

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

Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review

Applicant: Houston Independent School District (U374A170050)

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

|  | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Questions</b>                                       |                 |               |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Evidence of Support</b>                             |                 |               |
| 1. Evidence of Support                                 | 30              | 28            |
| <b>Need for Project</b>                                |                 |               |
| 1. Need for Project                                    | 25              | 25            |
| <b>Selection Criterion</b>                             |                 |               |
| <b>Quality of the Project Design</b>                   |                 |               |
| 1. Project Design                                      | 20              | 19            |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>                  |                 |               |
| 1. Management Plan                                     | 20              | 20            |
| <b>Adequacy of Resources</b>                           |                 |               |
| 1. Adequacy of Resources                               | 5               | 5             |
| <b>Priority Questions</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Competitive Preference Priority #1</b>              |                 |               |
| <b>Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators</b> |                 |               |
| 1. CPP 1   | 10              | 8             |
| <b>Competitive Preference Priority #2</b>              |                 |               |
| <b>Diverse and Effective Workforce</b>                 |                 |               |
| 1. CPP 2   | 5               | 4             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>115</b>      | <b>109</b>    |

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - TSL - 3: 84.374A

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

Applicant: Houston Independent School District (U374A170050)

## 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 well describes the how implementation of their proposed Project LEADERS (Leveraging Effective Academics Districtwide for Equity and Resources for Students) is part of a comprehensive human capital system that integrates performance-based compensation systems to recruit, hire, develop, retain, and reward effective and highly effective teachers and school leaders. The over-arching goal will be to provide wrap-around services and other supports for schools to increase student achievement. The applicant provides a description of the milestones from past systemic reforms which impacted LEA district-wide Human Capital Management System, and describes how the proposed project will build on these reforms as part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students (pp. e20-21). The LEA uses the Teacher Appraisal and Development System (TADS) and the School Leader Scorecard to determine the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders, as well as the retention of effective/highly effective teachers and leaders. These systems also determine the types of professional development needed, as well as if the experience of the teachers and leaders is a good match for the schools (p. e25).

##### Strengths (if applicable):

The LEA's Strategic Direction for District reform and improvements, created from the Beliefs and Visions document, is the basis for the HCMS. The Strategic Direction includes 5 core initiatives which will be important in implementing the HCMS, including effective teachers in every classroom; effective principals in every school; rigorous instructional standards and supports; data-driven accountability; and a culture of trust through action. The components to provide the foundation of reform and support the current HCMS include a performance-based evaluation and compensation system for teachers, principals, and the superintendent designed to help recruit, reward, support, and retain the best and brightest educators for schools (p. e21). These core initiatives are the framework for an effective performance based evaluation plan. The applicant describes the LEA's Human Capital Management System including the functions of its multi-faceted departments (pp. e21-22), as well as a detailed description of LEA teacher and leader recruitment efforts (pp. e22). The HCMS currently includes an evaluation and support system for teachers and school leaders that reflects equitable measures of performance, based in part on demonstrated improvement in student academic achievement. The evaluation and support system for teachers is a district developed teacher appraisal and development process (TADS) which replaces the previous PDAS which did not meet the needs of educators. Unique features of TADS include regular feedback with annual teacher evaluation based on student performance data; and tools and resources for appropriate professional development to improve their teaching practices (pp. e23-24). The evaluation support system for school leaders consists of a School Leader

### Sub Question

Appraisal Scorecard based on school performance, student performance, district-wide teacher effectiveness and on improving practices that are appropriately linked with student achievement. The State Education Agency has mandated that local education agencies must include student achievement data in the principal evaluations, based in part on students' STAAR scores. A data system that links educators with student academic achievement data (p. e24) will provide a viable means of assessing educator effectiveness. The proposed project will build upon previous HCMS models by ensuring equity for high-needs schools; by providing high quality teachers and leaders to increase academic achievement; by closing the achievement gap; and by providing compensations for highly effective teachers and school leaders to specifically serve high-need students. These goals show that the TADS model has a greater possibility than previous models in supporting the development of highly effective teachers and administrators. To institutionalize TADS, the LEA has developed a standardized curriculum; expanded the Literacy by 3 program to include middle school students; provided digital resources for students; implemented a districtwide Power UP initiative which provides home and school laptops for high school students; and incorporated 3 levels of district assessments for evaluations (pp. e 26-27).

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses

### 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 describes how the services to be provided by the proposed project involve collaborations of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project activities. The applicant describes external collaborative partnerships that will assist with improving teacher pedagogy and success including local colleges and universities, as well as internal collaborative partnerships with LEA departments which support HCMS goals.

Strengths (if applicable):

Through partnerships with colleges and universities (pp. e98-99), the applicant developed the Teach Forward Program which is a program where the District commits to paying students' unmet college tuitions for education majors, and provides program supports and training for teachers (pp. e27-28). Also, the Bilingual Teaching Cohort is a collaborative initiative in which the district will pay for employee tuition and a stipend for successful completion for a larger population of teachers. Additionally, the District partners with local universities to offer field observation opportunities in LEA schools and to help university students meet student teaching requirements (p. e22). Other partnerships include the Association of Hispanic School Administrators (A.H.S.A.), a professional organization for LEA employees dedicated to developing and advancing school leaders (p. e101); and the Alliance of Black School Educators' (HAABSE) whose primary mission is to enhance the education of all students and to provide professional services. This organization is a committed partner with the LEA through efforts to improve the ability of Black educators with problem resolutions (p. e100). The applicant describes the resources and services to be provided by 16 internal LEA departments, which will work collaboratively to provide district-wide technical assistance to the project. Within the District, the project will work in partnership with cross-functional teams in Human Resources, School Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, schools, and other divisions of the District. The interdepartmental collaborations are an effective strategy because a plan of this magnitude requires investment in every level of the organization. This project will be led by the Office of Leadership Development, which is appropriate since the focus will be on developing highly effective school leaders who increase student achievement for every student by helping teachers learn what it means to teach in a rigorous manner; as well as how to achieve relevance by changing the nature of curriculum and instruction (pp. e28-31 ). Teachers and principals support the project through active participation in planning project activities, participating in focused professional development and the commitment to be deployed in high needs schools.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses.

## Sub Question

### 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 provides a detailed description of how the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources. The applicant describes existing LEA funding streams teacher stipends for teacher leadership roles and mentor roles. The proposed project will expand current initiatives based on qualifications and experience of teacher leaders and principals. For example, the District's existing performance-based compensation system (PBCS) model will be revised to better provide teachers and school leaders, with incentives and awards for increasing student achievement, increasing equity, and additional duties. (pp. e31-32).

