



**Race to the Top - District
Application for Funding**
CFDA Number: 84.416



U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20202
OMB Number: 1894-0014
Expiration Date: February 28, 2013

**APPLICATION ASSURANCES
FOR
HARMONY SCIENCE ACADEMY (HARMONY PUBLIC SCHOOLS)
RACE to the TOP-DISTRICT APPLICATION**

Participating LEAs		NCES District ID	DUNS Number	EIN
Harmony Science Academy	Lead LEA	4800210	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony School of Excellence	Member LEA	4800274	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony School of Science-Houston	Member LEA	4801405	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony Science Academy-Austin	Member LEA	4800241	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony Science Academy-Brownsville	Member LEA	4801397	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony Science Academy-El Paso	Member LEA	4800272	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony Science Academy-Fort Worth	Member LEA	4800280	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony Science Academy-Lubbock	Member LEA	4800293	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony Science Academy-San Antonio	Member LEA	4800266	085187438	76-0615245
Harmony Science Academy-Waco	Member LEA	4800292	085187438	76-0615245

**IV. APPLICATION ASSURANCES
(CFDA No. 84.416)**

Legal Name of Applicant ¹ : Harmony Science Academy (Harmony Public Schools)	Applicant's NCES District ID ² : 4800210
Applicant's Mailing Address: 9321 W. Sam Houston Pkwy S. Houston, TX 77099	
Employer Identification Number: 76-0615245	Organizational DUNS Number: 085187438
Race to the Top – District Contact Name: (Single point of contact for communication) Mark K. Namver	Contact Position and Office: Director of Development Office of Development
Contact Telephone: (713) 343-3333 Ext. 2281	Contact E-mail Address: mnamver@harmonytx.org
<p>Required applicant Signatures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information and data in this application are true and correct. I further certify that I have read the application, am fully committed to it, and will support its implementation. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 218, Section 1001) 	
Superintendent or CEO of individual LEA or Lead LEA, or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity (Printed Name): <i>SONER TARIM</i>	Telephone: (713) 343-3333
Signature of Superintendent or CEO of individual LEA or Lead LEA, or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity: <i>[Signature]</i>	Date: <i>10/26/12</i>
Local School Board President (Printed Name): <i>Oner U. Celepikay</i>	Telephone: (713) 343-3333
Signature of Local School Board President: <i>[Signature]</i>	Date: <i>10/26/12</i>
President of the Local Teacher's Union or Association, if applicable (Printed Name): N/A. No Local Teacher's Union or Association	Telephone:
Signature of the President of the Local Teacher's Union or Association:	Date:

¹ Individual LEA, Lead LEA for the consortium, or eligible legal entity

² Consortium applicants must provide the NCES District ID for each LEA in the consortium, on a separate page and include in the Appendix. Applicants may obtain their NCES District ID at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch>.

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC ASSURANCES FOR CONSORTIA APPLICANTS

The Lead LEA or legal representative of the eligible legal entity must complete the forms in this part and sign on behalf of all members of the consortium. Individual LEA applicants must complete the forms in Part V.

ABSOLUTE PRIORITIES – CONSORTIUM APPLICANT

Absolute Priority 1

The applicant must address Absolute Priority 1 in its response to the selection criteria. Applicants do not write to Absolute Priority 1 separately.

Absolute Priorities 2 through 5

Applicants do not write to Absolute Priorities 2 through 5 separately. Instead, they complete this part by identifying the one (and only one) of Absolute Priorities 2 through 5 that applies. Please check one of the priorities below.

Absolute Priority 2: Non-Rural LEAs in Race to the Top States. To meet this priority, an applicant must be a consortium of LEAs in which more than 50 percent of participating students (as defined in this notice) are in non-rural LEAs in States that received awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competition.

Absolute Priority 3: Rural LEAs in Race to the Top States. To meet this priority, an applicant must be a consortium of LEAs in which more than 50 percent of participating students (as defined in this notice) are in rural LEAs (as defined in this notice) in States that received awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competition.

Absolute Priority 4: Non-Rural LEAs in non-Race to the Top States. To meet this priority, an applicant must be a consortium of LEAs in which more than 50 percent of participating students (as defined in this notice) are in non-rural LEAs in States that did not receive awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competition.

Absolute Priority 5: Rural LEAs in non-Race to the Top States. To meet this priority, an applicant must be a consortium of LEAs in which more than 50 percent of participating students (as defined in this notice) are in rural LEAs (as defined in this notice) in States that did not receive awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competition.

NOTE: Race to the Top Phase 1, 2, and 3 States are: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee and the District of Columbia.

BUDGET REQUIREMENT – CONSORTIUM APPLICANTS

In completing this part, the applicant assures that its Race to the Top – District budget request conforms to the established budget ranges for the Race to the Top - District competition.

