



# **ALABAMA NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION EVALUATION REPORT**

**ALABAMA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**  
**Spring 2021 Charter Application Evaluation**  
**Executive Summary**

Empower Schools of Alabama—Final Evaluation to the Commission

Non-Profit Information			
Non-Profit:	<i>Empower Schools of Alabama</i>	Education Service Provider (ESP)	No
		Name (# of ESP schools)	N/A
School Information			
School:	<i>Empower Community School</i>	Home District:	<i>Bessemer City Schools</i>
Grade Configuration at Start:	<i>K-2, 6-7</i>	Districts Served:	<i>Bessemer City Schools</i>
Grade Configuration at Scale:	<i>K-8</i>	Year Opening:	<i>2022-23</i>
Enrollment at Start:	<i>288-490</i>	Enrollment at Scale:	<i>528-900</i>
Proposal Summary			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Academic Model:</b> The applicant proposes opening the Empower Community School (ECS) in SY2022-2023 with 288-490 students in grades K-2 and 6-7. The school plans to serve 528-900 students when full capacity is met in Year 4. The school’s mission is to change the community by forging collaboration between a diverse group of scholars, educators, families, and partners to educate the next generation of community leaders and advocates. The applicant plans to educate the whole child through delivery of three essential design elements, including personalized instruction, targeted small group and individual intervention, and comprehensive social-emotional learning (SEL) via Edgenuity’s Purpose Prep SEL curriculum. Further, the applicant states that the school will implement Savvas Learning Company’s myView (K-5) and myPerspectives (6-8) for English language arts (ELA) and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s HMH Into Math framework (K-8). For science (K-8), ECS plans to implement Amplify Science and for social studies, Achievement First’s Open Source resources and curriculum.</li> <li>• <b>Financial Model:</b> The financial model provided is thorough, aligned with Alabama’s revenue guidance, and accounts for key major assumptions for starting a school. The applicant also provides key indicators of internal controls and financial processes. However, there were some inconsistencies between the budget narrative and the budget that need clarification, such as some staffing counts, and the model lacks a sufficient contingency financial and cash plan should its fundraising and revenue assumptions not come to fruition.</li> <li>• <b>Organizational Model:</b> The proposed school will be overseen by a Board of Directors that holds the charter, provides oversight to ensure the school successfully executes the mission, holds fiscal responsibility, adheres to all applicable local, State, federal laws, meets monthly, and establishes policies. The board delegates day-to-day management to the Head of School/Executive Director (HOS/ED). According to the application, an HOS/ED has been identified – Mr. Anthony Oliver. Mr. Oliver will be supported by a leadership team that will include a Director of Academics-Elementary, Director of Academics-Middle, Director of Operations, and a Student Services Coordinator. The applicant provides job descriptions for these roles and states that these roles will not be filled until the planning year – or no later than January 2022.</li> </ul>			
Statement of Assurances Included:			<b>Yes</b>
Potential Conflicts of Interest Identified:			<b>No</b>

## Non-High Schools – New Operator

Section	Points Possible	Score
<i>Educational Program</i>	103	90
<i>Operations Plan</i>	69	55
<i>Financial Plan &amp; Financial Management Capacity</i>	20	18
<i>Overall Alignment</i>	15	5
<i>Experienced Operators (If Applicable)</i>	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>168</b>

### Strengths of the Application:

- The applicant has identified curricular choices (p. 17) that have received “Meets Expectations” ratings in ELA (Savvas Learning Company’s myView [K-5] and myPerspectives [6-8]) and in math (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s HMH Into Math framework [K-8]).
- The applicant states that Empower’s dedication to personalized learning for all students is rooted in their belief that all students, when provided appropriate support, can grow academically, socially, and emotionally. The proposed model (e.g., the school schedule, staffing plan, and learning environment) has been designed to provide students with daily supports.
- The applicant prioritizes professional development (PD) with plans to offer 15 days of pre-opening PD, 7 days of PD through the school year, as well as daily planning time with weekly time allocated to problem solving team (PST)/data meetings, instructional coaching, team lesson planning, professional learning community (PLC) meetings and individual lesson planning.

### Areas Needing Further Attention:

- While the applicant presents some research, the research is mostly general and not directly connected to the anticipated student population; therefore, it is unclear if the proposed model has been proven to be successful with the anticipated student population.
- While the applicant has undergone much initial work and secured a letter of intent for two buildings, it is unclear from the information provided if those buildings will be large enough and properly equipped to serve the school at full scale – up to 900 students. Further, the applicant’s contingency plan lacks sufficient detail, including timeline and costs, to demonstrate that the plan is viable and fully aligned with the budget and operational needs of the school.
- While the applicant describes the community landscape to indicate that the school’s proximity to several school districts will support filling seats, the applicant has not collected specific evidence (e.g., signatures of parents/guardians with eligible students) to demonstrate that there is sufficient demand to meet enrollment targets.
- While the applicant team members speak to the school’s governance and operations plan and the proposed HOS/ED presents a strong, well-versed presentation of the academic program, no other team members demonstrated knowledge about the academic program. Also, additional leadership team members are not expected to begin until January 2022.

**ALABAMA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION**  
**Summer 2020 Charter Application Evaluation**

**SECTION 1. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM- 103 points**

<b>Educational Program Overview</b>			
<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 2</b>	<b>Very Good 3</b>	<b>Excellent 4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no information regarding the essential design elements of the school model, and/or</li> <li>the applicant has not provided at least three measurable goals.</li> <li>Little to no research base and little to no mention of the instructional methods and assessment strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The essential design elements of the school model and</li> <li>the goals (at least three) lack clarity and/or are not all measurable.</li> <li>The applicant has demonstrated a limited understanding of the research-based and/or other evidence that promises success for this program with the anticipated student population.</li> <li>The applicant minimally mentions the instructional methods and/or does not describe in sufficient detail the impact of the CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) instructional aspects of the program on the proposed student population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided the essential design elements of the school model, and</li> <li>at least three (no more than five) specific and measurable goals.</li> <li>Evidence that the educational program or essential design elements of the program are based on proven methods and provided evidence that the proposed educational program has a sound base in research, theory, and/or experience, and has been or is likely to be rigorous, engaging, and effective for the anticipated student population.</li> <li>The applicant has described the CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) instructional aspects of the educational program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has convincingly and comprehensively summarized the essential design elements of the school model and</li> <li>provided at least three (no more than five) specific and measurable goals.</li> <li>Strong and convincing evidence of research base.</li> <li>The applicant has clearly and comprehensively described the CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) instructional aspects of the program and provided strong evidence of impact within the anticipated student population.</li> </ul>
<b>Rating: 2</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant provides three essential design elements of the school model (p. 8), including: 1) personalized instruction; 2) targeted small group and individual intervention; and 3) comprehensive social-emotional learning (SEL) via Edgenuity's Purpose Prep SEL curriculum.</li> <li>The applicant presents nine goals that they state will help them know students will graduate with the academic, social, and emotional skills to be successful in the most challenging high school available (pp. 9-10), including three academic achievement goals (e.g., to exceed district and State proficiency averages, to demonstrate 1.5 years of growth in Year 1), three goals related to community building and scholar leadership, as well as three goals related to social-emotional development and restorative practices. However, the goals are not specific and clearly measurable. For example, an academic goal states that students will be able to express their thoughts using various methods of communication, including written and verbal communication. The goal does not include a timeline and does not specify the assessment tool. In the interview, the applicant indicated that the six goals listed on page 84 are the school's primary goals. These specific and measurable goals include annual achievement and growth on the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP); attendance; social-emotional learning (e.g., average score of 3.5 out of 5 on the Panorama SEL Skills and Competencies Survey); parent involvement; as well as staff satisfaction (e.g., 75% of staff will annually report a positive school climate on the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports [PBIS] school climate survey). However, the number of goals does not fall within the range specified in the criteria.</li> <li>The applicant cites some general research; however, it is not directly connected to the anticipated student population. For example, page 11 states that the flexible model is grounded in research informed by John Hattie's synthesis of 252 factors that impact student achievement with an average effect size of .40. They continue, stating that the proposed school's personalized learning model is rooted in Response to Intervention (RtI) with an effect size (1.20); however, the applicant does not demonstrate evidence that the model promises success for the anticipated student population. In the interview, the applicant explained that research from Johns Hopkins Institute – specifically, the triad of engagement – and Vanderbilt University informed development of their model, given that their best practices promote positive academic and behavioral outcomes with similar student populations. For example, in accordance with Vanderbilt studies, high expectations and clear standards are key to closing achievement gaps. Therefore, every ECS student's individualized plan presents where the student is, where the student wants to go, and how the school will support growth. However, the research presented was overall general, rather than specific to the target population.</li> <li>The applicant mentions instructional methods, such as personalized instruction (pp. 10-11), stating that students will be assessed at the beginning of each school year to determine academic performance and create a personalized learning plan; however, the applicant does not mention how the instructional methods are culturally responsive. In the interview, the applicant explained that flexible grouping and individualized learning plans are culturally responsive as they consider a student's prior knowledge and promote culture sharing. Further, the applicant stated that the community circles' mindset is woven throughout the classroom, prompting students to openly share their cultures in a safe learning environment.</li> </ul>	

