design Principles and ECHS strategies that will increase academic outcomes and college readiness of students with disabilities and Limited English Proficient students. A research citation was made to verify that the ECHS Model is beneficial for students from homes where a language other than English dominates. Also the targeted schools will have more than 500 LEP students.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Reader's Score: 1**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 9**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 9 - Improving Productivity (zero or one point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in this notice), or other strategies.

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 10**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 10 - Technology (zero or one point)**

**We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.**

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 9/16/11 12:00 AM

# Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - 84.411B Panel - 12: 84.411B

Reader #5: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools Project (U411B110024)

## Questions

### Summary Statement - Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the project. In determining the need for the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(3) The importance and magnitude of the effect expected to be obtained by the proposed project, including the extent to which the project will substantially and measurably improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. The evidence in support of the importance and magnitude of the effect would be the research-based evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project.

**Note Linking Magnitude of Effect to Presented Evidence:** The Secretary notes that the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with the research evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project is relevant to addressing the third factor of Selection Criterion A and, therefore, will be considered by the Secretary in evaluating the importance and/or magnitude of the impact expected to be obtained by the proposed project.

**Strengths:**

N/A- Reviewed by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

N/A- Reviewed by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are  
(a) Aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and  
(b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

(3) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.

(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.

Note: The Secretary considers cost estimates both

(a) To assess the reasonableness of the costs relative to the objectives, design, and potential significance for the total number of students to be served by the proposed project, which is determined by the eligible applicant, and  
(b) To understand the possible costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach the scaling targets of 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students for Validation grants. An eligible applicant is free to propose how many students it will serve under its project, and is expected to reach that number of students by the end of the grant period. The scaling targets, in contrast, are theoretical and allow peer reviewers to assess the cost-effectiveness generally of proposed projects, particularly in cases where initial investment may be required to support projects that operate at reduced cost in the future, whether implemented by the eligible applicant or any other entity. Grantees are not required to reach these numbers during the grant period.

(5) 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 Validation grant.

**Strengths:**

N/A- Reviewed by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

N/A- Reviewed by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

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

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the project evaluation. In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will include a well designed experimental study or a well designed quasi-experimental study.

(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 so as to facilitate 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.

**Note: We encourage eligible applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation: (1) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook and (2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers.**

**Strengths:**

The proposed evaluation plan is multi-faceted with the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data. Especially important is the inclusion of the types of analyses that are anticipated along with indicators as to the effect size and other guidelines that will be used to determine if the program is working and having a significant effect. While not elaborated upon, the plan also gives mention to the consideration of the reliability of the survey instrument and the production of themes in relation to the qualitative data that will be collected showing that these important factors in evaluation are being considered in the design.

**Weaknesses:**

Survey data is included in the design but no mention of response rates or plans to obtain desirable response rates was mentioned and this can be quite a challenge. One of the key impacts surrounds college access and success but only one cohort of the students will actually be that far along by the end of the study so conclusions on those impacts will be limited. More elaboration on the planned analyses would have strengthened the proposal

**Reader's Score: 22**

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

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.**

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

**(3) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a State or regional level (as appropriate, based on the results of the proposed project) working directly, or through other partners, either during or following the end of the grant period.**

**Strengths:**

N/A- Reviewed by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

N/A- Reviewed by another reviewer

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6**

**1. Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (zero or one 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:**

**Reader's Score:**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7**

##### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Innovations that Support College Access and Success (zero or one 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:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 8**

##### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (zero or one 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:**

**Reader's Score:**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 9**

##### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 9 - Improving Productivity (zero or one point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in this notice), or other strategies.

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 10**

##### **1. Competitive Preference Priority 10 - Technology (zero or one point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

**Reader's Score:**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 9/14/11 12:00 AM



# Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - 84.411B Panel - 12: 84.411B

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

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools Project (U411B110024)

## Questions

### Summary Statement - Summary Statement

#### 1. Summary Statement (Optional)

**General:**

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the project. In determining the need for the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The magnitude of the need for the services to be provided or the activities to be carried out by the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(3) The importance and magnitude of the effect expected to be obtained by the proposed project, including the extent to which the project will substantially and measurably improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. The evidence in support of the importance and magnitude of the effect would be the research-based evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project.

