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

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/13/2017 05:31 PM

Technical Review

Applicant: Union County Board of Education (U374A170033)
Reader #1:   **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Evidence of Support		
1. Evidence of Support	30	28
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	25	25
Selection Criterion		
Quality of the Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	19
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	17
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	5	3
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority #1		
Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators		
1. CPP 1	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority #2		
Diverse and Effective Workforce		
1. CPP 2	5	5
Total	115	107

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Union County Board of Education (U374A170033)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Evidence of Support

1. In determining evidence of support of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 28

Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.**

   General:

   Overall Comments:
   The applicant provided an overview of their comprehensive effort to improve education in the state where educator evaluation data are used to inform decisions that include placement, retention, dismissal, compensation and promotion of personnel (p.1). Examples of this proposed by applicant are evidence-based, job-embedded professional development, monetary and non-monetary compensation including career ladders. Academic information is available through the HCMS online portal that provides access to data on student achievement, summative assessment results and results from the NCEES which includes student growth calculated using the EVAAS assessment system. Also, the applicant proposed to redesign the district's existing HCMS and performance based compensation system to better attract, place, retain, and sustain effective educators. An example of this is the expanding of financial incentives for third grade reading teachers, Advance Placement and International Baccalaureate teachers, Career and Technical Education teachers and bonuses for recruitment and tenure for teachers who work in the highest need schools (p.2) as well as alignment with College and Career Ready Standards (p.2). Data driven PD is identified and provided based on aggregate data available through this system. This data was used to inform the current financial incentive system that has been implemented. There are also structures in place to support academic achievement and improve teaching and learning and include alignment with college and career ready standards which include a rigorous academic content standards that focus on leadership, teamwork, authentic assessment, and technology infused learning, use of the GRR instruction model and implementation of the student growth measurement using EVAAS. An example of aggregate data usage is pinpointing specific elements of each educator evaluation standard, indicating where educators may be experiencing common difficulties and allow for scheduling of PD for teacher's skill sets and effectiveness improvement. A formal evaluation system is tied to effectiveness ratings for teachers and school leaders.

   Strengths (if applicable):
   The applicant presents a clear and coherent plan that is data driven to improve teaching and learning using the Framework for 21st Century Learning and includes rigorous academic standards.

   Weaknesses (if applicable):
   None Noted

   Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of the project services.**

General:

Overall Comments:
The applicant's partnership is strategically designed to meet the needs of the school district and include educator support, administrator support, facilitator support, community support that includes the Union County Educational Foundation, the NC Department of Public Instruction and the University of North Carolina – Charlotte. The partnership represents the areas that are crucial to maximizing the effectiveness of project services through on-going collaboration.

Strengths (if applicable):
The partnership includes participants that can undergird the success of the school district including teachers, principals, facilitators, community non-profit organizations and an IHE. Teachers in the 13 highest-need schools participated in a survey to gage the interest of participating in TSL funding. 84% of the teachers expressed support for pursuing TSL funding while 87% supported a revised compensation system designed to improve student achievement and promote teacher effectiveness. Each principal also signed a memorandum of understanding in support of EPIC components and support for the program. Content Facilitators and Instruction Technology Facilitators in the 13 target schools will provide job-embedded PD and coaching designed to increase educator effectiveness and student achievement. Facilitators signed a detailed MOU outlining their commitment to the project. The Union County Educational Foundation has pledged to provide resources including funding to teacher to purchase technology, curriculum enhancements for classrooms as well as pledging to provide funding for School Resource Officers to improve school climate. The University of North Carolina-Charlotte will provide access to support services including continuing education such as a Master's program and professional development for target staff. The NC Department of Public Instruction will provide customized support to enhance curriculum and instruction, accountability, teacher and administrator preparation and licensing, and professional development. Letters of commitment were provided by the principals of the schools, Facilitators (MOUs) the Union County Educational Foundation, the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and the NC Department of Public Instruction. Having partners that represent the district, state, IHE, and non-profits working together collaboratively helps to ensure success of the program and the school district in meeting the needs of students.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
While the expertise the partners will provide is presented by the applicant, specific roles and responsibilities for the partners are not provided. Details around the PD to be provided and access to continuing education are not fully discussed. The applicant should consider providing a list of roles and responsibilities for all partners in future applications.

Reader's Score:

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)), using community, State, and Federal resources.**

General:

Overall Comments:
The applicant demonstrates how the project builds on outcomes using existing funding. In 2012, the NCDPI was awarded a Race to the Top grant, which was used to support districts, schools and teachers with implementation of the new content standards and develop aligned standardized assessments. Examples of new content standards and aligned assessments are not provided by the applicant. Additionally, Title I and Title II funding was used for PD and specialized support staff in Title I schools. Requested EPIC funding will be used to provide New Teacher Support Institutes for beginning teachers, Professional Learning Communities, the platform where targeted PD will occur. The PD includes modeling, coaching, feedback, and reflection around student work. Additionally, the applicant will hire 9 Content Facilitators that support continued teaching and learning in the schools. Further, consultants with expertise in supporting under-resourced learning and improving the classroom-learning environment for students and work environment for staff will be hired to inform the district. One example of new

EPIC activities would be to deliver a more coherent, strategic PD plan that uses targeted feedback to support improvements at the schools and teacher levels. Other new EPIC activities include New Teacher Support Institutes and PD and mentor training delivered through self-paced and instructor-led courses aligned with state educator evaluation standards.

Strengths (if applicable):
The applicant clearly articulates how current funding at the community, state and federal levels is being used and will continue to be used to support and improve relevant outcomes should the EPIC grant be funded. An example of how past federal funding that has been used for the project is the 2012 Race to the top grant. This funding was used to assist districts, schools, and teachers with implementation of new state content standards and to develop aligned, standardized assessments to provide alternative ways for students to show their knowledge. Additionally, Title I and II funding was used to pay for professional development. At the state level, NCDPI provided and will continue to provide professional development as well as enhance curriculum and instruction, accountability measures and teacher preparation and licensing. PLCs have been implemented at the local level and will be used to deliver a more coherent, coordinated PD. A clear delineation was made between how previous funding was used and how the proposed funding will be used.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
The applicant did not provide an example of the new content standards or how the new content standards were aligned with assessments.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

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

Reader's Score: 25

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.**
   General:

   Overall Comments:
   The county population has increased 80 % since 2,000 causing a 98% increase in student population. This rapid growth has created a need to find ways to increase academic achievement for minority students. The applicant proposed to target 6 of the lowest performing schools in the state along with 7 Title I schools that are performing below district and state averages. The average free and reduced lunch rates for these schools are: 83% elementary schools, 83% middle schools and 75% in the high schools. Additionally, nearly 13% of the county's population do not speak English as a home language with the Hispanic enrollment at the targeted schools 40%. Percentages of students on-track for college and career readiness statistics using EOC tests show that only 23.8% of the students in target middle schools score at performance levels 4 and 5 in reading while the UCPS average is 57%; in math at the 32% while the UCPS Average is 64.4% and in science at the 34% while the UCPS average is 70.9%. The target high schools performs at 28% in reading while the UCPS average is 65%; in math at 23% while the UCPS average is 66%; and in Biology at 34% while the UPS average is 60%. The academic achievement gaps are significant. To improve these schools, the district seeks to 1) increase racial diversity in the school workplace through recruitment and orientation, 2) Improve teacher quality through job-embedded PD, 3) Improve leader effectiveness through quality PD, 3) Improve school climate to retain current teachers and improve teacher attendance and 4) Reward proficiency, growth, retention and attendance for teachers.