##### Strengths (if applicable):

Currently, schools with teacher leaders provide a partial payment towards a teacher stipend; but the level of support proposed for this program is stronger because of the expanded services, incentives, and support. For example, the teacher leader role will be expanded to include more duties and more money. This is an improvement over the existing program because teachers are supported in leadership roles. The proposed project will expand to have clearly defined, different roles and different levels, depending on the experience and/or expertise of the teacher leader. For example, the District currently has teacher mentors. In this project, teacher mentors in the program will have more duties that will directly impact the teacher mentee and the mentorship will expand to up to three years, instead of the traditional one year. The mentors will earn additional money for these additional duties. Moreover, career pathways for teachers will be enhanced by project strategies to create teacher leaders (p. e94-97 ). Also, principal mentoring has existed for first year principals offering mentors for one year. ). This project will support principals for up to two years and will extend to struggling principals. The LEA's proposed project, entitled Project Leveraging Effective Academics Districtwide for Equity and Resources for Students (Project LEADERS), will revise the District's existing performance-based compensation system (PBCS) model to provide teachers and school leaders with incentives and awards for increasing student achievement, increasing equity, and additional duties. These incentives are designed to award differentiated compensation to instructional staff based on student growth, achievement data, and additional responsibilities. This project will be an improvement over the previous model by ensuring that teachers are well-trained and supported by teacher leaders and mentors. To be eligible to participate in this program, educators and school leaders must meet all the eligibility requirements that are applicable to their current position (pp. e31-32).

##### Weaknesses (if applicable):

The applicant does not describe how the proposed project will use existing funding streams supported by community, State, and Federal resources to improve relevant outcomes. The applicant has requested a waiver for not providing matching funds and will no longer manage the project after the Federal grant ends. More information is needed to describe how the fidelity of the project will be maintained using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.

### Reader's Score:

#### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

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

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 well describes how the proposed project will provide services to address the needs of students at risk of educational failure by building local capacity to implement a comprehensive human capital system. The applicant provides documentation of high needs schools, which shows the percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, as well as 50% or more of its enrollment is from low income families, based on eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch subsidies (pp. 66-68). The goal is to provide services to increase the academic achievement of students at the targeted 86 high-need campuses and to cultivate a performance culture of high expectations that also values and retains results-oriented employees. The LEA's revised HCMS model will integrate performance-based compensation with recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding highly effective teachers and leaders.

Strengths (if applicable):

The rationale for providing services to address the needs of students at risk of educational failure is based on the District's high-needs Priority, Focus, and low-achieving schools rated "Improvement Required" (IR) by TEA. When these schools are compared to the District and State, they have higher percentages of minority student enrollment; higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students; and higher percentages of students at risk for educational failure. The State Education Agency (TEA) identifies persistently low-performing School Improvement Program (SIG) schools as Priority schools or Focus schools; and for the 2016-2017 academic year, the LEA has 48 Focus schools, 22 Priority schools, and 16 low-achieving schools (IR) by TEA, based on their unacceptable performance in meeting required target scores and high-need status, which is an indicator of students at risk for academic failure (p e33). The LEA is having difficulty recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding highly effective and effective teachers at many schools; this is especially the case at the 86 Focus, Priority, and High-Poverty, low-achieving schools. The District recognizes the link between low academic achievement and low high school graduation rates, and how teacher turnover and ineffectiveness can have a dramatic and adverse effect on students' academic success. Based on a districtwide analysis, many of LEA's high-need schools have significantly lower percentages of effective and highly effective teachers (p. e35). Based on a districtwide analysis, several significant needs have been identified that contribute to the low academic achievement present in many LEA schools, for which the proposed project will provide services. These needs include the need to enhance and refine the District's recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding of highly effective and effective teachers and school leaders; the need for more highly effective and effective teachers and school leaders to provide rigorous academic offerings for all students, since they are unevenly distributed across schools; and the need to provide targeted, sustained professional development (PD) and other supports, in a variety of modalities, to school leaders and teachers, as well as to incentivize them to remain in high-need schools to improve students' academic achievement (p. e37). The proposed project will be effective in addressing these needs because of the enhanced services, incentives, and support provided to educators.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses

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 provides sufficient data which describes specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities which will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. The data provided includes student performance data, disaggregated by ethnic groups,

## Sub Question

socioeconomic status and high needs students. The magnitude of the gaps and weaknesses are evident when the applicant compares LEA data to state and national data. The applicant also provides data showing the magnitude of gaps in teacher and principal turnover rates within targeted schools as compared to District, State and National rates. The applicant describes several significant gaps and weaknesses that have been identified that contribute to low academic achievement present in many Houston ISD schools (pp. e37- 40).

Strengths (if applicable):

There are significant achievement gaps in student performance on the STAAR State Assessment for the 2015-2016 school year. There is a 13% gap between all students districtwide and all students at the 86 schools; a 15% gap between all students districtwide and all African American students at the 86 schools; an 11% gap between all students districtwide and all Hispanic students at the 86 schools; a 1% gap between all students districtwide and all White students at the 86 schools; and a 14% gap between all students districtwide and all economically disadvantaged students at the 86 schools. Among the 86 schools, the only student group to outperform all students districtwide are the Asian students (75% for the Asian students at the 86 schools versus 69% for all students districtwide). Overall, the cohort of 86 schools tend to have lower levels of achievement on the reading and mathematics portions of the STAAR State assessment, compared to the District and State; proficiency in these subjects are considered strong predictors of future academic success. For the cohort, the largest achievement gaps on the STAAR tests are found among all students, African Americans, Hispanics, and economically disadvantaged students at the targeted 86 schools. Among the 18 high schools included in the cohort of 86 targeted schools, the average class of 2015 four-year longitudinal graduation rate at these campuses, at 71%, tends to be lower than District (82%) and State (89%). Also, target schools have a higher dropout rate, at 17%, compared to the District (11%) and State (6.3%). Even more significant is the fact that many of the LEA's high-need schools have significantly-lower percentages of effective and highly effective teachers. There is an 11% gap in the percentage of effective and highly effective teachers between the 86 targeted schools (60%) and the District (71%). The 86 targeted schools tend to have teachers with fewer years of experience compared to District. For the 2015-2016 school year, the 86 targeted schools had a total of 3,885 teachers, with 46% of the teachers having five years or less of experience, 18% of the teachers having six-to-ten years of experience, and 35% of the teachers having eleven or more years of experience, while only 41% of all Houston ISD teachers have five years of experience or less, 19% of the teachers having six-to-ten years of experience, and 40% of the teachers having eleven or more years of experience. The 86 targeted schools have significantly higher annual teacher turnover rates and 5-year average turnover rates, compared to Houston ISD as a whole—whether moving to another Houston ISD school or leaving the District. At the end of the 2015-2016 school year, the LEA employed 12,287 teachers, including 3,885 teachers at the 86 targeted schools. Although 32% of the LEA's teachers work at the targeted 86 schools, 43% or 1,900 teachers from the targeted schools out of 4,408 District-wide moved from their then-current campus to another District school or left the District. Additionally, novice teachers and teachers with one-to-five years of experience also had the highest exit rates from the District. For the 2015- 2016 school year alone, 52% of all teachers hired or 1,284, were novice teachers and 19% of all teachers hired, or 479, had one-to-five years of experience. This data suggests that less-experienced teachers, with minimal support, never fully-developed their skills and are exiting the District at higher rates than their more experienced colleagues. The LEA is having difficulty in recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding highly effective and effective principals at many schools. Each year, the District hires between 30- 40 new principals to lead its schools and an even higher number of assistant principals. An analysis of District principal turnover rates in for 2015-2016, shows that all principals districtwide had an average of 3.5 years of experience at their current campus; priority schools' principals had an average of 1.77 years of experience at their current campus; focus schools' principals had an average of 1.87 years of experience at their current campus; and high-poverty schools with the lowest academic ratings had principals with an average of 2.5 years of experience at their current campus (pp. e37- 40 ). The applicant has clearly identified and described the magnitude of significant gaps impacting student achievement and educator retention in high needs schools.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

More information is needed to address the academic services for free and reduced lunch students as compared to the general population. It is unclear how the specific needs for improving the performance of free and reduced lunch students will be addressed through the two hour monthly training for educators (e.29).

