



AGENDA

METROPOLITAN BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
2601 Bransford Avenue, Nashville, TN 37204
Regular Meeting – April 28, 2026 – 5:00 p.m.
Freda Player, Chair

I. CONVENE and ACTION

- A. Call to Order
- B. Establish Quorum
- C. Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Adoption of Agenda

II. AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- A. Music City High Documentary Series
- B. Sylvan Park Elementary School State Champion Chess Team
- C. Class of 2026 Valedictorians and Salutatorians
- D. James Lawson High School Girls' 4x100 and 4x200 Record-Breaking Relay Teams

III. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- A. MNPS ReImaginED Update:
Core Tenets: Re-envision central office as a support hub. Empower and equip leaders at all levels.
Create and support engaging, rigorous, and personalized learning experiences for all students.
Identify and eliminate inequities.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Board will hear from those persons who have requested to appear at this Board meeting. In the interest of time, speakers are requested to limit remarks to two minutes or less. Comments will be timed.

V. BOARD REPORTS

- A.

VI. GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- A. Actions
 - 1. Consent
 - a. Minutes – 4/14/2026– Regular Meeting
 - b. Awarding of Purchases and Contracts
 - 1. Carter Group, LLC
 - 2. Education Resource Strategies, Inc
 - 3. Lessonspace, Inc. dba Code4Kids
 - 4. Office Furniture and Related Services
 - 5. Quorum Group LLC dba Takeform

6. Sown to Grow, Inc.
7. UTJ Holdco, Inc. dba Teaching Strategies
8. Vanderbilt University

2. New Start Charter School Applications

VII. STUDENT BOARD REPORTS

VIII. WRITTEN INFORMATION TO THE BOARD

- A. Sales Tax Collections as of April 20, 2026

IX. ADJOURNMENT

If any accommodations are needed for individuals with disabilities who wish to be present at this meeting, please submit the accommodation through hubNashville at <https://nashville.gov/hub-ADA-boards> or by calling (615) 862-5200. Requests should be made soon as possible, but 72 hours prior to the scheduled is recommended.

METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEETING –
April 14, 2026

Members Present: Freda Player – Chair, Berthena Nabaa-McKinney – Vice-chair, Rachael Anne Elrod, Erin O’Hara Block, Abigail Tylor, Robert Taylor, Rachael Anne Elrod and Zach Young
Cheryl Mayes (arrived at 5:15 pm)

Members Absent: TK Fayne

Student Members Present: Ava Davash, Hannah Nguyen

Meeting called to order at 5:31 p.m.

CONVENE AND ACTION

- A. Call to Order – Freda Player called the meeting to order.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance – Led by Freda Player.
- C. Adoption of Agenda

Motion to agenda to adopt agenda as listed

By Cherly Mayes, seconded by Berthena Nabaa-Mckinney

Vote: 8-0 (unanimous)

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- A. Academies of Nashville Students of the Year: The Board and Dr. Battle recognized the students.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

- A. Dr. Battle and Staff presented an MNPS ReImaginED Update: on Core Tenets: Re-envision central office as a support hub, Empower and equip leaders at all levels. Create and support engaging, rigorous, and personalized learning experiences for all students and Identify and eliminate inequities.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A. Honey Hereth – Addressed the Board concerning the Budget.

BOARD REPORTS

A. Budget and Finance Committee – Dr. Berthena Nabaa-Mckinney gave a brief committee report.

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

A. Actions

1. Consent

a. Minutes – 3/24/2026– Regular Meeting

b. Awarding of Purchases and Contracts

1. American Constructors, Inc.

2. Apple, Inc.

3. Coughlan Companies LLC dba Capstone

4. Rush Truck Centers of Tennessee, Inc.

c. FY26/27 Operating Budget – Recommendation from Budget and Finance Committee

d. Legal Settlement Johnson v. Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County (Case No. 26C52)

Motion to approve the consent agenda.

By Zach Young, seconded Rachael Anne Elrod

Vote: 8-0 (unanimous)

STUDENT BOARD REPORTS

A. Ava Dash gave the following report on attending the SCOPE conference. Special Report: Student Congress on Policies in Education (SCOPE) Conference Annually, TSBA (Tennessee School Board Association) hosts the Student Congress on Policies in Education (SCOPE) conference. This conference brings together 9th-12th grade students from across the state to discuss current topics in education. Participants explore education issues through mock school board meetings, group discussions, and debates with their peers.

These events are designed to give students an understanding of how school boards operate.

