

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/19/2015 03:17 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	0
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	45	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
Sub Total	100	16
Total	100	16

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - i3 Development Panel - 7: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

(2) The national significance of the proposed project.

(3) The potential replicability of the proposed project or strategies, including, as appropriate, the potential for implementation in a variety of settings.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the project are clearly specified and measurable.

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

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

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations.

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

Strengths:

The applicant is proposing a true-experimental study. As stated on page e36, "We propose a school-level RCT...." RCT stands for randomized control trial. In postulating casual claims, these claims are strengthened when randomization is possible. In addition to this exceptional data collection design approach to the evaluation, the applicant provided several important components related to the evaluation plan, (a) the key research question which will guide the evaluation (see page e38); (b) the key outcome being measured which is related to answering the research question (see page e38); and (C) the type of quantitative analysis which will be used to answer the research question. On page e84, the analytic method is appropriate for the study which will be hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). Given that the data is nested (districts-schools-classrooms-teachers-students) HLM is an appropriate method. The Level 1 and Level 2 details were provided on page e84. Finally, the applicant will be utilizing a respected evaluation firm with a proven track record with evaluations, more specifically i3 grants.

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant is proposing a randomized control trial research design which will meet WWC without reservations, the project is underpowered. This means it will not be possible to meet the Department of Education (DOE) requirement of being able to detect an effect size of .25. Based on the sample size for the project the minimum detectable effect size would be .45. The applicant has an alternative to the research design, using a quasi-experimental approach, utilizing propensity score matching. More specifically, a comparative interrupted time series analysis. Although this alternative is provided, a discussion was not provided related to how and what the minimum detectable effect size would be with this alternative design.

Reader's Score: 16

Status: Submitted
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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	0
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	45	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
Sub Total	100	16
Total	100	16

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - i3 Development Panel - 7: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

(2) The national significance of the proposed project.

(3) The potential replicability of the proposed project or strategies, including, as appropriate, the potential for implementation in a variety of settings.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the project are clearly specified and measurable.

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

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

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations.

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

Strengths:

The evaluator proposes a school-level randomized control trial to estimate project impact on writing skills. A 2-level multilevel model will be used which includes covariates for students, such as socioeconomic status, and teachers, such as years of experience (pgs. 20-21; Appendix J-1). Such a rigorous design should be successful in examining differences in mean writing scores and student growth in writing on the state exam. Ten schools will participate in the project, while ten different schools will serve as comparison schools (pg. 11).

An analysis of teacher implementation of the digital tools, and potential impacts of professional development and coaching, will be conducted. Data from surveys, logs, and metrics will be examined to observe teacher use (pg. 23-24). These results should help inform the project for future growth.

Although the evaluation budget represents 16% of the project's total budget, the evaluator has conducted other i3 evaluations and has worked with the project team; this experience should help produce a successful evaluation (pg. 17).

Weaknesses:

Several of the project outcomes focus on the quantity and frequency of writing tasks and feedback, rather than content and quality. For example, the proposed outcome to increase the amount and timeliness of teacher feedback to students on their writing tasks (pg. 9) is measureable; however, it would be more informative to the project if feedback content and quality were also evaluated. Examining the quantity and speed of feedback does not signify how meaningful and impactful the teacher comments were to the students and their writing. Also, the applicant notes that teacher and student focus groups will be used (pg. 18; 23); however, no description is provided as to how those responses will be used to inform the project. And, focus group activities are not appropriate measures for answering their research questions about amount and timeliness of teacher feedback (pg. 23).

The evaluator admits that their proposed research design may not produce a large effect due to the limited number of sample schools. Unfortunately, the interrupted time-series model with propensity score matching is not fully explained and is missing several key components. The sample sizes, effect size, and baseline characteristics to create the matched groups were not discussed for this design. As a result, if the RCT is not conclusive, then the research designs may not meet WWC standards.

Reader's Score: 16

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	45	43
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Sub Total	100	78
Total	100	78

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - i3 Development Panel - 7: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

(2) The national significance of the proposed project.

(3) The potential replicability of the proposed project or strategies, including, as appropriate, the potential for implementation in a variety of settings.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to provide tablet devices to schools so that they have access to Google Apps for Education (GAPE) and to the applicant's own proprietary workflow management, digital course management and learning tools, Doctopus and Goobric. Because the applicant is proposing a low-cost technology infrastructure and the use of open-source Add-Ons, the project has potential to scale rapidly and be replicable in a variety of settings.