**Sub Question**

**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:

The applicant provides a logic model (pp. e69-72) which demonstrates a research-based rationale for the project, which links to a budget which shows that funding is sufficient for scope of work, and that equitable distribution of effective and highly effective teachers and school leaders will lead to increasing academic achievement. The logic model is organized by project goals and for each goal provides descriptions of contributing factors, activities and outputs, outcomes, impacts, and long term goals and objectives. These components demonstrate a solid project rationale depicting how the proposed The HCMS will improve how it manages the four inter-related functions of acquiring strong talent, providing ongoing professional development opportunities, nurturing, rewarding, and challenging high-performing staff, and evaluating staff to inform personnel decisions to create a stronger workforce with the collective capacity and expertise to enable enhanced educational outcomes (p. e41).

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant's proposed project seeks to build local capacity to enhance the District's comprehensive HCMS and integrate performance-based compensation systems (PBCS) to reward highly effective teachers and school leaders to serve and increase the academic achievement of all students at the targeted 86 high-need campuses. The applicant describes the theoretical and conceptual background and supporting research of the proposed project, including relevant research that the project builds upon (contributing factors) and that provides a compelling rationale (goals and objectives) for activities and outputs, outcomes, impacts, and long term goals and objectives. The rationale is supported by clear project goals which are supported by measurable objectives and linked to focused activities for increasing the number of effective and highly effective teachers teaching students in high-need schools; increasing the number of effective and highly effective teachers; increasing teacher retention in high needs schools; increasing the percentage and retention of highly effective and effective principals in high-need schools to remain at the school for at least four years; and decrease the achievement gaps of all students of the project campuses (p. e41).

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses

**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 of the project is goal based; with a detailed description of measurable objectives, as well as appropriate strategies for meeting each objective. The project goals include increasing student achievement; improving human capital; and increasing the number of effective and highly effective educators. The District will create a system to



### Sub Question

better identify experienced, high-achieving teachers and incentivize them to go to or remain on high-need campuses. The purpose of the proposed project is to increase the proficiency and capacity of teachers by ensuring that they are well-trained and supported by successful teacher leaders and mentors. Incentives will be provided using metrics to measure student academic progress and state achievement data. Also, the District will create a system to better identify experienced, high performing school leaders and incentivize them to go to or remain on high-need campuses. In addition, wraparound services will be provided for targeted students to provide individualized mental health and health services designed to meet the specific needs and to help students with emotional or behavioral problems (pp. e41-51).

#### Strengths (if applicable):

Strategies to be utilized by the proposed project to successfully address the needs of the target population and other identified needs include equity in the allocation of effective teachers and principals, resources, and student access to challenging academic programs; strengthening recruiting and staffing policies and practices to attract and retain top talent, especially in high-need schools; providing additional supports and wrap-around services to students that will alleviate some of the challenges new and struggling teachers face when teaching students in high-need schools; and focusing recruitment efforts on finding quality teachers inside and outside of the state. Funding will also be provided for PD for teachers at the high-need schools. Improved teacher professional development will be job-embedded and on-going, and will address discipline-specific concepts and skills, student, as well as cultural proficiency and classroom management (pp. e41-46). The District will create a system to better identify experienced, high-achieving teachers and incentivize them to go to or remain on high-need campuses. For example, high-achieving teachers that decide to go to a low performing school to increase student achievement will be eligible for a one-time bonus of [REDACTED] and the opportunity to receive additional bonuses as a career pathway teacher leader. To be eligible to participate in the PBCS awards, teachers must have a rating of effective or highly effective, tied to the teacher appraisal system (TADS). Teachers with a rating of 3 or 4 will be chosen by the principal to be a mentor or teacher leader. The LEA will also revise the District's existing PBCS model to provide school leaders with incentives and awards. These incentives are designed to award differentiated compensation to school leaders based on student growth, achievement data, and support to teachers. The District will create a system to better identify experienced, high performing school leaders and incentivize them to go to or remain on high-need campuses. The District will reassign high achieving principals to low performing, high-needs schools to improve student outcomes. For example, high achieving school leaders who decide to go to a low performing school to improve teacher pedagogy and student achievement will be eligible for a one-time bonus of up to [REDACTED] and the opportunity to receive an additional bonus each year in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] for school success. The School Leader Appraisal Scorecard that currently evaluates school leaders includes student performance measures but does not provide a strong support system in the form of PD for school leaders. The professional development school leaders will receive through the proposed project will be job-embedded and the evaluation and support system will focus on continuous growth and improvement; guided self-reflection; informed professional development; and improving leadership qualities. Services provided to meet the individualized student health and mental health needs include wraparound services designed to meet the specific needs of the child and to help students with emotional or behavioral problems such as poor anger management or trouble getting along with other children. Wraparound services are comprehensive and address multiple life domains across home, school, and community, including family life, basic needs, safety, and social, emotional, educational, spiritual, and cultural needs. Wraparound services in high-need schools are important components of support for the new or struggling teachers because they will assist with student behavior and train the teachers on strategies to identify and if possible, address the needs of the students they teach (pp. e41-51).

#### Weaknesses (if applicable):

More details are needed to describe how the high needs target population will be specifically addressed. There is a lack of clarity about the specific services to be provided for the target population. More information is needed to clarify the goals and objectives specific to the high needs target population.

#### Reader's Score:

## Sub Question

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

#### General:

##### Overall Comments:

The applicant describes how grant activities will be evaluated and monitored. The District will contract with an external evaluator who will work in partnership with the District Research and Accountability Department in the implementation of the project evaluation. The evaluator, Project Director, and Program Manager will implement the evaluation plan by applying qualitative and quantitative methods that measure the impact of the program on meeting the stated goals and objectives (pp. e51-52).

##### Strengths (if applicable):

To monitor the efficacy of the program, classroom and campus observations, site visits, surveys, budgets, and focus groups, as appropriate, will be used to create formative and summative evaluations which will modify practices and reinforce expectations. The applicant will use a Board Monitoring System to establish a schedule of detailed reporting to the board and community on the District's efforts and effective use of funding to meet the District's facilities standards, and evaluate all major programs, grants, and services on a regular basis. The Board Monitoring System was designed to give the board, District administrators, and the public a data-driven accountability system that reports regularly, and it has become a key springboard for steering District policy. The progress toward meeting project goals and objectives will be reported annually to the USDE, the community, and the superintendent and board of education through documented reports and forums, as requested (pp. e51-52).