Student Experience: This year Ava and Hannah attended the SCOPE Conference debating within committees with people their grade level. This year's topic debated within the mock school board meeting was "Funding shall be moved away from related arts (music, art, etc.) and shifted to CTE courses in the school district's budget." The consensus within Ava's group was some money should be removed from the related arts and be given to CTE courses. Students argued CTE courses can give students a hands-on experience into the workforces students are interested in and if implemented in schools, can become more accessible, however students that are interested in related arts can find outside education within the community for their area of study.

The four topics dispersed to grade level groups:

9th: Students shall have the option of substituting club sports (kickball, club soccer, water polo, etc.) for physical education requirements. Consensus: No, students should NOT have the option of substituting club sport for physical education requirements

10th : The World Language graduation requirement shall be an elective Consensus: No, the World Language graduation requirement should stay as is.

11th : The ACT shall be substituted for end of course examinations.

Consensus: No, The ACT shall NOT be substituted for end of course examinations.

12th : All students shall be required to participate in at least one extracurricular activity (4-H, chess club, sports, Beta club, etc.) per year. Consensus: Yes, students should be required to participate in at least one extracurricular activity per year.

Board Recommendations: There are no board recommendations, but we encourage you to consider the responses of Tennessee students when making or speaking upon decisions related to these topics

Freda Player adjourned the meeting at 6:28 p.m.

David G. Sevier

David G. Sevier
Board Secretary

Freda Player
Board Chair

Date

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(1)

VENDOR: Carter Group, LLC

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): For the renovation and construction services at Hillwood Early Learning Center.

SOURCING METHOD: ITB MNPS000047

TERM: April 29, 2026 through Project Completion

FOR WHOM: Students and Faculty at Hillwood Early Learning Center

COMPENSATION: Contractor will be compensated in accordance with Exhibit A.
Total compensation for this contract is not to exceed \$1,665,000.
Total compensation is based on their project bid amount with allowances and contingencies included.

OVERSIGHT: Facilities

EVALUATION: Based on the quality and timeliness of renovation and construction services provided in accordance with the scope of work.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: C7000094

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Capital Funds

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(2)

VENDOR: Education Resource Strategies, Inc.

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): Amendment #6 increases the contract value and revises the scope of work to support the Department of Exceptional Education’s ongoing efforts to strengthen special education service delivery for students. The contract is for the provision of professional consulting services for strategic redesign and sustainable transformation planning and support.

SOURCING METHOD: Amendment of a Previously Board Approved Contract

TERM: April 29, 2026 through September 28, 2026

FOR WHOM: Exceptional Education

COMPENSATION: This amendment increases the contract value by \$234,000.
Total compensation for this contract is not to exceed \$3,833,000, which is inclusive of all consulting service projects performed over the life of the contract (since 2021).
Total compensation is based on an estimated project amount of \$325,000 to complete the Exceptional Education ongoing work.

OVERSIGHT: Exceptional Education

EVALUATION: Based on the quality and timeliness of the services provided in accordance with the revised scope of work.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: 7519459

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Operating Budget

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(3)

VENDOR: Lessonspace, Inc. dba Code4Kids

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): Amendment #1 extends the contract term and increases the contract value. The contract is for a K-8 Computer Science curriculum and includes a data sharing agreement.

SOURCING METHOD: Amendment of an Existing MNPS Contract

TERM: April 29, 2026 through June 30, 2027

FOR WHOM: MNPS K-8 Students

COMPENSATION: This amendment increases the contract value by \$208,000.
Total compensation for this contract is not to exceed \$304,000.
Total compensation is based on an estimated yearly amount of \$192,000.

OVERSIGHT: Division of Strategy

EVALUATION: Based on the quality and effectiveness of the program.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: 7626952

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Operating Budget

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(4)

VENDOR: Office Furniture and Related Services

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): For the provision of furniture, furnishings, and services.

SOURCING METHOD: TIPS Cooperative Contract #230301

TERM: April 29, 2026 through May 31, 2028

FOR WHOM: MNPS Schools and Departments

COMPENSATION: Contractor will be compensated in accordance with the TIPS contract.
Total compensation for this contract is not to exceed \$400,000.
Total compensation is based on an estimated yearly amount of \$200,000.

OVERSIGHT: Facilities

EVALUATION: Based on the quality of the products and services provided and the timeliness of delivery.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: C7000073

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Various Capital Funds, Operating Budgets, and Grant Funds

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(5)

VENDOR: Quorum Group LLC dba Takeform

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): For the provision of signage, graphics, and other related products and services.

SOURCING METHOD: TIPS Cooperative Contract #230301

TERM: April 29, 2026 through May 31, 2028

FOR WHOM: MNPS Schools and Departments

COMPENSATION: Contractor will be compensated in accordance with the TIPS contract.
Total compensation for this contract is not to exceed \$500,000.
Total compensation is based on an estimated yearly amount of \$250,000.

