

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 7/30/10 9:17 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Houston Independent School District -- , (S385A100140)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Evaluation Criteria		
Absolute Priority 1		
1.Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
1.Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Evaluaton Criteria		
Absolute Priority 3		
1.Absolute Priority 3	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Requirement		
Requirement		
1.Requirement	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Evaluation Criteria		
Core Element 1		
1.Core Element 1	0	0
Core Element 2		
1.Core Element 2	0	0
Core Element 3		
1.Core Element 3	0	0
Core Element 4		
1.Core Element 4	0	0
Core Element 5		
1.Core Element 5	0	0
High Quality Professional Development		
1.Professional Development	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Selection Criteria		
Need for the Project		
1.Need for Project	10	8
Project Design		

1.Project Design	60	52
Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project		
1.Adequacy of Support	25	25
Quality of Local Evaluation		
1.Quality of Local Eval.	5	4
Sub Total	100	89

Priority Questions

Priority Preference

Competitive Preference Priority 1

1.Competitive Priority 1	5	3
--------------------------	---	---

Competitive Preference Priority 2

1.Competitive Priority 2	5	4
--------------------------	---	---

Sub Total	10	7
------------------	----	---

Total	110	96
--------------	-----	----

Technical Review Form

Panel #16 - Panel - 16: 84.385A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Houston Independent School District -- , (S385A100140)

Questions

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 1

1. Priority 1: Differentiated Levels of Compensation for Effective Teachers and Principals:

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that --

It will develop and implement a PBCS that rewards, at differentiated levels, teachers and principals who demonstrate their effectiveness by improving student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as part of the coherent and integrated approach of the local educational agency (LEA) to strengthening the educator workforce.

In determining teacher and principal effectiveness as part of the PBCS, the LEA - -

- (a) Must give significant weight to student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice), based on objective data on student performance;
- (b) Must include observation-based assessments of teacher and principal performance at multiple points in the year, carried out by evaluators trained in using objective evidence-based rubrics for observation, aligned with professional teaching standards; and, if applicable, as part of the LEA's coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the educator workforce; and
- (c) May include other measures, such as evidence of leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice), that increase the effectiveness of other teachers in the school or LEA.

In determining principal effectiveness as part of a PBCS, the LEA must give significant weight to student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and may include supplemental measures such as high school graduation and college enrollment rates. In addition, the applicant must demonstrate that the differentiated effectiveness incentive payments will provide incentive amounts that are substantial and provide justification for the level of incentive amounts chosen. While the Department does not propose a minimum incentive amount, the Department encourages applicants to be thorough in their explanation of why the selected incentive amounts are likely high enough to create change in the behavior of current and prospective teachers and principals in order to ultimately improve student outcomes.

General:

The applicant met priority 1. The PBCS in Houston ISD is part of an established program called Project ASPIRE. Project ASPIRE is stated to address academic achievement and leadership and is likely to serve 130 schools. (p. 9)

a-The applicant gives significant weight to student growth and achievement as it evaluates teachers and principals. (p. 38)

b-The applicant on p. 39 notes that PBCS teachers and administrators will have several announced and unannounced observations of varying length, and a formalized Staff Review Process that occurs at least twice per year.

c-One component of Project ASPIRE is a proposed continuum of teacher supports and development activities that may provide PBCS participants with additional opportunities to mentor, coach, and deliver professional development. (p. 44)

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 2

1. Priority 2: Fiscal Sustainability of the Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS):

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that - -

(a) The applicant has projected costs associated with the development and implementation of the PBCS, during the project period and beyond, and has accepted the responsibility to provide such performance-based compensation to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) who earn it under the system; and

(b) The applicant will provide from non-TIF funds over the course of the five-year project period an increasing share of performance-based compensation paid to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) in those project years in which the LEA provides such payments as part of its PBCS.

General:

The applicant met priority 2.

a-The budget, found in the appendix, is reasonable and sufficient to support grant activities.

b-The applicant states that they will provide 31.8 million dollars from the grant (for entire project) and \$11.2 million as increasing share from the district general funds (to support PBCS for teachers and administrators) (p. 48). By year 5 of the grant, HISD will cover 75% of PBCS costs.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 3

1. Priority 3: Comprehensive Approaches to the Performance-Based Compensation System:

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that - -

The proposed PBCS is aligned with a coherent and integrated strategy for strengthening the educator workforce, including in the use of data and evaluations for professional development and retention and tenure decisions in the LEA or LEAs participating in the project during and after the end of the TIF project period.

General:

The applicant met priority 3.

The parent-ASPIRE program, under which the new PBCS will operate, conducted an analysis of the HISD human capital policies and practices. The report found that high poverty schools in HISD have a significantly lower percentage of high-performing teachers as compared to more affluent schools within HISD. The district used the findings from this report as the basis for changes to human resources, academic and management processes and procedures, including but not limited to, many elements of the PBCS initiative: increasing teacher and principal effectiveness and thereby improve student achievement, reforming teacher and principal appraisal and compensation systems so that teachers and principals are rewarded for increases in student achievement, increasing teacher and principal effectiveness, and increasing the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff subjects such as mathematics and science.

Reader's Score: 0

Requirement - Requirement

- 1. REQUIREMENT:** Comment on the quality of the applicant's description of how its proposed PBCS will provide educators with incentives to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice).

General:

Participants will receive \$1,000 for serving as a mentor or for serving on the school's ASPIRE Design and Advisory Committee. Other non-financial incentives may also apply to conducting professional developing, leading a study group, etc. The applicant also asserts that assigning highly effective teachers newly created site-specific positions will also encourage them to accept additional responsibilities (p. 16-17).

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 1

1. Core Element 1:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's plan for effectively communicating to teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and the community at-large the components of its performance based compensation system.

General:

The applicant will use established district communication channels to inform stakeholders of the PBCS. The district, on p. 34, will also utilize its multi-lingual program guide, released accountability reports, community forums and school/district office personnel to share information regarding the initiative. The list of communication options listed is reasonable and adequate.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 2

1. Core Element 2:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's involvement and support of teachers, principals, and other personnel (including input from teachers, principals, and other personnel in the schools and LEAs to be served by the grant) and the involvement and support of unions in participating LEAs (where they are the designated exclusive representatives for the purpose of collective bargaining) that is needed to carry out the grant.

General:

The applicant asserts that involvement in ASPIRE is demonstrated by the Advisory Committee (p. 35). No clarifying information is given regarding Committee membership or committee requisites or prerequisites. If the Advisory Board is the primary ombudsman between teachers and the decision making group is the Advisory Council, concerns exist as to how responsive they could be to teacher concerns. Formal and informal methods of communicating with the Advisory Committee may increase the opportunities teachers have to impact decisions regarding PBCS.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 3

1. Core Element 3:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's implementation, or plan to implement, a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor, as well as classroom observations conducted at least twice during the school year. The evaluation process must: (1) use an objective, evidence-based rubric aligned with professional teaching or leadership standards and the LEA's coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the educator workforce; (2) provide for observations of each teacher or principal at least twice during the school year by individuals (who may include peer reviewers) who are provided specialized training; (3) incorporate the collection and evaluation of additional forms of evidence; and (4) ensure a high degree of inter-rater reliability (i.e., agreement among two or more raters who score approximately the same).

General:

The district is in the process of updating its employee review process to include assessment of student growth, and a team approach to teacher appraisal. Members of small evaluative teams will be trained in inter-rater reliability (p. 36-39) and assess teacher performance and student growth. It is unclear from the narrative if the applicant will collect and evaluate additional forms of evidence.

The district has also selected an objective, evidence-based evaluation system to assess teacher effectiveness and thereby award incentives. ASPIRE will use SAS EVAAS to provide a value-added assessment of student growth and achievement. Each PBCS participant will be observed at least twice a year (p. 39).

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 4

1. Core Element 4:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's implementation or plan to implement, a data-management system that can link student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) data to teacher and principal payroll and human resources systems.

General:

The applicant states that its data-management system links student data and teacher and principal performance to human resource/payroll systems. Staff assignments and student-teacher linkages are verified through the ASPIRE Linkage and Verification process conducted in the spring (p. 40). Teachers and principals can review data in the system at anytime. This self-service entry into data-management is likely to improve discussions between administrators and teachers because all information concerning payroll, calculation of incentives and student growth is available for open review.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 5

1. Core Element 5:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's plan for ensuring that teachers and principals understand the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS, and receive professional development that enables them to use data generated by these measures to improve their practice.