##### Weaknesses (if applicable):

The applicant provides insufficient details describing the formative and summative evaluations, such as how they will be conducted; the timelines for implementation and reporting; the data sources (teachers, students, principals); and the responsibilities of personnel involved in all levels of the monitoring and evaluation processes. More information is needed to describe the classroom observation tools and survey tools to be utilized; when and by whom they will be utilized; and how these tools will be utilized to monitor and evaluate grant activities. More information is needed to describe the role of the Project Director and the Program Manager in evaluating and monitoring grant activities. More details are needed to describe the data input and retrieval processes for the Board Monitoring System, and how the system will be utilized to provide formative and summative data in the monitoring and evaluation process of grant activities.

#### 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 applicant provides a solid management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project, which includes an inter-departmental and multitiered process with support from all levels of District management. The applicant describes clearly defined responsibilities of District offices collaborating in the management of the project, as well as a description of the biographies (pp. e52-54) and resumes (p. e73) of the Project Director, Program Manager, and other key project personnel. The applicant will hire an independent external evaluator to lead the evaluation process, and provides a detailed description of the qualifications and responsibilities of the external evaluator in providing leadership in the collection, analysis, and reporting of all pertinent data to facilitate on-going project improvements (p. e54).

##### Strengths (if applicable):

Management of the project will be provided through collaborative support from District departments such as Talent Acquisition, Professional Support and Development, Elementary and Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, Office of School Leadership, Research and Accountability, Grants, Budgeting, Accounting, and LEA school offices (p. e54). The Project Director and Program Manager will provide direct oversight of the program to ensure that the professional

development and other Project LEADERS services are implemented with fidelity, on time and within budget. This integration will enable the District to leverage grant funds to be used specifically to build foundations for career pathways and for recruiting effective leaders and classroom teachers for high needs schools. The applicant describes the qualifications the Project Director and other key personnel who are qualified to carry out their responsibilities as evidenced by their biographies (pp. e52-54), resumes (p. e73), and job descriptions (p. e92).

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 20**

### **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: 5**

#### **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's budget meets mandatory requirements of providing, from non-Federal sources, an amount equal to 50% of the amount of the grant, which may be provided in cash or in kind, to carry out the activities supported by the grant. The applicant's budget illustrates matching contributions on an annual basis relative to the proposed TSL grant funds (p. e7 and pp. e123- 128). The applicant ensures continuation of the project after Federal funding ends through District allocation of funds as indicated in the budget (pp. e60 & e123-128) and through the commitment to seek funds from other resources (p. e58).

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant ensures its commitment to the continuation of all program activities beyond the period of the grant. All District staff and campus administrators will actively work to meet the goals and objectives of the project to impact a lasting change in the systems developed under the grant. The applicant plans to pursue other sources to fully continue the program after Federal funding ends. The District has committed to allocating funds to this project, as indicated in the budget (p. e7 and pp. e123- 128), and has also committed to obtaining funding through foundations, grants, and other resources to support project goals of transforming low-performing high-need schools into schools of choice where students are taught by effective and highly effective teachers.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses

**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 provides evidence supporting the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing program of the agency of organization at the end of the Federal funding (p. e60). The applicant's proposed

## Sub Question

project budget provides evidence of district matching funds to support and sustain project goals and activities (pp. e121-123). The applicant provides evidence of support from colleges and universities (pp. e98-99) which will provide ongoing program support.

Strengths (if applicable):

Staff development and teacher and principal mentors created through the proposed project will positively impact the student population of the district. The funds requested will be used to support a design and professional development for teachers and school leaders, to increase capacity to attract and sustain highly effective teachers and school leaders, and to develop career pathways that will allow teachers to become effective leaders on their campuses. Project LEADERS' funding will be matched with District general fund dollars to meet the required 50% match (pp. e121-123). This will allow the District to improve the education for all students. The LEA's partnership with many organizations (pp. e98-101) in the Houston area has laid the groundwork for the district to build and create an equitable college and career readiness culture throughout the district.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses

**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 clearly identifies 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. The applicant describes significant gaps in student achievement on the required STARR state assessments (p. e34) and academic achievement (p. e40); gaps in the percentages of highly qualified principals (pp. e38-40) and teachers (p. e38) who are deployed and remain at high needs schools; and gaps in professional development for educators (p. e38).

Strengths: The applicant describes several significant gaps and weaknesses that have been identified that contribute to low academic achievement present in many Houston ISD schools. The District needs to enhance and refine its human capital and compensation systems that will optimize how it manages hiring, allocating, and retaining highly qualified teachers and principals; provide fair teacher and campus-based leader appraisal systems; provide individualized support and targeted professional development, with the commensurate incentives to encourage staff stability for teachers and campus-based leaders; offer meaningful career pathways and differentiated compensation to retain and leverage effective teachers and campus-based leaders; and provide resources to students that will support their socio-emotional and behavioral growth which will allow teachers to maximize instructional effectiveness. The proposed project will serve as a model for systemic changes that will positively impact all students (pp. e40-41).

Weaknesses: No weaknesses

Overall Comments: The applicant identifies relevant factors used in determining such gaps, such as data on student

achievement (p. e19); staffing patterns (pp e38-40); and professional development (p. e38). The applicant provides documentation of High-Need Schools (pp. e66-68) and assures that the District used a variety of data collection methods to determine gaps (pp. e96-97). The District also utilizes the Teacher Dash Board and the Principal Dash Board, which are electronic data collection systems used for monitoring and analysis (pp. e 24-25).

Strengths: To identify gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities, the LEA conducted a district-wide analysis of schools across the District using a variety of data collection methods. Utilizing these multiple data tracking system will yield a triangulated analysis which will provide the LEA with a more realistic picture of needs. The Teacher Dashboard is designed to provide teachers with the ability to review student performance and other relevant information. Principals can correlate student performance in their schools with teacher performance to make informed hiring decisions. The Principal Dashboard enables administrators to view in-house school data in any variety of ways – whole school, by grade, by teacher, individual student or subject, as well as view attendance, discipline, and statewide assessment data (pp. e 24-25)

Weaknesses: No weaknesses

Overall Comments: The applicant includes a reference to the State Plan Insufficient information is provided to describe the overall state plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators.

Strengths: The applicant includes a reference to the State Plan Insufficient information is provided to describe the overall state plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators.

Weaknesses: More evidence of clarity about the alignment to and consistency with the state plan. Insufficient information is provided to describe the overall state plan to ensure equitable access to excellent educators. It is not clear 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.

**Reader's Score: 8**

## **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:**

Overall Comments:

The applicant provides a description of its commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce. Through initiatives such as providing a Campus Culture Specialist (p. e96); partnerships with minority educator organizations (p. e28); and recruiting bilingual and other educators of color the applicant will increase diversity (p. e28). As an inner-city school system with a 92.2% minority student population, the LEA seeks innovative ways for recruiting teachers who reflect the diverse characteristics of the student population and the general population. Potentially effective and committed teachers, regardless of race, language, creed, color, religious affiliation, sex, age, or handicapping condition are needed to maintain a diverse workforce (p. e13).