OVERSIGHT: Facilities

EVALUATION: Based on the quality of the products and services provided.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: C7000072

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Various Capital Funds, Operating Budgets, and Federal Funds including ISM

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(6)

VENDOR: Sown to Grow, Inc.

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): For the provision of Sown to Grow, a comprehensive digital student support platform.

SOURCING METHOD: TIPS Cooperative Contract #240101

TERM: April 29, 2026 through May 31, 2029

FOR WHOM: MNPS Students and Staff

COMPENSATION: Contractor will be compensated in accordance with the TIPS contract.
Total compensation for this contract is not to exceed \$1,260,000.
Total compensation is based on an estimated yearly amount of \$420,000.

OVERSIGHT: Student Support Services

EVALUATION: Based on the quality of the system and the services provided.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: C7000060

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Operating Budget

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(7)

VENDOR: UTJ Holdco, Inc. dba Teaching Strategies

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): Amendment #2 increases the contract value. The contract is for online curriculum, assessments, curriculum units of study, and professional development tools used in Pre-Kindergarten classrooms for Early Learning teaching staff, administrators, and department staff.

SOURCING METHOD: Amendment of a Previously Board Approved Contract

TERM: April 29, 2026 through June 30, 2027

FOR WHOM: MNPS Pre-K Students, Teachers, Administrators, and Department Staff

COMPENSATION: This amendment increases the contract value by \$400,000.
Total compensation for this contract is not to exceed \$1,500,000.
Total compensation is based on an estimated yearly amount of \$400,000.

OVERSIGHT: Pre-K

EVALUATION: Based on the quality and timeliness of the products and services provided.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: 7531746

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Operating Budget

GOVERNANCE ISSUES – ACTIONS – CONSENT

A.1.b.(8)

VENDOR: Vanderbilt University

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): Amendment #2 extends the contract term and increases the total revenue to be received under the grant. This grant contract establishes MNPS as a subcontractor under Vanderbilt University's grant from the William T. Grant Foundation that focuses on disrupting inequalities along the path to college and career.

SOURCING METHOD: Amendment of an Existing MNPS Contract

TERM: April 29, 2026 through June 30, 2026

FOR WHOM: MNPS Students and Staff

COMPENSATION: This amendment increases the revenue received by \$50,117.25.
Total revenue for this contract is estimated to be \$106,921.25.

OVERSIGHT: College and Career Readiness

EVALUATION: Based on the timeliness of payments to MNPS.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: 7576476

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Revenue

Charter School New Start Charter Applications

Presented by the MNPS Charter Schools Office

April 28, 2026



METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

MNPS Office of Charter Schools

Provides oversight of 26 charter schools authorized by the LEA

Leads the authorization and new start application process

Coordinates internal and external experts to review each new start application and presents evidence findings to the MNPS Board of Education

New Start Applicant Overview

New Start Charter Application	Proposed Location	Proposed Grade Span	Proposed Enrollment
Nashville School of Excellence	South Nashville-Nolensville Road Area	6-12	630
The Empowerment Academy	Nashville, TN	K-5	50
The Gate School	Nashville, TN- West Davidson County	6-8	360
Music City Academy	Davidson County Districts 5,8,and 9	9-12	480

Board Action Options

Approve or deny new start charter applications.

Note: T.C.A. 49-13-108(3)B states upon receipt of the grounds for denial, the sponsor has thirty days from receipt to submit an amended application to correct the deficiencies.

The LEA will have sixty days from receipt of an amended application to deny or to approve the amended application.

State Board New Start Application

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated §§ 49-13-107 and 49-13-108, the Tennessee State Board of Education is required to:

- Provide a **standardized charter school application format**
- Provide a **uniform application scoring rubric** to be used statewide
- Require **authorizers** to use this scoring rubric when evaluating charter school applications
- Ensure authorizers review the **full body of evidence**, which includes:
 - The written application
 - Independent due diligence
 - Applicant interviews

State Board New Start Application Updates

Overview of Changes

- Two application pathways now for new applicants and replication applicants
- Many of the attachments are not required now, such as handbooks and PD plans, until the pre-opening process (if approved)
- Reduced questions to focus on what matters most at this stage in the application process, such as community input and planning for the targeted population
- Removed rating of “exceeds” and set clearer expectations for each characteristic to decrease subjectivity
- Continued emphasis on the capacity interview to make the final determination in ratings

State Board New Start Application Sections

Educational Program Design and Capacity

Operations Plan and Capacity

Budget and Finance

Addenda
(If applicable)