Strengths (if applicable):
The academic needs of students in the applicant's poorest schools are satisfactorily addressed by providing services that enhance teacher performance which will in turn improve student achievement. The applicant proposes services that address the needs of the students in high need, low performing schools that include onboarding with a plan to recruit and provide orientation with on-going PD for those teachers new to the district, the support of teachers through job embedded data identified PD, improved school climate, rewards for placement in high need schools and incentives to remain in those schools through career ladders, mentors, master teacher and leadership roles.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
The applicant should be encouraged to use the data to identify and differentiate PD for individual staff members in need of targeted training. The identified areas of teacher training needs could be developed and provided by NCDPI through the current on-line platform for modules and mentoring. Providing differentiated PD specifically identified for teachers would strengthen the application.

Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.**

General:

Overall Comments:
The applicant conducted a needs assessment in the identified high need schools with the following results: Request for implementation of job embedded and content specific PD and the onboarding of new and beginning teachers/leaders. Identified weaknesses included difficulties in teacher retention and teacher/leader absenteeism as well as the need for adequate compensation for student growth. In an effort to address the identified gaps, the applicant provides a through plan to recruit diverse, qualified educators, orient and onboard new/beginning teachers and leaders, provide job embedded targeted support for teachers, improve the work environment and incentivize staff to work and remain in high need schools through financial and non-financial rewards. The nature and magnitude of the gaps were provided.

Strengths (if applicable):
The gaps were collaboratively identified through the use of a needs assessment in the identified high need schools and through the wide range of data available through the school district. The plan to address the gaps is thorough and strategic.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
None noted.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criterion - Quality of the Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 19

Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.**

   General:

   Overall Comments:
   There is a strategic and well thought out rational supported through an aligned literature review on best-practice research for improving educator effectiveness on academic achievement. One example of a promising practice is that HCMS practices con contribute to increased educator engagement, job satisfaction and long-term professional development with can then positively impact academic achievement (Kraemer, et al. 2015; Springer, Ballou, & Peng, 2008). A second example is the promising results of PBCS to improve teacher and school leader performance on educator evaluations which then leads to improved effectiveness rating (Chaing, et al., 2015). Additionally, professional learning communities, career ladders and increasing school leader effectiveness are presented as best practices. The rationale is well presented in the logic model and was developed based on gap identification and strong theory linking program strategies, activities and outputs to outcomes and long-term impact.

   Strengths (if applicable):
   The logic model is clear and includes an overarching review of the proposed program components and outcomes. The logic model provides inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes that correspond with the objectives and impact. Examples of the proposed activities include onboarding which are linked to recruitment, orientation of new teachers, mentors, targeted PD and leadership academies; Supporting which include job-embedded PD through PLCs and improving school climate; and Rewarding which provides bonuses for placement in high need subject in high need schools, as well teachers will be rewarded for proficiency, growth, retention and attendance. The logic model clearly addresses the objectives that are provided by the applicant. An example would be Increasing staff diversity objective which is indicated by a measurement of the number and percentage of educational and school leaders retained; dismissed; promoted; evaluated; requiring remediation and compensated. A second example would be increasing staff knowledge of effective instructional practices which are indicated by a measurement of the number and percentage of educators and school leaders receiving evaluative feedback, PD and mentoring. The identified outcomes are stated in measurable terms.

   Weaknesses (if applicable):
   None noted.

   Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

   General:

   Overall Comments:
   The design is appropriate to meet the identified gaps and best-practices literature was provided to show that the implementation activities have been shown to be successful with the target population. The proposed project design includes new recruitment and hiring strategies, onboarding with new and beginning teachers/leaders, PBCS, career ladders and supporting student achievement through teacher/leader targeted PD. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are the platform chosen by the applicant to provide PD and mentoring. PLCs have shown to build collective responsibility for student learning, helping students achieve at higher levels, and producing higher levels of teacher satisfaction (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Inclusion of a Career Ladder has shown that student achievement was significantly higher in districts where teachers had career ladders, while also improving teacher recruitment and retention (Booker, Glazerman, 2009; Dowling, Murphy & Wang, 2007). An example of how new teacher needs are being met is through a two-day Beginning Teacher Effective Practices Orientation prior to staring the school year. This orientation will include targeted PD training on the district instructional model, gradual release of responsibility, assessments, classroom management, lesson planning, parent-teacher conference and an overview of available resources and supports. A second example of how the EPIC grant meets and identified need is through embedded PD for teachers who are not in the beginning phase of their career. PD will be data driven with each school's leadership team examining data from educator evaluation and student assessment to determine common problem areas. This information will be used to develop targeted PD for instructional improvement.

Strengths (if applicable):
The recruitment plan is comprehensive and includes conducting job recruitment sessions at HBCUs, in-state and out-of-state colleges/universities as well as working through Educational Partners International, Visiting International Faculty Program and International Teacher Exchange Services. Additionally, the plan includes offering contracts earlier in the year as well as enhanced compensation for working in the identified schools. Non-financial incentives are also included. Examples of non-financial incentives include guaranteed planning time, reduced class sizes, and additional in-classroom support from Master Teachers, Instructional Content Facilitators, and Instructional Technology Facilitators. A gap that is being met is recruitment of minority, highly qualified teachers. This gap is being address through an increase in online recruitment efforts, developing recruitment materials that reflect diversity, encouraging existing minority teachers or teaching assistant to earn degrees or certifications and actively recruiting highly effective, experience teachers in other schools within the district and opportunity to transfer to a high need school and receive an additional $1,750 per year.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
None Noted.

Reader's Score:

3. **(3) The extent to which the grant activities will be evaluated, monitored, and reported to the public.**

General:

Overall Comments:
Goals and objectives are clearly written with annual benchmarks to monitor progress. The benchmarks are rigorous yet attainable and are linked. An example of a benchmark that is aligned with a goal is as follows: Goal 1: Redesign the district's existing HCMS and PBCS with the identified benchmark: By the end of Year 2, staff diversity will increase by 3%, increasing by 5% in each of Years 3 – 5 or until there is a 25% increase. The goal aligns with the objective and is benchmarked appropriately. A second example is Goal 2: Develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness. One of the benchmarks for this goal is: By the end of Year 2, at least 75% of teachers and principals will report that the data from their evaluation is very useful in identifying PD needed activities increasing by 5 percentage point in each of Years 3-5 or until reaching 90%. Formative and summative evaluations will be used to assess and monitor progress toward achieving program outcomes and objectives. A short term interrupted time series design with a comparison group will be used to assess the program impact on standardized achievement test scores. These types of data are useful in determining if the implementation is increasing student achievement scores and meet the What Works Clearing House requirements for moderate evidence. The grant will be monitored through monthly data reviews by the management team and there is a developed dissemination plan.