The number of participating LEAs is 10, and the number of participating students is 12,240. The total Race to the Top – District grant funds requested is \$29,866,938, which is within the following range: (Check the **one** range of participating students (all as defined in this notice) that applies)

- \$5-10 million - 2,000-5,000 participating students (as defined in this notice) or fewer than 2,000, provided those students are served by a consortium of at least 10 LEAs and at least 75 percent of the students served by each LEA are participating students (as defined in this notice)
- \$10-20 million - 5,001-10,000 participating students
- \$20-30 million - 10,001-25,000 participating students
- \$30-40 million - 25,001+ participating students

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS – CONSORTIUM APPLICANTS

By checking the applicable statement(s) below, the applicant assures that:

- Each member (including the Lead LEA) of the consortium meets the definition of local educational agency.
- Each member (including the Lead LEA) of the consortium is from one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
- This application is the only Race to the Top – District application to which the Lead LEA and any member of the consortium has signed on.
- This application serves a minimum of 2,000 participating students (as defined in this notice) or serves fewer than 2,000, provided those students are served by a consortium of at least 10 LEAs and at least 75 percent of the students served by each LEA are participating students (as defined in this notice).

✓ At least 40 percent of participating students (as defined in this notice) across all participating schools (as defined in this notice) are students from low-income families, based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch subsidies under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, or other poverty measures that LEAs use to make awards under section 1113(a) of the ESEA **OR** if the applicant has not identified all participating schools (as defined in this notice) at the time of application, the applicant assures that within 100 days of the grant award it will meet this standard.

✓ The applicant has demonstrated its commitment to the core educational assurance areas (as defined in this notice) and the superintendent or CEO for each LEA has assured that --

(i) The LEA, at a minimum, will implement no later than the 2014-2015 school year—

- (A) A teacher evaluation system (as defined in this notice);
- (B) A principal evaluation system (as defined in this notice); and
- (C) A superintendent evaluation (as defined in this notice);

(ii) The LEA is committed to preparing all students for college or career, as demonstrated by—

- (A) Being located in a State that has adopted college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice); or
- (B) Measuring all student progress and performance against college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice);

(iii) The LEA has a robust data system that has, at a minimum—

- (A) An individual teacher identifier with a teacher-student match; and
- (B) The capability to provide timely data back to educators and their supervisors on student growth (as defined in this notice);

(iv) The LEA has the capability to receive or match student level preschool through 12th grade and higher education data; and

(v) The LEA ensures that any disclosure of or access to personally identifiable information in students' education records complies with FERPA.

✓ The application is signed by the Lead LEA's superintendent or CEO, local school board president, and local teacher union or association president (where applicable).

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS – CONSORTIUM APPLICANTS

By checking the applicable statement(s) below, the applicant assures that the:

State comment period was met. Each LEA included in the consortium has provided its State at least 10 business days to comment on the LEA's application and has submitted as part of the application package—

- The State's comments OR evidence that the State declined to comment; and
 - The LEA's response (optional) to the State comment.
- (The submitted comments, evidence, and responses for each LEA are located in Part _____, from pages _____ to _____ of the proposal.)

Mayor (or city or town administrator) comment period was met. Each LEA included in the consortium has provided its mayor or other comparable official at least 10 business days to comment on the LEA's application and submitted as part of the application package—

- The mayor or city or town administrator's comments OR, if that individual declines to comment, evidence that the LEA offered such official 10 business days to comment
 - The LEA's response (optional) to the mayor or city or town administrator comments
- (The submitted comments, evidence, and responses for each LEA are located in Part _____, from pages _____ to _____ of the proposal.)

The application is consistent with 34 CFR 75.128 in that: (check one that applies)

One member of the consortium is applying for a grant on behalf of the consortium; or

_____ The consortium has established itself as a separate, eligible legal entity and is applying for a grant on its own behalf.

The application is signed by: (check one that applies)


The superintendent or chief executive officer (CEO), local school board president, and local teacher union or association president (where applicable) of that LEA, if one member of the consortium is applying for a grant on behalf of the consortium; or

_____ A legal representative of the consortium, if the consortium has established itself as a separate, eligible legal entity and is applying for a grant on its own behalf.

