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

**Applicant:** New Jersey Department of Education (S425B200034)  
**Reader #1:** **********

### Questions

#### Selection Criteria

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| Sub Total                           | 80              | 72            |

| Total                               | 80              | 72            |
Selection Criteria - Highest Coronavirus Burden

1. A: Highest Coronavirus Burden (up to 20 Points)

   (2) The extent to which the applicant has a high coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors identified by the applicant in response to Application Requirement 3. (up to 20 points)

   **Strengths:**
   The applicant sufficiently discussed areas impacted in the state that support that a high coronavirus burden exists from this health crisis. The applicant indicated that it ranked 11th in the world with deaths from the virus and confirmed cases of COVID19 with a count of 171,182 and 14,975 deaths as of June 2020. Additional information that was provided indicated an economic impact that was supported by 1.24 million people in the state filing for unemployment benefits. The educational impact included an analysis of learning loss of students due to school closures based upon out-of-school time. For example, the extended out-of-school could result in 70% retention in reading and 50% retention of math skills learned. This means that more students may begin the next school year not being on grade level (pp. e34-e37).

   **Weaknesses:**
   No weaknesses found.

   **Reader’s Score:** 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services and Project Plan

1. B: Quality of Project Services and Project Plan (up to 35 points)

   The Secretary considers the quality of project services and project plan.

   In determining the quality of the project services and project plan, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (up to 5 points)

   In addition, the Secretary considers--

   (1) The extent to which the proposed project is an exceptional approach to absolute priority being addressed and includes a detailed project plan for addressing the absolute priority. (up to 10 points)

   (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 to respond to the needs of students. (up to 10 points)

   (3) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will expand access to remote learning options and lead to improvements in student outcomes. (up to 5 points)
Strengths:
The applicant provided sufficient discussion that the proposed project would be accessible, and services would be available to meet the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities to ensure equity and equal access of participation (pp. e32-e33). 3 points

1) The applicant provided an adequate discussion of the proposed project would address Absolute Priority 3 that would pilot a digital platform management system that would connect the state’s existing initiatives designed to improve and continue student achievement. The system would focus on elementary students in grades kindergarten to fifth focusing on mathematics. The project would provide educators with the resources and support they need to deliver the standards-based curriculum and parent resources to support online learning at home. The applicant convincingly indicated that the new system proposed would be accessible in school and online to support school districts’ differentiated instruction which would support learning for all students (pp. e17-e20). 10 points

2) The applicant clearly described that gaps in services to impacted students, teachers, and parents relating to continuing school through remote access. There was a lack of adequate access to student data, evaluations, and lessons. Teachers reported not having the skills to effectively deliver course content via a remote platform and how to provide the support students and parents needed to continue learning. For example, the applicant discussed the results of a statewide survey in March that 90,000 students indicated that they could not fully access the remote learning lessons or that 82.44% of elementary parents reported having more challenges in managing remote learning. The comprehensive platform to be created by the proposed project would address this issue and provide necessary training to teachers and parents in order to effectively access and utilize these systems (pp. e24-e25). 10 points

3) It is likely that the services to be provided in the proposed project will expand access to remote learning options for students for the new platform would include teacher-created activities and make evaluation data available to teachers and parents. The performance measures described by the applicant align with data that would be generated by the proposed project during its full implementation year and available for the final evaluation of the proposed project (pp. e22-e23). 3 points

4) The applicant clearly referenced relative research that align with and support the selection of programs and services that would be implemented through the proposed project design. The research is evident in the discussion of how services that would be provided and programs delivered to support the delivery platforms (pp. e18-e19). 5 points

Weaknesses:
The applicant did not provide a complete discussion that the proposed project would ensure equal access and treatment of members of all traditionally underrepresented groups that include race, color, gender, and age (pp. e10).