General:

The applicant needs to provide additional details regarding how the PBCS will be communicated to end users. The applicant talks about communicating information through established district channels, but other communications options may be needed. The ASPIRE survey found that only 33% of participants found the website helpful for sharing information on the program (survey, p. 27). 13.8% found the community forums helpful.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - High Quality Professional Development

1. High Quality Professional Development:

Comment on the applicant's demonstration that ---

Its proposed PBCS will include a high-quality professional development component for teachers and principals consistent with the definition of the term professional development in section 9101(34) of the ESEA. The applicant must demonstrate that its PBCS has a professional development component in place, or a specific plan for developing one, that is directly linked to the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS. The professional development component of the PBCS must - -

(1) Be based on needs assessed either at the high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) participating in the applicant's proposed PBCS or LEA-wide;

(2) Be targeted to individual teacher's and principal's needs as identified in the evaluation process;

(3) Provide --

(a) Those teachers and principals in participating TIF schools who do not receive differentiated compensation based on effectiveness under the PBCS with the tools and skills they need to improve their effectiveness in the classroom or school and be able to raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice); and

(b) Those teachers and principals who are deemed to be effective and who, therefore, receive differentiated compensation under the PBCS, with the tools and skills they need to (1) continue effective practices in the classroom or school and raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice), and (2) successfully assume additional responsibilities and leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice);

(4) Support teachers and principals to better understand and use the measures of effectiveness in the PBCS to improve practice and student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice); and

(5) Include a process for regularly assessing the effectiveness of this professional development in improving teacher and leadership practice to increase student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and making modifications necessary to improve its effectiveness.

General:

1-The applicant's professional development plan will provide a system of individualized support and professional development for teachers aligned with stakeholder input and with the redesigned teacher-appraisal system. (p. 41-47)

2-The individual growth plans will cater to each teacher's needs and will differentiate

services provided to each teacher.
on p. 42.

3- Teachers who receive PBCS incentives and those who do not may still take advantage of professional development offerings and supports it offers. While compensation may be reserved for highly effective teachers, all teachers will benefit from information shared at trainings or from workshops delivered by PBCS teachers.

4-Methods to support teachers and principals to better understand and use the elements of PBCS are not clearly highlighted in the narrative.

5-Evaluation tools will gauge success of the professional development system and the usefulness of professional development supports. (p. 42)

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Need for the Project

1.(A): Need for the project (10 points):

In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the applicant establishes that--

1) The high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) whose educators would be part of the PBCS have difficulty--

(i) Recruiting highly qualified or effective teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff subjects or specialty areas, such as mathematics, science, English language acquisition, and special education; and

(ii) Retaining highly qualified or effective teachers and principals.

(2) Student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) in each of the schools whose educators would be part of the PBCS is lower than in what the applicant determines are comparable schools in the LEA, or another LEA in its State, in terms of key factors such as size, grade levels, and poverty levels; and

(3) A definition of what it considers a "comparable" school for the purposes of paragraph (2) of this selection criterion is established.

Strengths:

1-The applicant, through findings from an online ASPIRE survey, found that HISD highest poverty schools have a lower percentage of high-performing teachers as compared to more affluent schools in the district.

The survey also revealed highly effective teachers are less likely (36% compared to 28%) to transfer to a high-poverty school.

Similar concerns are noted for retaining highly qualified administrators. Due to teacher turnover each year, HISD faces approximately 1,000 teacher vacancies and principal positions. The applicant notes that HISD had a teacher turnover rate of 11.7%, or 1,501 out of 12,829 teachers, many of the highest performing teachers leave within three years.

2-Data provided on student achievement does show need. 70,000 children are not reading on grade level, many are not performing basic math skills expected of them (p. 6). The dropout rate for the participating schools HISD class of 2008 is 20.5% (p. 7).

3-The applicant does provide a definition of comparable schools on p. 7 that ultimately compares the HISD and DISD.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides little school-centered data to support difficulty recruiting teachers in hard to staff areas. It is unclear if the applicant is comparing HISD to DISD or comparing subsets of schools within the district (i.e., 130 high need in HISD versus 130 high need in DISD)(p 7-8). This makes it difficult to determine if the data included is comparable.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Project Design

1.(B): Project design (60 points)

In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the proposed PBCS--

(1) Is part of a proposed LEA or statewide strategy, as appropriate, for improving the process by which each participating LEA rewards teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) in high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) based upon their effectiveness as determined in significant part by student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice). With regard to the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel, the Secretary will consider whether--

(i) The methodology the LEA or SEA proposes to use in its PBCS to determine the effectiveness of a school's teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) includes valid and reliable measures of student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice);

(ii) The participating LEA would use the proposed PBCS to provide performance awards to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) that are of sufficient size to affect the behaviors of teachers, principals, and other personnel and their decisions as to whether to go to, or remain working in, the high-need school; and

(iii) The applicant provides a clear explanation of how teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) are determined to be "effective" for the purposes of the proposed PBCS.

(2) Has the involvement and support of teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools), including input from teachers, and principals, and other personnel in the schools and LEAs to be served by the grant, and the involvement and support of unions in participating LEAs where they are the designated exclusive representatives for the purpose of collective bargaining that is needed to carry out the grant;

(3) Includes rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate levels of effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor, as well as classroom observations conducted at least twice during the school year;

(4) Includes a data-management system, consistent with the LEA's proposed PBCS, that can link student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) data to teacher and principal payroll and human resources systems; and

(5) Incorporates high-quality professional development activities that increase the capacity of teachers and principals to raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and are directly linked to the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS.

Strengths:

1-The applicant desires to put effective teachers in every classroom and seeks to expand its current efforts through the ASPIRE initiative. The SAS EVAAS methodology used by the district is reliable and valid. The applicant intends to use the data-management system to identify incentive awards to each teacher according to student growth. It is not, however, clearly evident if the applicant has shared information with teachers and administrators outside of the project schools or the district.

3-The evaluation system has been redesigned and now features a staff review process. Teachers are divided up into highly effective, proficient, developing, and low performing groups. Teams of trained evaluators use data from the management system to make decisions regarding contracts and additional supports to improve teacher practice.

4-The applicant has adopted a data management system that is capable of linking measures of student growth with human resources and payroll systems. The data management tool can be accessed by both the principal and the teacher and has been shared through district professional development. Value-added data points are included and the professional development has trained teachers how to interpret the value added components.

5-High quality professional development linked to the measures of effectiveness are evident in the PBCS, including mentoring, coaching, team evaluation, PBCS, and data-management systems accessible by teachers and administrators.

Weaknesses:

The information provided on professional development is based around mentoring, recruitment, content professional development and pedagogy. More detail is needed here re: how it will impact student data and learning.

2-While there is evidence that the district uses communication strategies to share information regarding the PBCS program, input from teachers, and principals, and others in the LEA is not clearly evident. The applicant states that most communication and decisions regarding the PBCS occurs in the ASPIRE Advisory Committee. But it is unclear who serves on the advisory committee or how often input is solicited from the larger district community.

Reader's Score: 52

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project**1.(C): Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project (25 points):**

In determining the adequacy of the support for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which--

(1) The management plan is likely to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, and includes clearly defined responsibilities and detailed timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

(2) The project director and other key personnel are qualified to carry out their responsibilities, and their time commitments are appropriate and adequate to implement the project effectively;

(3) The applicant will support the proposed project with funds provided under other Federal or State programs and local financial or in-kind resources; and

(4) The requested grant amount and project costs are sufficient to attain project goals and reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the project.

Strengths:

The proposed plan will provide 31.8 million dollars from the grant (for entire project) and \$11.2 million as increasing share from the district general funds.

The management plan is defined and well developed (p. 48-53). The activities are inclusive and reflected in the narrative.

The project director and other supports are capable of providing program support and guidance.

The requested grant amount and project costs are sufficient to attain project goals and reasonable.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Quality of Local Evaluation

1.(D) Quality of Local Evaluation (5 points):

In determining the quality of the local project evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant's evaluation plan--

(1) Includes the use of strong and measurable performance objectives (that are clearly related to the goals of the project) for raising student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice), increasing the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools), and retaining and recruiting effective teachers, principals, and other personnel;

(2) Will produce evaluation data that are quantitative and qualitative; and

(3) Includes adequate evaluation procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The performance objectives on p. 11-14 are appropriate and address major project goals. The goals provided will yield both quantitative and qualitative results. The applicant has four strong goals on p. 11-14. They are inclusive and focused on increasing the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel. The goals also impact recruitment and retention of teachers and principals.