✓ The Application includes, consistent with 34 CFR 75.128, for each LEA in the consortium, copies of all Memoranda of Understanding or other binding agreements. These binding agreements must:

- (i) Describe the consortium governance structure (as defined in this notice) and the individual LEA's role in the structure;
- (ii) Bind each member of the consortium to every statement and assurance made in the application; and
- (iii) Include an assurance signed by the LEA's superintendent or CEO that—
 - (A) The LEA, at a minimum, will implement no later than the 2014-2015 school year—
 - (1) A teacher evaluation system (as defined in this notice);
 - (2) A principal evaluation system (as defined in this notice); and
 - (3) A superintendent evaluation (as defined in this notice);
 - (B) The LEA is committed to preparing students for college or career, as demonstrated by—
 - (1) Being located in a State that has adopted college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this notice); or
 - (2) Measuring all student progress and performance against college- and career-ready graduation requirements (as defined in this notice);
 - (C) The LEA has a robust data system that has, at a minimum—
 - (1) An individual teacher identifier with a teacher-student match; and
 - (2) The capability to provide timely data back to educators and their supervisors on student growth (as defined in this notice);
 - (D) The LEA has the capability to receive or match student-level preschool through 12th grade and higher education data; and
 - (E) The LEA ensures that any disclosure of or access to personally identifiable information in students' education records complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); and
- (iv) Be signed by the superintendent or CEO, local school board president, and local teacher union or association president (where applicable).

SIGNATURE BLOCK FOR CERTIFYING OFFICIAL FOR ALL RESPONSES TO SECTION VI

Superintendent or CEO of Lead LEA or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity (Printed Name): <i>SONER TARIM</i>	
Signature Superintendent or CEO of Lead LEA or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity: 	Date: <i>10/26/2012</i>

VII. OTHER ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS

Accountability, Transparency and Reporting Assurances

The Superintendent or CEO of the individual LEA or Lead LEA, or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity, assures that:

- The LEA or consortium will comply with all of the accountability, transparency, and reporting requirements that apply to the Race to the Top – District program, including:
 - For each year of the program, the LEA or consortium will submit a report to the Secretary, at such time and in such manner and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

Other Assurances and Certifications

The Superintendent or CEO of the individual LEA or Lead LEA, or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity, assures or certifies the following:

- The LEA or consortium will comply with all applicable assurances in OMB Standard Forms 424B (Assurances for Non-Construction Programs) and to the extent consistent with the application, OMB Standard Form 424D (Assurances for Construction Programs), including the assurances relating to the legal authority to apply for assistance; access to records; conflict of interest; merit systems; nondiscrimination; Hatch Act provisions; labor standards; flood hazards; historic preservation; protection of human subjects; animal welfare; lead-based paint; Single Audit Act; and the general agreement to comply with all applicable Federal laws, executive orders and regulations.
- With respect to the certification regarding lobbying in Department Form 80-0013, no Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the making or renewal of Federal grants under this program; the applicant, and for consortia each LEA, will complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure Form to Report Lobbying," when required (34 CFR Part 82, Appendix B); and the applicant will require the full certification, as set forth in 34 CFR Part 82, Appendix A, in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers.
- Any LEA receiving funding under this program will have on file with the State a set of assurances that meets the requirements of section 442 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232e).
- Any LEA receiving funding under this program will have on file with the State (through either its Stabilization Fiscal Stabilization Fund application or another U.S. Department of Education Federal grant) a description of how the LEA will comply with the requirements of section 427 of GEPA (20 U.S.C. 1228a). The description must include information on the steps the LEA proposes to take to permit students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers (including barriers based on gender, race, color, national origin, disability, and age) that impede access to, or participation in, the program.
- All entities receiving funds under this grant will comply with the Education Department

General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), including the following provisions as applicable: 34 CFR Part 74—Administration of Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations; 34 CFR Part 75—Direct Grant Programs; 34 CFR Part 77— Definitions that Apply to Department Regulations; 34 CFR Part 80— Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, including the procurement provisions; 34 CFR Part 81— General Education Provisions Act—Enforcement; 34 CFR Part 82— New Restrictions on Lobbying; 34 CFR Part 84—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance); 34 CFR Part 85—Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

SIGNATURE BLOCK FOR CERTIFYING OFFICIAL FOR ALL ASSURANCES AND CERTIFICATIONS IN SECTION VII

Superintendent or CEO of individual LEA or Lead LEA, or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity (Printed Name): <i>SONER TARIM</i>	
Signature of Superintendent or CEO of individual LEA or Lead LEA, or Legal Representative of Eligible Legal Entity: <i>[Signature]</i>	Date: <i>10/26/2012</i>

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IX. SELECTION CRITERIA

A. Vision (40 total points)

(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)

The extent to which the applicant has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on its work in four core educational assurance areas (as defined in this notice) and articulates a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)

The extent to which the applicant's approach to implementing its reform proposal (e.g., schools, grade bands, or subject areas) will support high-quality LEA-level and school-level implementation of that proposal, including—

- (a) A description of the process that the applicant used or will use to select schools to participate. The process must ensure that the participating schools (as defined in this notice) collectively meet the competition's eligibility requirements;
- (b) A list of the schools that will participate in grant activities (as available); and
- (c) The total number of participating students (as defined in this notice), participating students (as defined in this notice) from low-income families, participating students (as defined in this notice) who are high-need students (as defined in this notice), and participating educators (as defined in this notice). If participating schools (as defined in this notice) have yet to be selected, the applicant may provide approximate numbers.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

The extent to which the application includes a high-quality plan describing how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools (as defined in this notice), and will help the applicant reach its outcome goals (e.g., the applicant's logic model or theory of change of how its plan will improve student learning outcomes for all students who would be served by the applicant).