Strengths (if applicable):

The LEA is one of the largest employers in the metropolitan area and has been a leader in recruiting, hiring, and training minority candidates, and in developing an administrative and teaching staff that is racially and ethnically balanced. As an inner-city school system with a 92.2% minority student population (62% Hispanic, 25% African American, 5% Asian/other, 8% White), the District has proactively sought innovative ways for recruiting teachers who reflect the diverse characteristics of the student population and the general population (e.37). As a matter of board policy, the LEA recruits potentially effective and committed teachers, regardless of race, language, creed, color, religious affiliation, sex, age, or handicapping condition (p. e13). For example, the applicant's recruitment efforts include the search for high quality bilingual and other teachers of color to support the students since teacher diversity is important as well as training leadership mentors. The applicant supports recruiting teachers with similar backgrounds to their students, recognizing that this strategy can provide powerful role models for students by further motivating them. The LEA also has a strong partnership with the Association of Hispanic School Administrators (A.H.S.A.), a professional organization for employees

of Houston ISD and surrounding school districts dedicated to developing and advancing school leaders that can best help make the lives of students better. The Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators' (HAABSE) primary mission is to enhance the education of all students and to exercise leadership in providing valuable professional services and strategies. This organization is a committed partner with Houston ISD through its efforts and strives to improve significantly the ability of Black educators to promote problem resolution (p. e28).

Weaknesses: No Weaknesses

**Overall Comments:**

The applicant describes a few strategies for attracting, supporting, and retaining diverse Educators, such as recruiting bilingual and other minority educators as a priority; partnering with minority educator organizations and providing mentors and support to beginning teachers, as well as providing monetary incentives (p. e16)

**Strengths (if applicable):**

The applicant describes a few strategies they intend to use for attracting, supporting, and retaining diverse educators, such as recruiting bilingual and other minority educators as a priority; partnering with minority educator organizations and providing mentors and support to beginning teachers, as well as monetary incentives (p. e16).

**Weaknesses (if applicable):**

Insufficient details are provided describing a cohesive plan for attracting, supporting and retaining diverse educators.

**Reader's Score:** 4

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 07/13/2017 12:58 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/13/2017 12:36 PM

## Technical Review

Applicant: Houston Independent School District (U374A170050)

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

|  | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Questions</b>                                       |                 |               |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Evidence of Support</b>                             |                 |               |
| 1. Evidence of Support                                 | 30              | 26            |
| <b>Need for Project</b>                                |                 |               |
| 1. Need for Project                                    | 25              | 25            |
| <b>Selection Criterion</b>                             |                 |               |
| <b>Quality of the Project Design</b>                   |                 |               |
| 1. Project Design                                      | 20              | 19            |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>                  |                 |               |
| 1. Management Plan                                     | 20              | 17            |
| <b>Adequacy of Resources</b>                           |                 |               |
| 1. Adequacy of Resources                               | 5               | 3             |
| <b>Priority Questions</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Competitive Preference Priority #1</b>              |                 |               |
| <b>Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators</b> |                 |               |
| 1. CPP 1   | 10              | 7             |
| <b>Competitive Preference Priority #2</b>              |                 |               |
| <b>Diverse and Effective Workforce</b>                 |                 |               |
| 1. CPP 2   | 5               | 4             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>115</b>      | <b>101</b>    |

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - TSL - 3: 84.374A

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

Applicant: Houston Independent School District (U374A170050)

## 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: 26

#### 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 Project LEADERS (Leveraging Effective Academics Districtwide for Equity and Resources for Students) will be developed to address 86 high need schools in the Houston Independent School District. (Page e17)

Strengths (if applicable):

The proposed project is providing support for ensuring equity for high-needs schools by providing high quality teachers and leaders to increase academic success for those students. For example, support is given for the positive effects of well-prepared teachers and effective school leaders on student achievement. The project plans to pursue four key strategies that address this element. They include strengthening recruiting, establishing a rigorous and fair appraisal system, providing effective individualized support and professional development and offering meaningful career pathways. These elements demonstrate a clear link between the efforts of the proposed project and research-based connections concerning the influence of effective school teachers and leaders and student achievement. (Page e42)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

None

#### 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 Houston ISD has several collaborative partnerships outside the District. (Page e27)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant defines the out of district partnerships to include local universities including the Teach Forward



**Sub Question**

Houston Program which is a partnership with the University of Houston College of Education that targets high school students for teacher pipeline development within four years. (Page e27) This is an appropriate partnership for providing effective “grow your own” teachers.

The applicant describes the in-district partnerships that include 16 departments led by the Office of Leadership Development. These department responsibilities appear to be appropriate to support this project. For example, The Curriculum and Development Department will provide support and guidance to administrators, teachers, parents, and students regarding curriculum information. (Page e28-29)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

It is not clear how the internal department partnerships will expand their responsibilities through the funds from the proposed project.

**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 indicates that the Houston ISD has a Teacher/School Leader program that is similar to the one proposed. However, the proposed project will increase those efforts in scale and scope. (Page e31)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant indicates that the proposed project will expand the existing mentoring program by supporting principals for up to two years and teacher mentoring for three years. This extension of time will build effectively upon current programs. (Page e32)

The applicant indicates that the Teacher Appraisal and Development System (TADS) is a key factor in the human capital strategy for the district. This system has had some success within the district. This system will continue to be highly useful tool to assist in determining the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders as well as retention of effective and highly effective teachers and leaders.(Page e26)

Weaknesses (if applicable):The applicant does not include a clear linkage between the high needs campuses and how the Teacher Appraisal and Development System (TADS) will specifically address the uniqueness of those targeted schools.

**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**

**Sub Question**

## 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 demographics for the targeted schools are clearly identified and are the basis for the proposed project services. (Page e33)

#### Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant defined the targeted schools as those who have higher percentages of minority student enrollment, higher percentages of economically disadvantaged student and higher percentages of student at-risk for education failure than other schools in the district. This comparison data is the basis for the proposed project strategies to address these students' needs by providing more highly effective and effective teachers in those schools. This effort will clearly address the identified needs. (Pages e34-e35)

Houston ISD has high turnover rates for principals, especially in schools with high needs. This issue was recently raised through a series of community interviews and focus groups and supported as a need by the data collected. The proposed project will specifically address turnover rates and improve retention by expanding the newly established leadership development program to include school leaders' abilities to manage change, promote instructional excellence and increase equity in instructional programming that is responsive to the needs of diverse learners. (Page e37 and Page e40)

#### Weaknesses (if applicable):

None

### 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 has identified gaps or weakness in services by conducting a district-wide analysis of schools using a variety of data collection. The proposed project will address the identified weaknesses and gaps.