Strengths (if applicable):
Goals and objectives are provided with annual, rigorous yet attainable benchmarks. An example of a goal is Goal 2: Development and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness which is linked to the benchmark: 50% of teachers scoring below Accomplished in Year 2 will advance at least 1 level in Year 3, increasing by 5 percentage points each year, or until reaching 60%. The benchmarks are well written will each containing a specific percentage of increase to help determine the success of the implementation. Additionally, the timeline presented in the Management Plan section is clearly aligned with the activities and time needed for implementation appears to be reasonable. The timeline also provides who is responsible for a particular activity. The evaluation uses a time series design with control groups to determine the program impact on standardized achievement test scores. The formative evaluation will assess the frequency, intensity and duration of the activities being delivered as well as the perceptions of the participants' to the program.
The qualitative data methods to be used are interviews, focus groups, open-ended survey questions and project meeting minutes. Quantitative data sources include student standard achievement test scores teacher attendance, promotion, turnover, retention rates and scaled surveys. This mixed methods approach has promise of identifying and linking various data sources to provide more complete formative and summative data reports. The Evaluation Group, an independent evaluation firm, will be contracted to implement the research plan. Monthly team

management meetings will be held to monitor the implementation of the grant and provide quality, continuous performance feedback. Using a participatory approach, data will be disseminated through the use of a data dashboard. The data includes charts and graphs, interim and annual reports, survey results, focus group snapshots and in-person briefings.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
While applicant states that reports are available through the school dashboard, there is no evidence that there is a plan for reporting the minutes of meetings or outcomes of the program to the public.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

   The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

   General:

Overall Comments:
The management plan is comprehensive providing information on the structure and implementation of the project so that the objectives can be completed on time and within budget. The plan includes project milestones, a timeline and identifies team is responsible for task implementation. The applicant states that a management team made up of the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Education, Professional Development, Accountability and Students Services, AIG and Federal Programs and representative principals, teachers and ICFs. While there is a timeline with milestones included in the application, and there is a clear description of the Project Director – 100% FTE, Compensation Analyst – 100% FTE, Master Teachers, Beginning Teacher Mentor, Instructional Content Facilitator and Instructional Technology Facilitator, no descriptions or percentage of time to be spent on the project are given for the school district personnel such as members of the leadership team. The time devoted to the project by the Project Director and the Compensation Analyst are adequate. However, a project of this magnitude takes a collaborative team that includes the personnel hired specifically for the project, the school district personnel supporting the implementation and the research firm conducting the research.

Strengths (if applicable):
The milestones identified by the applicant include 1) Overarching management; 2) Onboarding; 3) Supporting (Professional Development); and 3) Rewarding. One example of a milestone is: Create professional development schedule. The timeline indicates that it will begin 11/17 and be revised annually. Responsibility for this task is given to the EMT and PD. Six structures that include the EMT, Project Director, HR, CA, ICF and ITF are identified that will work collaboratively to implement the grant so that the objectives can be completed on time and within budget. An example of one of the structures is the EPIC management team that will meet monthly to ensure ongoing project management. The EMT, which consists of school administrative personnel, EPIC grant hired employees, principals and teachers, is responsible for reviewing the evaluation findings to inform strategic decision-making including course corrections for continuous improvement. The milestones and timeline are reasonable and can be accomplished.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
There is a lack of management structure that should provide strategically planned collaboration between the six identified structures. An example of a missing management structure is that of an advisory board. While the EMT could serve that purpose, its main activity is to review the data that has been collected and make on-going decisions about the grant implementation. Both teachers and principals are on the EMT. Sensitive information concerning principal and teacher evaluations should be a part of decision-making and it would be unethical to discuss these types of data at the EMT meeting. While the applicant provided a timeline with overarching responsible entities such as the EMT and HR identified, neither position descriptions nor roles and responsibilities were provided. While there may be an inherent structure to which the applicant may be privy, it was not included in the application. Also, there is no clarity as to whom the Project Direct reports to in the project.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

 1. **The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 3

 Sub Question

 1. **(1) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**
  General:

  Overall Comments:
  The grant will seek sustainability through community support, building internal capacity, and aligning with State and district initiatives for financial stability. Alignment with existing initiatives strengthens the possibility of sustainability as NC has funded bonuses to 3rd grade, AP, IB and CTE teachers as well the PBCS pays an annual stipend to educators in high need schools. Examples of community support include the Union County Educational Foundation which provides funding to teachers to purchase technology and curriculum enhancements, UNC-C will provide access to continuing education and professional development for teachers in the identified schools, NCDPI provides support to enhance curriculum and instruction and finally Union County will continue to provide School Resource Officers. In support of enhanced compensation, NC has funded bonuses while the PBCS provides funding for an annual stipend to educators who work in high need schools. The annual local stipend for teachers and leaders in the highest need schools which is $1,750.

  Strengths (if applicable):
  The community partnership is strong as is the plan to build internal capacity. UNC-C will continue to provide PD for teachers/leaders, NCDPI will continue to provide curriculum enhancement support and Union County will continue to provide School Resource Officer.

  Weaknesses (if applicable):
  One weakness is not having an advisory board that includes the community partners. This is an example of a management structure that is not in place and would help ensure success of the project. A second weakness is the amount of the stipend for working in highest needs schools by highly qualify teachers who transfer. It seems that their stipend should be as much or more than the facilitators which is $5,000. Finally, the possibility of institutionalization of the enhanced compensation plan was neither explored nor discussed and might require legislative action. A plan to encourage the state legislature to support enhanced compensation could be considered.

  Reader's Score:

 2. **(2) The potential for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing program of the agency of organization at the end of the Federal funding.**
  General:

  Overall Comments:
  Promising EPIC strategies will be incorporated into district processes and annual budgets. During year one, experts will be engaged to advise and help the district complete a sustainability plan. Additionally, other human capital investments will be re-evaluated over the five-year period to identify funding that could be reallocated to support on-going sustainability.

Sub Question

Strengths (if applicable):
Promising EPIC strategies, based on data collected, will be incorporated into annual budgets. Other less successful strategies will be ended. Investment into the development of an HCMS platform, data collection and evaluation tools, will function beyond the grant period. The number of Lead ICFs will diminish over time as capacity is built across school staff. The Beginning Teacher induction program will be institutionalized so that there is an increase in teacher and school leader effectiveness that ultimately leads to student academic achievement. A sustainability plan will be written during year one with the help of experts so that promising EPIC strategies can be written into district processes and annual budgets.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
Should enhanced compensation in high needs school prove to be successfully linked to increased academic achievement, there is no plan as to how to continue funding after the grant period. There are no specific school funds from the institution linked to particular project segments. Again, while the funding is planned, none have been secured. While letters of support are provided, none were provided for sustainability purposes.

Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority #1 - Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators

1. **Projects that are designed to address the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both teachers and School Leaders, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA or LEAs the project will serve. At a minimum, applicants must:**

   (1) Identify the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA(s) the project will serve;

   (2) Identify relevant factors used in determining such gaps, such as data on availability of school resources, staffing patterns, school climate, and educator support; and

   (3) Describe how the strategies proposed for closing the identified gaps are aligned to and are consistent with the strategies identified in the State's Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, approved by the Department in 2015.

   General:

   Overall Comments:
   The applicant identified the most significant gaps in student access to effective teachers/leaders using results from educator evaluations to assess teacher and school leader performance as well as human capital decisions including the placement, retention, dismissal, compensation, and promotion of personnel.

   Strengths (if applicable):
   Data were provided to show how the gaps were identified including the results of the teacher surveys in the appendix. Data was also provided to show the lack of student access to effective teachers in high need schools within the district which showed that students in EPIC schools were more likely to be taught by a teacher rated developing or proficient and less likely to be taught by accomplished or distinguished teachers. Data were also provided on APs who were more likely to score in the Developing or Proficient range and less likely to score in the accomplished or distinguished range (p.14).