**Note Linking Magnitude of Effect to Presented Evidence:** The Secretary notes that the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with the research evidence provided by the eligible applicant to support the proposed project is relevant to addressing the third factor of Selection Criterion A and, therefore, will be considered by the Secretary in evaluating the importance and/or magnitude of the impact expected to be obtained by the proposed project.

#### Strengths:

The applicant established the magnitude of the need for the services to be provided. The eight partner LEAs partnering include some of the poorest and most rural districts in North Carolina as demonstrated by data in Table 1. In the targeted high schools, 42.6% to 76.2% of the students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch in 2009-10. Scores on state standardized tests at these schools tend to be low, particularly in mathematics. Among the 18 schools in this project, the rate of students scoring at/above grade level on the state's Algebra I End-of-Course exam ranged between 35.8% to 83.8% with nine of the schools below 70.0%. (Page e26) The 24-month average unemployment is 10.82% and 2009 per capita money income (3-year American Community Survey) was \$18,311 compared to \$27,100 for the U.S., calculated for counties using Stats America (Page e 26) Chart on Page e27-28

These ECHSs, targeting students traditionally underrepresented in colleges (minority, economically disadvantaged, and or first generation in family to attend college), have significantly lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, and higher enrollment and achievement in rigorous college preparatory courses than other schools with similar demographics. Providing a fifth year of enrollment and college dual enrollment

opportunities, it is possible for students to earn an Associate Degree through the community college system. This project represents an exceptional approach to the priority established for the competition. (Page e29)

The applicant cited research based evidence that the proposed project will substantially improve student achievement, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and increase college enrollment. The NCNSP model is the subject of a longitudinal experimental study (Edmunds, J. A., Bernstein, L., Unlu, F., Glennie, E., Arshavsky, N., Smith, A., 2011), Page e32) In 10 th grade, 96% of treatment students were still enrolled in a North Carolina public school compared to 89% of control students (Edmunds, Bernstein, Unlu, Glennie, Arshavsky, & Smith, April, 2011), a statistically significant adjusted impact estimate of 5% percentage points (effect size of .40).

This grant-funded project will extend early college strategies to 18 traditional, comprehensive high schools currently serving more than 12,200 students in eight rural low income districts and will create a well-codified professional development and district capacity building platform to support further national scaling. (Page e33)

Based on the results from the experimental study cited above and results from other existing NCNSP IS 4 -supported high schools (see Appendix C), the implementation of this project should produce an effect size of .40 on continuing enrollment in school in the 10th grade going up to .53 in the 11th grade and eventually producing an effect size of at least .40 on graduation rate. The expected effect size on college preparatory course taking is .18. (Page e34)

#### **Weaknesses:**

There were not identifiable weaknesses.

**Reader's Score:** 25

#### **Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are**  
**(a) Aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and**  
**(b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.**

**(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

**(3) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.**

**(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.**

**Note: The Secretary considers cost estimates both**

**(a) To assess the reasonableness of the costs relative to the objectives, design, and potential significance for the total number of students to be served by the proposed project, which is determined by the eligible applicant, and**  
**(b) To understand the possible costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach the scaling targets of 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students for Validation grants. An eligible applicant is free to propose how many students it will serve under its project, and is expected to reach that number of students by the end of the grant period. The scaling targets, in contrast, are theoretical and allow peer reviewers to assess the cost-effectiveness generally of proposed projects, particularly in cases where initial investment may be required to support projects that operate at reduced cost in the future, whether implemented by the eligible applicant or any other entity. Grantees are not required to reach these numbers during the grant period.**

**(5) 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 Validation grant.**

**Strengths:**

Applicant provided a clear set of goals and explicit strategies with actions that are aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet and expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives and outcomes of the proposed project. (Pages e 34-38)

