2013-2014 Application Cycle – Results of the In-Person Interview
Hirsch Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy, Inc.

The Technical Review Panel (TRP) conducted an interview of the applicant, Hirsch Academy: A Challenge Foundation Academy, Inc. (HA) on November 5, 2012 for the following purposes:

- To evaluate the capacity of the applicant to successfully implement the plan to operate a high-quality charter school,
- To provide the applicant team the opportunity to demonstrate how well they understand and have thought through the plan presented in the written application.

The applicant team present for the interview included the following members of the corporate board: Eleanor (Elie) Gaines, William (B. J.) Steinbrook, and Joan Lange, as well as Jason Klonoski representing Team CFA, identified in the application as having a governance relationship with HA.

The interview questions posed by the interview panel addressed the Education Plan, Organization Plan, and Business Plan. The results of the in-person interview are divided into sections aligned to scoring areas of the application. Each row begins with an overall rating for that portion of the interview. The rating options for each section are:

- The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.
- The information provided by the applicant did not change the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.
- The information provided by the applicant raised additional questions and/or concerns in the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.

The last column provides a summary of the responses given by the applicant in italics, and includes the primary questions asked by TRP members.

Rating	Section	Interview Summary
The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	Education Plan	1. Describe a typical day in the life of a 2nd grade student at your school. *HA described the daily schedule of 2nd grade students. The description demonstrated a clear understanding of the program of instruction.* <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>
The information provided by the applicant did not change the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	Education Plan	2. What does your program provide throughout the day for a student who enters below grade level? *HA described the program of instruction consistent with the written application package, but the answer did not focus on support for students within daily instruction.*

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The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	A.1 Educational Philosophy A.2 Target Population	3. The narrative for A.1 states that the curriculum addresses "the Fairness Gap, where poor American children lag far behind other American children from middle class families and above." How specifically will the school's proposed program of instruction improve pupil achievement in the target population you identified? • Is there room within the program to provide real life experiences for students, and could you expand on those real life experiences that are available? *HA described how studies have found that the content-rich Core Knowledge curriculum can erase the gap, and prevent the slump that often occurs after 4th grade. They described changes they had seen in a related school serving a similar population regarding student performance and aspirations for higher education.* <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>
The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	A.3 Program of Instruction	4. Could you describe your summative assessment plan? • Walk us through the alignment to the Educational Philosophy and methods of instruction? • What will you do on a regular basis with the data you collect from your summative assessments? *HA described the benchmark assessments, curricular assessments, and state standardized assessments consistent with the written application package. They described the alignment of those assessments with the educational philosophy. They described several ongoing assessments that would be used to align instruction with the needs identified in individual students.* <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>
The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	A.5 Performance Management Plan	5. Consider a scenario where a benchmark assessment given in November shows a third of your students are below the expected level in Math. What action steps would your PMP specify related to Strategy 1? *HA described how the PMP structured the response to the scenario. They described how they experienced a similar scenario in a related school, and the specific steps they took to address it.* <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>

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The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	A.5 Performance Management Plan	6. You mentioned Singapore Math. Elaborate on the strength of Singapore Math. • What are the challenges you expect to encounter with Singapore Math? *HA described how Singapore Math is especially suited for the target population due to the emphasis on concepts instead of only process, particularly number sense. They said that the Singapore Math framework mirrors the Common Core standards. They described the professional development necessary for successful implementation.* <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>
The information provided by the applicant did not change the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	A.6 Curriculum Samples	7. Could you identify the elements of instruction your administrators will be looking for to identify an effective lesson plan aligned to Arizona Common Core standards? • In the Kindergarten Reading sample, could you describe how the summative assessment is aligned to the standard? *HA described components found in their curriculum samples, as well as stating that administrators would be looking for standards taught across curricula and use of best practice strategies. They did not clearly align the components of the Kindergarten Reading assessment to the standard.*
The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	Overall Plan	8. Mr. Klonoski, you are listed as a Board member of Challenge Foundation Academies of Arizona, which operates Pioneer Preparatory, a Challenge Foundation Academy. That school received a D letter grade and Underperforming rating in 2011, and has improved to a B in 2012. What lessons have you learned that will help Hirsch Academy avoid student performance issues in the first year of operation? • Pinpoint four items that made a difference. *HA described lessons they learned about working in a low-SES, Hispanic community similar to the proposed site, which included language support for parents, the need for additional Math instruction, identification of attributes of successful teachers, and processes for monitoring student performance.* <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>

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The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	C.1 Facilities Acquisition	9. What progress have you made in securing a facility in your target area? • Would you say that you had an agreement? • Considering the other two facilities, how much work would be necessary to open as a school *HA described discussions with elements in the community including the City of Scottsdale to secure a facility near local youth programs. They described the discussions as advanced, but no lease has been signed. They stated that one of the alternate facilities described in the written application package currently functions as a school, and the other would not be prohibitive.* <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>
The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	C.2 Advertising & Promotion	10. The C.2 narrative states "Research on schools in the surrounding area serving a general education population suggests that Hirsch Academy: CFA should be able to enroll the projected number of students in year 1." What findings led you to this conclusion? • What is the approximate distance to the schools these kids are currently attending? *HA described how demographic data from city and community sources identified 700 families whose students are currently being bussed out of the neighborhood. They described the community as defined by distinct geographic features and as high density. They named community leaders who have expressed strong interest in their school.*
The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	C.3 Personnel	11. Describe the timeframe for recruiting, hiring, and training staff for the initial opening. • The PMPs for both Reading and Math includes stipends for a Mentor Teacher and "CK Coordinator" that would be paid before the opening of the school. Where in the start-up budget are these costs found? • The mentor teacher is going to be a model for other teachers who are struggling and needs extra assistance, so you will have to pull the mentor out of their classroom. We all know that the best person in from of kids is the most highly qualified with the relationship. Are you concerned that you will be taking this teacher out of their classroom and the kids won't have their teacher? *HA described the first step would be to find and hire a highly qualified school leader by the end of February, and that person would guide the recruitment and hiring of staff between March and June. They stated that the Mentor Teacher and CK Coordinator positions would be stipend additions to regular teaching positions, paid for in the Three Year Operational Budget. For the first three years, the*

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		mentor teacher would be scheduled to be pulled out of class twice a quarter, and the school would identify highly qualified substitutes to cover those classes. They stated that the school director would be the primary instructional leader while the school was growing. <u>The applicant provided information in the interview which should be incorporated in the narrative.</u>
The applicant provided additional information that improved the TRP's overall evaluation of the applicant.	C.5 Three Year Operational Budget	12. The budget is based on 90% of the projected enrollment. What is the minimum opening enrollment that you will need to make the plan viable? • If you don't get 111, how will you make up the difference in funding? *HA stated the minimum would be 111 students, or 90% of projected ADM. They stated that if the enrollment was 75%, they would have to consider cutting back one teaching position. HA provided details of how the revenue and expense projections in the budget were very conservative, with considerable cushion for unexpected situations.*