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

The extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals that are equal to or exceed State ESEA targets for the LEA(s), overall and by student subgroup (as defined in this notice), for each participating LEA in the following areas:

- (a) Performance on summative assessments (proficiency status and growth).
- (b) Decreasing achievement gaps (as defined in this notice).
- (c) Graduation rates (as defined in this notice).
- (d) College enrollment (as defined in this notice) rates.

Optional: The extent to which the applicant's vision is likely to result in improved student

learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals for each participating LEA in the following area:

(e) Postsecondary degree attainment.

In the text box below, the applicant should describe its current status in meeting the criteria and/or provide its high-quality plan for meeting the criteria.

The narrative or attachments should also include any supporting evidence the applicant believes will be helpful to peer reviewers, including at a minimum the evidence listed in the criterion (if any), and how each piece of evidence demonstrates the applicant's success in meeting the criterion. Evidence or attachments must be described in the narrative and, where relevant, included in the Appendix. For evidence or attachments included in the Appendix, note in the narrative the location where the information can be found and provide a table of contents for the Appendix.

To provide a high-quality plan, the applicant should describe, at a minimum, the goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties (for further detail, see Scoring Instructions in Part XV or Appendix A in the NIA). The narrative and attachments may also include any additional information the applicant believes will be helpful to peer reviewers.

Peer reviewers will reward applicants for developing goals that – in light of the applicant's proposal – are “ambitious yet achievable.” In determining whether an applicant has “ambitious yet achievable” annual goals, peer reviewers will examine the applicant's goals in the context of the applicant's proposal and the evidence submitted in support of the proposal. There is no specific goal that peer reviewers will be looking for here; nor will higher goals necessarily be rewarded above lower ones.

For optional goal (A)(4)(e): Applicants scores will not be adversely impacted if they choose not to address optional goal (A)(4)(e).

Recommended maximum response length: Eight pages (excluding tables)

(A)(1) Harmony's comprehensive and coherent reform vision

Introduction

Harmony Public Schools, a network of high-performing K-12 public charter schools across Texas, including in five metropolitan areas, focuses on providing science, computer technologies, engineering, and math education (STEM) to traditionally underserved students. Our 24,000 students are diverse: 56% receive free or reduced price lunch and 80%+ are non-white (45% Hispanic, 19% African American, and 16% Asian). Harmony schools demonstrate that with a rigorous, high-quality program and the right social and emotional supports in place, all students, regardless of racial or economic background, can achieve outstanding results. Our

schools consistently outperform regional and state averages in all four core subject areas and are making great progress in closing the achievement gap for minority and low-income students. Harmony has the foundation and the momentum to successfully carry out a major improvement initiative. **Harmony will use Race to the Top-District to further personalize the way each student uses time, receives support to master essential skills, and deepens understanding of content.** We will achieve this by redesigning our school day, expanding our approach to inquiry-based teaching and learning, and upgrading our data infrastructure, resulting in a model for personalized education that can be replicated in the Nation's schools.

Harmony's leadership in STEM education has been recognized and supported by the State and private foundations working to expand and improve STEM education nationally.

Honors our schools have received include:

- Title I National Distinguished School for closing the achievement gap – US Department of Education
- *US News & World Report's* "Best High Schools in the Nation" (2007-2012)
- Seven schools in *Newsweek's* "America's Best High Schools" (2012), four of which were also in the "Top 25 Transformative High Schools" and "Top Ten Miracle High Schools"
- Four schools in this year's *The Washington Post's* Challenge Index (based on student achievement on IB, AP, ACT, and SAT exams and graduation rates)

With a nationally-recognized program that we have successfully scaled, an energized staff committed to our vision for equitable student outcomes, students excited to be challenged and grow, and university partners providing our program with a bridge to college, Harmony is poised to build on our strong foundation of academic success.

Progress against the four core educational assurance areas

As we have grown from one school to a network of 38, Harmony has demonstrated a track record of steady progress against the four core educational assurance areas.