   Weaknesses (if applicable):
   None noted.

   (2)   Identify relevant factors used in determining such gaps, such as data on availability of school resources, staffing

patterns, school climate, and educator support; and

Overall Comments:
The data provided by the applicant included school resources, staffing patterns, school climate and educator support. Categories of data provided included high school graduation rates, lowest performing schools, racial inequalities, academic achievement, suspensions, NCEES teacher standards, student growth, teacher and leader effectiveness, educator experience, teacher shortages, teacher retention/attendance and percentages of minority teachers and administrators.

Strengths (if applicable):
The applicant has a robust database making it easy for teachers and administrators to locate and review school district data. Data on school resources, staffing patterns, school climate and educator support were provided using easy to read charts and graphs.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
None noted.

(3)   Describe how the strategies proposed for closing the identified gaps are aligned to and are consistent with the strategies identified in the State's Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, approved by the Department in 2015.

Overall Comments:
The proposed strategies are aligned with the NC State 2015 Plan to Ensure Equitable Access. They most closely align with Strategies 5. Leadership Academies 6. Mentoring/Induction, 8. Financial Incentives making use of the Disadvantaged Student Supplement Funding, 9. Teacher working conditions, 11. Increase the quality of PD, and 16. Focus on teacher retention.

Strengths (if applicable):
The applicant strategies are closely aligned with the following NC State Strategies: recruitment and orientation of beginning and new teachers, mentors and leaders (Strategies 5, 6, 16); supporting job embedded PD, Master teachers, summer PD (Strategy 11); improving schoolwork environment through PD in MTSS, Cultural Responsiveness, improved school climate, School Resource Officers (Strategies 9, 11); Enhanced compensation that includes bonuses for placement in high need subjects/school, compensation to reward proficiency, growth, retention and attendance and promote career ladder, mentors, master teachers and leadership roles (Strategies 6, 8, 16).

Weaknesses (if applicable):
None Noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Competitive Preference Priority #2 - Diverse and Effective Workforce

1. **Projects that are designed to attract, support, and retain a diverse and effective workforce, including effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, from historically underrepresented populations. At minimum, applicants must provide:**

   A description detailing their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce.

   General:

   1. Overall Comments:
   The applicant provides a detailed commitment to maintaining a diverse workforce. An example of this commitment is by putting into place recruitment strategies designed to increase both educator diversity through recruitment in HBCUs (p.20)

and implementation of a career ladder. Statistics are provided that supports the need for a diverse workforce and states that enrollment has increased by 98% from 1997 and with this has come increased diversity including an increase in both African American and Hispanic students. With only 15% of teachers and administrators in target schools minority, it is important for the district to increase the racial diversity in the school workforce especially since this has shown to close achievement gaps and improve the school experience for all students, not just minorities (p. 1/1; p.12; p. 19; p.21).

Strengths (if applicable):
The applicant provides the research behind increasing diversity and links it with student academic achievement (Kraemer et al., 2015; Springer, Ballou and Peng, 2008). They also provide a detailed plan for both minority recruitment and implementation of an expanded career ladder. They also provide data that show non-minority teachers/leaders often do not understand racially, culturally, or linguistically diverse students' unique learning needs which can hinder them in providing appropriate instruction or interventions.

Weaknesses (if applicable):
None noted.

(2)   Their plan for attracting, supporting, and retaining diverse Educators.

Overall Comments:
The applicant provides a comprehensive recruitment and hiring plan with a focus on minority teachers/leaders. This plan includes financial such as bonuses and non-financial incentives such as guaranteed planning time to recruit qualified teachers. Teacher support is provided based on the needs assessment and retention is addressed through improved PD, a focus on improving school climate and an increase in on-on-one collegial support.

Strengths (if applicable):
The recruitment plan includes conducting recruitment session in HBCUs, in state and out-of-state universities, on-line as well as seeking teachers from international sources particularly in critical need subject areas. The plan includes encouraging minority teaching assistants currently working in the district to earn their degree or certification. It also provides extensive and well-developed onboard support for new teachers/leaders and experienced teacher new to the district. Mentors will be provided and Master Teachers will be available to team teach with new teachers to help delivery high quality lessons. Teachers are encouraged to remain employed through enhanced compensation, improved PD, improved school climate and an increase in day-to-day teaching support (p. 19; p.20).

Weaknesses (if applicable):
No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/13/2017 05:31 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/13/2017 05:33 PM

Technical Review

Applicant: Union County Board of Education (U374A170033)
Reader #2:   **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Evidence of Support		
1. Evidence of Support	30	30
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	25	25
Selection Criterion		
Quality of the Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	20
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	18
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	5	4
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority #1		
Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators		
1. CPP 1	10	10
Competitive Preference Priority #2		
Diverse and Effective Workforce		
1. CPP 2	5	5
Total	115	112

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Union County Board of Education (U374A170033)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Evidence of Support

1. **In determining evidence of support of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 30

    Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.**
   General:

   Overall Comments: Proposal presents evidence of aligning proposed activities for their local district to current state structures and initiatives for improving teaching and learning and supporting rigorous standards for students. Standards were implemented in 2010 designed to encourage students to master skills and knowledge needed to be college and career ready. Also, there is a statewide accountability model based on student growth in place currently that is used to assess yearly progress. These current initiatives will be aligned with the proposed project.

   Strengths (if applicable): Proposed activities will support a set of rigorous academic standards for college and career ready skills implemented statewide in 2010 as well as a research-based instructional model (Page e23). This districtwide instructional model, Gradual Release of Responsibility, includes strategies such as goal setting, modeling, guided instruction, feedback, and collaborative learning. This model will be used to develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness to more positively impact student academic achievement. Proposed activities will also build on current state evaluation standards for both teachers and administrators including career ladders.

   Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

   Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of the project services.**
   General:

   Overall Comments: Strong evidence was provided that the support from stakeholders was gathered for input into the grant. Stakeholders include district administrators, school instructional content facilitators, community support in the form of a local educational foundation, the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, and the NC Department of Education. This support was from both local and state levels and assures buy-in for successful outcomes.

   Strengths (if applicable): Key community partners include the Union County Educational foundation and the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. The Educational foundation will provide resources to teachers to purchase technology and curriculum enhancements for their classrooms and the University will provide access to support services including Master's program and professional development for target staff. A primary strength of this grant

is the inclusion of teachers and administrators as partners in the development and implementation of the proposal (Page e27). Instructional Content Facilitators signed a Memorandum of understanding in support of the proposal along with letters of commitment from the University, the Department of Education, and the educational foundation. Data was provided that shows a majority (87%) of teachers and administrators surveyed support a revised compensation system designed to improve student achievement and improve educator effectiveness.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score:

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)), using community, State, and Federal resources.**
   General:

Overall Comments: It is proposed that local and state funds will be used to support the activities stated in the grant proposal. Federal Race To the Top funds were used to provide resources for the implementation of new content standards for the state and to develop aligned, standardized assessments. The applicant was able to use these funds to pilot work on EVAAS to inform the state's accountability system and used in the educator evaluation system, forming the basis of infrastructure for the proposed project. (Page e28)

Strengths (if applicable): The proposal will leverage current local and state funding sources for this grant. For example, state funding supports an online PD portal and hosts initial mentor training that will be used in part for mentor training in the new proposal. Currently teachers in high-need schools receive an annual incentive payment to attract and retain quality teachers to work in these high need schools. The applicant will continue these payments as part of the match for this proposal.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

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

Reader's Score: 25

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.**
   General:

Overall Comments: Compelling evidence presented that teacher quality needs improvement to address needs of high risk students in targeted schools. These schools have a higher turnover rate and administrators score lower on current evaluations. The county has grown rapidly, resulting in an 80% increase. This growth has resulted in overcrowded schools and a dramatic demographic shift resulting in a 495% increase in Hispanic students. The average free and reduced lunch rates in the six targeted schools exceed the district average of 36%. The elementary rate is 83%, middle is 83% and the high school rate is 75%. The students in the target schools also have lower achievement rates in core subjects than other students in the district with differences in double figures for elementary and middle schools.