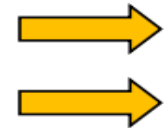
State Board Rubric Guidance

MNPS Review Team Members completed the following:

- Completed each subsection rating to describe overall strengths, noted outstanding questions or concerns, and provided an overall subsection rating

Educational Program Design and Capacity Scoring

Educational Program Design and Capacity Scoring			
School Overview			
1	School Overview	Not evaluated for quality.	<input type="checkbox"/> Included <input type="checkbox"/> Missing
School Mission and Model			
2	Mission and Features	Meets Standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mission statement is clear, concise, and measurable. Partially Meets Standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mission statement is clear and concise but not measurable. Does Not Meet Standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mission statement lacks clarity and is not measurable. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet
5	Structure of School Day	Meets Standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describes the daily and weekly schedule for each applicable grade band (e.g., K-5, 6-8, 9-12), including start/end times, instructional blocks, and breaks. Aligns the structure with the school's academic model and student needs (e.g., time for core instruction, enrichment, intervention, etc.). Partially Meets Standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes a general daily/weekly schedule but lacks detail or differentiation by grade band. Some connection to the academic program is present but not clearly articulated. May omit key components (e.g., lunch/recess, advisory, or intervention periods) or present a schedule that appears unbalanced. Does Not Meet Standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides minimal or no description of the school day/week schedule. No differentiation by grade band or offers an unrealistic or incomplete schedule. Fails to align the schedule with educational goals or student needs. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet
Strengths			
Questions/Concerns			
Subsection Rating		<input type="checkbox"/> Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet	



State Board Rubric Guidance

MNPS Review Team Members completed the following:

- Completed the Summary Rating table at the end of each Overall Section with strengths, weaknesses, and a rating.

Summary Rating

Educational Program Design and Capacity Summary			
Subsection Ratings	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet
School Overview			
School Mission and Model			
Anticipated Student Population			
Family and Community Engagement and Support			
School Culture and Discipline			
Curriculum and Instruction			
Special Populations			
Student Assessment and Evaluation			
Educational Program Capacity			
Educational Program Design and Capacity Section Rating	___ Meets	___ Partially Meets	___ Does Not Meet
Summary of Section Strengths:			
Summary of Section Weaknesses:			
Outstanding Questions:			



State Board Rubric Guidance

MNPS Review Team Members completed the following:

- Completed the Overall Application Summary & Recommendation
- Note: For any application to be deemed ready for approval, the summary rating for each of the Overall Section must “Meet the standard”.

Overall Application Summary & Recommendation

Overall Application Summary and Recommendation				
Major Section Ratings	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	N/A
Educational Program Design and Capacity				
Operations Design and Capacity				
Budget and Finance				
Addenda (as applicable)				
Overall Application Strengths:				
Overall Application Weaknesses:				
Outstanding Questions:				
Overall Application Recommendation				
___ Meets Standard		___ Partially Meets Standard		___ Does Not Meet Standard

MNPS New Start Application Review Process Objectives



In alignment with Tennessee Code Annotated §§ 49-13-107 and 49-13-108 MNPS incorporates the following:



Evaluate the new start application using the uniformed application scoring rubric published by the State Board of Education



Incorporate the full body of evidence which includes the written application, independent due diligence, and capacity interview responses for the rating determination



Require the review team to rate each section using the State Board of Education scoring rubric standards of **Meets**, **Partially Meets**, and **Does Not Meet Standard**



Reach a consensus among the review team regarding the rating of each section in the new start application

Review Team Members

Facilities/Planning

Resource Strategy

Research
Assessment and
Evaluation

Operations

External Reviewer

Teaching and
Learning

Nashville School of Excellence

Grades	6-12
Enrollment	630
Location/Zone	South Nashville Nolensville Road Area

Evidence Findings

Nashville School of Excellence

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: School Mission and Model

Application Deficiency: The applicant lacks clear evidence of a need for a STEM focused education replication in the targeted area, as STEM programming is already available in current MNPS traditional and charter schools.

Rubric Section: Family and Community Engagement and Support

Application Deficiency: The application provides limited evidence to demonstrate that community voice shaped the school design, nor does it sufficiently document authentic engagement and enrollment interest.

Evidence Findings

Nashville School of Excellence

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Governance

Application Deficiency: The application does not reflect a commitment to meaningful parent voice in governance or mechanisms for supporting the parent board member. The applicant indicated in the capacity interview that the board does not meet locally, so parent participation will rely primarily on virtual participation or travel.

Rubric Section: Facilities

Application Deficiency: The applicant does not reflect a clear understanding of legal and practical requirements for facility needs, as the application includes significant discrepancies between the proposed space program and facilities budget.