#### Strengths (if applicable):

The district wide needs-analysis identified that there are gaps in the services that are provided for in each of the building sites. For example, the 86 targeted schools have low levels of participation in the District's Teacher Leader program. The Proposed Project will provide meaningful Professional Development, mentoring and career pathways for teachers in those high-need schools. For example, the proposed project will provide a mentoring program that includes common planning time, regularly scheduled collaboration and external teacher networks. The professional development proposed in this project will address discipline-specific concepts and skills, student learning, and cultural proficiency and classroom management. This professional development will be job-embedded and on-going. (Page e38-e46)

The applicant clearly links the low academic achievement issues for African-American, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, English Language Learners and the proposed project plans for improved professional development. (Page e43)

#### Weaknesses (if applicable)

None

**Sub Question**

**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:

The applicant has provided researched based information that supports the effort of the district to provide for intervention for improvement in teaching and then positively affect student achievement. (Page e42)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant has indicated that by developing and supporting school leaders, nurturing a positive school environment, training, recruiting and retaining competent teachers, and engaging parents, improvement in teaching and learning will continue for all students including those who are in high need programs. This effort clearly supports the quality of the project design. (Page e43)

Professional development for new/struggling principals in this proposed program includes mentoring that has a focus on improving practices that are linked with student achievement and developing teachers. (Page e44)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

None

**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 has identified goals and objectives that will identify and address the needs of the target population. (Pages e44-e45)

Strengths (if applicable):

The proposed project design includes "Wraparound services". These services include individualized mental health and health services provided in the school designed to meet the specific needs of the child. This is an effort that effectively meets the needs of students who are part of the target population. (Page e51)

The proposed project includes three major goals. Those include: Increase Student Achievement, Improve Human Capital, Increase the number of effective and highly effective educators. (Page e45) These goals are clearly supported by objectives that are measureable and attainable. For example, Objective 2.4 Placement: The percentage of effective/highly effective teachers at high-need schools will increase by at least 5% each year as measured by the previous year's rates. (Page e45)

The proposed project includes a one-time bonus of [REDACTED] to teachers willing to go to a low-performing school

### Sub Question

within the district. This appears to be an appropriate incentive to increase the effective and highly effective teachers to make that decision. (Page e47)

The proposed project will also provide for incentives for school leaders. The Houston ISD will assign high-achieving principals to low performing, high-needs schools to improve student outcomes at those locations. High achieving school leaders who decide to go to the low performing school will be eligible for a one-time bonus of up to [REDACTED] and the opportunity to receive an additional bonus each year in the amount of [REDACTED] for school success. These incentives will provide for appropriate placement of school leaders. (Page e48)

Weaknesses (if applicable):None

### 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 proposed project includes a project evaluation plan that will utilize an external evaluator.

Strengths (if applicable):

The proposed project includes an evaluation plan that includes a variety of classroom and campus observations, site visits, surveys and focus groups. Both formative and summative evaluations will be used to assess the success and modify practices. The use of a variety of methods of assessment will assure the success of the program is appropriately measured. (Page e51)

The applicant includes in the evaluation plan a reporting process which will be accomplished by the use of The Board Monitoring System which will share information with the Board, District administrators and the public. This is an appropriate method for reporting results to the stakeholders. (Page e51)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

The applicant does not include details as to how each of the goals will be addressed by the evaluation process. For example, it is not clear how the wrap-around services for students will be measured for success. (Page e46)

### 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 application includes a chart that outlines the Major Activities, Timelines, Responsibility, Benchmarks/Milestones. (Page e55)

The applicant identifies the key personnel that will be responsible for the work involved. For example, the Senior Manager will devote 50% of her time and the Assistant Superintendent will devote 30% of her time to the project. The building principals have committed to dedicate 20% of their time to this project. Each school may have at least four Teacher Leaders. (Page e53)

Strengths (if applicable):

Appropriate timelines and milestones are included in the chart on page e55. For example, meeting with the evaluator to develop the written plan to evaluate program components will occur in February, 2018. This will be accomplished with the Project Director, Program Manager and the Research Department. These types of elements will support that the project can be completed on time and within budget.

Weaknesses (if applicable): The proposed project addresses 86 high-need sites. Without an itemized definition of the district's support services that will be utilized for this project, it is not clear if 50% of a manager's time is sufficient. (Page e53)

**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 applicant states that Houston ISD is fully committed to continuation of all program activities beyond the period of the grant. (Page e58)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant has indicated in the Budget Summaries that over one-half of the funds for this project for the five project years will be provided by the Houston ISD. This indicates a strong commitment to the project throughout those five years and a substantial commitment after the completion of the project. (Pages e7 and e58)

The applicant has included a letter of support that clearly indicates the desire of one of the partners to provide continued support. The University of Houston College of Education will co-implement induction support through the first two years of teaching in the district. (Page e98)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

The applicant does not clearly define how the career pathways will be supported after the completion of the project. Without that information it is difficult to determine if the actions will continue without the incentives.

**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 states that the staff development and teacher and principal mentors created through the proposed project will impact the current and future populations. (Page e58)

### Sub Question

Strengths (if applicable): No specific strengths were identified.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

The proposed project does not include outlined potential of the incorporation of project purposes, activities or benefits into the ongoing program at the end of the Federal funding. Without this information, it is difficult to determine which of the activities will have that potential. (Page e58)

### 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 plans to address the gaps that exist in the highest poverty schools by providing incentives to attract effective teachers to those programs. (Page e38)

#### Strengths (if applicable):

The proposed project will address the 86 target schools with low levels of participation in the District's Teacher Leader program by providing more meaningful professional development, mentoring, career pathways and opportunities for collaboration with other teachers. These efforts will assist in attracting and maintaining effective teachers in those high-need programs. (Page e39)

#### Weaknesses (if applicable):

The applicant does not clearly outline the efforts to address increasing effective school leaders in the school program with high need students. The "Grow its Own" program that is identified is not clear and does not address specifically how this will assure that the leaders being trained will be retained at the targeted schools. (Page e40)

- (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:

To establish the needs of the project the applicant indicates that based on districtwide analysis there are several significant needs that have been identified. (Page e36)

Strengths (if applicable):

The relevant factors that the applicant has used in determining gaps include the higher teacher and administrator turnover rates in the 86 targeted schools. (Page e36) Also used by the applicant is the academic achievement data in the 86 schools in comparison with all students in Houston ISD and in Texas. The data analyzed from these sources are clearly supporting the need for the planned interventions. (Page e34)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

None

(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 applicant includes a reference to the State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access. (Page e111)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant includes a reference to the State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

The applicant does not provide a link between the strategies proposed for closing the identified gaps and the State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access. The applicant does not address this alignment.

**Reader's Score: 7**

### **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:**

Factor/Sub-criterion

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

Overall Comments:

The applicant has indicated that Houston ISD has sought innovative ways for recruiting teachers who reflect the diverse characteristic of the student population. (Page e13)

Strengths (if applicable):

There are not identified strengths in the area.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

The district does not detail their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce throughout this proposed project.

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

**Overall Comments:**

The applicant has indicated that Houston ISD has addressed one element within the proposed project that would attract diverse educators.

**Strengths (if applicable):**

The proposed project includes a Bilingual Teaching Cohort. This is a partnership with the University of St. Thomas that targets paraprofessional employees who are bilingual. This is an effective method of encouraging a diverse workforce. (Page e28)

**Weaknesses (if applicable):**

The general manner that the applicant addresses the needs for principals and other school leaders to be more diverse is not very developed. Therefore it is difficult to determine if the school leaders will be as diverse as the student population. (Page e40)

There is not a clearly developed plan for retaining diverse educators.