(1) Rigorous standards and assessments

Harmony's instructional approach strives for equity by providing a rigorous, challenging STEM curriculum to serve all students, a focus on formative assessment, and a culture of high expectations and support. While Texas has not yet adopted the Common Core State Standards

(CCSS), Harmony is committed to ensuring all of our programs are aligned to CCSS as well as the State standards. Our curriculum is inquiry-based and student-centered and matches the focus of the CCSS on rigor, depth, and higher-order skills such as conceptual understanding and application. In addition, we emphasize mastery of 21st century skills that all students will need to be successful in college and career. Because our goal is college preparedness, we have a strong Advanced Placement (AP) program at each of our high schools that provides students the opportunity for advanced study in areas of personal interest and helps prepare them with the skills and intellectual habits they will need to be successful in college. We encourage our students to begin taking AP courses as early as 10th grade.

Implementation of our core curriculum is supported by the purposeful use of diagnostic, formative, benchmark, and summative assessments aligned to the standards. Our comprehensive approach to assessment gives teachers the information they need to understand the specific skills and abilities of each student, set accelerated goals, differentiate instruction, and provide timely corrective instruction where necessary to ensure student mastery.

(2) High-quality data systems

Over the last ten years, Harmony's in-house information technology team has developed and continuously improved a robust assessment and reporting platform called the *Harmony Performance Management Database* (HPMD). This SQL-based school database features individual and aggregate student information on logistics, culture and discipline, and academics. Teachers use the database to view assessment results at the individual and aggregate levels for purposes of tracking progress and adjusting plans to meet goals. A particularly powerful aspect of the HPMD is its integrated assessment bank and associated data analysis and remediation feedback. Harmony students take locally-developed benchmark assessments every six weeks. The HPMD allows teachers to view individual student or aggregated group results, and administrators to benchmark student achievement and growth across classes, schools, and the entire Harmony system, by subgroup. Our leadership uses this information in system-wide continuous improvement cycles to guide decision making around resources and supports.

(3) Effective teachers and principals

The effectiveness of our approach rests on the quality of teachers and principals at our schools. Because we are STEM schools, offering subjects that are traditionally hard-to-staff, we

have developed innovative human capital strategies that will support getting and keeping the highest quality teachers for our schools. To keep pace with our rapid growth, we have developed a set of strategies to grow talent from within by cultivating personalized career paths for teachers and principals. Our approach leverages the following strategies (described in greater detail in Appendix A):

- Providing incentives for hard-to-staff subjects (math, science, computer/technology applications, bilingual/ESL, and special education)
- Providing tuition assistance to Harmony alumni to attain a teaching certificate and return to a Harmony school
- Providing financial assistance to Harmony teachers to obtain a Master’s of Education degree or principal’s certificate and grooming them to become Harmony school leaders
- Supporting the pursuit of subject-based advanced degrees for Harmony school leaders
- Providing ongoing high-quality professional development to current staff

High-quality professional development is our key strategy for ensuring excellence in teaching and school leadership and retaining our staff. We provide extensive professional development for teachers and school leaders before and during the school year, including training all new teachers in our curriculum and data-driven approach and providing support structures for ongoing improvement through frequent collaboration meetings and a mentoring program. Periodic cluster-wide professional development around key Harmony initiatives supports district-wide alignment to our approach. These strategies have enabled us to sustain the quality of our program while scaling it across the state.

(4) Turning around lowest-achieving schools

Harmony schools provide critical proof points for what is attainable for all students. Harmony does not have any lowest-achieving or low-performing schools – all of the schools have significantly outperformed their respective districts and the state. To date, every Harmony school has fulfilled its obligations to the charter authorizer (Texas State Board of Education) and its local community. With a majority of our students coming from low-income households and 15% feeding in from the state’s lowest-performing middle or high schools, we provide a high-quality option that puts our students on the path to college and career. Accountability of our

schools to our Superintendent, the state, and all stakeholders is key to our program's success. Our central office closely monitors schools' progress and provides immediate feedback to school staff. Our responsive system ensures that if a school is struggling to meet its goals, our central office provides immediate support. We are committed to helping other schools learn from our program and are actively exploring ways to support traditional public schools to implement our innovative model to give even more students access to high-impact instruction.

Building on our success: Harmony's plan for reform

Our track record of success and progress against the core assurance lays the foundation for our next steps. We see Race To The Top as an opportunity to deepen personalization of classroom instruction so that every student has choice and customized support, and to equip students, teachers and other stakeholders with real-time, actionable information on student learning to facilitate this individualized approach.

Our proposed approach builds on successes to date and will accelerate progress by strengthening and deepening current systems and practices. These initiatives will deepen our approach to personalized learning and enable us to achieve educational equity for all our students.