The proposed technology platform is browser and device agnostic so that open-source tools can be utilized on any device, including low-cost alternatives like Chromebooks. This holds promise of broad implementation for under-resourced schools that may not be able to invest in expensive technology mobile devices.

The applicant's open source tools like rosterSync and chromebookInventory may reduce the time teachers spend updating big data sets and managing workflow, leaving more time for teachers to spend on personalizing curriculum for students and providing targeted, differentiated instruction in writing. By examining how workflow impacts quality of instruction, there is an opportunity to create a repeatable best practice in writing instruction.

The use of free, open-source tools like Doctopus, Classroom and Gubric affords teachers the opportunity to provide real-time feedback to students on writing assignments, further personalizing learning environments. In addition, students can ask questions and posit ideas in real-time, fostering an iterative learning process between teacher and student (page 16). This project may provide additional information about best practice in creating personalized learning environments for students and best practice in using digital tools.

The applicant has a strong network that can be leveraged to share information about the project to enhance learning about available tools and foster deployment and replicability. The applicant manages the Google Apps Scripts for Education Google+ community which has a large membership. In addition, the applicant's open-source tools are among GAPE's popular downloads with a dedicated following on social media. The applicant has also developed a set of CCSS-aligned curricula that is being access by users across New York.

Weaknesses:

No significant weaknesses noted.

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the project are clearly specified and measurable.

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a clear and concise, fully-developed logic model on page 10 of the application that includes inputs, activities, outputs, proximal outcomes and distal outcomes for the project. The goals and objectives are specific and measurable and should help the applicant to evaluate effectiveness of the project.

The applicant will have access to rich data that will be collected from Google Analytics and access to an existing data warehouse of student performance in New York City. Access to valid and reliable data should enable the applicant to measure the goals and objectives identified in the application.

The applicant provides a detailed management plan identifying key personnel, project milestones and timeline for completion (pages 11-18). This plan may help the applicant to track progress on milestones and to mitigate against project delays.

The project design incorporates a component for teacher professional development from both treatment and comparison schools. Further, teachers from treatment schools will receive additional training focused on implementing digital workflows and instructional techniques and coached on how to apply the tools pedagogically. Teacher professional development may further enhance personalization of learning in the classroom, and contribute to more rapid deployment of digital tools.

The applicant plans to use a variety of mechanisms to disseminate project findings. For example, the applicant will create practitioner guides and screencasts, issue briefs, share evaluation reports, participate in guest blogging and present at national venues. These materials will be used to encourage dialogue with strategic partners such as teachers unions and curricula developers and the applicant will leverage its New Visions GAFE Google+ group for further dissemination.

Weaknesses:

The applicant proposes to work with 9th Grade Global History teachers and 10th Grade ELA teachers, which limits the degree to which the intervention can be studied across time in either Global History or ELA. In addition, the indicator being utilized measures student's progress on the Global History Regents Exam, and assumes competencies taught in ELA will impact performance on the GH exam. This could be a potential validity problem with the proposed study.

Although the applicant will be collecting data from attendance records, tool analytics and student performance, no information is provided about how this data will be used to continuously refine and improve the model. In addition, the applicant states that it will use bi-weekly meetings with the project team to reflect on the data and to inform conversations with principals and teachers, but the applicant does not elaborate on how ongoing feedback from principals and teachers

will be collected refine and improve the model.

Reader's Score: 43

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations.

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

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	33
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	45	43
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Sub Total	100	76
Total	100	76

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - i3 Development Panel - 7: 84.411C

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

(2) The national significance of the proposed project.

(3) The potential replicability of the proposed project or strategies, including, as appropriate, the potential for implementation in a variety of settings.

Strengths:

(1) Applicant demonstrates profound use of existing resources by leveraging low cost infrastructure model built on Google Apps with student accounts. Emphasis will be placed on improving student writing amongst socio-economically disadvantaged students which is commendable and needed. Content is well-aligned with Common Core curriculum standards. Global History and English Language Arts teachers will be empowered to supplant knowledge base through free cloud based technological plug-in devices. Solid data demonstrating effectiveness of approach was presented.