Curriculum & Instructional Design			
Weak 1	Fair 5	Very Good 15	Excellent 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little or no description of the basic learning environment,</li> <li>• little or no description of the curricula aligned to state standards.</li> <li>• Applicant provides little to no description of curricular choices and rationale behind those choices— or — the applicant has chosen one or more core curricula that receive a “Does Not Meet” rating on EdReports.org on any indicator within those reports.</li> <li>• If the applicant plans to develop a curriculum, little or no description of how.</li> <li>• Little to no description of instructional strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The description of the basic learning environment is limited and/or only includes some of the required information or is not aligned to the school mission and vision.</li> <li>• The applicant has identified curricular choices that do not receive any “Does Not Meet” ratings on EdReports.org, but receive mostly “Almost Meets Expectations” ratings and</li> <li>• provides a minimal or unsupported rationale for why the curricula were chosen and how they support the vision.</li> <li>• For internally developed curricula, there is a limited or incomplete description regarding how the curriculum will be developed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The description of the basic learning environment is clear, includes class size and structure, is aligned to the school’s mission and vision, and describes evidence that the learning environment is CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1).</li> <li>• The applicant has identified curricular choices that do not receive any “Does Not Meet” ratings on EdReports.org, but receive mostly “Almost Meets Expectations” ratings and</li> <li>• provides a strong rationale for why the curricula were chosen and how they support the vision.</li> <li>• A sample scope and sequence for one subject in one grade of each division (elementary, middle, and high) is provided.</li> <li>• Applicant describes the curriculum and summarizes the curricular choices and the rationale for each.</li> <li>• For internally developed curricula, the applicant provides a detailed description regarding how the curriculum will be developed, including who will be responsible and when key stages will be completed.</li> <li>• The applicant has provided a description of the primary instructional strategies, along with a rationale.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The description of the basic learning environment is clear, comprehensive and includes class size and structure, is well aligned to the school’s mission and vision, and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS(1).</li> <li>• The applicant has identified curricular choices that receive mostly “Meets Expectations” ratings on EdReports.org and</li> <li>• provides a strong rationale for why the curricula were chosen.</li> <li>• Applicant comprehensively describes the curriculum and its alignment to the goals, summarizes the curricular choices and the rationale for each -or- provides a detailed, comprehensive, and well-articulated description regarding how the curriculum will be developed.</li> <li>• There is a detailed, sophisticated, and comprehensive description of the primary instructional strategies along with compelling research, or experience- based rationale</li> </ul>
<b>Rating: 18</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant describes the basic learning environment, including class size with student-to-teacher ratio in each grade band (e.g., 10:1 in K-2, 13.33:1 in 3-5 and less than 17:1 in 6-8 during direct instruction). They also describe the class structure (e.g., a flexible learning model with daily goal-setting and data-driven learning cycles, RtI) a co-teaching structure during direct instruction, station rotation (p. 11) and the extended learning time (during a daily power hour) to address learning gaps in reading and math and empower students to own their learning and reach goals). Additionally, the applicant states that the K-5 environment uses a workshop approach (e.g., at the K-2 level, the 50-minute writing workshop includes a mini-lesson, independent writing, and writing bridge) while students in grades 6-8 attend learning labs divided into sections (p. 15) during which students are clustered in groups of 40-to-50 with a minimum of three instructors. However, the applicant does not directly connect the learning environment to the mission or provide evidence that it is culturally-responsive. In the interview, the applicant stated that the learning environment connects to the mission; it is designed to build whole students through implementation of individualized instruction, SEL, and small-group interventions. The applicant also stated that the learning environment is culturally-responsive; its adjustable model is designed to meet each learner’s specific needs. Further, they explained that daily community circles, as well as the E3 framework, are designed to identify specific issues and concerns as students and staff learn from, and use empathy to understand and address different needs, backgrounds, aspirations, and differences. The applicant also explained that the learning environment forges collaboration among a group of scholars who are diverse in academic achievement, social, as well as socio-economic background.</li> <li>• The applicant has identified curricular choices (p. 17) that receive “Meets Expectations” ratings in ELA (Savvas Learning Company’s myView (K-5) and myPerspectives (6-8)) and in math (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s HMH Into Math framework (K-8)). In addition to the EdReports.org ratings and alignment to the Alabama Course of Study Standards, the applicant provides rationale for these selections. More specifically, they state that the curriculum supports student-centered learning and gradual release of responsibility to ensure mastery of content. Further, in support of their mission, they state that the curriculum was chosen to support students’ academic, social, and emotional development (p. 18). In the interview, the applicant explained that since submission, the team has selected Amplify Science and Achievement First’s (AF) open sources for social studies, given its high ratings in EdReports, as well as its ability to align with State standards. However, review of EdReports (<a href="https://www.edreports.org/reports/overview/amplify-science-2018">https://www.edreports.org/reports/overview/amplify-science-2018</a>) shows that AmplifyScience received a Partially Meets rating for grades K-5 and AF social studies is not rated by EdReports.</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the application (p. 18), the science and social studies curriculum in grades K-8 will be developed by content area teachers under the guidance of the Director(s) of Academics. They state that intense focus will be placed on analyzing historical content from a culturally-responsive lens and the science curriculum will be developed around the 5E model, allowing students to engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate scientific content. However, the applicant does not state when key stages will be completed, and the Director of Academics' job responsibilities and qualifications do not include curriculum development. Further, according to Attachment 3, the applicant states that all curriculum has been developed. In the interview, the applicant stated that ECS has selected pre-developed curriculum so that teachers' focus is placed on curriculum implementation and students rather than curriculum development. Further, they stated that the Director of Academics will facilitate job-embedded training to ensure that the curriculum is fully-aligned to Alabama standards.</li> <li>The applicant states that Empower will use a variety of instructional methods to ensure that students' individual needs are met. They provide a description of the primary instructional strategies, including Direct Instruction, targeted small group (for 4-6 students in need of remediation or enrichment), and/or performance-based learning (e.g., students are organized into groups of 4-6 where they apply learning to a real-life experience while the teacher facilitates learning and guides individualized practice (pp. 15-16, 18). In addition, the application includes a chart outlining ECS's primary instructional strategies that, in the interview, the applicant stated are based on John Hattie's list of 256 factors related to student achievement. The applicant explained that in a past principal role, these instructional strategies proved effective in improving student achievement; however, detail, such as quantitative evidence, was not provided to make it compelling. Further, the proposed HOS/ED's former administrative roles were at the middle school level; therefore, the experience is not related to the proposed elementary grades.</li> </ul>
--	--	---

**Student Performance Standards**

<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 2</b>	<b>Very Good 3</b>	<b>Excellent 4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of the student performance standards for the school as a whole.</li> <li>The applicant has insufficiently or not addressed policies, standards, and/or expectations for promoting students.</li> <li>The applicant has provided little to no description of the school's exit standards for graduating students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of the student performance standards for the school as a whole, though, the description does not address all grades and is limited in detail.</li> <li>The applicant has mentioned the policies, standards, and expectations for promoting students from one grade to the next and that they are based on research and/or best practices.</li> <li>The applicant has provided the school's exit standards for graduating students, though it is not clear what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do to meet or exceed all state grade level expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of the student performance standards for the school as a whole and they are aligned with state standards.</li> <li>The proposed policies, standards, and expectations for promoting students from one grade to the next are based on research and/or best practices and there is a CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) plan for clearly communicating these criteria to staff, students, and families.</li> <li>The applicant has provided the school's exit standards for graduating students which clearly set forth what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a comprehensive description of the student performance standards for the school as a whole.</li> <li>The proposed policies, standards, and expectations for promoting students from one grade to the next are based on research and/or best practices, demonstrate high standards for students and are well aligned to the school's education program, mission, and vision. The applicant has provided a strong, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) plan for clearly communicating these criteria.</li> <li>The applicant has provided the school's exit standards for graduating students which clearly set forth what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do.</li> </ul>

<b>Rating: 4</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant states (p.19) that the proposed school will use the performance standards outlined by the Alabama Course of Study for each subject; therefore, the curriculum and course development will be aligned with State standards. In the interview, the applicant described the standards as being necessary to prepare students to progress through the grade levels and are followed to ensure that Empower students are held to, and meet, the same expectations as peers across the state.</li> <li>The applicant identifies promotion criterion for students in grades K-2 and 3-8 (pp. 19-21) and notes that students will be promoted to the next grade based on academic credits earned during core courses; however, there is no evidence that the criteria are based on research and/or best practices. In the interview, the applicant stated that the proposed promotion criteria are based on practices that are standard in Alabama schools and were, therefore, selected to facilitate movement to, and from, other schools. Further, the applicant stated that the criteria align with their mission as Empower commits to preparing students for high school and long-term success. In addition, the application explained that promotion and graduation criteria will be communicated, in writing, to parents at various times throughout the school year and will be posted on the school's website (p. 21). Finally, the application indicates that standards will remain a part of the ongoing communication between staff and students as they work with individualized learning plans and in problem-solving teams to monitor progress.</li> <li>Attachment 5 includes 8<sup>th</sup> grade exit standards. Review of the attachment indicates that Empower will use the Alabama Course of Study in math, ELA, science, and history to determine what students in the last grade served will know and be able to do (e.g., write informative or explanatory texts; and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently). Additionally, the applicant provides a list of graduate dispositions for each core value (pp. 26-28); for example, they state that students will understand their own identity and emotions and how they impact and influence those around them.</li> </ul>
------------------	-----------------------------	--

HS Graduation Requirements (HS Only)			
Weak 1	Fair 2	Very Good 3	Excellent 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of how the school will meet the requirements described <b>and/or</b></li> <li>little or no explanation of how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered.</li> <li>If graduation requirements for the school will exceed state standards, there is not an explanation of the additional requirements.</li> <li>There is little or no explanation of how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities.</li> <li>There is little or no explanation of the systems and structures the school will implement for students at risk of dropping out and/or not meeting the proposed graduation requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a limited description with insufficient detail on how the school will meet the requirements described,</li> <li>along with an explanation of how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered; and</li> <li>if graduation requirements for the school will exceed state standards, an explanation of the additional requirements was minimally described.</li> <li>The explanation of how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities lacks clarity and sufficient detail.</li> <li>There is a limited or insufficient explanation of the systems and structures the school will implement for serving students at risk of dropping out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of how the school will meet the requirements described,</li> <li>along with an explanation of how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered.</li> <li>If graduation requirements for the school will exceed state standards, there is an explanation of the additional requirements.</li> <li>There is an explanation of how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities.</li> <li>There is a clear description of the systems and structures the school will implement for serving students at risk of dropping out and/or not meeting the proposed graduation requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clear and comprehensive description of how the school will meet the requirements described,</li> <li>along with a strong explanation of how students will earn credit hours, how grade-point averages will be calculated, what information will be on transcripts, and what elective courses will be offered.</li> <li>If graduation requirements for the school will exceed state standards, there is an explanation of the additional requirements.</li> <li>There is a clear and convincing description of how the graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or other postsecondary opportunities.</li> <li>There is a thorough and sophisticated description of the systems and structures used for students at risk of dropping out.</li> </ul>
<b>Rating: N/A</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not Applicable: This topic does not apply to this applicant.</li> </ul>	