Strengths (if applicable): A compelling case is made as to the growth of diversity in students in particular students

that do not speak English. The six schools targeted in the grant represent the students most at need in the district. There is also compelling evidence that these students are have low achievement and fall far below proficiency levels in all grades.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.**

General:

Overall Comments: Gaps identified by the teachers and teacher leaders included recruiting diverse, qualified educators; orienting and onboarding new teachers and leaders, targeted support for teachers, challenging working environment, and staffing high need schools. The need cited most often by teachers and teacher leaders in a survey was job-embedded professional development at 85% with leading topic areas including how to work with diverse learners, providing differentiated instruction, improving classroom learning environment, and more content specific professional development.

Strengths (if applicable): A strength of this grant is the inclusion of teachers and school leaders in determining the gaps and weaknesses in their schools. Their suggestions became components of the grant proposal including adding Master Teachers and strengthening the onboarding process for new and Beginning Teachers. Beginning teachers will receive monthly targeted supplemental professional development on grade level specific content. Program strategies have been designed to address identified gaps as stated in table on page e38.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criterion - Quality of the Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 20

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.**

General:

Overall Comments: A rationale is provided that aligns propose activities with best-practice research. Research based evidence was provided and cited and linked to each activity of the project including Human Capital Management System practices, professional learning communities, career ladders, and increasing school leader effectiveness. Clear links between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes were illustrated in the logic model. Inputs included personnel, partners, and systems linked to activities such as strategies to attract, hire, and provide professional development which then linked to reasonable and expected outcomes that corresponded with project objectives.

Strengths (if applicable): Applicant provided a well-developed logic model that shows components and how they relate to one another. The logic model (Appendix C) reflects a rationale that provides evidence of promising

practice with evidence based activities. The outcomes are aligned with project objectives, a strength of this proposal. For example, the Beginning Teacher Orientation proposed activity prior to the start of the school year aligns with outcomes such as decreased turnover and increased teacher attendance. After completing the orientation at the start of the school year, those teachers will receive ongoing support for three academic years from an assigned mentor. This promising practice indicates a high probability that the applicant will be able to achieve the outcomes stated in the logic model.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

General:

Overall Comments: Applicant propose comprehensive activities in three major areas—onboarding, supporting, and rewarding--that address the implementation strategies to attract, hire, place, retain, dismiss, compensate, provide professional development, tenure and promotion, and implement a PBCS. These strategies directly support new teachers and recruit higher quality teachers for low performing target schools.

Strengths (if applicable): Applicant cited several activities to address low quality of teachers in low performing schools such as plans to target top-third of students at Historically Black Colleges or Universities for recruitment. They will also provide support for new teachers for three years by assigning mentors and targeted professional development. Mentors will be an effective or highly effective teacher with at least 4 years experience, preferably in the beginning teacher's same grade or subject area level. New principals in target schools will be assigned a principal mentor. In addition, new principals will attend a new principal academy. A strength of this proposal is the additional salary supplement for teachers that agree to transfer to lowest-performing schools and the commitment to stay at the school a minimum of three years.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score:

3. **(3) The extent to which the grant activities will be evaluated, monitored, and reported to the public.**

General:

Overall Comments: Applicant provides a comprehensive evaluation plan (Page e51-55) aligned with measurable project goals and objectives. An external evaluator has been obtained and the budgeted amount for the evaluation represents a robust and committed evaluation process.

Strengths (if applicable): Applicant provides clear, ambitious, and measurable goals and objectives for proposal (Page e50). Formative evaluations will be performed to provide feedback and make midcourse corrections if necessary and summative evaluation will be performed to address stated research questions. Results will be reported through a feedback loop including monthly meetings with the management team, to keep the board, administrators, principals, and project staff informed.

Weaknesses (if applicable): Although evaluation results will be shared via a data dashboard (Page e54), there is no identified plan for reporting to the public.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

   The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

   General:

   Overall Comments: A clear, comprehensive plan is given that will achieve goals on time and within budget. Staff have been identified and include a full time director. A management team will meet monthly and will include district level personnel as well as representative principals, teachers, and instructional content facilitators. Other identified staff to be hired is a full time compensation analyst to provide professional development on using EVAAS data to inform coaching, maintain accurate reporting to comply with federal regulation, manage student assessment and teacher evaluation data, and engage in specialized tasks related to employee compensation and report development and dissemination for target schools.

   Strengths (if applicable): Based on a review of resumes provided in the application, the proposal shows evidence of a competent team to administer and implement the proposal, includes a full time project director, and shows a well thought out timely progression of activities within budget, with appropriate role designations. Management team meets on a monthly basis, professional development is provided on a monthly basis by instructional coaching facilitators, and recruitment strategies will be ongoing.

   Weaknesses (if applicable): An advisory board is not included in this proposal. An advisory board would be able to oversee the project as a whole and provide guidance in meeting project goals, timelines, and benchmarks.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. **The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 4

   Sub Question

   1. **(1) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

      General:

      Overall Comments: Evidence is provided in letters that shows strong commitment with partners for continued support beyond funding period. Capacity building strategies for school and district personnel are cited to ensure grant strategies implemented will continue beyond funding.

      Strengths (if applicable): Letters of commitment are provided that show community support. A strength of the proposal is the development of partnerships with higher education institutions. Proposed activities that prove successful will become integrated into current infrastructure beyond grant period. Revisions to HCMS and PBCS in 40 additional schools will be made based on lessons learned from proposal.

      .

      Weaknesses (if applicable): Although resumes are provided, no position descriptions are provided for the Project Director or overall duties required of each of the responsibility roles in the management plan Table 2 on Pages e56-

Sub Question

    57.

Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The potential for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing program of the agency of organization at the end of the Federal funding.**

   General:

   Overall Comments: Applicant proposes to embed strategies into HCMS platform beyond grant period. Matching funds for teacher bonuses and stipends will continue beyond grant period.

   Strengths (if applicable): A written sustainability plan will be developed; to include expanding activities to additional schools beyond grant period. The state will continue to provide bonuses to teachers and pay annual stipends to educators in high-need schools for recruitment and retention. Local funding will continue for instructional materials and coaching.

   Weaknesses (if applicable): Sustainability plans were discussed; however, none have been secured. Letters of support are provided but not for sustainability. (Page e60)

    Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority #1 - Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators

1. **Projects that are designed to address the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both teachers and School Leaders, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA or LEAs the project will serve. At a minimum, applicants must:**

   (1) Identify the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA(s) the project will serve;

   (2) Identify relevant factors used in determining such gaps, such as data on availability of school resources, staffing patterns, school climate, and educator support; and

   (3) Describe how the strategies proposed for closing the identified gaps are aligned to and are consistent with the strategies identified in the State's Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, approved by the Department in 2015.