Evidence Findings

Nashville School of Excellence

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Operating Budget

Application Deficiency: The budget template is complete but reflects misalignment with the application narrative such as conflicting statements regarding startup fundraising commitments and cash reserves.

Rubric Section: Operating Budget

Application Deficiency: Staffing projections are inconsistent with the projected enrollment and school model as the narrative descriptions, charts, and budget tables include misalignment in the number of core and related arts teachers funded in Year 1 and the timing of specialized instructional roles.

Evidence Findings

Nashville School of Excellence

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Addenda A and B	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Addendum A

Application Deficiency: State level performance data and authorizer evaluations of affiliated schools with the same proposed grade-span do not demonstrate compelling evidence of raising student achievement levels.

Rubric Section: Addendum B

Application Deficiency: The network budget does not make it clear how network level costs are allocated to the proposed charter school or reconcile revenue inconsistencies between the budget narrative and the operating budget to clearly demonstrate the funding to support the opening of a new school.

Nashville School of Excellence

Review Team Findings	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	N/A
Educational Program Design and Capacity		X		
Operations Plan and Capacity		X		
Budget and Finance		X		
Addendum A/B		X		
Overall Application Rating		X		

Board Vote

DRAFT

Empowerment Academy

Grades	K-5
Enrollment	50
Location/Zone	Nashville, TN

Evidence Findings

Empowerment Academy

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Does Not Meet Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: School Mission and Model

Application Deficiency: The proposed school model is not clear in that it lacks coherence and connection to the core educational program.

Rubric Section: Family and Community Engagement and Support

Application Deficiency: There is little documentation or high-quality evidence demonstrating meaningful community engagement or support as the parent letters are for support of an Empowerment Academy summer program, rather than the proposed charter school.

Evidence Findings

Empowerment Academy

CATEGORY

REVIEW TEAM RATING

Operations Plan and Capacity

Does Not Meet Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Governance

Application Deficiency: The organization chart is incomplete because it does not clearly depict reporting relationships, governance versus management distinctions, or how structures will evolve over time.

Rubric Section: Staffing

Application Deficiency: The applicant fails to provide a clear description of leadership and staffing structures in the application or in the capacity interview responses as there is conflicting information about the number of teachers overall and per grade level, coupled with concerns about feasibility of the overall plan.

Evidence Findings

Empowerment Academy

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Budget and Finance	Does Not Meet Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Operating Budget and Finance Capacity

Application Deficiency: The enrollment projections are questionable as they remain flat at 50 students through Year 5, creating sustainability concerns that are not justified in the budget narrative or during the capacity interview.

Rubric Section: Operating Budget and Finance Capacity

Application Deficiency: The budget assumptions, which include a substantial startup-year deficit with no programmed startup revenue, limited reliance on per-pupil funding, and no secured grants or fundraising commitments, are unsupported in the budget narrative or during the capacity interview.

Evidence Findings

Empowerment Academy

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Addenda B and D	Partially Meets Standard

Rubric Section: Addendum B Sponsors Proposing to Open a New School That Will Create a Network or as Part of an Existing Network/CMO

Application Evidence: While the applicant provides a general five-year growth plan, they do not provide a detailed strategic vision for operating schools in Tennessee since the capacity interview responses demonstrated limited understanding of how per-pupil funding would be captured and reflected in the network budget raising concerns about their understanding of fund flow between the school and network levels.

Rubric Section: Addendum D Sponsor Seeking Approval of Multiple School in This Application Cycle

Application Evidence: The applicant provides steps to build organizational capacity, but the plan lacks sufficient detail and does not articulate how capacity will be sustained over time.

Empowerment Academy

Review Team Findings	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	N/A
Educational Program Design and Capacity			X	
Operations Plan and Capacity			X	
Budget and Finance			X	
Addendum A/B		X		
Overall Application Rating			X	

Board Vote

DRAFT

The Gate School

Grades	6-8
Enrollment	360
Location/Zone	Nashville, TN- West Davidson County

Evidence Findings

The Gate School

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: School Mission and Model

Application Deficiency: The application lacks a thorough explanation for determining need as the evidence of existing seat capacity is limited, nor does it address surplus capacity in middle schools or the enrollment challenges at established charter schools in the target community.

Rubric Section: Anticipated Student Population

Application Deficiency: The application does not include a variety of outreach methods to reach diverse student populations within the targeted community, or address how their recruitment strategies will differ from existing charter schools in the targeted area who are not meeting enrollment targets.