School Calendar and Schedule			
Weak 1	Fair 2	Very Good 3	Excellent 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of the annual academic schedule for the school,</li> <li>how the calendar reflects the needs of the educational program and meets the school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation</li> <li>...does not include the total number of instructional days and hours, holidays, make-up days in case of inclement weather, and state assessment days.</li> <li>The applicant has provided little or no evidence regarding the structure of the school day and week, including the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects, <b>and/or</b></li> <li>there is little or no explanation on how the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of the annual academic schedule for the school, though it does not clearly explain <b>and/or</b></li> <li>demonstrate how the calendar reflects the needs of the educational program and meets Alabama's Standards.</li> <li>The school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation lacks sufficient detail regarding the total number of instructional days and hours, holidays, make-up days in case of inclement weather, and state assessment days.</li> <li>The applicant has provided limited and insufficient detail regarding the structure of the school day and week, including the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, the start and dismissal times.</li> <li>There is a minimal explanation why the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clear description of the annual academic schedule for the school which explains <b>and</b></li> <li>demonstrates how the calendar reflects the needs of the educational program and meets Alabama's Standards.</li> <li>The school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation includes the total number of instructional days and hours, holidays, make-up days in case of inclement weather, and state assessment days.</li> <li>The applicant describes the structure of the school day and week, including the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and the start and dismissal times.</li> <li>There is an explanation why the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning.</li> <li>The minimum number of hours/minutes per day and week that the school will</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clear and compelling description of the annual academic schedule for the school which explains <b>and</b></li> <li>demonstrates how the calendar reflects the needs of the educational program and meets or exceeds Alabama's Standards.</li> <li>The school's proposed calendar for the first year of operation includes the total number of instructional days and hours, holidays, make-up days in case of inclement weather, and state assessment days.</li> <li>The applicant has comprehensively described the structure of the school day and week, including the number of instructional hours/minutes in a day for core subjects such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and the start and dismissal times.</li> <li>There is a strong and sophisticated explanation as to why the school's daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning and</li> </ul>

			devote to academic instruction in each grade has been provided along with a sample daily and weekly schedule for each division of the school.	faculty/staff development needs.
<b>Rating: 4</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to review of the annual calendar and a description of Empower’s annual schedule, the school calendar includes 180 instructional days, one week of parent orientation prior to school’s opening, 15 days of teacher induction, as well as 8 days for PD throughout the school year.</li> <li>The applicant states that the calendar is designed to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of Empower students (e.g., every student is provided with a daily intervention during a “Power Hour” to address specific reading and math needs, as well as an advisory period and time for social-emotional learning dedicated to SEL programming). Further, the applicant states that Empower’s daily schedule is designed to ensure that students are given the supports to excel academically, socially, and emotionally in alignment with the State’s key initiatives in reading, math, and science (p. 44).</li> <li>The calendar (Attachment 6) demonstrates that the school year includes 180 instructional days while the application states that students receive 7.5 hours of daily instruction (including time for core academics, physical education, electives, and social emotional learning) and a total of 1,350 instructional hours (p. 22) that, they state, equates to an additional 24 extra days of extra instruction. Further, according to the application, the number of instructional minutes per week varies by grade. For example, students in grades K-2 will have 100 minutes of math per day (500 per week), 150 minutes of ELA per day (five times a week), and 50 minutes of science and social studies per week, while 3-5<sup>th</sup> grade students will have 60 minutes per day in math, 110 minutes per day in ELA, 40 -to minutes per day in science, and 50 minutes per day in social studies. Middle school students (grades 6-8) will have 50 minutes per day/ five days a week in each content area. In addition, the calendar identifies holidays, while the application reports that the school will use days reserved for PD to make-up inclement weather days; however, State assessment days are not identified. In the interview, the applicant stated that assessment days will follow the State’s calendar, which they anticipate will be administered in mid-March to mid-April.</li> <li>The applicant provides a sample schedule with columns dedicated to each grade level, showing the start (8:00 a.m. morning meeting for all grade levels following breakfast from 7:30-8:00 a.m.) and dismissal (4:00 p.m. following schoolwide community circles and celebrations) times. As stated above, the application identifies the daily instructional minutes by subject.</li> <li>The applicant clearly prioritizes daily planning time, with weekly time allocated to PST/data meetings, instructional coaching, team lesson planning, PLC meetings, and individual lesson planning (Attachment 7 and p.22). Further, the applicant states that each component of the schedule is designed to meet students’ needs; however, the applicant does not fully explain why the school’s daily and weekly schedule will be optimal for student learning. Finally, it is unclear how the 90-minute instructional periods accommodate instructional methods described in the application (e.g., 25 minutes of direct instruction (DI), 25 minutes of performance-based learning, 25 minutes of targeted small group instruction, and 25 minutes of individualized practice (pp. 16-17)). In the interview, the applicant explained that the schedule will be optimal for student learning, given it places emphasis on literacy, beginning in K and continuing through grade six. It also includes consistent time for interventions through grade eight to support students who have not mastered previous learning. The applicant also explained that the instructional methods described in the application are implemented when the math and science periods (at the middle grade level) are combined to get a 100-minute block.</li> </ul>		

<b>School Culture</b>			
<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 5</b>	<b>Very Good 15</b>	<b>Excellent 20</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of the culture of the proposed school or an explanation of how it will promote a positive and culturally inclusive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.</li> <li>There is little or no description for how the school will establish and maintain the school culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians starting from the first day of school, and/or</li> <li>there is little or no description of a plan for enculturating students who enter the school mid-year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The description of the culture of the proposed school lacks sufficient detail as to how it will promote a positive and culturally inclusive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.</li> <li>There is a limited explanation of how the school will establish and maintain the school culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians starting from the first day of school, including a plan for enculturating students who enter the school mid-year;</li> <li>demonstrates a limited or incomplete understanding of how to create and implement a positive school culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of the culture of the proposed school, explaining how it will promote a positive and culturally inclusive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.</li> <li>There is a description for how the school will establish and maintain the school culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians starting from the first day of school, including a plan for enculturating students who enter the school mid-year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a compelling description of the culture of the proposed school, explaining how it will build, promote, and sustain a positive and culturally inclusive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.</li> <li>The applicant’s description demonstrates a solid understanding and strong capacity to practice cultural inclusiveness.</li> <li>There is a well-articulated, comprehensive, and compelling description for how the school will establish and maintain the school culture for students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians starting from the first day of school, including a plan for enculturating students who enter the school mid-year.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Rating: 20</b></p>	<p><i>Evaluative Comments:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant states that they believe a positive, supportive, and reflective school culture is paramount to student, teacher, and leader growth (p. 23). Accordingly, they explain that their culture is based on the E3 framework; therefore, everything done at ECS is grounded in three core values (excellence, empathy, and empowerment). The applicant outlines the key components of each value to illustrate what it looks like in practice to explain how the school will promote a positive environment to reinforce intellectual and social development. In addition, a table is provided to show how the school will integrate E3, CASEL, and the Purpose Prep SEL curriculum. However, they do not explain how the school will promote a culturally-inclusive environment. In the interview, the applicant explained that the community circles and team-building events promote a culturally-inclusive environment, while restorative practices are woven through lessons to complement SEL values that are embedded through lessons in alignment with Purpose Prep to promote a positive and culturally-inclusive academic environment and reinforce student intellectual and social development.</li> <li>In the interview, the applicant spoke to the integral importance of the community circle for staff as well as students to use the space to purposefully and frequently address and practice cultural-inclusiveness. Further, the program model, including the dedicated time for SEL, restorative practices, and attention to students' individual and collective needs, is clearly designed to address and honor diversity.</li> <li>The applicant explains that the success of the school's culture relies on the active participation of all stakeholders. They state that staff are introduced to the culture during hiring process and culture is then maintained via coaching and PD throughout the school year. Further, they state that parents and students are introduced to the school culture during summer orientation, while students who enter mid-year are assigned a peer mentor and attend advisory meetings until their transition is complete (p. 32).</li> </ul>
--------------------------	------------------------------------	---

**Supplemental Programming**

<p><b>Weak 1</b></p>	<p><b>Fair 2</b></p>	<p><b>Very Good 3</b></p>	<p><b>Excellent 4</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) extra-curricular or co-curricular activities offerings and how they will be delivered and funded. <i>and/or</i></li> <li>there is no description of how the school will pay for student participation in district sponsored interscholastic programs.</li> <li>There is little or no description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) programs that address the mental, emotional, and social development and health of ALL students, including how the program will be funded and how those programs will meet the unique needs of the student population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) extra-curricular or co-curricular activities offerings and how they will be delivered and funded is limited in scope <i>and/or</i></li> <li>does not provide sufficient detail to determine sufficient resources <i>and/or</i> program viability. <i>and/or</i></li> <li>the applicant minimally addressed how the school will pay for student participation in district sponsored interscholastic programs.</li> <li>The description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) programs that address the mental, emotional, and social development and health of ALL students, including how the program will be funded and how those programs will meet the unique needs of the student population is limited in scope <i>and/or</i> does not provide sufficient.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clear description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) extra-curricular or co-curricular activities offerings <i>and</i></li> <li>how they will be delivered and funded, including the schedule, length, and anticipated participants.</li> <li>There is a description of how the school will pay for student participation in district sponsored interscholastic programs.</li> <li>There is a clear description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) programs that address the mental, emotional, and social development and health of ALL students, including how the program will be funded and how those programs will meet the unique needs of the student population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clearly and convincingly articulated and comprehensive description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) extra-curricular or co-curricular activities offerings <i>and</i></li> <li>how they will be delivered and funded, including the schedule, length, and anticipated participants, <i>and</i></li> <li>how the school will pay for student participation in district sponsored interscholastic programs.</li> <li>There is a clearly articulated and compelling description of CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) programs that address the mental, emotional, and social development and health of ALL students, including how the program will be funded and how those programs will meet the unique needs of the student population.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Rating: 2</b></p>	<p><i>Evaluative Comments:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant states that the school will partner with local organizations such as the parks and recreation board and YMCA to ensure that students have access to extracurricular activities. Further, they state they are currently identifying partners to apply for a grant to operate a \$100k 21<sup>st</sup> century learning program to provide high-quality, enrichment opportunities in reading, math, and fine arts beyond school hours in a safe and secure environment; however, the programming has not yet been confirmed and details are limited. Further, while they state they have set \$100k aside for other instructional support costs to support after-school and summer programming, they do not explain how programming will be culturally-responsive. In the interview, the applicant explained that the 21<sup>st</sup> century application process will not begin until August 2022; therefore, since submission, conversations with a potential partner (who would operate the programming) that currently runs an after-school program across Alabama have begun. They also stated that programming will be responsive to parent and student needs; it will accommodate parent's schedules and integrate reading, math, and arts support while including organizations that build cultural relevance (e.g., Birmingham Civil Rights Museum, Birmingham Museum of Arts and Kuumba Community Arts). However, programming has not yet been confirmed and details remain limited although the applicant stated that, if necessary, the school would fund programming in response to student needs.</li> <li>The applicant states that \$100k have been set aside for other instructional support costs and that they are currently working to identify partners. However, the applicant does not provide sufficient details to determine sufficient resources <i>and/or</i> program viability. In the interview, the applicant stated that, as a contingency, the school would tap into its projected surplus (shown in budget and reported, at the interview, to be even larger in</li> </ul>
-------------------------	------------------------------------	--