   General:

   (1)   Identify the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA(s) the project will serve;

   Overall Comments: Applicant identified specific gaps with data from across schools on all areas. Those gaps were then mapped to proposed program strategies.

   Strengths (if applicable): Evidence provided by the NC Department of Instruction (Page e34) shows that students in low performing schools are taught by a lower quality teachers than high performing schools across the district, those teachers were less likely to have a significant impact of student growth, and have less experience. According to EVAAS data from the 2015-16 school year. Evidence is also provided that these same characteristics are similar to administrators in these schools.

   Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

(2)   Identify relevant factors used in determining such gaps, such as data on availability of school resources, staffing patterns, school climate, and educator support; and

Overall Comments: Applicant identified specific factors in determining gaps such as teacher attendance and retention rates.

Strengths (if applicable): Strength of this grant is the inclusion of teachers and teacher leaders to determine gaps. Specifically targeted educators in the 13 highest-needs schools gave responses to a survey that identified gaps and weaknesses. Educators suggested several program components they felt would be beneficial, which were integrated into the proposed project.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

(3)   Describe how the strategies proposed for closing the identified gaps are aligned to and are consistent with the strategies identified in the State's Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, approved by the Department in 2015.

Overall Comments: Educator Performance Incentives and Career Pathways (EPIC) was designed to close these gaps and align with NC's State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators (Page e46) , which recommended increasing salaries and supplemental pay, targeting issues of discipline, providing comprehensive professional development on working with diverse students, improving working conditions, teacher and leader support programs including mentoring, and high-quality PD.

Strengths (if applicable): Elements are in alignment with the Equity plan include increasing equitable access to high-quality teachers by using Union County's Virtual School (UCVS), the district's own interactive online learning program that incorporates rigor, relevance and relationships into all courses and uses the district's most effective teachers, allowing them to extend their reach into our lowest-performing
high schools.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Competitive Preference Priority #2 - Diverse and Effective Workforce

1. **Projects that are designed to attract, support, and retain a diverse and effective workforce, including effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, from historically underrepresented populations. At minimum, applicants must provide:**

    A description detailing their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce.

    General:

    (1)   A description detailing their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce.

Overall Comments: EPIC will address by putting into place recruitment strategies designed to increase both educator diversity and the percentage of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders in our target schools.

Strengths (if applicable): The applicant proposes three main components to address creating and maintaining a diverse workforce. 1) Onboarding with revisions to the district's recruiting, hiring, and orientation process for beginning teachers

and school leaders; 2) Supporting educators through job-embedded professional development; and 3) Rewarding educators with compensation for placement in high-need schools and subject-areas, compensation for student growth and increases in educator effectiveness, and promotions via a career ladder for effective or highly effective teachers and school leaders. Details were outlined on Page e39-40.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

(2)   Their plan for attracting, supporting, and retaining diverse Educators.

Overall Comments: EPIC will address Competitive Priority 2 by putting into place recruitment strategies designed to increase both educator diversity and the percentage of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders in our target schools.

Strengths (if applicable): Applicant provides detailed plans for attracting, supporting, and retaining teachers. Plans to attract teachers include working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities to identify students who are in the top third of their graduating class and to retain teachers by providing bonuses and non-financial incentives.

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status:	Submitted
Last Updated:	07/13/2017 05:33 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/13/2017 05:54 PM

Technical Review

Applicant: Union County Board of Education (U374A170033)
Reader #3: **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Evidence of Support		
1. Evidence of Support	30	27
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	25	20
Selection Criterion		
Quality of the Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	19
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	19
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	5	4
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority #1		
Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators		
1. CPP 1	10	9
Competitive Preference Priority #2		
Diverse and Effective Workforce		
1. CPP 2	5	5
Total	115	103

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - TSL - 7: 84.374A

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

Applicant: Union County Board of Education (U374A170033)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Evidence of Support

1. In determining evidence of support of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 27

Sub Question

1. (1) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

General:

Overall Comments: The applicant definitely states its Teacher and School Leader Incentive program, EPIC (Educator Performance Incentives and Career Pathways), will target 13 of its lowest-performing, highest-poverty schools. The EPIC project was developed in collaboration with teachers, school leaders, and district administrators. The applicant states key partners will be Union County Education Foundation which will provide resources for the proposed grant for teachers to purchase technology and curriculum enhancement. 1-2, 7

Strengths (if applicable): The applicant clearly plans for its EPIC project will improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students. EPIC has two over-arching goals: 1) Redesign our district's existing HCMS and Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS)to better attract, place, retain, and sustain effective educators; and 2) Develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness to more positively impact student academic achievement. For example, the 2012 Race to the Top assisted the districts to implement new content standards and the EPIC funding will be levered to supplement job-embedded professional development component to include PD, coaching and modeling by EPIC facilitators. The applicant's HCMS online portal provides access to a variety of databases including details on student achievement, summative assessment results, and results from the NC Educator Evaluation System (NCEES) which includes student growth calculated using Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). The applicant has worked with the state previously to align the NC Educator Evaluation Standards (NCEES) with the P21/READY Framework to emphasize the importance of leadership, teamwork, authentic assessment and technology-infused learning while assessing performance in relation to the NC Professional Standards for educators. The applicant explains how it provides training and resources to teachers and school leaders on NCEES. The applicant includes a table the level of achievement on NCEES. The applicant explains student growth for Standard 6 (teachers) and Standard 8 (leaders) are developed using EVAAS to determine if students met state academic performance standards and exhibited expected growth compared to an annual statewide growth model.
1-6

Weaknesses (if applicable): No weakness

Reader's Score:

2. (2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of the project services.

General:

Overall Comments: The applicant administered surveys to teachers and administrators in its district prior to the application to TSL Partnership funding. This collaboration of appropriate partners was designed to provide input to support and maximize the effectiveness of the TSL project services. 7

Strengths (if applicable): The applicant consistently involved the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services. These partners were Administrators, Instructional Content Facilitators, Community Support, NC Department of Public Instruction and Institutes of Higher Education. For example, the University of North Caroline-Charlotte signed on to assist by providing access to services including continuing education for a Master's program and professional development for the targeted staff in the grant. The administrators, Instructional Facilitators and Community all pledged to support the TSL Partnership project; (87%) supported a revised compensation system designed to improve student achievement and promote educator effectiveness. Complete survey results are in Appendix F .7-8

Weaknesses (if applicable): Specific roles and responsibilities of the partners are not clearly stated. How community support will be provided is also not described; neither roles or description or responsibilities related to the EPIC project are described. 7-9

Reader's Score:

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)), using community, State, and Federal resources.**

General:

Overall Comments: The applicant definitely explains the proposed project will integrate with or build on the federal and state resources. It plans to use Race to the Top funds, EVAAS funding and district Title I and Title II fund. It will leverage funding to supplement EPIC's job-embedded professional development component which includes intensive professional development, coaching, and modeling provided by our Facilitators, Teacher Leaders, and Mentors.(7-9)

Strengths (if applicable): The Department of Education Race to the Top 2012 grant, the district's Title I and Title II projects will be accessed to improve relevant outcomes. The applicant clearly plans to work with state programs and the University state system to fund and provide New Teacher Support Institutes. The proposed EPIC project will leverage this funding to supplement EPIC's job-embedded professional development component which includes intensive professional development, coaching, and modeling provided by our Facilitators, Union County Public Schools: Teacher Leaders, and Mentors.
The applicant clearly plans to leverage federal funds which are supplied to its district via Title I and Title II, which pays for professional development and specialized support staff in its Title II target schools. These funds will supplement EPIC's job-embedded professional development component which includes intensive professional development, coaching, and modeling provided by Facilitators, Teacher Leaders, and Mentors. 7-9
 p. 7-9

Weaknesses (if applicable): The applicant does not provide how new content standards are aligned with assessments.

Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

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

Reader's Score: 20

Sub Question

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.**

   General:

   Overall Comments: The applicant sufficiently describes the challenges of its community of Union County, lists it Title I schools, racial inequities, and performance of its schools for College and Career Readiness and Academic Achievement along with other data. 8-9

   Strengths (if applicable): The applicant will provide more coherent and coordinated professional development to each of the EPIC target schools. Professional Learning Communities in the areas of modeling, coaching, feedback and reflection and the use of student-level data and related materials for a shared understanding of effective instruction and its student achievement. Because teachers are the most important variable in improving student achievement the EPIC project's critical component is improving school leadership and teacher quality and effectiveness. y9, 14-15

   Weaknesses (if applicable): Although the applicant provides specific data on the community of Union County and data on student achievement it does not explain the specific services it will conduct to address the needs of at risk students.

   Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.**

   General:

   Overall Comments: The applicant clearly provides the specific gaps weaknesses in services and infrastructure including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. The applicant completed a needs assessment into perceived gaps in services and suggested improvements to inform the EPIC project design. P. 16-18

   Strengths (if applicable): The applicant convened district administrators to study data from all 53 schools in its district. In early 2017, teachers and leaders in 13 high need schools were surveyed to gain their input into what would be beneficial for the EPIC project to address. The leading topic was professional development at 85%, on how to improve their own educator effectiveness ratings. Improvement of the current process for onboarding new and beginning teachers was at 83%. Difficulties sited were in teacher retention and teacher/leadership absenteeism. The survey results were included in the application. 16-18

   Weaknesses (if applicable): Specific roles and responsibilities of the partners are not clearly stated. How community support will be provided is also not described; neither roles or responsibilities related to the EPIC project are described. 7-9

   Reader's Score:

Selection Criterion - Quality of the Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 19

1. **(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.**

    General:

    Overall Comments: The applicant clearly explains how the proposed EPIC project demonstrates a rationale on improving educator effectiveness to impact student achievement. The applicant includes the logic model and an overview of key program strategies and the link to evidence-based and evidence of promise. 18-19

    Strengths (if applicable): The applicant sufficiently explains its TSL grant planning team conducted a literature review to align project activities with best-practice research on improving educator effectiveness to impact student achievement. The applicant also developed a logic model to illustrate EPIC's strong theory and rationale linking program strategies, activities, and outputs to anticipated outcomes and long-term impact. The applicant will use five evidence-based activities in its EPIC project: HCMS, Performance-based Compensation System, Professional Learning Communities, Career Ladders, and Increasing School Leader Effectiveness. For example, the HCMS practices can contribute planned EPIC activities can increase educator engagement, job satisfaction, and long-term professional development, which in turn, can positively impact student academic achievement. For example, the applicant identified gaps such as providing adequate compensation for educator contributions to increase student academic growth. A table is included (Table 8) showing identified gaps and how EPIC will address those gaps and provide effective strategies to increase educator effectiveness. 18-19

    Weaknesses (if applicable): No weakness

    Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

    General:

    Overall Comments: The applicant clearly states its needs assessment revealed gaps in its current HCMS which will be addressed by the key EPIC components. As the key components come from the identified needs the EPIC project should meet the needs of the target population.

    Strengths (if applicable): The applicant lists and thoroughly explains how it will address three components in the EPIC TSL Partnership project. Component 1 is onboarding and the strategy is recruitment and hiring. The applicant lists the components with the strategies EPIC will provide to meet the needs. For example to meet Component 1: Onboarding▶Strategy 1. Recruitment and Hiring: CPS has recently faced increased competition when recruiting teachers, including an ever-declining pool of available educators, particularly minority teachers, due to increased competition from other districts in our state and across the border in South Carolina. EPIC will address Competitive Priority 2by putting into place recruitment strategies designed to increase both educator diversity and the percentage of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders in our target schools. We will begin by 1) conducting recruitment sessions at the 10 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in NC that offer teacher education programs. 2)We will use a similar approach in conducting recruitment at both in-state and out-of-state colleges and universities, seeking out beginning educators in the top-third of their class,) We will also work through existing programs at the federal and state level including Educational Partners International, Visiting International Faculty Program, and International Teacher Exchange Services to identify highly-qualified international teachers, particularly those who are eligible to teach critical need subjects in our target schools, and who are fluent in Spanish to better connect with our target schools' large population of Hispanic students. 19-31

    Weaknesses (if applicable):The stakeholder do not include teachers, parents and the public which would be

appropriate to assist the Board and school administrators in making course corrections and program adjustments for the TSL grant.

Reader's Score:

3. **(3) The extent to which the grant activities will be evaluated, monitored, and reported to the public.**

   General:

   Overall Comments: The applicant clearly plans its primary evaluation components used to evaluate and monitor the EPIC project. The applicant will use its logic model and a mixed methods evaluation approach.

   Strengths (if applicable):The EPIC logic model will be used to evaluate, monitor, and report to the stakeholders along with a mixed methods evaluation approach using data analysis using descriptive statistics which will assist the data and feedback to enable stakeholders to make critical mid-course corrections and program adjustments in a timely manner. The stakeholders are the Board, administrators, principals, and project staff all who are involved directly in the project. The independent evaluator will participate in Monthly Management Team meetings to build consensus on critical evaluation questions, methods, instruments, data collection protocols, and reporting formats. Evaluation results will be shared via a data dashboard with charts and graphs for ease of interpretation as well as through interim and annual reports, surveys, and focus group snapshots, and in-person briefings provided by an evaluator to the stakeholders; board, administrators, principals, and project staff. The logic model will clearly assist in conducting the program evaluation by, spelling out desired outcomes, and dissecting the crucial pieces of the plan, including program inputs, activities, outputs, and the extent to which activities have targeted their intended audience. The summative evaluation will use a research design, SITS-C, to measure program impacts on student performance and trend data will be compared for all schools five years before and three years after the EPIC project's implementation. The project plans to rely on continuous quality feedback shared via a data dashboard. 35-36

   Weaknesses (if applicable): The applicant does not clearly state who the Project Director will report to. There is not an Advisory Board planned for this project which would enable the public to have a voice on educator effectiveness and ways to improve achievement for at risk students.