Specifically, Harmony will invest in three key strategies:

1. Expand on a successful pilot of a STEM **Project-Based Learning curriculum** to implement a cross-disciplinary, multi-sensory, technology-enabled project-based learning (PBL) curriculum that integrates STEM, social studies, and English language arts
2. Strengthen and integrate into the school day the personalized intervention and enrichment programs that are currently offered after school by instituting a **Custom Day** schedule whereby students receive 2 hours a day of targeted instruction on three flexible paths: receive remediation and extra support in math and English Language Arts (ELA); choose math or ELA advancement; or pursue electives in areas of interest
3. Improve our existing data systems by building out our **Data System and** developing customized **Data Dashboards** to provide real-time data to inform the first two

strategies (and our system more broadly), and to support students in setting goals and creating personal learning plans

Project-Based Learning: Already a model program for STEM education, Harmony is well-positioned to lead continued innovation by connecting STEM curriculum to the humanities through rich, meaningful, and rigorous cross-disciplinary and multi-sensory projects. Modeled on a pilot PBL initiative in STEM, the curriculum will lead to higher levels of student engagement as students will choose the focus of their intellectual exploration based on their own unique interests. The projects will align to Common Core and Texas state standards and require students to apply their knowledge using higher-order skills such as analysis and interpretation. Researchers have documented numerous benefits of project-based approaches beyond the development of content knowledge: students learning through a project-based curriculum develop the ability to transfer their learning to new situations, demonstrate an increased ability to define problems and support their reasoning, and are better able to tackle conceptual problems than those taught with a more traditional curriculum.¹ Through creative and innovative uses of technology such as video storytelling and web sites, Harmony students will publicly share their work both throughout the process and in a culminating capstone presentation, ensuring an authentic and meaningful context for deep student learning.²

Over the course of this grant, Harmony will engage internal and external expertise to design, pilot, and fully implement this curriculum in our middle and high schools. The major activities associated with this initiative will include:

1. Developing standards-aligned outcomes and assessment tools that specify the deeper learning and 21st century skill outcomes for students.

¹ These and other findings that document the benefits of project-based learning approaches were identified in the following review of research: Barron, B. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). Teaching for meaningful learning: A review of research on inquiry-based and cooperative learning in *Powerful learning: What we know about teaching for understanding*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

² Research has demonstrated multiple benefits of developing multimedia projects, as compared to traditional performance tasks, resulted in greater content mastery and coherence of design, as well as effectiveness at reaching intended audience: e.g., Penuel, W. R., Means, B., & Simkins, M. B. (2000). *The multimedia challenge*. Educational Leadership, 58, 34-38.

2. Designing an instructional framework that specifies the overarching learning objectives and scope and sequence of the projects across the three core subject areas.
3. Developing a bank of cross-disciplinary, multi-sensory, technology-enabled PBL projects that align to and expand on course content. for use throughout the year and as capstone projects.
4. Developing or procuring an interactive online platform that will host the project content, resources, tools, and student work products.
5. Re-designing professional development systems to provide teachers with the initial training and substantial ongoing support they will need to facilitate deeper learning.

Custom Day: Our Custom Day initiative provides the time and structure within the school day for students to receive individualized support to master skills at the pace and through the modality most suited to their specific learning needs, with a two-hour block of time reserved for flexible placement into intervention, enrichment, or elective courses. In intervention periods, teachers will utilize a variety of instructional approaches to support competency-based progress through individualized learning plans. Teachers will leverage technology-based learning and assessment systems to provide one-on-one personalized learning experiences for students, create smaller teacher-student ratios and support rapid feedback cycles with real-time assessment data. Students who are already on track to college and career readiness will use Custom Day time to choose math or ELA enrichment, or to pursue individual interests through elective classes. The major activities associated with this initiative will include:

1. Developing an instructional framework articulating the variety of high-leverage strategies used in Custom Day classes
2. Identifying and designing ways to increase classroom flexibility to allow multiple forms of instruction to happen simultaneously
3. Establishing methods and routines for assigning students to appropriate classes and regularly reevaluating and regrouping based on assessment data
4. Supporting mastery-based progression by procuring student learning technology based on the most current advances in personalized instruction
5. Re-designing professional development systems to provide teachers with the necessary training and support for implementing these instructional strategies

Data Systems and Dashboards: To support the project-based learning and Custom Day initiatives, by way of further deepening and accelerating student learning, we will invest in upgrading our data systems to integrate different types of data from multiple platforms onto dashboards customized to our different end users. These dashboards will provide all of our stakeholders with the critical information they need to effectively interpret and act on data in order to keep us on track to student, school, and LEA-wide goals. The major activities associated with this initiative will include:

1. Identifying end users (e.g., students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators) and the high-leverage dashboard components for each end-user profile
2. Identifying the components of a personalized education plan (the inputs for the data system)
3. Developing the framework that will link the outputs from PBL and Custom Day, as well as other existing systems (e.g., Eduphoria, Naviance) into the dashboard.
4. Developing the dashboards
5. Training all key stakeholders to use dashboards to support data-driven decision-making to effectively personalize learning and accelerate student progress toward college and career readiness