		<p>Years 2+ following a budget cell correction) to finance after-school programming. However, the applicant did not provide sufficient details to determine sufficient resources and/or program viability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant does not address interscholastic programming. In the interview, the applicant stated that while the school hopes to raise funds to support interscholastic programming, athletic options are currently not part of the proposed budget.</li> <li>The applicant states that the core of the school’s supplemental programming is their dedication to the mental, social, and emotional health of all students; therefore, they plan to hold daily community circles and advisory periods that provide students with a dedicated adult advocate. They also describe plans to implement (during the daily instructional time) Purpose Prep, their intended SEL program, in alignment with ECS’s individualized learning model, including PBIS and RtI so that teachers may assign individual students lessons and strategies based on specific needs. Further, they state that Empower will employ a social worker to connect students with additional resources when needed; however, the description is limited in scope and does not provide sufficient detail to explain how the program will meet students’ unique needs. In the interview, the applicant explained that the proposed SEL model, Purpose Prep, is designed to build community connectedness as students and staff learn about themselves and others. While they stated that specific attention will be given to conflict resolution and communications skills given gaps identified in the community, the applicant was not specific about students’ mental development and health.</li> </ul>
--	--	--

**Special Populations and At-Risk Students**

Weak 1	Fair 5	Very Good 10	Excellent 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided little to no description of an overall plan to serve students with special needs, including but not limited to students with IEPs or Section 504 plans, ELLs, students identified as intellectually gifted, and students at risk of academic failure or dropping out is limited and lacks sufficient detail.</li> <li>The plan minimally or does not address how the school will meet students’ needs in the least restrictive environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The overall plan to serve students with special needs, including but not limited to students with IEPs or Section 504 plans, ELLs, students identified as intellectually gifted, and students at risk of academic failure or dropping out, is limited and lacks sufficient detail.</li> <li>The plan minimally addresses how the school will meet students’ needs in the least restrictive environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of the overall plan to serve students with special needs, including but not limited to students with IEPs or Section 504 plans, ELLs, students identified as intellectually gifted, and students at risk of academic failure or dropping out.</li> <li>The plan addresses how the school will meet students’ needs in the least restrictive environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a clear and comprehensive description of an overall plan to serve students with special needs, including but not limited to students with IEPs or Section 504 plans, ELLs, students identified as intellectually gifted, and students at risk of academic failure or dropping out.</li> <li>The plan thoroughly addresses how the school will meet students’ needs in the least restrictive environment and the school calendar and schedule is supportive of the needs.</li> </ul>

<b>Rating: 12</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant states that the school plans to serve slightly more students with special needs than the Bessemer City Schools, given the potential attractiveness of the program (p. 35). Estimates include students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) (15%) or Section 504 plans, English language learners (ELLs) (10%), students identified as intellectually gifted (10%), and students at risk of academic failure given performance data on the ALSDE report card data – that is, in 2019, 23.1% of students were proficient in reading and 22.3% were proficient in math (p.8). The application includes methods for identification (e.g., Power School, Child Find, distribution of a home language survey, and the administration of baseline assessments in reading and math (e.g., Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills [DIBELS] 8<sup>th</sup> Editions or the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress [NWEA MAP])). They provide assurance that the school will comply with all federal and State guidelines, regulations, and laws (p. 35); and state that Empower’s daily schedule – including Power Hour and personalized learning as well as their staffing model, including a Coordinator of Student Supports, counselors, special education teachers, ELL teachers, reading and math specialists, behavior interventionists, instructional aides, as well as consultative services, implementation of their RtI model (three tiers) and the use of a problem solving team (PST) will work to support students’ diverse needs. The applicant also states that gifted learners in K-2 will receive accommodations in the general education setting, while students in grades 3-5 will receive pull-out services for 3-to-5 hours/week and 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade students will participate in enrichment clusters during Power Hour. However, while the applicant states that students with disabilities will be educated in the general education classroom with the support of supplementary aids and services (p. 40), the applicant does not explain how students who are not progressing in the general education setting will be served. Additionally, while the applicant provides a few strategies to support ELL’s language acquisition and academic growth (e.g., text previewing and summarizing/retelling, explicit vocabulary instruction, graphic organizers, and meta-cognitive strategies), the plan to serve ELL students is limited and lacks sufficient detail. In the interview, the applicant explained that, in case students are not progressing in the general education setting, the IEP team would convene to determine which additional modifications or services were required to meet students’ needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE). They also stated that ECS would assume full responsibility for meeting these needs. For example, if a change in placement became necessary, the school would identify the resources and finances to create a self-contained classroom and/or outsource services; however, the plan is incomplete with undefined costs and resources. Further, in the interview, the applicant explained that students’ (including ELLs’) individualized learning plans serve as a road map for success, identifying strategies (such as explicit instruction, language development, vocabulary, context-based learning) based on assessment data (e.g., Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State [ACCESS]). Further, they stated that ELL teachers would collaborate with the general education teacher to ensure individualized learning plans meet students’ language needs.</li> <li>According to the application, Empower will provide qualified students with special education services in their LRE. For example, they state that every student qualifying for special education services will have his/her LRE</li> </ul>
-------------------	-----------------------------	---

		determined on a case-by-case basis during the development of their IEP. They add that students with disabilities will be educated with their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate and not removed for the general education classrooms unless they are not progressing with the support of supplementary aids and services. The applicant lists examples of aids and services the school will implement to support student growth in the general education setting, including preferential seating, one-on-one support provided by a special education or general education teacher in the classroom, intentional planning, access to communicative software, and small group instruction. (p. 40). Further, the applicant states that Empower’s dedication to personalized learning for all students is rooted in their belief that all students can grow academically, socially, and emotionally when provided appropriate support. In the interview, the applicant explained that the schedule and the school calendar is supportive of students’ needs. For example, the schedule includes a daily intervention period (i.e., Power Hour) that, informed by data-driven decisions made at weekly PLC meetings, is used to address specific needs so that students do not miss core academic instruction.
--	--	--

**Student Recruitment & Enrollment**

Weak 1	Fair 2	Very Good 3	Excellent 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of the culturally inclusive student marketing and recruitment plan and how it will provide equal access to all interested students and families <i>and/or</i></li> <li>the applicant has minimally or not described the school’s plan for outreach to at-risk students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a limited and incomplete description of the culturally inclusive student marketing and recruitment plan and how it will provide equal access to all interested students and families, <i>and/or</i></li> <li>the applicant has minimally described the school’s plan for outreach to at-risk students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of the culturally inclusive student marketing and recruitment plan and how it will provide equal access to all interested students and families.</li> <li>The applicant has specifically described the school’s plan for outreach to at-risk students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a comprehensive and compelling description of the culturally inclusive student marketing and recruitment plan and how it will provide equal access to all interested students and families.</li> <li>The applicant has specifically and completely described the school’s plan for outreach to at-risk students, including evidence of targeted outreach plans to specific neighborhoods or zip codes, identified based on the proposed student population and the mission of the school.</li> </ul>

<b>Rating: 3</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant states their commitment to employing a robust recruiting and marketing plan to ensure fair access to all families. While they describe some recruitment strategies the school will use to increase interest in the school, the strategies (pp. 45-46) described are mostly general (i.e., visual advertising with a billboard along a main thoroughway, digital advertising, community information sessions, canvassing) with limited description of the culturally-inclusive aspects of the plan – aside from providing materials in both English and Spanish. Further, apart from holding a lottery, it is unclear how they will ensure equal access or “...work to ensure family status or situation is not a barrier to enrollment” (p. 46). In the interview, the applicant explained that ECS continues to be very intentional about meeting people in their community (e.g., congregations, or housing developments). They explained that they continue to form partnerships with community organizations, including places of faith, to maximize outreach. Additionally, they stated that five virtual informational meetings have been hosted throughout the community, and they have held community meetings in low-income and Latinx communities and more than 20 individual meetings with members of the Bessemer community. Further, the applicant elaborated on the value added by including the school’s number on the billboard, given their understanding that cell phones and text messaging is the most used mode for communication in Bessemer. However, details provided were more general than specific. For example, the applicant did not explain how the plan would be inclusive of all cultures or responsive to families without Internet access or with nontraditional schedules.</li> <li>The applicant states that the school’s outreach to at-risk students includes partnering with local organizations such as the Housing Authority, distributing materials and hosting information sessions to explain how the personalized model supports all learners’ needs and implementation of a pre-enrollment system (p. 46); however, it is unclear how the plan is specific to at-risk students. In the interview, the applicant explained that outreach taking place at the housing authority helps them attract low-income students.</li> </ul>
------------------	-----------------------------	---

**Student Discipline Policy & Plan**

Weak 1	Fair 2	Very Good 3	Excellent 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided little or no description of the proposed discipline plan, with little or no detail on how the plan is based on some combination of research, theory, experience, and best practices, <i>and/or</i></li> <li>little or no explanation on how the discipline policy will be CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) and effective for the anticipated student population, and/or little</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided a limited and insufficient description of the proposed discipline plan, with insufficient detail on how the plan is based on some combination of research, theory, experience, and best practices, <i>and/or</i></li> <li>little or no demonstration or explanation on how the discipline policy will be CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided a detailed description of the proposed discipline plan, along with a detailed explanation of how the plan is based on some combination of research, theory, experience, and best practices, and a clear demonstration <i>and</i></li> <li>explanation on how the discipline policy will be CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided a convincing, comprehensive, and thorough description of the proposed discipline plan, with detail on how the plan is based on some combination of research, theory, experience, and best practices, and a clear and sophisticated demonstration <i>and</i></li> <li>explanation on how the expectations and discipline</li> </ul>

or no demonstration of compliance with applicable state laws and authorizer policies.	and effective for the anticipated student population, or in compliance with applicable state laws and authorizer policies.	and effective for the anticipated student population and has demonstrated compliance with applicable state laws and authorizer policies.	policy will be CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1) and effective for the anticipated student population, and has comprehensively demonstrated compliance with applicable state laws, authorizer policies, and due process requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant demonstrates the capacity to successfully implement the discipline plan schoolwide.</li> </ul>
<b>Rating: 4</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to a review of the application, the school’s discipline model is designed to set boundaries for how the school interacts as a community while creating pathways for student personal growth. The plan includes Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) with a weekly tiered approach for student behavioral expectations, as well as restorative practices that, they state, will honor every student and situation while focusing on how students can take responsibility for mistakes to grow socially and emotionally. However, while the application includes citations for some statements (e.g., “Students who are unable to behave appropriately and follow school rules are unable to learn.”) that connect with their approach and also state that an understanding of research, experience, and practice informed their decision to use PBIS, the applicant provides a limited and insufficient description on how the plan is based on some combination of research, theory, experience, and best practices. For example, the applicant states, “The leadership team has learned through experience that exclusionary disciplinary measures without appropriate support and interventions can compound to become more serious and dangerous” (p. 47); however, no further detail or data was provided. In the interview, the applicant stated that research describing the negative impact of high suspension rates prompted them to select restorative practices because it is designed to address issues and increases a student’s time in school. Further, the applicant explained that the proposed discipline plan purposefully engages students and keeps students in the classroom in response to trends noted through personal teaching experience. For example, ECS plans to actively engage academically-strong students to prevent negative behavior and will not send academically low-performing students away from the school to miss necessary instruction. The applicant also stated that State codes are used in the ECS disciplinary plan so they may collect data used to compare the number of type of incidents at their school to those reported by schools across the State.</li> <li>The application does not explain how the discipline policy will be culturally-responsive (CR) and effective for the anticipated student population or in compliance with applicable State laws and authorizer policies. In the interview, the applicant explained that the ECS discipline policy is CR because its use of restorative practices builds authentic relationships and community while allowing the victim to be part of the process and engaging all students in a proactive environment designed to promote student achievement. Further, the application (p. 58) describes the school’s due process protocol.</li> <li>In the interview, the applicant stated (and review of the job description demonstrates) that the Dean of Students will hold primary responsibility for implementing the schoolwide discipline plan, and data will be used to evaluate the plan’s effectiveness.</li> </ul>	