Evidence Findings

The Gate School

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Staffing

Application Deficiency: The application draws a connection to the school model and instructional strategies but does not provide a clear connection of how the plan will be adapted to meet the specific needs of the anticipated student population as much of the plan is modeled after a local charter school and a local private school that serve different subgroup populations than the anticipated student population.

Rubric Section: Facilities

Application Deficiency: The applicant does not demonstrate a full understanding of the facility requirements for bringing a 12,000-square-foot facility into compliance within the stated tenant improvement budget, nor does it provide evidence of a specific site under serious consideration, which raises concerns about the applicant's ability to open the school as proposed.

Evidence Findings

The Gate School

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Operating Budget

Application Deficiency: While the application includes an operating budget and presents multiyear projections, there are areas of misalignment and limited clarity between the budget narrative, application text, and budget template, with key staffing and cost assumptions not consistently clear across documents.

Rubric Section: Operating Budget

Application Deficiency: The applicant does not clearly explain key assumptions behind revenue and expense projections to determine if the budget will remain viable if enrollment projections are not met.

Evidence Findings

The Gate School

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Addenda	N/A

DRAFT

The Gate School

Review Team Findings	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	N/A
Educational Program Design and Capacity		X		
Operations Plan and Capacity		X		
Budget and Finance		X		
Addendum A/B				X
Overall Application Rating		X		

Board Vote

DRAFT

Music City Academy

Grades	9-12
Enrollment	480
Location/Zone	Davidson County- Districts 5, 8, and 9

Evidence Findings

Music City Academy

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: School: School Mission and Model

Application Deficiency: The mission statement is not clear in demonstrating how the athletic and programmatic vision will adequately address how the school will adhere to the three primary objectives that member schools of the TSSAA should achieve through the established bylaws.

Rubric Section: Curriculum and Instruction

Application Deficiency: The applicant reflects a commitment to college and career readiness but lacks a fully developed plan since these offerings are not clearly reflected in the schedule or fully explained in terms of student access and implementation.

Evidence Findings

Music City Academy

CATEGORY

REVIEW TEAM RATING

Operations Plan and Capacity

Partially Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Facilities

Application Deficiency: There is minimal alignment with the instructional model as the plan does not include Career and Technical Education requirements or the facilities needed for the proposed athletic-centered model.

Rubric Section: Health and Safety

Application Deficiency: The applicant acknowledges a plan for medical services, but the plan relies on contracted medical services and does not indicate a nurse until year 3, which does not align with the anticipated health needs of student athletes.

Evidence Findings

Music City Academy

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Budget and Finance	Meets Standard

Examples of evidence noted by the review team:

Rubric Section: Operating Budget

Application Evidence: The applicant's budget and budget narrative for the enrollment plan and scaling from Year 1 to Year 5 are reasonable, and the application includes a complete multi-year operating budget aligned to projected enrollment, staffing, and facilities assumptions.

Rubric Section: Operating Budget

Application Evidence: The applicant articulates a sound process for board oversight the board, including how data will inform decisions and ongoing evaluation of financial health.

Evidence Findings

Music City Academy

CATEGORY	REVIEW TEAM RATING
Addenda	N/A

DRAFT

Music City Academy

Review Team Findings	Meets	Partially Meets	Does Not Meet	N/A
Educational Program Design and Capacity		X		
Operations Plan and Capacity		X		
Budget and Finance	X			
Addendum A/B				X
Overall Application Rating		X		

Board Vote

DRAFT

New Start Charter Application Review Team Findings Nashville School of Excellence

Proposed Model: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)	
Grades	6 th -12 th
Enrollment	630
Location/Zone	South Nashville Nolensville Road area

Submitted April 23, 2026



METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

Section 1: New Start Application Overview

ABOUT THE STATE LAW

In Tennessee, charter schools are public schools and can be established in one of the following ways:

- Creating a new public charter school or opportunity public charter school
- Converting a traditional public school to a charter school

Tennessee law limits who may sponsor a charter school and prescribes the type of entity may operate a charter school. Only entities that are exempt from federal taxation under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code may operate a public charter school in Tennessee. Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-106, a charter will not be granted to a for-profit corporation, a nonpublic school, as defined in T.C.A. § 49-6-3001, or other private, religious, or church school. Cyber-based public charter schools are not allowed.

Sponsors must submit all application materials – the application narrative, required attachments, and applicable addenda – to the authorizer on or before 11:59 p.m. CT on February 1 of the year preceding the year in which the proposed public charter school plans to begin operation. If February 1 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the application is due on the next business day.

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THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

To ensure our review team consisted of cross departmental experts, MNPS appointed a core team specifically trained to assess the quality and sustainability of a proposed school. Individuals with specific expertise in Business and Finance, Curriculum, Facilities, Data Quality, and Operations evaluate each application to provide the needed expertise in those areas. Finally, the review team includes an external consultant who has experience and expertise in specialized areas.