With a total cost of \$15 million, this project will serve more than 21,000 students over the five years of the grant at a per student cost of approximately \$715/student. A large part of the cost to each school is to support tuition and books for college courses. (Pages e 38). Increasing the graduation rate by 10 percent at each school would result in 225 more graduates per year across the 18 project schools. If the financial lifetime benefit of high school graduation is estimated at \$200,000 per student then the benefit of this project for one cohort of students would be \$45 million. (pages e-39)

The NCNSP Design Principles embody effective practices in instruction and school design consistent with a large body of research and numerous other recommendations. For example, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Practice Guide addressing college access (Tierney, W. G., Bailey, T., Constantine, J., Finkelstein, N., & Hurd, N. F., 2009) makes five recommendations in the area of academic preparation, expectations, and support with steps for college entry similar to the NCNSP Design Principles. (page e 39)

The total cost of this project is \$15 million and will reach more than 21,000 students giving a per student cost of approximately \$715. Based on these costs, the estimated cost of extending this to a further 100,000 students after the grant period is \$71,500,000, to 250,000 students is \$178,750,000 and 500,000 is \$357,500,000. (page e 40)

The costs seem reasonable relative to the objectives, design, and potential significance for the total number of students to be served.

This project extends NCNSP's current work into additional schools and will serve as a demonstration to communities and legislators that significantly better results can be achieved in the traditional, comprehensive high school given the implementation of NCNSP Design Principles and IS4 professional development strategies. (pages e40)

**Weaknesses:**

No statements concerning the possible costs for the eligible applicant or others to reach the scaling targets for validation grants.

No baseline data provided.

**Reader's Score: 20**

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

**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the project evaluation. In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will include a well designed experimental study or a well designed quasi-experimental study.**

**(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 so as to facilitate 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.**

**Note: We encourage eligible applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation: (1) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook and (2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers.**

**Strengths:**

N/A

**Weaknesses:**

N/A

**Reader's Score: 0****Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

**(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.**

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

**(3) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a State or regional level (as appropriate, based on the results of the proposed project) working directly, or through other partners, either during or following the end of the grant period.**

**Strengths:**

Table 3 page e53 provided milestones for accomplishing project tasks. Applicant provided a discussion of the responsibilities and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Qualifications and relevant training and experiences were discussed for key project personnel. Applicant attached resumes for additional documentation of relevant experiences.

NCNSP was established in 2003 by the state's Education Cabinet and the Office of the Governor with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Through close ties with similar programs and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the NCNSP seems well positioned to support scaling up the project. (Page e 56)

**Weaknesses:**

There was no timeline provided and no clearly defined responsibilities, sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

Project director would have to be hired. No discussion of qualifications for project director.

**Reader's Score: 20****Priority Questions****Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 6**

- 1. Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (zero or one 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:**

n/a

**Weaknesses:**

n/a

**Reader's Score: 0**

#### Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 7

##### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 7 - Innovations that Support College Access and Success (zero or one 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 effective in implementing innovative practices, strategies, and programs through the new schools project. It addresses student preparedness and expectations related to college. The proposed project will help students understand issues of college affordability, financial aid and college application processes. It also will provide support from peers and knowledgeable adults.

**Weaknesses:**

No notable weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 1**

#### Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 8

##### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 8 - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (zero or one 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 project mentions innovations to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities and limited English proficient students. Programs and strategies designed for the regular will serve to assist students with specific learning needs as well.

**Weaknesses:**

More information about activities designed especially for students with unique learning needs could have been incorporated into the proposal.

**Reader's Score: 1**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 9**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 9 - Improving Productivity (zero or one point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of open educational resources (as defined in this notice), or other strategies.

**Strengths:**

n/a

**Weaknesses:**

n/a

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 10**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 10 - Technology (zero or one point)**

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

**Strengths:**

Not applicable to this proposal.

**Weaknesses:**

Not applicable to this proposal.

**Reader's Score: 0**

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**Last Updated:** 9/16/11 12:00 AM