<b>Family &amp; Community Involvement</b>			
<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 2</b>	<b>Very Good 3</b>	<b>Excellent 4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided little or no description and/or evidence of the specific role to date of the parents/guardians and community members involved in developing the proposed school and/or any other evidence of parent/guardian and community support for the proposed charter school.</li> <li>The applicant has provided little or no evidence that the school has assessed and built parent/guardian and community demand for the proposed school <b>and/or</b></li> <li>little to no description how the school will engage families and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has described and provided evidence on the role to date of the parents/guardians and community members involved in developing the proposed school <b>and</b></li> <li>has mentioned other evidence of parent/guardian and community support for the proposed school, though the information is limited and lacking in sufficient detail to determine engagement.</li> <li>The applicant has demonstrated some assessment of parent/guardian and community demand for the proposed school, though its description of how the school will engage families and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening has limited outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has described and provided evidence on the specific role to date of the parents/guardians and community members involved in developing the proposed school <b>and</b></li> <li>has included any other evidence of parent/guardian and community support for the proposed charter school.</li> <li>The applicant demonstrates that the school has assessed and built parent/guardian and community demand for the proposed school and describes how the school will engage families and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has articulately described, in detail, and provided evidence on the specific role to date of the parents/guardians and community members involved in developing the proposed school <b>and</b></li> <li>has included any other evidence of parent/guardian and community support for the proposed charter school.</li> <li>The applicant convincingly demonstrates that the school has assessed and built strong parent/guardian and community demand for the proposed school and comprehensively describes how the school will engage families and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening with realistic and diverse outreach strategies</li> </ul>

		strategies, and the nature of family and community engagement is unclear.	designed to reach a broad audience and ensure genuine community and family engagement.
<b>Rating: 3</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the application, Empower has engaged parents and community members (p. 59) since July 2020 via five monthly virtual information sessions. However, the applicant does not name the role to date of the parents/guardians and community members involved in developing the school. In the interview, the applicant explained that parents/guardians and community members' feedback has played an integral role in shaping the school's design. For example, in direct response to parent feedback, the enrollment plan was expanded to include elementary grade levels. Further, in response to parents' and community members' desire to be actively engaged with the school community and leaders, the proposal includes both a community council and a parent council.</li> <li>The application includes six letters of support from community members who state that a school like Empower will be an asset to the community which is on the cusp of a rebirth. While the applicant also indicates that Empower has more social media followers (which they state has increased to 850 followers or 110 more) than two existing charter schools in Jefferson County, information is limited and lacking to determine the extent that the school has assessed and built parent/guardian and community support for the school. In the interview, the applicant explained that, in addition to the letters of support, 75 signatures have been collected via the community support forum tab on the school's website to demonstrate support (e.g., write a letter of support, help school open) for the school.</li> <li>The applicant describes steps the school will take to connect with the community and involve families from approval to opening (p. 60). For example, the school will advertise throughout the community (using visual, digital, and print materials), host community information sessions, canvas the community, create advisory boards, and adopt Joyce Epstein's School-Family-Community Partnership model (pp. 59-60) to provide opportunities for parents to be informed and engaged in their student's education while providing feedback on the school's activities and progress. However, the applicant has not demonstrated an assessment of demand for the proposed school. In the interview, the applicant described the community landscape to indicate the school's proximity to several school districts will support filling seats; however, the applicant has not collected specific evidence (e.g., signatures of parents/guardians with eligible students) to demonstrate that there is demand.</li> </ul>	

**Educational Program Capacity**

<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 5</b>	<b>Very Good 15</b>	<b>Excellent 20</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has not provided the key members of the school's leadership team and who will be responsible for development and opening of the school.</li> <li>There is <i>little or no description</i> of the team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, and/or no team capacity in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leadership, administration, and governance;</li> <li>Curriculum, instruction, and assessment;</li> <li>Performance management;</li> <li>Cultural competence/inclusiveness;</li> <li>Family and community engagement;</li> <li>Special populations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided key members of the school's leadership team who will be responsible for development and opening of the school, though it is unclear if all members have been identified.</li> <li>The applicant has provided limited or insufficient detail on some or all of the following descriptions of the team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, which includes team capacity in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leadership, administration, and governance;</li> <li>Curriculum, instruction, and assessment;</li> <li>Performance management;</li> <li>Cultural competence/inclusiveness;</li> <li>Family and community engagement;</li> <li>Special populations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key members of the school's leadership team who will be responsible for development and opening of the school have been identified.</li> <li>There is a description of the team's individual and collective qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, which includes team capacity in areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leadership, administration, and governance;</li> <li>Curriculum, instruction, and assessment;</li> <li>Performance management;</li> <li>Cultural competence/inclusiveness;</li> <li>Family and community engagement;</li> <li>Special populations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key members of the school's leadership team who will be responsible for development and opening of the school have been identified and are actively involved in school development.</li> <li>The applicant has comprehensively and convincingly demonstrated strong individual and collective team qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, and addressed team capacity in areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leadership, administration, and governance;</li> <li>Curriculum, instruction, and assessment;</li> <li>Performance management;</li> <li>Cultural competence/inclusiveness;</li> <li>Family and community engagement;</li> <li>Special populations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Rating: 18</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the application, the proposed school will be led by a Head of School/Executive Director, Mr. Anthony Oliver. Mr. Oliver will be supported by a leadership team that includes a Director of Academics-Elementary, Director of Academics-Middle, Director of Operations, and a Student Services Coordinator. The applicant provides job descriptions (Attachment 14) for these roles and states that these roles will not be filled until the planning year (or no later than January 2022). In the interview, the applicant stated that the school leadership team members will play an active role in implementing the framework and bringing the school model to fruition. Further, the applicant stated that leadership team members will hold responsibility for hiring staff.</li> <li>According to review of and the application narrative, the applicant provides detail on the team's individual and collective qualifications for successfully implementing the school educational program. Team members hold expertise in academics; performance management and school leadership; administration and governance – for example, one member has served as an assistant superintendent while another member has served as both a principal and an assistant principal; family and community engagement; as well as cultural</li> </ul>
-------------------	-----------------------------	---

		<p>competence/inclusiveness – for example, Mr. Brigham, a proposed board member, has served as a partner with Purpose Built Communities and Demarcus Rodgers, the proposed Vice Chair, has worked to connect homeless veterans to community resources and opened Kunti’s Kitchen to further serve and connect with the community; and curriculum, instruction and assessment – for example, Ms. Pinkard has served as a reading and math coach and the Director of Academic’s qualifications include a graduate degree in education leadership and curriculum. However, the team’s expertise and capacity with special populations is unclear. In the interview, the applicant stated that the school plans to hire a Student Services Coordinator who will have expertise and capacity with special populations to carry out job duties (including 1. Supervise, monitor, and implement special education, 504, gifted, and ELL referrals and services; and 2. In collaboration with the Director(s) of Academics, oversee the implementation of the schoolwide RtI program). Review of the job description indicates qualifications for this position include a Master’s degree and experience working with children but not specifically in a special education setting. Further, the proposed HOS/ED stated that in past administrative roles, responsibilities have required active participation in IEP meetings and manifestation hearings, as well as resource allocation; however, evidence of serving all special populations was not provided.</p>
<p><b>Section Score 90/103</b></p>	<p><b>Section 1: Educational Program</b></p>	