3) Implementation of the digital platform would occur during the 2022-23 school year, the last year of the grant, therefore year one and two of the grant period would not include providing services (pp. e17-e20). It is unclear if the services to be provided would improve student outcomes. The applicant did not provide any outcome projections of student performance that would be compared to baseline data after the end of the one year during the grant period that full services would be available (pp. e22-e23).
Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources

1. C: Quality of the Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources (up to 25 points)

In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers--

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (up to 5 points)

(2) The extent to which the proposed use of funds will adequately support the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

1) The applicant provided an overview of the intended management of the proposed project and requested funds that would be managed by existing staff in established divisions within. The applicant provided timelines, tasks, and milestones related to the planning, development, and final implementation of the digital platform (pp. e20-e23). 3 points

2) The applicant’s planned use of the funds requested relate to the proposed project as designed to support activities that include planning, meetings, data collections, and request to vendors for creating a digital platform. Once all components are in place, the applicant would serve participants in year three with services and programs. The applicant indicated that summer 2022 training would occur to teachers on the new system that would allow them to deliver effective online instruction to the target schools (pp. e22-e24). 5 points

3) The applicant provided adequate discussion that the costs are reasonable as they relate to the significance and design of the proposed project that would create a more efficient delivery and evaluation system to support student achievement (pp. e60-e64). 4 points

4) The applicant has requested $123,456 dollars over a three-year period to develop the proposed project that would increase remote options of education delivery with the intention to able to reach 500,000 elementary students and provide services to 100,000 students in year three of the grant. With the extent of the planning and preparation described by the applicant, the cost is reasonable (pp. e17, e31, e63). 9 points

Weaknesses:

1) The applicant did not provide clear project objectives for the proposed project; therefore, it cannot be determined if the management of the project would be sufficient enough to ensure that the objectives would be met on time or within budget (pp. e20-e23).

3) The amount allocated to compensate some members of the Advisory Group is excessive without a clear rationale since the group is compiled from several stakeholder groups such as students, parents, and higher education professors (pp. e21, e62-e63).

4) The applicant did not indicate how many teachers and parents would be served by the proposed project.
**Technical Review Coversheet**

**Applicant:** New Jersey Department of Education (S425B200034)

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Technical Review Form

Panel #9 - FY20 REM - 9: 84.425B

Reader #2: **********
Applicant: New Jersey Department of Education (S425B200034)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Highest Coronavirus Burden

1. A: Highest Coronavirus Burden (up to 20 Points)

(2) The extent to which the applicant has a high coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors identified by the applicant in response to Application Requirement 3. (up to 20 points)

Strengths:
The applicant provides compelling evidence of a high coronavirus burden, noting that (p. 20) “if the state of New Jersey was its own country, it would rank ninth for number of coronavirus cases. It would rank 11th in the world for number of deaths.” Additionally, the counties that have suffered most due to coronavirus (Essex, Hudson, Passaic, & Middlesex) are also experiencing extreme disparities in coronavirus-related health outcomes along racial lines (p. 20). 20 points

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses noted.

Reader’s Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services and Project Plan

1. B: Quality of Project Services and Project Plan (up to 35 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of project services and project plan.

In determining the quality of the project services and project plan, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (up to 5 points)

In addition, the Secretary considers--

(1) The extent to which the proposed project is an exceptional approach to absolute priority being addressed and includes a detailed project plan for addressing the absolute priority. (up to 10 points)

(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 to respond to the needs of students. (up to 10 points)

(3) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will expand access to remote learning options and lead to improvements in student outcomes. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. (up to 5 points)
Strengths:

Quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access: The proposed project does include efforts to pilot the work in those districts most impacted by COVID-19 (p. 7) and thus, would target traditionally underrepresented and/or marginalized students. Further, the applicant notes that a focus on elementary mathematics, which is a major project component, is aimed at improving outcomes for traditionally underserved student (p. e32-e33). 5 points

Sub-criterion 1: The applicant aims to develop and implement a comprehensive state-wide digital learning system (p. e14). This system will be designed to house learning resources and data analysis tools with a special focus on mathematics for grades K-5. In addition, the project would support the development of videos and model lessons (modeled and taught by County Teachers of the Year, p. 7). This material would be freely available to all students and parents in the state. The project components mentioned here (i.e., state-wide digital learning system, focus on K-5 mathematics, and model lessons) do offer an exceptional approach to absolute priority three. 10 points