(2) Based on applicant's base of 77 schools, program design, use of templates, best-practices, and plans for expanding reach to 5,000 students; broad reaching replicability is realistic. According to applicant, solution will allow to expeditiously process large volumes of student assignments via electronic folders. Rubrics and student revisions to their respective work will be tracked in local school, district, and within state. A tool with such an in-depth capacity coupled with an affordable cost increases intrinsic value to the education industry as a whole.

(3) Data furnished substantiated that proposed tool is built on one of the most widely used applications with over 80,000 active subscribers. Concise examples of usage in multiple settings were disclosed.

Weaknesses:

(1) Level of proposed innovation was minimal. Proposed tool does leverage Google apps however the degree of novelty was difficult to determine (pages 2 and 3). Deduct 2 points

Reader's Score: 33

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the project are clearly specified and measurable.

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

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

Strengths:

(1) Several concrete goals, objectives, and outcomes were discussed with finite details. Applicant plans to increase amount of student's writing assignments. Use of proposed technology will help improve participants' performance on state mandated achievement tests. Anticipated intense professional development plan ensures educators will be adequately prepared to administer all components of system.

(2) Excellent management plan led by highly qualified project director and administrative support team was presented. PD has a PhD in urban education and founded the Academy for Careers in Television & Film. Currently, he oversees 60+ district schools.

Timelines, milestones, and personnel responsible for attainment of outcomes were presented.

(4) Applicant discussed extensive collaboration with key stakeholders, industry publications, national conferences, blogging sites, and community leaders to disseminate program results.

Weaknesses:

(3) Sufficient details describing applicant's data collection methods were not presented. Without knowing frequency, type of information sought, and how it will be used; likelihood of continuous improvement is challenging to gauge (page 22 and 23). Deduct 2 points.

Reader's Score: 43

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations.

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

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/21/2015 01:30 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/21/2015 11:12 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan		
1. Project Design/Mgmt. Plan	45	45
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Sub Total	100	80
Total	100	80

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - i3 Development Panel - 7: 84.411C

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. (U411C150117)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

(2) The national significance of the proposed project.

(3) The potential replicability of the proposed project or strategies, including, as appropriate, the potential for implementation in a variety of settings.

Strengths:

The applicant's proposed project "Personalization at Scale" is, frankly, an exciting project for its exceptional focus on improving students' writing skills through supporting teachers' capacity to assign and respond meaningfully to student writing often enough and deeply enough to make a significant difference in its quality over time. As writing is so critical to learning and thinking at levels expected by the Common Core and other higher standards, and in view of the existing practical limits of what teachers are able to do to improve student writing, the proposed technology strategy for addressing current limitations offers a promising solution to this common problem.

Inasmuch as the challenges to teaching writing effectively are national in scope, across a wide diversity of school settings, and since the applicant's strategy involves a technology approach that is not tool-specific and therefore useful to teachers regardless of local circumstances, the project has much national significance.

A strong case is also made in the application for the project's replicability, given that the project's basic technology tools are already available for the project's proposed use across the country. The applicant's plan to develop the proposed strategy in urban schools where technology is less used, along with the applicant's plan to link the Google-supported tools to its available curriculum content in core subjects, also strengthens the potential for replication in areas of greatest need across the country.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the project are clearly specified and measurable.

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

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

Strengths:

The goal of the project to help teachers use technology tools to increase their capacity for strengthening writing instruction to improve student writing is clearly specified (p. e25) along with a listing of outcomes that are clearly measurable. A logic model is also presented on p. e26 that clearly illustrates the project's inputs, activities, outputs, proximal outcomes, and distal outcomes.

The applicant's management plan - which organizes project implementation around key activities of school selection, professional development, resource and tool design, and technology implementation - indicates the key objectives of the project along with a clear discussion of those responsible for accomplishing those objectives. Management responsibilities with reference to milestones and major project tasks are provided on a timeline (table, p. e34) and are further described in the narrative on pages e32-e33.

Based on the applicant's plan to use a process monitoring system to support ongoing checks on progress, procedures to ensure feedback and continuous improvement appear adequate.

The applicant provides an extensive list of mechanisms (p. e35) that will be used in disseminating project information, including the plan to develop teacher leaders as advocates of the proposed approach along with the development of practitioner guides, both of which can be expected to support further development or replication of project strategies.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 45

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations.

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

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/21/2015 11:12 AM