**SECTION 2. OPERATIONS PLAN - 69 points**

<b>Organization Structure &amp; Partnerships</b>			
<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 3</b>	<b>Very Good 5</b>	<b>Excellent 7</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has failed to submit organizational charts.</li> <li>The organization charts do not delineate the roles and responsibilities of, and lines of authority and reporting among, the governing board, school leader, management team, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school.</li> <li>The organization charts document clear lines of authority and reporting within the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has partially submitted organizational charts.</li> <li>Organization charts <i>partially</i> include the roles and responsibilities of the governing board, school leader, management team, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school.</li> <li>The organization charts document lines of authority and reporting within the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has submitted organizational charts.</li> <li>The organization charts include roles and responsibilities of the governing board, school leader, management team, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has submitted organizational charts.</li> <li>Organization charts clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of, and lines of authority and reporting among, the governing board, school leader, management team, staff, any related bodies (such as advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils), and any external organizations that will play a role in managing the school.</li> <li>Evidence is provided that partnerships with such external organizations are in place.</li> </ul>
<b>Rating: 6</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant provides two organizational charts: one for Year 1 and the other for Years 4 and 5 when the school is at full capacity.</li> <li>According to the review of the organizational charts, the HOS/Executive Director (ED) reports to the Board of Directors. The Coordinator of Student Services, the Directors of Academics (one each at the elementary and at the middle level) and Director of Operations oversee support or instructional staff members and report to the ED. The charts also indicate that the parent and the community advisory boards report to the ED. Further, job descriptions, provided in Attachment 14, describe the roles and responsibilities of leadership team members while the application (pp. 60, 66, and 73) describes the basic roles and responsibilities of the advisory boards (e.g., to provide input on topics affecting the school).</li> <li>The applicant states that ECS has established a partnership with New Schools for Alabama (NSFA) for back-office, food service, and facilities support; however, the application does not include documented evidence to show the partnership is in place. In the interview, the NSFA representative indicated that NSFA has been offering support to ECS; however, a partnership will not be formalized until after charter approval.</li> </ul>	
<b>Governing Board</b>			
<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 5</b>	<b>Very Good 10</b>	<b>Excellent 15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided little or no description of the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles of the governing board and how it will interact with the principal/head of school and any advisory bodies.</li> <li>The applicant describes the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board.</li> <li>The applicant failed to identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has described the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles of the governing board, how it will interact with the principal/head of school and any advisory bodies,</li> <li>the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board,</li> <li>the key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board, though has done so in a limited and non-specific manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has described the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles of the governing board and how it will interact with the principal/head of school and any advisory bodies.</li> <li>The applicant describes the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board.</li> <li>The applicant identifies key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has clearly outlined and described the governance structure of the proposed school, including the primary roles of the governing board and how it will interact with the principal/head of school and any advisory bodies.</li> <li>The applicant clearly describes the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board.</li> <li>The applicant clearly identifies and outlines key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board. Individuals who will serve key roles on the board have been identified and are committed.</li> </ul>
<b>Rating: 15</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant describes the governance structure of the proposed school (e.g., the board provides oversight, delegates day-to-day management to the HOS/ED, elects officers, and works through a committee structure), including the primary roles of the Board of Directors (e.g., implement financial policies, draft policies, evaluate the HOS/ED toward measures in the accountability plan, conduct an annual audit). While the applicant states that the board will hear reports and updates from the HOS/ED at monthly board meetings, the applicant does not describe how the board will interact with the HOS/ED. In the interview, the proposed board members explained that, in addition to an annual review of the HOS/ED, they plan to hold regularly-scheduled meetings to remain aware of what is happening on the ground and to ensure the charter promises are fulfilled. The board members also</li> </ul>	

		<p>explained that, in addition to monthly meetings, there would be a perpetual feedback loop/constant communication to proactively identify and address barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The application indicates that the board (currently consisting of eight members) may consist of 7-to-11 members (or 5-to-15 members according to the bylaws in Attachment 15) holds the charter; provides oversight to ensure that the school successfully executes mission; holds fiscal responsibility (p. 70); adheres to all applicable local, State, federal laws; meets monthly; and establishes policies. In the interview, the applicant stated that while the bylaws identify the minimum (5) and maximum (15) number of board members, the ideal size includes 7-to-11 members.</li> <li>The applicant states that the board will be composed of a diverse, talented group of professionals. The application includes a description of the key skills and areas of expertise (including finance, marketing, law, federal programming, fundraising, philanthropy, real-estate, project and construction management, K- 12 school experience, and community building) and constituencies (e.g., two parent representatives will sit on the board) that will be represented on the board (p. 71). According to review of the , the board currently holds expertise in finance, real-estate, K-12 school experience, and community building. In the interview, the applicant stated that board member, Haley Colson Lewis, has served as a staff attorney and holds a Juris Doctor (J.D.) law degree. Additionally, the applicant stated that the Adams and Reese law firm is on retainer.</li> </ul>
--	--	--

### Staffing Plans

Weak 1	Fair 2	Very Good 3	Excellent 4
<p>The applicant has provided little or no information on the staffing chart for the school (Commission template) with little or no notes or roster to identify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year one positions, as well as positions to be added during the five (5) year charter contract;</li> <li>Administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel;</li> <li>The number of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialty teachers;</li> <li>Operational and support staff.</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant has provided a limited and/or incomplete staffing chart for the school with insufficient notes and/or a roster to identify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year one positions, as well as positions to be added during the five (5) year charter contract;</li> <li>Administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel;</li> <li>The number of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialty teachers;</li> <li>Operational and support staff.</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant has provided a completed staffing chart for the school with accompanying notes or roster to identify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year one positions, as well as positions to be added during the five (5) year charter contract;</li> <li>Administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel;</li> <li>The number of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialty teachers;</li> <li>Operational and support staff.</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant has provided a comprehensive and complete staffing chart for the school with thorough notes and connection to the needs of the student population. The roster identifies, minimally, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year one positions, as well as positions to be added during the five (5) year charter contract;</li> <li>Administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel;</li> <li>The number of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialty teachers;</li> <li>Operational and support staff.</li> </ul>

<b>Rating: 4</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The application includes a complete staffing chart (Attachment 21- Staffing Plan) that delineates the school’s staffing plan through the five-year charter term, including: administrative, instructional, and operations staff members; the number of classroom teachers (eight K-1 teachers in all years of the charter term, as well as four teachers for second through fifth grade in Year 1 and increasing by four each year until Year 4); behavior interventionists; and specialty teachers (reading, math, PE/art/ music –combined into one role in Year 1). The staffing table also identified operational and support staff (e.g., nurse, food service, transportation, and custodial staff). However, thorough notes (such as a description of the operation and staff support roles) were not provided to explain the staffing chart nor did the applicant explain how the staffing chart is connected to student needs. In the interview, the applicant explained that the staffing chart is directly connected to student needs. For example, the school’s RtI/ Dean Coordinator role is imperative to school’s successful implementation of the individualized and personalized learning plans with the RtI framework to meet students’ specific needs. Further, review of district performance data has encouraged the school to prioritize hiring a math coach in Year 1 before bringing a reading coach on board in Year 2. Further, to support individualized/personalized learning and meet students’ needs, the staffing plan includes one teaching assistant per grade level. Finally, to meet students’ social-emotional needs, the staffing plan includes a behavior interventionist and social worker(s).</li> </ul>
------------------	-----------------------------	---

### Professional Development

Weak 1	Fair 3	Very Good 5	Excellent 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of the core components of teacher and staff professional development and how these components will support effective implementation of the proposed educational program;</li> <li>how the professional development plan will include the development and practice of cultural competence for all staff; building staff capacity in the collection, analysis and use of performance data to improve student learning;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided a limited description of the core components of teacher and staff professional development and how these components will support effective implementation of the proposed educational program;</li> <li>how the professional development plan will include the development and practice of cultural competence for all staff; building staff capacity in the collection, analysis and use of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a detailed description of the core components of teacher and staff professional development and how these components will support effective implementation of the proposed educational program;</li> <li>how the professional development plan will include the development and practice of cultural competence for all staff, building staff capacity in the collection, analysis and use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a detailed and thorough description of the core components of teacher and staff professional development and how these components will support effective implementation of the proposed educational program;</li> <li>how the professional development plan will include the development and practice of cultural competence for all staff; building staff capacity in the collection, analysis and use of</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>and</i> the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performance data to improve student learning; <i>and</i></li> <li>• the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of performance data to improve student learning; <i>and</i></li> <li>• the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally.</li> <li>• There is a clear understanding of the capacity required to effectively deliver professional development training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performance data to improve student learning; <i>and</i></li> <li>• the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will allow for flexibility to meet individualized staff needs as well as align with collective schoolwide goals.</li> <li>• There is a clear understanding of the capacity required to effectively deliver professional development training.</li> </ul>
---	--	--	---

<p><b>Rating: 7</b></p>	<p><i>Evaluative Comments:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant describes the core components of teacher and staff professional development (PD), stating that ECS staff members will receive ongoing PD so they may effectively address the academic and social-emotional needs of its students. More specifically, ECS plans to host a 15-day Summer Institute – which, according to review of the agenda in the application, will address a variety of topics, including team building, human resources policies, Intro to PLC, SEL training, and individualized learning plans. In addition, the schedule has been designed to engage teachers in more than three hours of weekly PD and collaborative planning time. Additionally, the calendar includes seven PD days throughout the school year, while the calendar shows eight PD days. Topics to be addressed during PD include RtI and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), data-driven instruction, student supports, and social-emotional learning. However, it is unclear how and when PD will support implementation of the selected curriculum programs. In the interview, the applicant explained that PD to support implementation of the curriculum will be embedded into their PD around UDL and RtI, beginning in the 3-week-period pre-opening.</li> <li>• The applicant lists data-driven instruction, based on Paul Bambrick-Santoyo’s book <i>Driven by Data</i>, as a uniform PD session topic, but does not explain how PD will address building staff capacity in the collection, analysis, and use of performance data to improve student learning. Additionally, they do not explain how the PD plan will include the development and practice of cultural competence for all staff. In the interview, the applicant explained that in addition to PD sessions based on Bambrick-Santoyo’s book and weekly PLC time that is used to review classroom-based data, quarterly PD days are built into the calendar so that staff may look at schoolwide data that are disaggregated by subgroups using Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Data Wise process. Further, the applicant stated that day one of PD begins with a bus tour through the community to build staff’s awareness of the community as well as their cultural competence. They also stated that teachers are trained on Purpose Prep, the SEL curriculum, which requires they consider individual emotions/biases and connect them to building relationships with others who are different. Finally, the applicant presented the importance of community circles, stating the circles play an integral role in helping participants recognize who they are as a person and how this impacts relationships with others.</li> <li>• According to the application, PD will be uniform (e.g., all educators will participate in several trainings such as a book study on <i>The Power of Teacher Teams</i>) and individualized (i.e., teachers will create their own PD action plans and may select courses on the Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) Activate Professional Development Library, which the applicant states include nine distinct pathways. Finally, PD will be conducted both internally (planned, monitored, and implemented by the Director of Academics in collaboration with other leadership team members) and externally. In the interview, the applicant explained that performance data and survey results will help them determine if PD effectively aligns with collective schoolwide goals. For example, should students’ performance on the written portion of the ACAP be low, it would indicate that PD on text dependent literacy was ineffective. Further, low performance would prompt them to identify funds for an external expert.</li> </ul>
-------------------------	------------------------------------	---

<b>Performance Management</b>			
Weak <b>1</b>	Fair <b>3</b>	Very Good <b>5</b>	Excellent <b>7</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is little or no description of mission-specific academic goals and targets are unclear in terms of the measures or assessments the school plans to use, and/or overall are not specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic, relevant, and time-bound.</li> <li>• There is little to no description of how the school will measure and evaluate school mission-specific academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of the mission-specific academic goals and targets are clear in terms of the measures or assessments the school plans to use, <i>and/or</i></li> <li>• some are specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic, relevant, and time-bound.</li> <li>• The description of how the school will measure and evaluate school mission-specific academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract, is lacking in sufficient</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has provided 3-5 mission-specific academic and organizational goals and targets. Goals are clearly stated in terms of the measures or assessments the school plans to use,</li> <li>• are Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART).</li> <li>• There is a detailed description of how the school will measure and evaluate school mission-specific academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the term of the charter contract.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has provided 3-5 mission-specific academic and organizational goals and targets. All goals are clearly and completely stated in terms of the measures or assessments the school plans to use,</li> <li>• are Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART).</li> <li>• There is a compelling and convincing description of how the school will measure and evaluate school mission-specific academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year,</li> </ul>

	detail to determine the potential for implementation.		<p>and for the term of the charter contract.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a plan for corrective action a school will take if it falls short of goals at the schoolwide, classroom, or individual student level.</li> </ul>
--	---	--	---