Sub-criterion 2: The development of a state-wide digital learning system (p. e14) is an effective plan, given the gaps identified in the narrative. For example, the applicant notes that New Jersey districts are faced with delivering remote instruction in the context of a digital divide, limited data literacy for parents and educators, and a lack of technology proficiency for educators. 7 points

Sub-criterion 3: The combined focus on elementary mathematics and a state-wide digital learning system should allow for broad reach (e.g., available to students in all districts and regions of the state) as well as improved student outcomes. The project includes supports for formative assessment (p. 13) that would facilitate improved remote and/or hybrid instruction. On page e-14, the applicant offers references to support the model/project plan that is outlined (study cited of impacts of COVID-19 on students and teachers). 5 points

Sub-criterion 4: The inclusion of multi-tiered systems of supports and Response to Intervention are grounded in best practices and available evidence (p. e18-e19). Moreover, the applicant’s emphases on elementary mathematics and strengthening online instruction are both grounded in up-to-date evidence of effective educational practice. 5 points

Weaknesses:

Quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access: No weaknesses noted.

Sub-criterion 1: No weaknesses noted.

Sub-criterion 2: The strong focus on K-5 means that by default, grades 6-12, as well as Pre-K, are going to receive less emphasis under this project plan. It is not clear that this specific focus is warranted, based on the state-level data presented. In particular, there is a concern that the emphasis on K-5 might mean that secondary students, especially those at risk of not completing high school, will be underserved. Finally, the application notes 90,000 students in the state cannot successfully access remote learning (pg. e36) and the plans to close that gap are not made clear in the application. So, it is not obvious how the applicant’s aim of making the resources developed with this funding to all students in the state will be realized. What would have strengthened this section is if the applicant had made clear how the 90,000 students who struggle to access remote learning might be successfully reached. At least a proposed timeline for reaching these students should have been included to overcome this weakness. -3 points

Sub-criterion 3: No weaknesses noted.

Sub-criterion 4: No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 33
Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources

1. C: Quality of the Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources (up to 25 points)

In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers--

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (up to 5 points)

(2) The extent to which the proposed use of funds will adequately support the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

Sub-criterion 1: The budget narrative outlines which funds are allocated for different major project components (e.g., department expenses). The project leadership is experienced and already in place in the department, so they are able to begin work immediately, if funded (p. e60-e64). The applicant outlines each project year’s milestones and timeline (p. e22-e23) that provides evidence of a project plan that will allow for completion of project activities on time. The budget details offered (p. e60-e63) indicate that the applicant has allocated sufficient funds for completing the project within budget (e.g., funds for implementation coordinator and funds for travel). 5 points

Sub-criterion 2: Based on the plan outlined in the project narrative, the funds requested appear to be adequate to support the proposed work. The reviewer sees the allocation of funds for a full-time project manager as well as an implementation coordinator as particular strengths (p. e60). 5 points

Sub-criterion 3: Based on the scope of work and the project components, the funds requested by the applicant seem reasonable with regard to overall project aims/activities. 2 points

Sub-criterion 4: Given that the applicant plans to implement a statewide digital platform (p. e14), which would be available for all students and educators in the state, the funds requested are reasonable for the number of persons served. The estimate of [ ] per student served (p. e63) appears to be a reasonable cost. 10 points

Weaknesses:

Sub-criterion 1: No weaknesses noted.

Sub-criterion 2: No weaknesses noted.

Sub-criterion 3: The majority of funds requested are marked for an outside vendor (TBD), so much of the specific allocation of funds (more than [ ]) is unknown and pending the planning and coordination with this vendor. Thus, for the bulk of funds, very little information is provided about which activities and/or expenses would be covered (p. e60-e64). For example, the reviewer cannot determine which portion of funds awarded to the vendor would go to salaries, travel, materials, infrastructure, training, etc. This section would have been stronger if some estimates – or even caps – for budget domains (travel, salary, etc.) were offered. It is also not clear, given the information in the application, how the figures for the sub-award/contract with vendor were calculated. Because of these limitations, the reviewer cannot fully determine if the costs are reasonable for executing the work plan, because it is not clear which costs will go to which components of the plan.