A team of seven (7) people reviewed the new start applications and produced the evidence findings. The review committee members included:

- Deputy Chief of Schools
- Executive Director of Maintenance and Construction
- Director of Boundary and Planning
- Executive Officer of Operations
- Data Coach Research and Assessment
- Resource Strategy Coordinator
- External Reviewer

THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Initial Application Submission

During the initial application review, the authorizer's review team will evaluate each application using the State Board's required scoring rubric and will conduct a capacity interview with the sponsor to elicit evidence-based explanations that allow the sponsor to determine clear evidence of capacity to execute the charter school plan successfully. The capacity interview will be scheduled by the authorizer in advance of the authorizer's initial vote on the application.

Initial Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(2), authorizers must rule by resolution, at a regular or specially called meeting, to approve or deny a public charter school application no later than 90 calendar days after receipt of the initial completed application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny a public charter school application within 90 days, the public charter school application will be deemed approved.

Amended Application Submission

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an initial charter school application is denied, the charter school sponsor will have 30 calendar days from receipt of the grounds for denial to submit an amended application using this same application form to correct the deficiencies.

Amended Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an amended application is submitted, the authorizer has 60 days from receipt of an amended application to approve or deny the amended application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny the amended application within 60 days, then the amended application will be deemed approved.

The analysis of the new start application is based on four categories:

- Educational Plan Design and Capacity
- Operations Plan and Capacity
- Budget and Finance
- Applicable Addenda

This report includes a summary of evidence justifying the review team's scores and the applicant's responses to the capacity interview.

Section 2: Waiver Request(s)

The application includes a request for flexibility related to administrative staffing, specifically seeking a waiver that would allow unlicensed deans or assistant principals to conduct TEAM evaluations for licensed teachers.

Section 3: Summary Ratings for Nashville School of Excellence

SUMMARY RATINGS

There are three ratings (Meets, Partially Meets, or Does Not Meet). The committee’s evidence findings are outlined on the following pages.

THE MNPS REVIEW COMMITTEE’S RATINGS Nashville School of Excellence	
CATEGORY	RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meet Standard
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard
Applicable Addenda	Partially Meets Standard
Overall Rating	Partially Meets Standard

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state’s rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Educational Program Design and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. School Overview
2. School Mission and Model
3. Anticipated Student Population
4. Family and Community Engagement and Support
5. School Culture and Discipline
6. Curriculum and Instruction
7. Special Populations
8. Student Assessment and Evaluation
9. Educational Program Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Educational Program Design and Capacity Partially Meets Standard.

School Overview: Nashville School of Excellence (NSE) proposes a charter school serving students in grades 6–12 in the Nolensville Road area, with a mission to support student success in college and careers through a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) focused curriculum with an emphasis on inclusive learning environment, individualized academic, social and emotional supports, and engagement with families and community partners. The applicant states their model will include an enriched curriculum, technology integration, multiple forms of assessment, instructional and student support systems, and opportunities for parental involvement. NSE will operate as part of the Read Foundation network, which has operated schools in western Tennessee since 2010.

School Mission and Model: NSE is a proposed charter school that will be part of a network operated by the Read Foundation, which currently operates four schools in Memphis. The applicant states their mission is “to empower each student to succeed in college and career by mastering a rigorous science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curriculum; experiencing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment; receiving individual academic, social, and emotional support; and working alongside families and community partners.” While the proposal identifies a focus on STEM education, it does not clearly demonstrate a need for a STEM-focused replication in the targeted community of Nolensville Road in the south Nashville area, where similar programming is already available in traditional and other charter schools. While the mission is clear and concise, it is not measurable. The proposed mission-specific goals are broadly written, with limited alignment to the mission and all state accountability indicators for student performance to clearly understand how school effectiveness and organizational outcomes are measured and evaluated.

Additionally, insufficient detail is provided about how the measurable outcomes were determined to understand if they are realistic and to support clear accountability. The needs assessment presents limitations, including the use of outdated data, the exclusion of relevant district- and state-approved charter schools, and a lack of clarity regarding geographic boundaries. Data presented in the application indicates available seat capacity in the target area, which does not align with statements asserting the need for a new charter school for additional capacity. Population trends are cited; however, the application does not establish that those trends will translate into increased student enrollment. In addition, the proposed academic schedule lacks detail and does not differentiate by grade band. The structure of instructional time, particularly the balance between Tier 1 instruction and intervention, omits key components in the application and in the applicant’s response during the capacity interview.