<b>Rating: 4</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided six goals (p. 84) related to academic achievement (e.g., At the end of every school year, ECS will have an annual increase in student proficiency of no less than 5% in both reading and math as determined by the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program); academic growth (e.g., At the end of every school, ECS students will be at-or-above the State average for growth in reading and math as determined by the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program; attendance; SEL; parent involvement; and staff satisfaction. The goals and targets are clear in terms of the measures or assessments the school plans to use (e.g., State assessments, Panorama SEL Skills and Competencies Survey, participation in student led conferences). However, the six goals listed on p. 84 do not match the nine goals listed on p. 9. For example, the growth goals use different metrics (e.g., NWEA MAP versus the State assessment). Therefore, it is unclear which goals the applicant intends to establish. In the interview, the applicant stated that the six goals on page 84 are the school's primary goals; however, the number of goals does not fall within the range specified by the criterion.</li> <li>The proposed goals are specific, measurable, action-oriented, and time-bound; however, it is unclear if they are realistic and relevant; and, as stated above, the goals are unclear. In the interview, the applicant explained that the achievement and growth goals are based on the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Therefore, to reach the ESSA goal set for 2028, they used backwards calculations to establish the specific achievement and growth rates.</li> <li>The applicant states the school plans to measure and evaluate academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, and the school as a whole (p.85), using research-based measures implemented at strategic intervals throughout the school year, at the end of the academic year, and for the term of the contract. Proposed assessments include baseline and interim assessments (NWEA MAP, DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition), diagnostic assessments (e.g., high-frequency word inventory), formative assessments (e.g., myView and myPerspectives assessments as well as entrance/exit tickets and metacognition checks) and summative assessments (e.g., ACAP, unit tests and rubric graded essays).</li> </ul>
------------------	-----------------------------	--

**Facilities**

<b>Weak 1</b>	<b>Fair 3</b>	<b>Very Good 7</b>	<b>Excellent 10</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little or no description of the steps already taken to identify prospective facilities as well as the process for identifying and securing a facility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a description of the steps already taken to identify prospective facilities as well as the process for identifying and securing a facility, including any brokers or consultants the applicant is employing to navigate the real estate market, plans for renovations, timelines, financing, etc. It is unclear if these steps are sufficient.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has identified prospective facilities as well as the process for securing a facility, including any brokers or consultants the applicant is employing to navigate the real estate market, plans for renovations, timelines, financing, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has secured an adequate and suitable facility or can show a contingent facility agreement.</li> </ul>

<b>Rating: 3</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant specifies two preferred facilities (p.87), provides a letter of intent from the lessor (Attachment 25 - Proof of Facility Commitment), and identifies a supporting organization who could help with the facilities acquisition process. The applicant also describes engaging with an unnamed architectural firm. However, while the applicant provides some details of each facility's amenities, it is unclear if the space will be sufficient to serve its budgeted population of 406 students in Year 1 and 737 students by Year 5 (Attachment 30 - Financial Plan Workbook) with a maximum enrollment of 900. The description of the facilities indicates that the two facilities combined has 18 classrooms (p.87), while the budget indicates that the school would serve 18 sections/classes of students in Year 1, and 33 sections of students by Years 4 and 5 (Attachment 30 - Finance Plan Workbook). Moreover, the letters to the two prospective facilities describes serving 400-480 students cumulatively, whereas the application's planned enrollment is up to 900 students at full scale. These numbers do not include preschool, which is also described as being served in these facilities. Additionally, while the applicant references their plans to renovate the facility at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic church, it is unclear from the provided information the scope of the renovations needed and, therefore, whether the budget and timeline for renovations are realistically and accurately stated. Insufficient information has been provided to indicate if these facilities plans are properly aligned with the budget and operational needs of the school as outlined. In the interview, the applicant explained that one of the two facilities was turnkey, while the other facility (a former private school) required some renovations (e.g., leaking roof, handicap accessibility). While the applicant explained that open spaces at the turnkey facility could be combined and used as classroom space and modules could be added to the outdoor space to help them meet the minimum enrollment number (528) but not the maximum enrollment number (900),</li> </ul>
------------------	-----------------------------	--

insufficient details (e.g., timeline, costs), were provided to demonstrate that the plan is viable as well as fully aligned with the budget and operational needs of the school.

**Startup & Ongoing Operations**

Weak 1	Fair 5	Very Good 10	Excellent 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided little or no information or a description of its start-up plan for the school.</li> <li>The proposed start-up year budget is not clearly aligned to stated goals.</li> <li>The applicant has provided little or no information or a description of the school transportation plan.</li> <li>The applicant has provided little or no information or a description of the plans for food service and other significant operational or ancillary services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided some or part of the start-up plan for the school, though is missing tasks and lacks details in some or all of the required plans.</li> <li>The proposed start-up year budget is partially aligned to stated goals.</li> <li>The applicant has provided a limited description or insufficient detail for one, some, or all of the school transportation plan.</li> <li>The applicant has provided a limited description or insufficient detail for the plans for food service and other significant operational or ancillary services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided a detailed start-up plan for the school, specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individual(s).</li> <li>Said plan is in alignment with the proposed start-up year budget. The applicant has provided a school transportation plan with arrangements for prospective students, daily transportation needs, <b>and</b></li> <li>a description of how the school plans to meet transportation needs for field trips and athletic events.</li> <li>The applicant has outlined the plans for food service and other significant operational or ancillary services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant has provided a clear, compelling, and detailed start-up plan for the school specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals, <b>and</b></li> <li>is in alignment with the proposed start-up year budget.</li> <li>The applicant has provided a comprehensive school transportation plan with arrangements for prospective students, daily transportation needs, <b>and</b></li> <li>a description of how the school plans to meet transportation needs for field trips and athletic events and has strong and demonstrated capacity for its plan and for its plan.</li> <li>The applicant has a comprehensive plan for food service and other significant operational or ancillary services.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Rating: 12</b></p>	<p><i>Evaluative Comments:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant’s start-up plan (Attachment 27) identifies tasks, a timeline, and responsible person(s); however, the timeline is unclear; dates listed do not specify starting or final dates. The plan provided a reasonable amount of initial detail, although it was not always in alignment with other documents. For example, the plan discussed securing renovations financing, but the budget implied that renovations would be paid for with the organization’s cash on hand and did not include debt service. In the interview, the applicant explained that dates listed in the start-up plan are final dates. While the applicant indicated that the budget was corrected, a copy of the budget was not provided to confirm alignment.</li> <li>The proposed start-up year budget, while heavily dependent on outside fundraising, is aligned to the scope of work and objectives described in the application.</li> <li>The applicant describes in some detail its initial tentative plans for transportation, including utilization of two cluster bus routes increasing to four in later years. However, the applicant does not describe its plans for providing transportation for students with special needs and contradicts itself by stating in Attachment 30 that transportation is not budgeted for, but budget line items for transportation are included in Attachment 30. Further, the applicant’s description of its plans to meet transportation needs for field trips and athletic events is limited and insufficient. In the interview, the applicant explained that transportation decisions will be made in accordance with a student’s IEP and with attention to selecting the most cost-effective option (e.g., including an additional route(s) or reimbursing families for mileage). Further, the applicant stated that the school anticipates negotiating with a third-party service provider at hourly rates for travel to athletic events/field trips once plans are established.</li> <li>The applicant describes its plans to contract with a vendor, School Food Wellness Group (SFWG), to oversee food service (Attachment 30) and references the National School Lunch Program but does not provide additional specifics on its plan for implementation, necessary equipment, food health and safety, or other relevant details. The applicant also provides some detail on its plans for school safety protocol, including the utilization of Raptor software for check-in, and provides a description of its plans for insurance (pp. 88-89). In the interview, the applicant described plans to contract with the SFWG and explained that they will select from the group’s various models to accommodate the school’s specific needs (e.g., facilities).</li> </ul>
--------------------------	------------------------------------	---

**Operations Capacity**

Weak 1	Fair 2	Very Good 3	Excellent 4
<p>There is little or no description of the team’s individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Operations Plan successfully, and/or little to no capacity in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing</li> <li>Professional development</li> <li>Performance management</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant has described some of the team’s individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Operations Plan successfully, and/or demonstrated limited capacity in some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing</li> <li>Professional development</li> <li>Performance management</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant has described the team’s individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Operations Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing</li> <li>Professional development</li> <li>Performance management</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant has provided a comprehensive and compelling description of the team’s individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Operations Plan successfully, with strong capacity in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staffing</li> <li>Professional development</li> </ul>

+ General operations + Facilities management		+ General operations + Facilities management		+ General operations + Facilities management		+ Performance management + General operations + Facilities management	
<b>Rating: 4</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant describes the founding team members' individual and collective qualifications in PD, performance management, general operations, and facilities management. More specifically, review of the proposed leader's as well as the board member biographies and demonstrate capacity in PD (e.g., board member Cynthia Pinkard's biography states that, in her role as reading and math coach over the past 27 years, she has delivered PD), performance management, and general operations (e.g., the proposed leader has served as a principal and assistant principal [AP]); and facilities management (e.g., the school's proposed back-office provider, NSFA, has a track record of selecting facilities providers and offers access to SchoolPrint – a nonprofit facilities advisory program that supports charter schools who are developing or renovating facilities). Additionally, the former Chief Operations Officer with Birmingham City Schools, Troy Williams, is a member of the applicant team. Finally, the applicant states their plans to bring on a Director of Operations as .5 full-time employee (FTE) during the planning year (Attachment 30 - Financial Plan). However, clear evidence of the team's capacity in staffing was not provided. In the interview, the applicant described the team's individual and collective capacity in staffing. The proposed HOS/ED shared an example of prior staffing experience that included networking to successfully identify 12 staff members one month prior to school opening. Similarly, a member of the applicant team explained that in a previous role, he was tasked with building the Achievement School District's operations team, which required filling positions in a four-month period while also procuring services (transportation and food). The applicant stated that successfully filling staffing requirements in a rapid timeline provides them with confidence in their individual and collective capacity in staffing.</li> </ul>					
		<b>Section Score 55/69</b>	<b>Section 2: Operations Plan</b>				