-3 points
Sub-criterion 4: No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 22

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/22/2020 09:46 AM
## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** New Jersey Department of Education (S425B200034)  
**Reader #3:** **********

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Selection Criteria - Highest Coronavirus Burden

1. A: Highest Coronavirus Burden (up to 20 Points)

   (2) The extent to which the applicant has a high coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors identified by the applicant in response to Application Requirement 3. (up to 20 points)

   Strengths:
   The applicant details how the burdens of COVID-19 have impacted the area and caused a swift and steep rise in the number of cases. The area is ranked ninth for number of cases in the US and 11th in the world for deaths. The data presented validates that the racial and ethnic groups in the area were differently impacted by the virus crisis, including a high number of their students. The plan further describes how there are social and emotional impacts, such as, weakened economics, 28% of the labor force filed for unemployment benefits, and stress caused by financial insecurity is enormous. The mandated closure of the schools impacted the educational system and dictated an immediate shift to access remote learning. The applicant provides details enacted by community and district leaders to focus on families to ensure digital access, transitioning to remote instruction which include on-air classes, and providing additional web-based resources to address social-emotional support services. The applicant recognizes a wide range of barriers generated by the COVID-19 crisis that will continue to exist and need to be effectively addressed. (pgs. 23-25) 20 pts.

   Weaknesses:
   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader’s Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services and Project Plan

1. B: Quality of Project Services and Project Plan (up to 35 points)

   The Secretary considers the quality of project services and project plan.

   In determining the quality of the project services and project plan, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (up to 5 points)

   In addition, the Secretary considers--

   (1) The extent to which the proposed project is an exceptional approach to absolute priority being addressed and includes a detailed project plan for addressing the absolute priority. (up to 10 points)

   (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 to respond
to the needs of students. (up to 10 points)

(3) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will expand access to remote learning options and lead to improvements in student outcomes. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

Quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access:

The applicant presents a platform that aligns with GEPA mandates and is designed to increase access for all students to receive high quality learning. The project includes strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment and to provide adapted materials that will address and support the students with special needs, students experiencing homelessness, and students with disabilities which are considered members of traditionally underrepresented groups. (pg. e10) 5 pts.

1. The applicant presents a project design with clearly defined goals and objectives for the purpose of increasing high-quality remote learning through a comprehensive digital learning system. The plan also includes providing online math instructional units that meet state standards to students in grades K-5. The project plan is building on an existing initiative in the current educational system and the COVID-19 crisis mandated additional online instructional tools and supports that ensure delivery of high-quality education to all targeted students. The project involves different information technology components and is developed on multiple digital platform levels. The designed project is innovative and aligns with components of multi-tier systems of supports (RTI; MTSS; LMS) that blends learning models; integrates comprehensive digital-learning platforms; provides modeled curriculum units and differentiated instruction; monitors progress in meeting technology-supported learning and instructional needs; and maximizes student and family accessibility to the remote learning environment. The regularly scheduled meetings of staff and an internal working group can ensure high-quality tools that align with the proposed project objectives and successful implementation. (pgs. 3-6) 10 pts.

2. The applicant identifies gaps and weaknesses in services and opportunities that are exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. The project plan specifies the gap in services to the education community, that includes the absence of a fully remote educational environment; a lack of skills, resources, and tools needed by educators to support students, and efforts to empower parents to master academic skills and knowledge in non-existent. The applicant states that the pandemic-related closure revealed the need to modernize the educational system with new tools and increased flexibility for online learning, online professional development, and resources that can be integrated with digital-learning platforms. The plan to utilize baselines for reporting on the project-specific performance measures that are to be collected, can determine how many students and parents are successfully using the online platform. (pgs. 9, 14-15) 10 pts.