Key Elements for Success

Successful implementation of our reform strategies will rely on two key underpinnings: 1) high-quality professional development and 2) stronger teacher and principal evaluation systems. Our proposal includes a strategy for initial and ongoing professional development for teachers and leaders to support learning new skills and practices. At the same time, we will align our teacher and principal evaluation systems to the reform strategies and make them both more rigorous and more connected to the personalized learning approaches that we will expect to see in practice. With these support systems in place, Harmony will be poised to successfully carry out the personalized learning initiatives proposed here to realize our vision of ensuring all Harmony students graduate college- and career-ready.

(A)(2) Harmony’s approach to implementation

(A)(2)(a) School selection process

To determine the highest-leverage approach to reform for our schools, Harmony’s leadership followed a systematic process to identify our needs and gaps, as well as the most promising strategies for reform. Concluding that the most promising strategies for augmenting personalized learning and teaching were expanding our Project-Based Learning pilot, instituting a Custom Day program, and redesigning our data infrastructure to support these individualized approaches, the next question was which of our schools would benefit most from, and which would be most likely to implement successfully these changes. We decided that initiating these programs in all of our middle and high schools, and not our elementary schools, is the best course of action for the following four reasons:

- 1) We want to expand our Project-Based Learning (PBL) pilot from the STEM area to include more core subject areas. The STEM pilot is currently operating in our high schools, and so it is a natural fit to expand it in these schools.
- 2) We want to expand the PBL pilot to middle schools to address the critical developmental stage that middle schoolers are in.
- 3) The Custom Day initiative will be a natural fit for middle and high school schedules because these students switch classes regularly.
- 4) We want to provide these initiatives to students who are heading into the college- and career-readiness portions of their educational careers so we can lay the groundwork for the future in middle schools and build on that foundation in high school.

All Harmony schools serving grades 6 through 12 meet the Race To The Top – District competition’s eligibility requirements. Specifically, the schools in aggregate serve 12,240 students from grades 6 through 12 with 60.1% qualifying for low-income status and 81.2% qualifying for minority status. Please refer to chart (A)(2) in the A Tables section at the end of this proposal (A Tables -1) for detail on each participating school, including number of participating students and educators.

(A)(2)(b) List of participating schools

Participating schools include all 36 of our middle schools and high schools. Please refer to chart (A)(2) in the A Tables section at the end of this proposal (A Tables -1) for the complete list of participating schools.

(A)(2)(c) Participating students

In total, 50% of Harmony students will participate in this initiative, representing all 12,240 students in grades 6-12. Fifty-seven percent of participating students are from low-income families, and all students are classified as high-needs as defined by federal standards since all of our schools are high-minority schools.³ Overall, 572 educators will participate in this program.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change

Scaling the reforms

Harmony will scale up and create meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools by 1) monitoring the results as we implement these initiatives in our middle and high schools and making continual improvements and 2) applying lessons learned to the program's eventual rollout in our elementary schools. Importantly, as our middle and high school students become more practiced at project-based, inquiry-driven activities, we will identify the building block skills our elementary students must develop to succeed at the more complex assignments expected of them in middle and high school.

Enhancing our data systems at the elementary school level will be more straightforward. With the infrastructure already in place and tested at our middle and high schools, the technical aspects of rolling out our new data systems for elementary school will be far less complex. In terms of using the more robust data that will then be available, we will take what we have learned from user experience with our new Data Dashboards and apply these insights to the building of and training around our elementary-level dashboards.

³ We define high-minority schools as schools with >50% non-white students.