**SECTION 3. FINANCIAL PLAN – 20 points**

<b>Financial Plan &amp; Financial Management Capacity</b>			
<b>Not Included 1</b>	<b>Weak 5</b>	<b>Fair 15</b>	<b>Excellent 20</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant did not provide a completed operating budget.</li> <li>• The applicant has provided little or no detail in the budget narrative. It minimally or did not address:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Realistic student enrollment projections</li> <li>○ Anticipated funding sources</li> <li>○ The school’s contingency plan to meet financial needs</li> <li>○ Year one cash flow contingency.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an operating budget, though it is vague and missing information.</li> <li>• The applicant has provided a budget narrative description, though it lacks sufficient detail to determine its viability and/or the applicant has insufficiently addressed:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Realistic student enrollment projections</li> <li>○ Anticipated funding sources</li> <li>○ The school’s contingency plan to meet financial needs</li> <li>○ Year one cash flow contingency.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a completed operating budget, which uses the per-pupil revenue guidance provided by the Commission.</li> <li>• The applicant has provided a detailed budget narrative, which includes an evidence-based description of assumptions and revenue estimates, the basis and calculations for revenue projections, staffing levels and expenditures, and the degree to which the school/campus budget will rely on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising). The applicant has sufficiently addressed:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realistic student enrollment projections</li> <li>• Anticipated funding sources</li> <li>• The school’s contingency plan to meet financial needs</li> <li>• Year one cash flow contingency.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a completed operating budget, which uses the per-pupil revenue guidance provided by the Commission and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the school’s finances.</li> <li>• The applicant has provided a detailed and comprehensive line-item budget narrative, which includes a description of assumptions and revenue estimates, the basis and calculations for revenue projections, staffing levels, and expenditures, the degree to which the school/campus budget will rely on variable income (e.g., grants, donations, fundraising). The description aligns to the educational program and clearly addresses:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realistic student enrollment projections</li> <li>• Anticipated funding sources</li> <li>• The school’s contingency plan to meet financial needs</li> <li>• Year one cash flow contingency.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Rating: 18</b></p>	<p><i>Evaluative Comments:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant provided a complete operating budget, which uses the per pupil revenue guidance provided by the Commission. (<i>Attachment 30: Financial Plan Workbook</i>).</li> <li>• The applicant has provided a detailed budget narrative, which includes an evidence-based description of assumptions and revenue estimates, the basis and calculations for revenue projections, staffing levels and expenditures, and the degree to which the school/campus budget will rely on variable income (<i>Attachment 31: Budget Narrative</i>). However, while the applicant has sufficiently addressed enrollment projections and anticipated funding sources, there are several areas that need more clarity:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contingency plans and specific strategies (particularly for the startup year cash flow), should the applicant not receive competitive grant funds from Charter Schools Project (CSP), the Charter School Growth Fund, and the New Schools Venture Fund. The applicant does mention seeking a line of credit but does not provide evidence to demonstrate they will be able to secure a line of credit. In the interview, the applicant stated contingency planning would entail adjusting the budget and the major adjustment in early years would be to avoid renovation and locate only in the turnkey facility. Further, NSFA stated they would support ECS via its relationships with banks and lenders who are interested in extending lines of credit to schools and has experience.</li> <li>○ It is unclear if \$250,000 will be sufficient for facility renovation costs of the St. Francis property and the St. Alloysius property. It is also not clear if these facilities will have sufficient space to accommodate enrollment of 730+ students and the applicant has not identified contingency options should these properties not work out. In the interview, the applicant explained that a set of architects, contractors, and trades-people conducted a site visit to inform estimates. However, it remains unclear if these facilities will have sufficient space to accommodate enrollment of 730+ students. Further, the applicant has not identified contingency options should these properties not work out.</li> <li>○ There are some inconsistencies in the budget with the staffing chart and the staffing costs modeled in the budget.                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Administrative Staffing   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there is 1 FTE for Director of Academics – Middle in Year 1, but the cost is not captured in the budget. In the interview, the applicant stated both directors start in January 2022; however, the cost is not captured in the budget that was reviewed.</li> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there is 1 FTE for Director of Finance/Operations in Years 1-5, but 2 FTEs are budgeted in Years 2-5. In the interview, the applicant stated there is 1 FTE in Years 1-5; however, this is inconsistent with documentation that was reviewed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there is not an FTE for a Social Worker in Year 1, but 1 FTE is budgeted in Year 1. In the interview, the applicant stated the cell reference error has been corrected; however, the correction is not captured in the budget that was reviewed.</li> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there is 1 FTE for RTI Dean/Coordinator in Years 1-5, but 2 FTEs are budgeted in Years 2-5. In the interview, the applicant stated there will be 1 FTE RTI Dean/Coordinator in Year 1 and 2 in Years 2-5; however, this is inconsistent with documentation that was reviewed.</li> <li>▪ Instructional Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there are 4 FTEs for Teachers Grades 2-5 in Year 1, but 8 FTEs are budgeted in Year 1. In the interview, the applicant stated there are 4 FTEs for Teachers Grades 2-5 in Year 1 however, this is inconsistent with documentation that was reviewed.</li> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there is 1 FTE for Teacher Assistants Grades 2-5 in Year 1, but 3 FTEs are budgeted in Year 1. In the interview, the applicant stated there is 1 FTE TA for each grade level; however, this is inconsistent with documentation that was reviewed.</li> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there are 8 FTEs for Teachers Grades 6-8 in Year 1, but 1 FTE is budgeted in Year 1. In the interview, the applicant stated there are 8 FTEs for teachers in Grades 6-8 in Year 1; however, this is inconsistent with documentation that was reviewed.</li> <li>✓ The applicant indicates there are 3 FTEs for Sp. Ed. Teachers/ELL Grades 6-8 in Year 1, but 1 FTE is budgeted in Year 1. In the interview, the applicant stated there are 3 FTEs for special education teachers/ELL Grades 6-8 in Year 1; however, this is inconsistent with documentation that was reviewed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Section Score</b> <b>18/20</b></p>	<p><b>Section 3: Financial Plan</b></p>	

**SECTION 4. OVERALL ALIGNMENT AND VIABILITY – 15 points**

<b>Overall Alignment &amp; Viability</b>			
<b>Insufficient 1</b>	<b>Weak 5</b>	<b>Fair 10</b>	<b>Excellent 15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant team does not appear to have a clear understanding of the academic program proposed or a strong implementation strategy in place.</li> <li>Additionally, there are serious concerns about the financial viability of the school and/or the capacity of the leadership team to effectively operate a high-quality charter school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge around the academic program is limited to one or two individuals.</li> <li>There are some significant concerns about the financial viability of the school and/or the capacity of the leadership team to effectively operate a high-quality charter school.</li> <li>In the event that a leadership team has not been identified, the plan to identify an effective leadership team is insufficient or unconvincing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most members of the team are well versed in the academic program and a plan for implementation is in place.</li> <li>There are no significant concerns about the financial viability of the school or the capacity of the leadership team to effectively operate a high-quality charter school.</li> <li>In the event that a leadership team has not been identified, the plan to identify an effective leadership team is sound and convincing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All members of the team are well versed in the academic program and provided compelling information in response to interview inquiries.</li> <li>There are no concerns about the financial viability of the school or the capacity of the leadership team to effectively operate a high-quality charter school.</li> <li>The leadership team identified has a track record of success.</li> </ul>
<b>Rating: 5</b>	<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While applicant team members spoke to governance and operations, the proposed HOS/ED was the only interview participant that was very well-versed in, and demonstrated knowledge around, the academic program.</li> <li>As stated above, there are a few areas of the budget that require additional detail.</li> <li>Empower has identified a proposed leader. The applicant states they plan to hire, train, and retain a team of high-quality people to fill the leadership team during the planning year (p. 62), no later than January 2022. While they state they will attract high-quality individuals to support student learning through implementation of a robust recruitment plan to attract, identify, and screen applicants, the plan is unconvincing; the application process is general, and the robust features of the recruitment plan are not described.</li> </ul>	
<b>Section Score 5/15</b>	<b>Section 4: Overall Alignment and Viability</b>		

<b>Experienced Operators if Applicable</b>			
<b>Weak 1</b>		<b>Fair 3</b>	
<b>Very Good 5</b>		<b>Excellent 10</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the school intends to contract with an ESP for the management of the school or substantial educational services, the applicant has not addressed the following:</li> <li>Evidence of the nonprofit ESP's success in serving student populations that are similar to the anticipated student population, including demonstrated academic achievement, successful management of nonacademic school functions.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the school intends to contract with an ESP for the management of the school or substantial educational services, the applicant has partially addressed the following:</li> <li>Evidence of the nonprofit ESP's success in serving student populations that are similar to the anticipated student population, including demonstrated academic achievement, successful management of nonacademic school functions.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the school intends to contract with an ESP for the management of the school or substantial educational services, the applicant has addressed the following:</li> <li>Evidence of the nonprofit ESP's success in serving student populations that are similar to the anticipated student population, including demonstrated academic achievement, successful management of nonacademic school functions.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the school intends to contract with an ESP for the management of the school or substantial educational services, the applicant has comprehensively and in detail addressed the following:</li> <li>Evidence of the nonprofit ESP's success in serving student populations that are similar to the anticipated population, including demonstrated academic achievement, successful management of nonacademic school functions.</li> </ul>	
<b>Rating: N/A</b>		<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not Applicable: This topic does not apply to this applicant.</li> </ul>	
<b>Section Score N/A</b>		<b>Section: Experienced Operators</b>	



<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>		<b>Yes/No</b>
The description of the board’s ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interest does not exist or is lacking sufficient detail ( <b>Attachment 16</b> ):		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Ethics Policy.</li> <li>• Conflict of Interest Policy.</li> </ul>		
The applicant has provided a signed, conflict of interest statement for every:		No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant team member</li> <li>• Identified board member</li> </ul>		
The applicant has provided a statement of Assurances agreeing to requirements should approval be granted.		Yes
<i>Evaluative Comments:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application (Attachment 20) includes both a code of ethics, as well as a conflict-of-interest policy.</li> <li>• The application does not include any signed conflict-of-interest statements.</li> <li>• The application includes a statement of assurances signed by the proposed CEO/HOS and dated 11/29/2020.</li> </ul>	

<sup>1</sup>For purposes of this rubric, The Alabama Public Charter School Commission uses the definition from the National Center for **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE(1)** Educational Systems, which holds that cultural responsiveness is the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures. The committee will consider factors such as the applicant group’s connectedness with the intended student population and the applicant group’s ability to provide programming that will serve the needs and interests of the likely student population.