   Reader's Score:

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:**

   The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

   General:

   Overall Comments: The management plan is sufficient to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. The applicant includes a table outlining the milestones, timeline and responsibility for the management plan which clearly defines responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. 35-36

   Strengths (if applicable): The applicant's management structure will be an EPIC management team, a full time Master's level Project Director, use of the Human Resources team, a full time Compensation Analyst, nine Instructional Content Facilitators, eleven Instructional Technology Facilitators, two Master Teachers and an Evaluation group. Each of the component objectives are clearly included in the table; onboarding, supporting and rewarding. 35-36

   Weaknesses (if applicable): No weakness

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project based on the following factors:

Reader's Score: 4

Sub Question

1. (1) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

General:

Overall Comments: The applicant thoroughly explains engaging community support, building internal capacity, and aligning with state and district initiatives the EPIC project will have continued support of the project after Federal funding ends. 38-40

Strengths (if applicable): The applicant clearly states its plan to continue providing School Resource Officers in target EPIC schools to help improve climate and educator working conditions. The capacity building conducted during EPIC will continue after the grant funding ends. Because the EPIC project is aligned to existing initiatives to human capital this system will be support beyond the EPIC grant. For example, NCDPI will provide support to enhance curriculum and instruction, accountability, teacher and administrator preparation and licensing, and PD efforts aligning to increased educator effectiveness on the NCEES to increase educator capacity. Union County will continue providing School Resource Officers in target EPIC schools to help improve school climate and educator working conditions. 38-40

Weaknesses (if applicable): No weakness

Reader's Score:

2. (2) The potential for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing program of the agency of organization at the end of the Federal funding.

General:

Overall Comments: The applicant designed the EPIC project to build local capacity for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing program of the agency of organization at the end of the Federal funding.40

Strengths (if applicable): While the applicant states once the EPIC TSL project ends funding for the Project Director, Compensation Analyst, travel and meetings, technology, evaluation and capacity will be eliminated the one-time investment in the HCMS functional beyond the grant period for data collection and evaluation. The applicant will use an independent evaluation by a team of Ph.D. evaluators to provide objective, ongoing, formative feedback about the implementation progress and impact on student achievement and educator effectiveness. While each EPIC strategy is backed by a strong research base, the applicant will use the evaluation findings to pinpoint which strategies are most effective in improving educator effectiveness and ultimately student achievement which will be incorporated into district processes and annual budgets including which strategies to sustain and which to revise or eliminate. The applicant plans to engage experts to develop a written sustainability plan with aligned action plans and resource allocation charts starting in Year 1 and evolving throughout implementation to identify and isolate effective strategies. The applicant also plans to reevaluate other human capital investments over the five-year period to identify funds that could be reallocated to support long-term sustainability. The lessons learned from EPIC

will inform revisions to the HCMS to an additional 40 schools. 40. Appendix D (resumes of evaluators) 40

Weaknesses (if applicable): The applicant does not explain how its plan to reevaluate other human capital investments over the five-year period to identify funds would be reallocated to support long-term sustainability. The letters of support do not address sustainability. 40

Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority #1 - Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators

1. **Projects that are designed to address the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both teachers and School Leaders, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA or LEAs the project will serve. At a minimum, applicants must:**

   (1) Identify the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA(s) the project will serve;

   (2) Identify relevant factors used in determining such gaps, such as data on availability of school resources, staffing patterns, school climate, and educator support; and

   (3) Describe how the strategies proposed for closing the identified gaps are aligned to and are consistent with the strategies identified in the State's Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, approved by the Department in 2015.

   General:

   (1)   Identify the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, in High-Need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the LEA(s) the project will serve;

   Overall Comments: The applicant clearly identifies the significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, in the Union County high-need Schools, including gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, are distributed across the Union County district fo the project will serve. Table 13, Figure 5 and 6 1-2, 13, 15

   Strengths (if applicable):. The applicant provides Table 6 which shows the significant gaps in reading, math and science/biology from standardized testing in end-of-grade exams for high school students. Figure 5 (Average Score on School Leader Evaluation Standard 1-7) and Figure 6 (Three-Year Average of Teaching Experience) assist in showing the levels of teachers and school leaders why improving school leadership is a critical component of improving student achievement and increasing teacher quality and effectiveness. Table 13, Figure 5 and 6 1-2, 13, 15

   Weaknesses (if applicable):None Noted

   (2)   Overall Comments: The applicant uses both state data systems and statewide assessments to identify relevant factors to determine educational gaps in the availability of school resources, staffing patterns, school climate, and educator support.

   Strengths (if applicable): The applicant uses the Framework for 21st Century (P21) to determine gaps, such as data on availability of school resources, staffing patterns, school climate, and educator support. The applicant also states statewide assessment provide benchmark and summative data to inform teaching and learning and provide differentiation.

   Weaknesses (if applicable): The gaps or relevant factors of the gaps are not disaggregated to the applicant's schools.

   (3)

Overall Comments: The applicant plans strategies in the EPIC around closing the identified gaps to align to and be consistent with the strategies identified in the State's Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators. This is included in Table 2 (NCEES Standards for Teaches and School Leaders). The state also was one of the first states to establish a statewide school accountability program which the applicant uses to detail the percent of students who meet the college-and-career readiness standards. 2-4 Table 2

Strengths (if applicable): The applicant states it commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce through its recruitment strategies in the TSL Partnership grant and will align with the state's Equity Plan. Other elements in the Equity Plan include increasing equitable access to high quality teachers. The applicant explains the state has worked to align the North Carolina Educator Evaluation Standards (NCEES) with the P21/READY Framework to emphasize importance of leadership, teamwork, authentic assessment, and technology-infused learning while assessing performance related to NCEES. The applicant included a Table 2—NCEES Standards for Teachers and School Leaders identifying what improvement strategies will help to close identified gaps. In 2013, NCDPI developed a 5-point scale for end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments which are used to assess a student's achievement in meeting state standards. This information is reported on annual report cards at the school and district level that include details on the percent of students who meet the college-and-career readiness standard and who meet grade-level proficiency.
 2-4, Table I—p4, 21, 27

Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted

Reader's Score: 9

Competitive Preference Priority #2 - Diverse and Effective Workforce

1. **Projects that are designed to attract, support, and retain a diverse and effective workforce, including effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, from historically underrepresented populations. At minimum, applicants must provide:**

   A description detailing their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce.

   General:

   (1)   Overall Comments: The applicant details their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce. The applicant plans to onboard, attract and retain highly effective teachers and leaders in the target schools. The applicant will recruit at HBCUs)

   (2)   Strengths (if applicable): . The applicant plans to onboard, attract and retain highly effective teachers and leaders in the target schools. The applicant will recruit successful diverse students at HBCUs and other colleges with teacher education programs.

   Weaknesses (if applicable): None noted

   (3)   Their plan for attracting, supporting, and retaining diverse Educators.
   Overall Comments: Specific plans are designed to recruit highly qualify diverse teachers and support and retain diverse educators These are: enhanced compensation, non-financial incentives which includes guaranteed planning time, reduced class sizes, and additional in classroom support from Master Teachers, Instructional Content Facilitators, and Instructional Technology Facilitators. 20

   Strengths (if applicable): The applicant plans to recruit at 10 Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the state, working with the colleges to identify and target students in the top-third of their class. The same approach will be used at in-state and out-of-state colleges/universities. To support and retain diverse educators the applicant offers specific enhancements: increased compensation, non-financial incentives which includes guaranteed planning time, reduced class sizes, and additional in classroom support from Master Teachers, Instructional Content Facilitators, and Instructional

Technology Facilitators. 20-21
 Weakness: none noted

Reader's Score: **5**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/13/2017 05:54 PM