The goals are measurable and will produce qualitative and quantitative goals.

The presence of the ASPIRE Advisory Committee and the feedback from studies conducted by the district's Research and Accountability Department (i.e., program evaluation, district data analysis, operations and data control, performance analysis, etc., p. 60) are additional sources of evaluative data.

Weaknesses:

Moreover, the applicant states that one of its goals is to close the achievement gap (p. 11). It is unclear how changing the performance pay system will immediately close the achievement gap by even the 3% noted in the narrative.

Reader's Score: 4

Priority Questions

Priority Preference - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority: Use of Value-Added Measures of Student Achievement. (Up to 5 points):

To meet this competitive preference priority, the applicant must demonstrate, in its application, that the proposed PBCS for teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) will use a value-added measure of the impact on student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor in calculating differentiated levels of compensation provided to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools).

Under this priority, the applicant must also demonstrate that it has a plan to ensure that, as part of the PBCS, it has the capacity to (1) implement the proposed value-added model (e.g., through robust data systems that collect the necessary data and ensure data quality), and (2) clearly explain the chosen value-added model to teachers to enable them to use the data generated through the model to improve classroom practices.

Strengths:

The applicant states that it has used value-added data in previous evaluation systems and has provided training to all staff on value-added data techniques. It also asserts on p. 2 that national attention has been paid to its efforts on value-added data. It is also listed as a component of the current ASPIRE initiative (p. 10).

Weaknesses:

Despite claims of national attention, very little information is provided in the narrative regarding value added data. While the applicant mentions it in the narrative, specific information regarding what the district does with it is missing. The applicant provides information on the TAKS test, which is an annual test. No additional information was noted to explain how an annual test provides useful value-added data to a teacher between annual test administrations. More discussion on how the district communicates information on value added data would have provided additional detail.

Reader's Score: 3

Priority Preference - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority: Increased Recruitment and Retention of Effective Teachers to Serve High-Need Students and in Hard-to-Staff Subjects and Specialty Areas in High-Need Schools. (Up to 5 points):

To meet this competitive preference priority, the applicant must demonstrate in its application that its proposed PBCS is designed to assist high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) to (1) serve high-need students (as defined in the Federal Register notice), (2) retain effective teachers in teaching positions in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas, such as mathematics, science, special education, and English language acquisition, and (3) fill vacancies with teachers of those subjects or specialty areas who are effective or likely to be effective. The applicant must provide an explanation for how it will determine that a teacher filling a vacancy is effective or likely to be effective. In addition, applicants must demonstrate, in their applications, the extent to which the subjects or specialty areas they propose to target are hard-to-staff. Lastly, applicants must demonstrate, in their applications that they will implement

a process for effectively communicating to teachers which of the LEA's schools are high-need and which subjects and specialty areas are considered hard-to-staff.

Strengths:

- 1-The applicant has provided details that its schools and positions are hard to staff by virtue of high turnover in administrative and teacher positions and the 50% or higher economically disadvantaged rate of project schools.
- 2-The applicant has stated that effective teachers are not only hard to retain, but hard to recruit (p. 4). All incentives, like the ones proposed, that are likely to attract and retain effective teachers may help address chronic turnover statistics (i.e., 1000 teacher and principal vacancies in the district each year, p. 5)
- 3-The applicant provides adequate evidence of how it intends to fill vacancies with teachers of those subjects or specialty areas who are effective or likely to be effective. The applicant has identified the ASPIRE initiative and its PBCS as primary recruitment and retention tools for effective teachers (p. 8-9).

Weaknesses:

No front-loaded incentive is provided to attract teachers to the system. A signing bonus, housing allowance, or tuition waiver are examples of front-loaded incentives. The lack of such front-loaded incentives may be a deterrent to some.

The applicant also did not articulate a process to determine if the teacher filling a vacancy is effective or likely to be effective.

The applicant did not adequately demonstrate the extent to which the subjects or specialty areas they propose to target are hard to staff.

The applicants did not provide adequate evidence that subjects or specialty areas they propose to target are hard-to-staff.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 7/30/10 9:17 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 7/29/10 1:54 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Houston Independent School District -- , (S385A100140)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Evaluation Criteria		
Absolute Priority 1		
1.Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
1.Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Evaluaton Criteria		
Absolute Priority 3		
1.Absolute Priority 3	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Requirement		
Requirement		
1.Requirement	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Evaluation Criteria		
Core Element 1		
1.Core Element 1	0	0
Core Element 2		
1.Core Element 2	0	0
Core Element 3		
1.Core Element 3	0	0
Core Element 4		
1.Core Element 4	0	0
Core Element 5		
1.Core Element 5	0	0
High Quality Professional Development		
1.Professional Development	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Selection Criteria		
Need for the Project		
1.Need for Project	10	7
Project Design		

1.Project Design	60	54
Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project		
1.Adequacy of Support	25	25
Quality of Local Evaluation		
1.Quality of Local Eval.	5	4
Sub Total	100	90

Priority Questions

Priority Preference

Competitive Preference Priority 1

1.Competitive Priority 1	5	5
--------------------------	---	---

Competitive Preference Priority 2

1.Competitive Priority 2	5	3
--------------------------	---	---

Sub Total	10	8
------------------	----	---

Total	110	98
--------------	-----	----

Technical Review Form

Panel #16 - Panel - 16: 84.385A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Houston Independent School District -- , (S385A100140)

Questions

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 1

1. Priority 1: Differentiated Levels of Compensation for Effective Teachers and Principals:

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that --

It will develop and implement a PBCS that rewards, at differentiated levels, teachers and principals who demonstrate their effectiveness by improving student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as part of the coherent and integrated approach of the local educational agency (LEA) to strengthening the educator workforce.

In determining teacher and principal effectiveness as part of the PBCS, the LEA - -

- (a) Must give significant weight to student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice), based on objective data on student performance;
- (b) Must include observation-based assessments of teacher and principal performance at multiple points in the year, carried out by evaluators trained in using objective evidence-based rubrics for observation, aligned with professional teaching standards; and, if applicable, as part of the LEA's coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the educator workforce; and
- (c) May include other measures, such as evidence of leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice), that increase the effectiveness of other teachers in the school or LEA.

In determining principal effectiveness as part of a PBCS, the LEA must give significant weight to student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and may include supplemental measures such as high school graduation and college enrollment rates. In addition, the applicant must demonstrate that the differentiated effectiveness incentive payments will provide incentive amounts that are substantial and provide justification for the level of incentive amounts chosen. While the Department does not propose a minimum incentive amount, the Department encourages applicants to be thorough in their explanation of why the selected incentive amounts are likely high enough to create change in the behavior of current and prospective teachers and principals in order to ultimately improve student outcomes.

General:

The applicant meets all the criteria for Priority 1.

A) The applicant will use state tests (TAKS) and value-added metrics (EVAAS) to determine student achievement gains in core subjects. Teachers and principals with test scores in the top 50% of participating schools are eligible for bonuses, based on proficiency and growth. The bonuses are primarily based on student achievement. Therefore student achievement is significantly weighted.

B) The applicant described a system of observation based evaluations that are aligned with the district's new Staff Review Process (pg 36) for both teachers and principals. The process involved multiple evaluation points and multiple reviewers. The design of the evaluation process is in development.

C) The applicant stated that it will create leaderships positions for high performers, such as mentor teachers, professional learning community leaders, etc (pg 44).

The applicant states teachers may earn up to \$10,300, principals may earn up to \$15,530, and assistant principals may earn up to \$7,765 for superior performance (pg 20). These amounts of money are significant enough to encourage modified behavior.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 2

1. Priority 2: Fiscal Sustainability of the Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS):

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that - -

(a) The applicant has projected costs associated with the development and implementation of the PBCS, during the project period and beyond, and has accepted the responsibility to provide such performance-based compensation to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) who earn it under the system; and

(b) The applicant will provide from non-TIF funds over the course of the five-year project period an increasing share of performance-based compensation paid to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) in those project years in which the LEA provides such payments as part of its PBCS.