3. The applicant provides evidence plans, methods, strategies, and activities targeting the disruption of instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These components include detailed efforts to improve its current technology and online platforms, individualized support for students, data and reporting mechanisms, and a central digital space for connecting various aspects within the digital learning environment (i.e. curriculum; instruction; assessment; data; and communication). The applicant presents several multi-tiered systems of support, including the digital learning system (CAR) framework that connects with assessments, data analysis tools, instructional tools, and tier 2 and 3 interventions. There are currently support resources (academic; behavioral; intervention) available for producing instructional units that are accessible online for students throughout the state. These efforts were generated through partnerships with educator associations, private collaborations, and IT companies to deploy Wi-Fi-enabled devices to every student. These innovative resources are aligned with the existing systems and instructional units that are to be utilized online and are available to close the digital divide as well as support 1-to-1 digital access for students. (pgs. 2-12, 16-17) 3 pts.

4. The applicant references current up-to-date resources relating to implementing success improvements to the digital environment; developing a framework for delivering evidence-base strategies and interventions within a schoolwide program; modeling a process schools can use for prevention, intervention and enrichment for all student groups; and instructions during the Era of COVID-19. The project reflects innovative approaches to up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice, throughout the plan. The project aligns with demonstrated knowledge that is proven to
connect digital platforms and provide a high-quality remote learning environment for students, teachers, and parents. (pgs. e18, e19, 14- 17)  5 pts.

**Weaknesses:**

Quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access:

No weaknesses noted.

1. No weaknesses noted.

2. No weaknesses noted.

3. The state of NJ and IT partners distributed computers to all students, however, large number of these students (90,000) cannot fully access remote learning in spite of continual efforts. The lack of Wi-Fi and internet connections can have a negative effect on students that are not able to access the proposed online activities.

4. No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 33

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources**

1. **C: Quality of the Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources (up to 25 points)**

In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers--

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (up to 5 points)

(2) The extent to which the proposed use of funds will adequately support the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. (up to 10 points)

**Strengths:**

1. The applicant presents the project plan with milestones, timelines, and staff responsibilities. The budget aligns with the stated project goals and the budget costs seems adequate and reasonable to support the wide range of planned services, resources, and activities over the grant period. The full and part-time staff have experiences, qualifications, leadership skills, and expertise working with various program offices, which is necessary to attain the project objectives within budget. There is a sufficient amount of staff who will be employed by the project to implement it appropriately (budget narrative).  5 pts.

2. The applicant's plan shows that a large amount of the expenses will be leveraged through resources for contractual
advisory groups and a student learning management vendor. These components are critical to the grant project for ensuring online instructional tools and individualized student supports that will provide invaluable resources in remote settings. The committed resources will ensure the project is well supplied with the needed technology and equipment, have experienced and qualified staff in place, and can provide high-quality remote learning opportunities to parents. The budget is expected to fund the incorporated program components to offer long-lasting benefits for the educators and contribute towards the academic success of the targeted students. (Budget) 5 pts.

3. The budget cost seems reasonable in relation to the objectives and scope of the project. The description of resources for remote instruction, experience staff, a tiered system of supports, supplies, equipment, tracking methods, travel, and the delivery of services are funded by reasonable budget costs. The financial commitment from the district will enable the project to commit additional resources and supplement other direct student services to enhance quality educational opportunities to the students experiencing homelessness, English learners, and students with disabilities. (budget narrative) 2 pts.

The applicant states that over 500 school and district leaders are supporting the cycle of continuous improvement and learning efforts. These components are customized to support students inside and outside of the traditional school building. The requested cost seems reasonable to support approximately 500,000, K-5 students in the digital high-quality mathematical instructional program. The project plan includes a specific instructional online platform targeting large numbers of students with special needs, students with disabilities, and individual curriculums for gifted and talented, as well as advanced students. The budgeted funds will also generate online instructional tools to address individual needs; provide materials on sharing best practices; and develop resource banks for public use. These accessible tools can maximize the educational support offered to schools, students, and parents. (pgs. 2, 16, 18) 10 pts.

**Weaknesses:**

1. No weaknesses noted.

2. No weaknesses noted.

3. The large budget-line items for the Advisory group, contracted vendors, and hefty salaries of two part-time employees being equivalent to the one full time employee, seems excessive and makes it difficult to determine if the proposed cost is reasonable. (budget)

4. No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 22