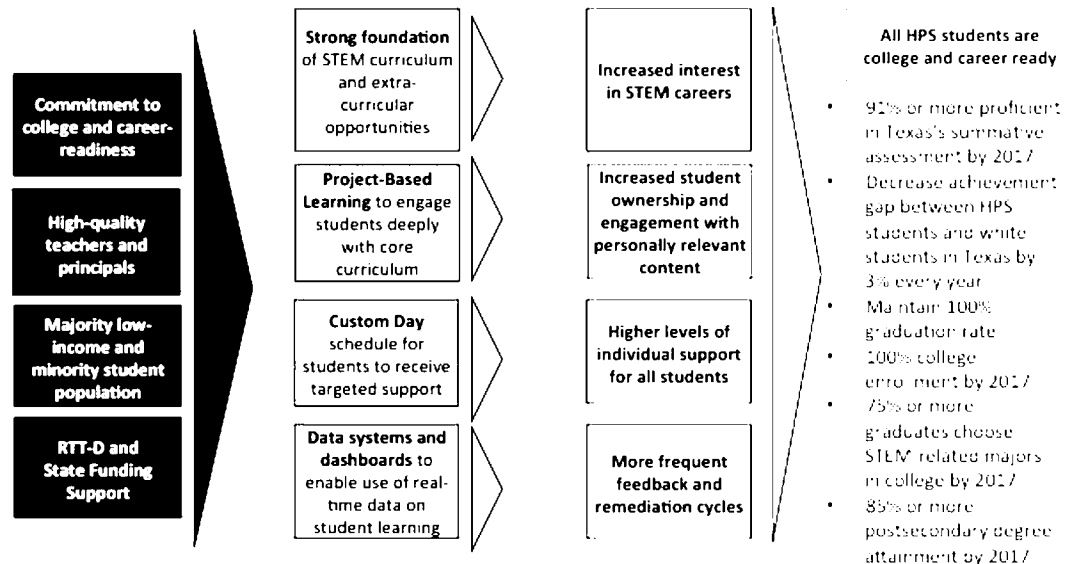
Theory of Change

The plan presented in this proposal is based on a theory of change that aims to increase the percentage of students graduating from Harmony schools college- and career-ready. To improve these student outcomes, we have developed a plan for a personalized learning program in which students engage deeply with core content, receive targeted support or enrichment to accelerate learning, and demonstrate ownership over their own life trajectory by actively participating in developing and monitoring their own learning plans. This personalized learning program will be realized through the implementation of our three key strategies: PBL, Custom Day, and enhanced Data Systems and Dashboards. These strategies were developed through a rigorous feedback process involving students, educators, and parents, and analysis of available student data around Harmony's current instructional model.

The PBL initiative will improve student engagement by increasing the relevance of the learning as students choose topics based on their interests. Students will engage in complex, authentic learning activities that will deepen content knowledge and develop skills key to success in the 21st century. The Custom Day strategy will offer educators flexibility during the school day to provide targeted, differentiated support to create an effective learning environment for each student. Lastly, the Data Systems and Dashboards efforts will allow educators to draw more useful, frequent insights about student learning and provide the most responsive learning environment possible for each student. The more robust data system will also enable school and system leaders to identify and share promising practices early on in the program and to respond quickly to problems in order to refine, sustain and scale this work.

In this proposal, we outline the details of this theory of action; the expected outcomes from implementing these initiatives; and detail behind our implementation plan, including how we will equip educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders with the knowledge and skills necessary to execute on these goals successfully, and our plan for continuous improvement.

Theory of Change



(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes

Executing the strategies described in this proposal to deepen and personalize student learning will accelerate achievement and allow us to reach the ambitious college- and career-readiness goals we have set for our schools.

(A)(4)(a) Performance on summative assessments

Goal: At least 91% of Harmony students will be proficient in Math and Reading on Texas's summative assessment by 2017

Harmony believes our personalized learning initiatives will directly improve student learning outcomes because each initiative focuses on ensuring that students develop college- and career-ready knowledge and skills. The PBL curriculum will align to Common Core State

Standards (CCSS) as well as Texas state standards, requiring students to go deep into the content and apply their knowledge using higher-order skills. The Custom Day initiative will provide each student with individualized support to accelerate learning and ensure mastery of math and ELA standards. Our Data Systems and Dashboards will ensure we have real-time, actionable data to keep students on track to our ambitious goals.

Our baseline data and goals for summative assessments are included in section (A)(4)(a) of the A Tables section at the end of this proposal (A Tables-3). Harmony's results from SY 2010-11 for each grade-level and subject-level test are included, comparing the performance of students by individual Harmony LEA by subgroup (minority group, low-income status or other special needs categorization). For SY 2011-12, STAAR End Of Course (EOC) tests were introduced for 9th grade students with the tables reflecting this addition.

(A)(4)(b) Decreasing achievement gaps

Goal: Achievement gap between Harmony subgroups and white students in Texas on average will decrease by 3% every year

Harmony has already made great strides in decreasing the achievement gap, but we will not be satisfied until the gap is completely closed and our minority and low income students are performing at least as well as their white peers in each school and across the state. By engaging all students deeply through highly personalized, student-driven inquiry projects, providing individualized support to achieve mastery of skills, and ensuring that all our students have access to the tools and resources they need to excel in our rigorous program, Harmony will accelerate our movement along the trajectory toward closing this gap.

To evaluate progress in decreasing achievement gaps between white students and Harmony's minority and low-income students, Harmony will use measures of summative assessment as outlined in (A)(4)(a) and compare achievement of each subgroup of Harmony students to that of white students across the state of Texas (a state-wide average of white student performance). Our baseline performance and targets are included in table (A)(4)(b), (A Tables-123) in the A Tables section at the end of this proposal.