General:

The applicant met the criteria for Priority 2.

A - The applicant projected total costs of more than \$42 million over the course of a five year project period. \$31.8 million is projected to come from Federal funds. \$11.1 million is projected to come from non-Federal funds (e5,6).

B - The applicant states that it will gradually assume more responsibility for the costs of implementation and stated that it is committed to carrying the costs of the program after the five year project period (pg 56). The district will go from 0% responsibility to 75% financial responsibility by year 5. To do this, the district has set aside money in its regular budget and has partnered with foundation to raise additional monies (pg 35).

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluaton Criteria - Absolute Priority 3

1. Priority 3: Comprehensive Approaches to the Performance-Based Compensation System:

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that - -

The proposed PBCS is aligned with a coherent and integrated strategy for strengthening the educator workforce, including in the use of data and evaluations for professional development and retention and tenure decisions in the LEA or LEAs participating in the project during and after the end of the TIF project period.

General:

The applicant met the criteria of Priority 3.

The applicant's proposed PBSC is aligned with the district's ASPIRE program, which is a recently implemented comprehensive effort to improve student achievement by improving educator quality. The program does include the use of data, evaluations, professional

development and retention efforts to attract and retain quality teachers at high-need schools (pg 2-7). ASPIRE is a large, comprehensive effort designed for the entire district, and it appears to be the centerpiece of reform efforts in the district. It is a well thought-out plan, and it focuses on student achievement as its core goal.

Reader's Score: 0

Requirement - Requirement

1. **REQUIREMENT:** Comment on the quality of the applicant's description of how its proposed PBCS will provide educators with incentives to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice).

General:

The applicant has met the requirement. The applicant stated that it will provide stipends of \$1,000 for teachers to take on additional responsibilities, including serving on committees, and mentoring. (pg 16, Budget 3). Future leadership roles may be created as the plan develops.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 1

1. Core Element 1:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's plan for effectively communicating to teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and the community at-large the components of its performance based compensation system.

General:

The applicant's plan for communicating the components of its performance based compensation system to staff is lackluster. The district informs its staff through a published report and a website portal (pg 34). The district will publish an annual report and give access to the district's school performance records (pg 33). However, it does not say how the records can be accessed, whether it be hard-copy or online. There is no evidence of attempted earned media efforts or internet efforts.

Approximately 70% of teachers and staff knew about the program's first implementation, according to surveys in the Appendix A.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 2

1. Core Element 2:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's involvement and support of teachers, principals, and other personnel (including input from teachers, principals, and other personnel in the schools and LEAs to be served by the grant) and the involvement and support of unions in participating LEAs (where they are the designated exclusive representatives for the purpose of collective bargaining) that is needed to carry out the grant.

General:

The applicant states input and support for the ASPIRE program comes via the ASPIRE Awards Program Advisory Committee (pg 35). The committee meets throughout the year and provides recommendations to the Board of Educaiton. However, it is unclear as to who sits on the committee and how the members are chosen. The applicant states that collective bargaining approval is not needed in the State of Texas for matters of compensation (pg 35). In the appendix A section, the data from the district's teachers and principals show a slight majority are in favor of merit based bonuses.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 3

1. Core Element 3:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's implementation, or plan to implement, a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor, as well as classroom observations conducted at least twice during the school year. The evaluation process must: (1) use an objective, evidence-based rubric aligned with professional teaching or leadership standards and the LEA's coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the educator workforce; (2) provide for observations of each teacher or principal at least twice during the school year by individuals (who may include peer reviewers) who are provided specialized training; (3) incorporate the collection and evaluation of additional forms of evidence; and (4) ensure a high degree of inter-rater reliability (i.e., agreement among two or more raters who score approximately the same).

General:

1) The applicant provides a plan to implement a fair, rigorous and transparent evaluation system to differentiate effectiveness. The applicant contracted with The New Teacher Project (TNTP) in 2009 to revamp the evaluation process. The board decided to include student achievement growth to be part of the teacher retention decision.

2) The applicant also implemented a comprehensive Staff Review Process to gather data on staff using student achievement, multiple evaluations each year, and using multiple evaluators to judge individual performance. The design of the evaluation system is in the works, and thus final metrics are not described.

3) The applicant will incorporate additional forms of evidence, including the principal's evaluation based on the Texas principal standards, and teacher evaluations, based the New Teacher Project's standards. Additional leadership responsibilities will also be considered.

4) Because the observations are conducted by multiple reviewers, the applicant states it will synthesize the results to come up with one score.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 4

1. Core Element 4:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's implementation or plan to implement, a data-management system that can link student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) data to teacher and principal payroll and human resources systems.

General:

The applicant described a sophisticated system for linking student achievement to teacher and principal performance. The system uses student achievement data from the district's EVAAS system to calculate value-added data. There is a Bureau of Performance Analysis that can calculate awards, make corrections, and answer staff questions. This system appears to be thorough and fair.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 5

1. Core Element 5:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's plan for ensuring that teachers and principals understand the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS, and receive professional development that enables them to use data generated by these measures to improve their practice.

General:

The applicant's plan to ensure staff understanding of the metrics used to determine staff effectiveness is not clear. The data in Appendix A suggests that 70% of teachers understood the metrics used for the program's first implementation. The applicant does have a robust professional development plan that incorporates the use of data to improve their practice (pg 39-42).

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - High Quality Professional Development

1. High Quality Professional Development:

Comment on the applicant's demonstration that ---

Its proposed PBCS will include a high-quality professional development component for teachers and principals consistent with the definition of the term professional development in section 9101(34) of the ESEA. The applicant must demonstrate that its PBCS has a professional development component in place, or a specific plan for developing one, that is directly linked to the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS. The professional development component of the PBCS must - -

- (1) Be based on needs assessed either at the high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) participating in the applicant's proposed PBCS or LEA-wide;
- (2) Be targeted to individual teacher's and principal's needs as identified in the evaluation process;
- (3) Provide --
 - (a) Those teachers and principals in participating TIF schools who do not receive differentiated compensation based on effectiveness under the PBCS with the tools and skills they need to improve their effectiveness in the classroom or school and be able to raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice); and
 - (b) Those teachers and principals who are deemed to be effective and who, therefore, receive differentiated compensation under the PBCS, with the tools and skills they need to
 - (1) continue effective practices in the classroom or school and raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice), and (2) successfully assume additional responsibilities and leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice);
 - (4) Support teachers and principals to better understand and use the measures of

effectiveness in the PBCS to improve practice and student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice); and
(5) Include a process for regularly assessing the effectiveness of this professional development in improving teacher and leadership practice to increase student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and making modifications necessary to improve its effectiveness.

General:

1) Professional development will be targeted to teachers serving at 130 high-need schools.

2) The applicant does provide a plan for professional development that is needs based, targeted to the individual teacher's needs (based on reviews).

3 and 4) All educators, whether receiving PBCS bonuses or not are provided access to professional development. The professional development program aims to provide instructors with skills needed to be effective. The applicant described a professional development program with four different audiences: 1) New teachers and teacher recruitment, 2) beginning teachers, 3) professional development for teachers in need of additional support, and 4) pedagogical skills enhancement (pg 43). All teachers wishing to qualify for the awards must have 45 hours or more of professional development during the school year (pg 46) and the district is providing mentor teachers, common planning time and ongoing seminars (pg 45).

5) The plan includes training to understand the metrics, once they are defined, and EVAAS training (pg 41).

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Need for the Project

1.(A): Need for the project (10 points):

In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the applicant establishes that--

1) The high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) whose educators would be part of the PBCS have difficulty--

(i) Recruiting highly qualified or effective teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff subjects or specialty areas, such as mathematics, science, English language acquisition, and special education; and

(ii) Retaining highly qualified or effective teachers and principals.

(2) Student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) in each of the schools whose educators would be part of the PBCS is lower than in what the applicant determines are comparable schools in the LEA, or another LEA in its State, in terms of key factors such as size, grade levels, and poverty levels; and

(3) A definition of what it considers a "comparable" school for the purposes of paragraph (2) of this selection criterion is established.

Strengths:

1) The applicant identified 130 schools in its district that meet the criteria of high need. Each school has a high poverty rate, below average student achievement, and the schools struggle with a high staff turnover rate of 11.7% (pg 5). Good teachers are especially likely to leave after only a few years (pg 5). The district also hires 30-40 principals per year among the 130 identified schools, showing a lack of consistency among school site leadership.