**Reader's Score: 4**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 07/13/2017 12:36 PM



Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/13/2017 01:07 PM

## Technical Review

**Applicant:** Houston Independent School District (U374A170050)

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

|  | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Questions</b>                                       |                 |               |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Evidence of Support</b>                             |                 |               |
| 1. Evidence of Support                                 | 30              | 27            |
| <b>Need for Project</b>                                |                 |               |
| 1. Need for Project                                    | 25              | 25            |
| <b>Selection Criterion</b>                             |                 |               |
| <b>Quality of the Project Design</b>                   |                 |               |
| 1. Project Design                                      | 20              | 20            |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>                  |                 |               |
| 1. Management Plan                                     | 20              | 20            |
| <b>Adequacy of Resources</b>                           |                 |               |
| 1. Adequacy of Resources                               | 5               | 5             |
| <b>Priority Questions</b>                              |                 |               |
| <b>Competitive Preference Priority #1</b>              |                 |               |
| <b>Improve Equitable Access to Effective Educators</b> |                 |               |
| 1. CPP 1   | 10              | 9             |
| <b>Competitive Preference Priority #2</b>              |                 |               |
| <b>Diverse and Effective Workforce</b>                 |                 |               |
| 1. CPP 2   | 5               | 4             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>115</b>      | <b>110</b>    |

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - TSL - 3: 84.374A

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

Applicant: Houston Independent School District (U374A170050)

## 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 has a strong plan that will provide a substantial compensation for highly effective teachers and school leaders to specifically serve high-need students and campuses. This proposed project will be a collaborative process, involving the needs and voices of all stakeholders.

##### Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant intends to develop and implement a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning by providing high quality teachers and leaders to increase academic achievement and close the achievement gap. The applicant's plan will provide substantial compensation for highly effective teachers and school leaders to specifically serve high-need students and campuses.(e.28)

##### Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses 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 proposed project involves appropriate collaboration with partners who will maximize the effectiveness of project services. For example, a partnership with the University of St. Thomas targets paraprofessional employees who are bilingual to serve specific needs of a growing English language learner (ELL) student population.

**Sub Question**

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant's proposal has the appropriate partners for example, the Teach Forward Houston Program is a partnership within the University of Houston College of Education that targets high school students for teacher pipeline development within four years needed to become a teacher. Through this program, the District pays for student's unmet college tuition need and provided program support and training.(e28)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

The applicant did not provide clear information on how internal partnerships will benefit from funding or are committed to support. For example, teachers, principal and counselors are not addressed.

**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 has shown a strong plan to integrate with or build on similar efforts related efforts to improve relevant outcomes. For example, the Houston ISD proposed project, Project LEADERS, will revise the District's existing performance -based compensation system model to provide teacher and school leaders with incentives and awards for increasing student achievement, increasing equity, and additional duties. (e32)

Strengths (if applicable):

This applicant has thoroughly demonstrated the work that will be done in the proposed project will build on similar efforts already in place in the Houston Independent School District. For example, Houston ISD has a Teacher/School Leader Program similar to the one proposed in the application. Currently schools with teacher leaders provide a partial payment towards teacher stipends but the level of support proposed for this program will be increased through this grant. This proposed project will expand supported teachers with roles that defined their leadership.(e32)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses 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**

**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.**

## Sub Question

### General:

#### Overall Comments:

The applicant of the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure. For example, Houston ISD's Project LEADERS seeks to build local capacity to implement a comprehensive human capital system that integrates performance-based compensation systems to recruit, hire, develop, retain, and reward highly effective teachers and campus-based leaders (i.e., Principals, Assistant Principals, and Deans) to serve and increase the academic achievement of all students at the targeted 86 high-need campuses. (e34)

#### Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the target population and circumstances facing them that supports the need for the proposed project. For example, 31% of the Houston ISD live below the Federal level of Poverty above the state average of 22%. (1) There is a 13% gap between all students districtwide and all students at the 86 schools; (2) There is a 15% gap between all students districtwide and all African American students at the 86 schools; (3) There is a 11% gap between all students districtwide and all Hispanic students at the 86 schools; (4) There is a 1% gap between all students districtwide and all White students at the 86 schools; and (5) There is an 14% gap between all students districtwide and all economically disadvantaged students at the 86 schools. Among the 86 schools, the only student group to outperform all students districtwide are the Asian students (i.e., 75% for the Asian students at the 86 schools versus 69% for all students districtwide). (e34) The applicant's plan is comprehensive and addresses the weaknesses or gaps described.

#### Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses 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:

The applicant provides a thorough description of the gaps in the current infrastructure that will be addressed by the proposed project. For instance, challenges and gaps noted include: the "highest poverty schools have a significantly lower percentage of high performing teachers as compared to more affluent schools" and there is a "need to provide them with incentives to attract effective teachers and better tools to remove low performers" (Houston ISD, 2017, p. 9). Additionally, the District's teacher turnover rate for 2015-2016, at 20%, further compounds the challenges of providing an effective teacher in every classroom (TEA, 2016); each year, the District hires approximately 2,000 teachers—and many teacher positions remain unfilled when the school year begins—and 30-40 principals, but their recruiting, hiring, placement, and retention still remains an ongoing challenge to meet districtwide needs. (e36)

#### Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant will address gaps and challenges by (1) enhancing and refining its human capital and compensation systems that will optimize how it manages (a) acquiring strong talent, (b) providing ongoing professional development opportunities, (c) nurturing, rewarding, and challenging high-performing staff, and (d) evaluating staff to inform personnel decisions to create a stronger workforce with the collective capacity and expertise to enable enhanced educational outcomes; (2) Increasing equity in the allocation of effective teachers and principals, and resources, and student access to challenging academic programs; and (3) strengthening recruiting/staffing policies and practices to attract and retain top talent, especially in high-need schools. (e35)

#### Weaknesses (if applicable):

**Sub Question**

No weaknesses 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**

**Sub Question**

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

**General:**

Overall Comments:

The applicant's proposed project demonstrates a strong rationale. For instance, the proposed project endeavors to improve how it manages the four inter-related functions of (1) acquiring strong talent, (2) providing ongoing professional development opportunities, (3) nurturing, rewarding, and challenging high-performing staff, and (4) evaluating staff to inform personnel decisions to create a stronger workforce with the collective capacity and expertise to enable enhanced educational outcomes. (e41)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant provides a convincing discussion that shows the proposed project is based on a strong theoretical perspective. Based on Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the importance of developing and supports school leaders, nurturing positive and supportive school environment, training, recruiting, and engaging parents and communities has been shown.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses 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 applicant clearly outlines a design for the proposed project that is appropriate to and will successfully address the needs of the target population. For example, the proposed project will enable the District to create and implement a more robust, holistic, and flexible school leader appraisal and development system and improve the current teacher system. The six principles that drive this school improvement are around the following framework: (a) Leadership Excellence; (b) Teaching Excellence; (c) Instructional Excellence; (d) School Design; (e) Social and Emotional Learning Support; and (f) Family and Community Empowerment

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant clearly outlines a design for the proposed project that is appropriate to and will successfully address the needs of the target population. For instance the following activities and outcomes are proposed; (1) Increase equity in the allocation of effective teachers and principals, resources, and student access to challenging academic

### Sub Question

programs; (2) Strengthen recruiting/staffing policies and practices to attract and retain top talent, especially in high-need schools; (3) Provide additional supports and wrap-around services to students that will alleviate some of the challenges new and struggling teachers face when teaching students in high-need schools; and (4) Focus recruitment efforts on finding quality teachers inside and outside of the state. (e44)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses 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:

The applicant's proposal to the extent to which the grant activities will be evaluated, monitored, and reported to the public. The applicant has a detailed plan to publicize the grant activities, project goals and objectives.