2) Student achievement at the 130 identified schools lower than state averages, and are the lowest performing schools in the district. (pg 6).

3) The applicant chose another large urban district in the same state to show comparable school scores. The other district did indeed show higher student achievement among similar demographics

Weaknesses:

The applicant chose to compare only its worst schools with the district wide average of another school district (Dallas). This is not an accurate indicator of how the applicant's low-performing schools compare to other low-performing schools with similar demographics and size. Therefore, it is unclear as to how well the applicant's high-need schools perform versus truly comparable schools.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Project Design

1.(B): Project design (60 points)

In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the proposed PBCS--

(1) Is part of a proposed LEA or statewide strategy, as appropriate, for improving the process by which each participating LEA rewards teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) in high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) based upon their effectiveness as determined in significant part by student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice). With regard to the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel, the Secretary will consider whether--

(i) The methodology the LEA or SEA proposes to use in its PBCS to determine the effectiveness of a school's teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) includes valid and reliable measures of student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice);

(ii) The participating LEA would use the proposed PBCS to provide performance awards to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) that are of sufficient size to affect the behaviors of teachers, principals, and other personnel and their decisions as to whether to go to, or remain working in, the high-need school; and

(iii) The applicant provides a clear explanation of how teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) are determined to be "effective" for the purposes of the proposed PBCS.

(2) Has the involvement and support of teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools), including input from teachers, and principals, and other personnel in the schools and LEAs to be served by the grant, and the involvement and support of unions in participating LEAs where they are the designated exclusive representatives for the purpose of collective bargaining that is needed to carry out the grant;

(3) Includes rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate levels of effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor, as well as classroom observations conducted at least twice during the school year;

(4) Includes a data-management system, consistent with the LEA's proposed PBCS, that can

link student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) data to teacher and principal payroll and human resources systems; and

(5) Incorporates high-quality professional development activities that increase the capacity of teachers and principals to raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and are directly linked to the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS.

Strengths:

1) The applicant does intend to use TIF monies to compliment an existing LEA wide strategy (ASPIRE). The funds will be targeted to reward teachers and principals only at high-need schools. The methodology to determine an educator's performance is solid. The awards are based on student growth. The applicant does provide a plan as to how it will explain to teachers and principals what criteria are needed to earn a bonus (pg 34).

2) The applicant does demonstrate support among teachers and principals (Appendix survey). The applicant states that the teachers' union does not need to be on board because it does not bargain additional compensation measures (pg 35).

3) The applicant does incorporate a fair, data driven evaluation system. Evaluations are based on student performance and manager evaluations that are consistent with the criteria in the grant. Observations are performed by both managers and peers, and are conducted at multiple points in the year. Principals will be trained to identify areas of support. Principals will be evaluated based on the Learner-Centered Standards for Texas Principals, and by how well their schools perform on standardized testing (pg 32, 33).

4) The applicant does include a data management system (EVAAS) that can link student performance to human resources (pg 40) The applicant also has a division within its central office that manage and analyze merit compensation decisions.

5) The applicant demonstrates it has a high-quality professional development plan to increase educator capacity. The plan includes a new delivery model, areas of focus and content of support offerings, skills development classes that are recommended in the evaluation and EVAAS training (pg 41).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not show an overwhelming support from teachers and principals for the plan. Based on its own surveys, there is lack of widespread support from teachers and principals to use student performance as a key factor for compensation decisions (Appendix 22-23).

Based on their previous incentive program, only 30% of teachers felt the award would incentivize them to change behavior (Appendix 23) .

Reader's Score: 54

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project

1.(C): Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project (25 points):

In determining the adequacy of the support for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which--

(1) The management plan is likely to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, and includes clearly defined responsibilities and detailed

timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

(2) The project director and other key personnel are qualified to carry out their responsibilities, and their time commitments are appropriate and adequate to implement the project effectively;

(3) The applicant will support the proposed project with funds provided under other Federal or State programs and local financial or in-kind resources; and

(4) The requested grant amount and project costs are sufficient to attain project goals and reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the project.

Strengths:

The proposed project demonstrated that it does:

1) Have a management plan that is likely to achieve the objectives. The senior management is actively involved, and the district has a division dedicated to managing data and compensation decisions. The board has shown its support, as well.

2) The project director and other personnel do appear to be qualified to implement the project, based on experience demonstrated on their resumes (Appendix).

3) The applicant demonstrates a will to support the proposed project with non-Federal funding, and will assume 75% of the total costs by year 5. Outside grants have been secured to help offset the costs (pg 36).

4)The requested grant amount is sufficient to attain the project goals.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Quality of Local Evaluation

1.(D) Quality of Local Evaluation (5 points):

In determining the quality of the local project evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant's evaluation plan--

(1) Includes the use of strong and measurable performance objectives (that are clearly related to the goals of the project) for raising student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice), increasing the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools), and retaining and recruiting effective teachers, principals, and other personnel;

(2) Will produce evaluation data that are quantitative and qualitative; and

(3) Includes adequate evaluation procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

1) The applicant demonstrates that it will use strong, measureable objectives (pg 11-13). The goals are to improve the effectiveness of teachers and principals, student achievement, and increase the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority students in high-need schools. The district will use its Research and Accountability

Department to collect and analyze the data, which will also provide adequate feedback for evaluation purposes (pg 57).

2) The Department will also produce evaluation data that is both quantitative (student growth and test scores) and qualitative (staff surveys) and will use that data to find trends and determine awards.

3)The district will use its Research and Accountability Department to collect and analyze the data, which will also provide adequate feedback for evaluation purposes (pg 57). There is a plan to collect data to better drive decisions related to recruitment and retention, and award bonuses.

Weaknesses:

The only weakness is that the program is being evaluated by the same entity (the school district) that is charged with implementing the TIF grant. It is possible that some bias will take place in the evaluation process.

Reader's Score: 4

Priority Questions

Priority Preference - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority: Use of Value-Added Measures of Student Achievement. (Up to 5 points):

To meet this competitive preference priority, the applicant must demonstrate, in its application, that the proposed PBCS for teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) will use a value-added measure of the impact on student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor in calculating differentiated levels of compensation provided to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools).

Under this priority, the applicant must also demonstrate that it has a plan to ensure that, as part of the PBCS, it has the capacity to (1) implement the proposed value-added model (e.g., through robust data systems that collect the necessary data and ensure data quality), and (2) clearly explain the chosen value-added model to teachers to enable them to use the data generated through the model to improve classroom practices.

Strengths:

1) The applicant does demonstrate that it will use value-added measures as the primary measure of the impact on student growth. The applicant has already implemented EVAAS, a value-added software system, and the district appears to have the capacity to tie that data to teacher compensation. The district has a specific division to interpret that data and tie it to human resource decisions.

2) The applicant does provide a plan as to how it will explain to teachers and principals what the model is and plans to provide professional development related to that model (pg 34).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Preference - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority: Increased Recruitment and Retention of Effective Teachers to Serve High-Need Students and in Hard-to-Staff Subjects and Specialty Areas in High-Need Schools. (Up to 5 points):

To meet this competitive preference priority, the applicant must demonstrate in its application that its proposed PBCS is designed to assist high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) to (1) serve high-need students (as defined in the Federal Register notice), (2) retain effective teachers in teaching positions in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas, such as mathematics, science, special education, and English language acquisition, and (3) fill vacancies with teachers of those subjects or specialty areas who are effective or likely to be effective. The applicant must provide an explanation for how it will determine that a teacher filling a vacancy is effective or likely to be effective. In addition, applicants must demonstrate, in their applications, the extent to which the subjects or specialty areas they propose to target are hard-to-staff. Lastly, applicants must demonstrate, in their applications that they will implement a process for effectively communicating to teachers which of the LEA's schools are high-need and which subjects and specialty areas are considered hard-to-staff.

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrated that finding and retaining quality teachers in high-need schools is a significant priority for the district. The district hires over 1,000 teachers per year, most of whom will be placed in high-need schools and subjects that are hard to fill. The applicant intends to strengthen its recruiting and selection processes. The district also plans to strengthen its induction process and provide additional training to teachers in high need schools (pg 43).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not propose using TIF funds for signing bonuses to get high need subject teachers on board. The applicant did not give specifics as to how it would improve teacher recruitment by making high need schools a place that teachers would want to work for. Its plan for recruitment do not appear to be overly attractive, based on the lack of signing bonuses.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 7/29/10 1:54 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 7/30/10 9:41 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Houston Independent School District -- , (S385A100140)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Evaluation Criteria		
Absolute Priority 1		
1.Absolute Priority 1	0	0
Absolute Priority 2		
1.Absolute Priority 2	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Evaluaton Criteria		
Absolute Priority 3		
1.Absolute Priority 3	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Requirement		
Requirement		
1.Requirement	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Evaluation Criteria		
Core Element 1		
1.Core Element 1	0	0
Core Element 2		
1.Core Element 2	0	0
Core Element 3		
1.Core Element 3	0	0
Core Element 4		
1.Core Element 4	0	0
Core Element 5		
1.Core Element 5	0	0
High Quality Professional Development		
1.Professional Development	0	0
Sub Total	0	0
Selection Criteria		
Need for the Project		
1.Need for Project	10	8
Project Design		

1.Project Design	60	48
Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project		
1.Adequacy of Support	25	25
Quality of Local Evaluation		
1.Quality of Local Eval.	5	5
Sub Total	100	86

Priority Questions

Priority Preference

Competitive Preference Priority 1

1.Competitive Priority 1	5	4
--------------------------	---	---

Competitive Preference Priority 2

1.Competitive Priority 2	5	2
--------------------------	---	---

Sub Total	10	6
------------------	----	---

Total	110	92
--------------	-----	----

Technical Review Form

Panel #16 - Panel - 16: 84.385A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Houston Independent School District -- , (S385A100140)

Questions

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 1

1. Priority 1: Differentiated Levels of Compensation for Effective Teachers and Principals:

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that --

It will develop and implement a PBCS that rewards, at differentiated levels, teachers and principals who demonstrate their effectiveness by improving student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as part of the coherent and integrated approach of the local educational agency (LEA) to strengthening the educator workforce.

In determining teacher and principal effectiveness as part of the PBCS, the LEA - -

- (a) Must give significant weight to student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice), based on objective data on student performance;
- (b) Must include observation-based assessments of teacher and principal performance at multiple points in the year, carried out by evaluators trained in using objective evidence-based rubrics for observation, aligned with professional teaching standards; and, if applicable, as part of the LEA's coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the educator workforce; and
- (c) May include other measures, such as evidence of leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice), that increase the effectiveness of other teachers in the school or LEA.

In determining principal effectiveness as part of a PBCS, the LEA must give significant weight to student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and may include supplemental measures such as high school graduation and college enrollment rates. In addition, the applicant must demonstrate that the differentiated effectiveness incentive payments will provide incentive amounts that are substantial and provide justification for the level of incentive amounts chosen. While the Department does not propose a minimum incentive amount, the Department encourages applicants to be thorough in their explanation of why the selected incentive amounts are likely high enough to create change in the behavior of current and prospective teachers and principals in order to ultimately improve student outcomes.

General:

Met

HISD has implemented a differentiated system of compensation for teachers, principals, and other school personnel based on student achievement. Project ASPIRE was first implemented in the 2007-08 academic year. It focuses on teacher effectiveness and growth in student learning at campus (principal), individual teacher level and central office level. (p 8-9)

Value-added performance assessment based on student growth is utilized to determine awards, performance appraisals and contract decisions. Student gains at each campus are calculated through EVAAS and the district rank orders the campus value-added gain. Teachers at schools ranked in Quartiles 1 and 2 receive compensation (p 21) The PBCS incorporates state/local funds with TIF funds to provide the incentive award.

A new Staff Review Process will be developed as a result of TIF funding. The current system for teachers includes performance assessment results, principal walk-throughs,

multiple observations, review of student work products, and formative student assessment data (p 37). Clear guidelines for these assessment tasks are not provided; however, the new performance compensation system will rely on lessons learned from the initial program. Principals will receive assistance from the Staff Review Team on making decisions about teacher effectiveness (p 38); however, there is no information provided on training principals will receive on completing the observation rubrics. It also isn't clear whether the rubrics will be aligned with teacher performance standards. On page 44, the proposal states that there will be standards-based evaluations but does not elaborate on these evaluations. Leadership roles that provide new career pathways are included. Available leadership roles include mentorship of struggling teachers, leading professional learning communities or grade level teams, design and delivery of professional development (p 17). Principal evaluations are not clearly outlined in the proposal. Award amounts available to teachers and principals is outlined but is a bit confusing because there seems to be several components to the formula. All in all, principals may receive up to \$15,500, teachers of core subjects up to \$10,300, and assistant principals up to \$7,700. There is a different formula for teachers who do not teach core subjects (p 20). Justification for these amounts is based on results from the initial ASPIRE program which indicated that this amount is sufficient.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 2

1. Priority 2: Fiscal Sustainability of the Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS):

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that - -

(a) The applicant has projected costs associated with the development and implementation of the PBCS, during the project period and beyond, and has accepted the responsibility to provide such performance-based compensation to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) who earn it under the system; and

(b) The applicant will provide from non-TIF funds over the course of the five-year project period an increasing share of performance-based compensation paid to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) in those project years in which the LEA provides such payments as part of its PBCS.

General:

Met

Initially (2007-08), HISD designated 1% of the budget for personnel for performance-based awards (p 56). Now the district has obtained federal, state, and private funds to meet many of the needs of the PBCS. The district has partnered such groups as the John and Laura Arnold Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Houston Endowment (p 36) to ascertain additional funds for the ASPIRE program. Success at obtaining and utilizing these grant funds indicates that the district is capable acquiring outside monies. The proposal includes a budget that outlines the increasing share to be paid by HISD (p 56).

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Absolute Priority 3

1. Priority 3: Comprehensive Approaches to the Performance-Based Compensation System:

Comment on how well the applicant demonstrates that - -

The proposed PBCS is aligned with a coherent and integrated strategy for strengthening the educator workforce, including in the use of data and evaluations for professional development and retention and tenure decisions in the LEA or LEAs participating in the project during and after the end of the TIF project period.

General:

Met

The new ASPIRE plan will utilize data from the appraisal system and will assist in developing individualized plans for teachers to provide support and professional development that increases teacher effectiveness. (p 41) In order to retain quality teachers, the project provides support to teachers by "nurturing them from induction to effective instruction" (p 44). This process provides high quality mentoring, a common planning time, ongoing professional development, an external network of teachers with which to collaborate, and a standards-based evaluation. In addition, the school district will offer a bonus to qualified teachers in hard to staff subject and specialty areas who agree to move to a high-needs school (p 15).

Reader's Score: 0

Requirement - Requirement

1. REQUIREMENT: Comment on the quality of the applicant's description of how its proposed PBCS will provide educators with incentives to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice.

General:

Met

The HISD will create career pathways by providing highly effective teachers a leadership role in their school. Opportunities for leadership roles include opportunities for mentorship of struggling or new teachers, leading professional learning communities or grade level teams, providing professional development resources. Additional compensation or incentives will be made available for taking on these leadership roles as evidenced in the budget in the appendix (p e2).

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 1

1. Core Element 1:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's plan for effectively communicating to teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and the community at-large the components of its performance based compensation system.

General:

The district offers several vehicles for informing stakeholders of this PBCS (p 34). A bilingual guidebook that introduces ASPIRE is made available. Public access to district level, school level, and value added summary reports are made available to the community annually. The district holds community Forums to educate parents, families and community members about aspects of the school system. Participants are encouraged to provide feedback. Information related to how the district informs teachers, principals, and other school personnel appeared to be missing.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 2

1. Core Element 2:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's involvement and support of teachers, principals, and other personnel (including input from teachers, principals, and other personnel in the schools and LEAs to be served by the grant) and the involvement and support of unions in participating LEAs (where they are the designated exclusive representatives for the purpose of collective bargaining) that is needed to carry out the grant.