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant provided a solid plan for the evaluation, monitoring, and reporting of grant activities. For instance, the applicant's proposal uses a Board Monitoring System to establish a schedule of detailed reporting to the board and community on the District's efforts and effective use of funding to meet the District's facilities standards, and evaluate all major programs, grants, and services on a regular basis. The system requires more in depth reporting and analysis than is required by state law. The Board Monitoring System was designed to give the board, District administrators, and the public a data-driven accountability system that reports regularly, and it has become a key springboard for steering District policy, priorities, and initiatives. The progress toward meeting project goals and objectives will be reported annually to the USDE, the community, and the superintendent and board of education through documented reports and forums, as requested. (e51)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses noted.

### 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:

The applicant's proposal showed the adequacy of the management plan, including the objectives, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. For example, the responsibility for implementation of the proposed plan is inter-departmental and multi-tiered to guarantee support from all levels of District management including, but not limited to, Talent Acquisition, Professional Support and Development, Elementary/Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, Office of School Leadership, Research and Accountability, Grants, Budgeting, Accounting, and School Offices and that the support is integrated into well-established processes and procedures currently practiced.

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant provided a detailed timeline that illustrated the project tasks, responsibilities and corresponding milestones. The project tasks were relevant and organized. For example, the proposed project management and implementation will be led and assured by the project director and program manager. The project director and project manager will provide direct oversight to the program to ensure the professional development and services that are a part of applicant's proposal are of high quality, and the components of this project are completed as directed by the grant, on time and within budget.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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: 5**

**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's proposed project will be allocated funds from the School District to continue the program after Federal Funding ends.

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant's proposal provides for the continued support of the project after Federal funding ends. This is demonstrated through the commitment of the District to allocating funds to this project, as indicated in the budget, and has also to find funding through foundations, grants, and other resources to support this new direction in the attempt to transform its low-performing high-need schools into schools of choice where students feel safe, valued, and are taught by effective and highly effective teachers. (e58)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses noted.

**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.**

## Sub Question

### General:

#### Overall Comments:

The applicant's potential to benefit the ongoing program of the agency of organization at the end of the Federal funding is high. It will be matched with Houston ISD general fund dollars to meet the required 50% match. This will allow the District to improve education for all students. Houston ISD's partnership with many organizations in the Houston area has laid the groundwork for the district to build and create an equitable college and career readiness culture throughout the district. (e58)

#### Strengths (if applicable):

The potential for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing program of the agency of the proposed project is high. The funds requested will be used to support a design and professional development for teachers and school leaders, to increase capacity to attract and sustain highly effective teachers and school leaders, and to develop career pathways that will allow teachers to become effective leaders on their campuses.

#### Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses noted.

### 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 sufficiently identifies the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, School Leaders, or both, in High- Need Schools, including gaps or iniquities in teaching and learning providing high quality teachers and leaders to increase academic achievement and close the achievement gap. (e23)

#### Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the gaps and insufficiencies that are facing them that supports the need for the proposed project. For example, 31% of the Houston ISD live below the Federal level of Poverty above the state average of 22%. (1) There is a 13% gap between all students districtwide and all students at the 86 schools; (2) There is a 15% gap between all students districtwide and all African American students at the 86 schools; (3) There is a 11% gap between all students districtwide and all Hispanic students at the 86 schools; (4) There is a 1% gap between all



students districtwide and all White students at the 86 schools; and (5) There is an 14% gap between all students districtwide and all economically disadvantaged students at the 86 schools. Among the 86 schools, the only student group to outperform all students districtwide are the Asian students (i.e., 75% for the Asian students at the 86 schools versus 69% for all students districtwide). (e34)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses noted.

Overall Comments:

The applicant clearly identified relevant factors used in determining such gaps, such as the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, principals, or other School Leaders in High-Need Schools, as applicable to the proposed project. This includes gaps or inequities in how effective teachers, principals, or other School Leaders are distributed across the LEA. They are identified using factors such as data on school resources, staffing patterns, school environment, educator support systems, and other school-level factors. (e36)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant has clearly identified the relevant factors used in determining gaps, such as the most significant gaps or insufficiencies in student access to effective teachers, principals Throughout the District, the “highest poverty schools have a significantly lower percentage of high performing teachers as compared to more affluent schools” and there is a “need to provide them with incentives to attract effective teachers and better tools to remove low performers” (Houston ISD, 2017, p. 9). Additionally, the District’s teacher turnover rate for 2015-2016, at 20%, further compounds the challenges of providing an effective teacher in every classroom (TEA, 2016); each year, the District hires approximately 2,000 teachers—and many teacher positions remain unfilled when the school year begins—and hires 30-40 principals, but their recruiting, hiring, placement, and retention still remains an ongoing challenge to meet districtwide needs.(e21)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weakness noted.

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant includes a reference to the State’s Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, approved by the Department in 2015.

Weaknesses (if applicable):

More information is needed to demonstrate the link between the 2015, Texas Department of Education State Plan and this proposal.

**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:**

Overall Comments:

The applicant details their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce as evidenced by, teachers with similar backgrounds to their students can be powerful role models for students, further motivating them (OECD, 2010). Houston ISD also has a strong partnership with the Association of Hispanic School Administrators (A.H.S.A.), a professional organization for employees of Houston ISD and surrounding school districts dedicated to developing and advancing school leaders that can best help make the lives of students better. The Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators' (HAABSE) primary mission is to enhance the education of all students and to exercise leadership in providing valuable professional services and strategies. (e28)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant details their commitment to creating and maintaining a diverse workforce as evidenced by, teachers with similar backgrounds to their students can be powerful role models for students, further motivating them (OECD, 2010). Houston ISD also has a strong partnership with the Association of Hispanic School Administrators (A.H.S.A.), a professional organization for employees of Houston ISD and surrounding school districts dedicated to developing and advancing school leaders that can best help make the lives of students better. The Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators' (HAABSE) primary mission is to enhance the education of all students and to exercise leadership in providing valuable professional services and strategies. This organization is a committed partner with Houston ISD through its efforts and strives to improve significantly the ability of Black educators to promote problem resolution. (e28)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses noted.

Overall Comments:

The applicant has a plan for attracting, supporting and retaining diverse Educators. For example, the district will provide cohort supports and certification preparation opportunities. In addition to hiring from within, Houston ISD will search for high quality bilingual and other teachers of color to support the students since teacher diversity is important. Teachers with similar backgrounds to their students can be powerful role models for students, further motivating them (OECD, 2010).(e 28)

Strengths (if applicable):

The applicant has a plan for attracting, supporting and retaining diverse Educators. For example, the district will provide cohort supports and certification preparation opportunities. In addition to hiring from within, Houston ISD will search for high quality bilingual and other teachers of color to support the students since teacher diversity is important. Teachers with similar backgrounds to their students can be powerful role models for students, further motivating them (OECD, 2010). (e28)

Weaknesses (if applicable):

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 4**

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