General:

The New Teacher Project conducted a survey in March and April 2010 of classroom teachers, principals, and teacher applicants. The survey, which had been conducted on previous years, sought to examine the quality of the ASPIRE program. The Executive Summary of the survey results in the appendix reveals the results of involvement and support of teachers, principals, and other personnel. There was a 37.7% overall response rate. The top 3 recommendations for changing the 2008-09 ASPIRE Award included: 1) not applying a differentiated compensation model so that all employees were treated equally, compensated equally, or had the opportunity to receive the same amount as the top dollar earners (20.9%), 2) providing other performance measures, ideas, or criteria (20.7%), and 3) provided negative commentary about the model or the implementation of the model (18.5%). (p e6, Appendix)

The HISD Board of Trustees and other administrative leaders obtain input from stakeholders through the ASPIRE Advisory Council; however, there is no information about the members of the Advisory Council. There is no collective bargaining as unions are not a strong influence in Texas (p 35).

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 3

1. Core Element 3:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's implementation, or plan to implement, a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor, as well as classroom observations conducted at least twice during the school year. The evaluation process must: (1) use an objective, evidence-based rubric aligned with professional teaching or leadership standards and the LEA's coherent and integrated approach to strengthening the educator workforce; (2) provide for observations of each teacher or principal at least twice during the school year by individuals (who may include peer reviewers) who are provided specialized training; (3) incorporate the collection and evaluation of additional forms of evidence; and (4) ensure a high degree of inter-rater reliability (i.e., agreement among two or more raters who score approximately the same).

General:

The current Staff Review Process was designed and implemented with the initiation of ASPIRE in 2007-08. The review process entails a three step process. (1) Principals group all teachers into one of four categories based on their performance data: highly

effective, proficient, developing, and low-performing (p 37). Performance data includes principal walk throughs, multiple observations, review of student work products, formative student assessment data, etc. However, clear guidelines for these assessment tasks are not provided. No discussion is provided about a standards-based rubric which is based on standards, about the number of observations teachers receive each year, about whether evaluators are trained to use an observation rubric, or that controls are in place to ensure inter-rater reliability. (2) Principals attend a staff review meeting where a team is trained prior to reviewing performance information on the teachers to insure fidelity and consistency in the process. (3) Principals work with the Staff Review Team and use a Staff Management Decision-Making Framework to make decisions on actions related to teacher contracts and to define additional supports for the teachers. Principal evaluations are not clearly outlined in the proposal.

With TIF funding, HISD will develop a new appraisal system that will rigorously assess teacher performance (measured largely by student performance), produce accurate differentiation of performance levels, and reliably identify individual teacher strengths and weaknesses. (p 38) The district will facilitate an extensive process to gather stakeholder input and include all required elements for a new comprehensive teacher appraisal system.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 4

1.Core Element 4:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's implementation or plan to implement, a data-management system that can link student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) data to teacher and principal payroll and human resources systems.

General:

The data management system links student achievement data to teacher and principal performance using the human resource system and payroll as an instrument for tracking and support. (p 40) Information is provided on how the data is entered into the system and an extensive discussion of how the reports are generated is included in the abstract. There is little information provided on how principal assessment reports are generated.

Reader's Score: 0

Evaluation Criteria - Core Element 5

1.Core Element 5:

Comment on the quality of the applicant's plan for ensuring that teachers and principals understand the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS, and receive professional development that enables them to use data generated by these measures to improve their practice.

General:

There is discussion on developing an effective system of individualized support and professional development with stakeholder input that closely aligns with the teacher appraisal system; however, the component of this core element related to ensuring that teacher and principals understand the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness in the PBCS is not clearly discussed. In addition, there is no mention of providing professional development that enables the teachers and principals to use data to improve their practices (p 41).

Evaluation Criteria - High Quality Professional Development

1. High Quality Professional Development:

Comment on the applicant's demonstration that ---

Its proposed PBCS will include a high-quality professional development component for teachers and principals consistent with the definition of the term professional development in section 9101(34) of the ESEA. The applicant must demonstrate that its PBCS has a professional development component in place, or a specific plan for developing one, that is directly linked to the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS. The professional development component of the PBCS must - -

- (1) Be based on needs assessed either at the high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) participating in the applicant's proposed PBCS or LEA-wide;
- (2) Be targeted to individual teacher's and principal's needs as identified in the evaluation process;
- (3) Provide --
 - (a) Those teachers and principals in participating TIF schools who do not receive differentiated compensation based on effectiveness under the PBCS with the tools and skills they need to improve their effectiveness in the classroom or school and be able to raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice); and
 - (b) Those teachers and principals who are deemed to be effective and who, therefore, receive differentiated compensation under the PBCS, with the tools and skills they need to
 - (1) continue effective practices in the classroom or school and raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice), and (2) successfully assume additional responsibilities and leadership roles (as defined in the Federal Register notice);
 - (4) Support teachers and principals to better understand and use the measures of effectiveness in the PBCS to improve practice and student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice); and
 - (5) Include a process for regularly assessing the effectiveness of this professional development in improving teacher and leadership practice to increase student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and making modifications necessary to improve its effectiveness.

General:

There is an extensive discussion of the development of a new professional development system (p 41). The system appears to be loosely linked to the needs assessment outcomes discussed in the first section of the proposal (p 2) The professional development system will strive to improve teacher performance through comprehensive individual support. There is some discussion of plans for principal professional development but the focus of the plan is on teacher improvement. The plan will include the following elements: a new delivery system, areas of focus for the content of support offerings, training for principals on providing effective school-based support, a systematic approach for implementing growth plans for individual teachers, and a reporting system to gauge how well the system of support and development increases teacher effectiveness.

Specific plans for teacher support and development focus on new teacher support, beginning teacher mentoring and induction, additional support for teachers in the content areas, and pedagogical skills enhancement (p 42).

Because the professional development system is in the planning stages, additional planning is needed to provide differentiation for professional development based on those who do and do not receive compensation, as well as providing training to ensure teachers and principals understand the measures of effectiveness to be used. The opportunity for leadership roles is included in the proposal (p 17). In addition, metrics and a reporting

system will be put into place that gauges how well the overall system of support and development increases teacher effectiveness and to gauge the comparative efficacy of particular teacher supports and the implementation of the supports at individual schools (p 42).

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Need for the Project

1.(A): Need for the project (10 points):

In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the applicant establishes that--

1) The high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) whose educators would be part of the PBCS have difficulty--

(i) Recruiting highly qualified or effective teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff subjects or specialty areas, such as mathematics, science, English language acquisition, and special education; and

(ii) Retaining highly qualified or effective teachers and principals.

(2) Student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) in each of the schools whose educators would be part of the PBCS is lower than in what the applicant determines are comparable schools in the LEA, or another LEA in its State, in terms of key factors such as size, grade levels, and poverty levels; and

(3) A definition of what it considers a "comparable" school for the purposes of paragraph (2) of this selection criterion is established.

Strengths:

The Houston Independent School District is a large ethnically diverse school district. The schools in HISD targeted for this incentive program have many of the characteristics found in other high-needs schools: low graduation and high dropout rates, and students from low-income families. Criterion for selection as a school participating in the PBCS includes large percentages of economically disadvantaged students, as well as lower student achievement than in comparable schools (p 1). These characteristics make it difficult to recruit and retain highly effective teachers and principals to these schools; however, the professional development plan does provide nurturing and support to ensure retention of quality teachers in the school (p 44).

The Dallas Independent School District was identified as a comparable school district because it is the second largest school district in the state next to Houston. Extensive guidelines by which to determine a comparable school is presented for the purposes of this proposal (p7-8). Comparison of student achievement scores of students in the target schools in Houston along with scores from Dallas and Texas are provided (p 6).

Weaknesses:

The fact that statistics for the 130 HISD high-needs schools were compared to the district-wide average for Dallas and the state-wide average for Texas would affect the comparison results. (p 7) District- and state-wide results would include student achievement data from schools that are not high-need. These schools would not be comparable to the target schools in this proposal.

Selection Criteria - Project Design

1.(B): Project design (60 points)

In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the proposed PBCS--

(1) Is part of a proposed LEA or statewide strategy, as appropriate, for improving the process by which each participating LEA rewards teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) in high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) based upon their effectiveness as determined in significant part by student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice). With regard to the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel, the Secretary will consider whether--

(i) The methodology the LEA or SEA proposes to use in its PBCS to determine the effectiveness of a school's teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) includes valid and reliable measures of student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice);

(ii) The participating LEA would use the proposed PBCS to provide performance awards to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) that are of sufficient size to affect the behaviors of teachers, principals, and other personnel and their decisions as to whether to go to, or remain working in, the high-need school; and

(iii) The applicant provides a clear explanation of how teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) are determined to be "effective" for the purposes of the proposed PBCS.

(2) Has the involvement and support of teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools), including input from teachers, and principals, and other personnel in the schools and LEAs to be served by the grant, and the involvement and support of unions in participating LEAs where they are the designated exclusive representatives for the purpose of collective bargaining that is needed to carry out the grant;

(3) Includes rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation systems for teachers and principals that differentiate levels of effectiveness using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor, as well as classroom observations conducted at least twice during the school year;

(4) Includes a data-management system, consistent with the LEA's proposed PBCS, that can link student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) data to teacher and principal payroll and human resources systems; and

(5) Incorporates high-quality professional development activities that increase the capacity of teachers and principals to raise student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice) and are directly linked to the specific measures of teacher and principal effectiveness included in the PBCS.

Strengths:

The current ASPIRE program is a comprehensive system for improving student achievement in high needs schools. Forty percent of teacher evaluations are based on student growth as measured in a value-added model (p Abstract). Student achievement is based on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), an assessment used by schools in the state to determine student performance.

The appraisal system which measures effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other

personnel is currently under revision. There was discussion about the current model for assessing teachers. In addition, there was an in-depth discussion about the awards process provided for teachers (p 20).

Involvement of district personnel provided through the ASPIRE Advisory Committee and the survey results of The New Teacher Project is considered by Executive Committee as they make changes to the project (p 35). As noted in the Executive Summary of The New Teacher Project in the Appendix, support for the project is stronger for principals than for teachers. Suggestions for improvement to the PBCS are included in the Executive Summary. Union representation is not included in collective bargaining in this state. (p 36)

The data management system utilized is SAS-EVAAS that links teacher and campus performance to student achievement. This system is also linked to human resources and payroll (p 40).

The professional development system is under review and revision. Currently, professional development activities are available and provide guidance to new and experienced teachers to enhance their abilities to raise student achievement levels. Because the evaluation system is also under revision, the standards by which teachers and principals are considered effective are unclear at this time (p 41)

Weaknesses:

Because the staff appraisal system is being revised, much of the information related to the effectiveness of teachers and fairness or rigor of the evaluation instruments will be determined later. There was little discussion about the assessment of principals' effectiveness. Tables that reveal compensation for student achievement are included on page 29. It seems that their evaluation hinges solely on student achievement.

It is unclear whether the awards allocated to principals and teachers were considered sufficient. There was no justification provided for the size of the rewards. The results of the items related to this in The New Teachers Project found in the Appendix did not provide much support for the levels of compensation. There has been a decrease in the percent of respondents who were in favor of or somewhat in favor of the concept of performance pay from 69.2% in December 2007 to 55.2% in March 2010 (appendix e2)

There was no indication that input was received from teachers or principals on the development or implementation of the PBCS. The district does collect teacher and principal input on various aspects of the PBCS through the New Teacher Project survey and it is noted that the responses are used in making improvements to the program; however, the extent of this consideration is not clear (Appendix e2). In addition, the make up of the ASPIRE Advisory Council which provides input to the Executive Council in making decisions is not provided (p 35).

Reader's Score: 48

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project

1.(C): Adequacy of Support for the Proposed Project (25 points):

In determining the adequacy of the support for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which--

(1) The management plan is likely to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, and includes clearly defined responsibilities and detailed timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

(2) The project director and other key personnel are qualified to carry out their responsibilities, and their time commitments are appropriate and adequate to implement the project effectively;

(3) The applicant will support the proposed project with funds provided under other Federal or State programs and local financial or in-kind resources; and

(4) The requested grant amount and project costs are sufficient to attain project goals and reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the project.

Strengths:

A timeline for completing project task is included which includes the major activities to be accomplished, personnel and milestones. Key personnel are identified and an explanation of their qualifications and responsibilities are included. School district funds have been allocated for the continuation of ASPIRE. (p 56) In addition, the district has partnered with such foundations as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on other projects. This grant proposal will benefit from those partnerships. (p 36) The requested amount and costs seem sufficient to carry out the project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Quality of Local Evaluation

1.(D) Quality of Local Evaluation (5 points):

In determining the quality of the local project evaluation, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant's evaluation plan--

(1) Includes the use of strong and measurable performance objectives (that are clearly related to the goals of the project) for raising student achievement (as defined in the Federal Register notice), increasing the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools), and retaining and recruiting effective teachers, principals, and other personnel;

(2) Will produce evaluation data that are quantitative and qualitative; and

(3) Includes adequate evaluation procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

Goals accompanied by strong, measurable objectives were identified beginning on page 11 to guide the project. The goals include: Increasing teacher and principal effectiveness and thereby improving student achievement, reforming the teacher and principal appraisal and compensation systems so that teachers and principals are rewarded for increases in student achievement, increase teacher and principal effectiveness, and increase the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority, and disadvantage students in hard to staff subjects such as math and science.

The HISD Research and Accountability Department is responsible for implementing the evaluation plan. This department will collect all data, carry out the analysis and report the results to the stakeholders. Progress toward meeting project goals will be reported annually for the schools participating in the PBCS. The evaluation will assess the

effectiveness of the project in relation to the goals. It will also assess the impact on participants in the program, as well as completion of project activities based on timelines. (p 58)

A set of questions have been developed to guide the annual evaluation of the ASPIRE Award Program as it is implemented in the district. Performance scores will provide quantitative data and post-award surveys will provide qualitative data. The project evaluator will report on a quarterly and end-of-year basis.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

Priority Preference - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority: Use of Value-Added Measures of Student Achievement. (Up to 5 points):

To meet this competitive preference priority, the applicant must demonstrate, in its application, that the proposed PBCS for teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools) will use a value-added measure of the impact on student growth (as defined in the Federal Register notice) as a significant factor in calculating differentiated levels of compensation provided to teachers, principals, and other personnel (in those sites in which the grantee wishes to expand the PBCS to additional staff in its schools).

Under this priority, the applicant must also demonstrate that it has a plan to ensure that, as part of the PBCS, it has the capacity to (1) implement the proposed value-added model (e.g., through robust data systems that collect the necessary data and ensure data quality), and (2) clearly explain the chosen value-added model to teachers to enable them to use the data generated through the model to improve classroom practices.

Strengths:

A value-added model utilized in the project is calculated by subtracting the district composite reference gain for that level and dividing by each campuses standard error (p 21). Extensive use of this value added approach is described within the proposal to measure impact on student growth and to calculate differentiated levels of compensation for teachers, principals, and other personnel. SAS EVAAS will carry out the comprehensive evaluation of student improvement using this value-added approach.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear whether the use of the value-added data is explained to teachers and principals in order for them to use the information to improve classroom practices

Reader's Score: 4

Priority Preference - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority: Increased Recruitment and Retention of Effective Teachers to Serve High-Need Students and in Hard-to-Staff Subjects and Specialty Areas in High-Need Schools. (Up to 5 points):

To meet this competitive preference priority, the applicant must demonstrate in its application that its proposed PBCS is designed to assist high-need schools (as defined in the Federal Register notice) to (1) serve high-need students (as defined in the Federal Register notice), (2) retain effective teachers in teaching positions in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas, such as mathematics, science, special education, and English language acquisition, and (3) fill vacancies with teachers of those subjects or specialty areas who are effective or likely to be effective. The applicant must provide an explanation for how it will determine that a teacher filling a vacancy is effective or likely to be effective. In addition, applicants must demonstrate, in their applications, the extent to which the subjects or specialty areas they propose to target are hard-to-staff. Lastly, applicants must demonstrate, in their applications that they will implement a process for effectively communicating to teachers which of the LEA's schools are high-need and which subjects and specialty areas are considered hard-to-staff.

Strengths:

The professional development process in place provides support and training for teachers from induction to effective instruction. This process along with the performance compensation awards is a strong vehicle for retaining quality teacher to the district. Extra incentives are provided for teachers who move to high needs schools and hard to staff subject and specialty areas (p 44).

Weaknesses:

There isn't a clear plan described that attracts new teachers to the high needs districts in subject areas and specialty areas that are hard to staff. It is also unclear in the proposal how the school district will determine that a teacher who is filling a vacancy is effective. No justification is provided to explain the extent to which a subject is hard to staff.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 7/30/10 9:41 AM