Anticipated Student Population: The applicant proposes a 6th–12th grade structure with 630 students at capacity. The anticipated demographics for the proposed charter school are 34% economically disadvantaged, 10% students with disabilities, and 25% English Learners. While the application describes the anticipated student population, the reported

methodologies for enrollment and demographic projections are not clear and are not based on relevant data. While the applicant indicated they analyzed the academic and non-academic needs of schools that serve the same or similar grade levels, the complete analysis is not provided. The student recruitment plan includes strategies for pre-opening and ongoing enrollment that include a variety of outreach methods. The applicant states they will backfill seats and provides a general overview of when and how it will occur but provides only a limited rationale about how the policy aligns with the school's mission, academic model, and operational model.

Family and Community Engagement and Support: While outreach efforts and partner support are described, the application does not provide enough high-quality evidence to demonstrate that family and community voice shapes the school design, nor does it sufficiently document authentic engagement and enrollment interest from families with students who are eligible to enroll. There is a detailed plan for ongoing engagement with parents and community members, which includes strategies such as parent advisory groups, volunteer opportunities, and community partnerships.

School Culture and Discipline: Across school culture and culture-building, the applicant provides general details regarding implementation plans for students, teachers, administrators, and parents/families and demonstrates an understanding of how school culture can establish a positive academic environment. Strategies and practices are named and described, such as focus on college readiness, events to support positive environment, family engagement, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices. However, these practices and strategies are available in MNPS traditional schools and do not demonstrate how they will be differentiated to effectively address their proposed school's mission, model, and student outcomes. A basic plan for integrating students who enroll mid-year is provided through peer mentors and staffing positions.

The attendance plan demonstrates an understanding of the importance of regular attendance and describes tiered support, however; the plan to collaborate with families and external partners for prevention, intervention, and progress monitoring is vague. The student discipline approach includes a general reference to align with the mission, but does not make a clear connection between the school's discipline philosophy and the values and educational goals.

Curriculum and Instruction: While the application articulates a stated focus on STEM and Career and Technical Education (CTE), it does not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate how this focus translates into a structured, differentiated, and compliant educational program that meets the needs of all learners and aligns to stated outcomes. The details provided in the application and capacity interview raise concerns regarding compliance with piloting instructional materials. As previously noted, most existing schools in the proposed area already offer STEM instruction, and the applicant does not explain how the proposed model meaningfully differentiates itself in curriculum and instruction. The intervention model appears to rely heavily on computer-based tools for differentiation without articulating broader

instructional strategies, or an evidence-based rationale aligned to student needs. While opportunities such as industry credentials and CTE programs are referenced, CCR criteria are not established as a unifying framework, and credentialing pathways are not clearly defined by tier or grade level. It is unclear whether specific CTE pathways are intentionally aligned with Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSO) opportunities or how ongoing student participation and attainment are tracked.

Special Populations: The applicant describes an intent to serve students with disabilities, English Learners (ELs), and gifted students. Detailed information is provided regarding staffing, identification procedures, a continuum of services model, and progress monitoring structures to support students with disabilities. The method for identifying EL students, plans for ensuring EL students' access to the full general education curriculum, and exit and post-exit monitoring processes are also described; however, based on anticipated enrollment projections, the proposed number of EL staff in the first year does not align with expected service ratios and does not include information on how staffing levels will scale if enrollment exceeds projections for the targeted geographic area. Key roles to support service delivery and intervention are not funded in year one. Additionally, the applicant does not explain how small-group instruction for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions is delivered consistently and effectively within the proposed staffing structures. Staffing plans also indicate that a single staff member may be responsible for both special education and gifted instruction. While this approach promotes staffing efficiency, it does not ensure that service delivery, scheduling, and instructional quality are adequately addressed across both populations, particularly given the distinct certification requirements and instructional needs associated with each group.

Student Assessment and Evaluation: The application describes the use of universal screeners, multiple points of assessment (MPA), and structural supports such as double blocks in English Language Arts and mathematics as part of the school's approach to intervention. These elements indicate an intent to monitor student performance and provide additional instructional support. However, the application lacks sufficient clarity and specificity as the timing and frequency of assessments are not consistently defined, nor is it clear how they align with decision-making cycles. The use of data focuses on student grouping and reteaching standards without clearly explaining how data is used to evaluate the quality of core instruction.

Educational Program Capacity: Overall, the application identifies key leadership roles and governance structures but provides limited specificity regarding local leadership presence. The application identifies a proposed principal; however, the principal does not have prior experience leading or working within Tennessee charter schools. Much of the planning and operational work is based in Memphis, with local school-based staff in Nashville not scheduled to be hired until January 2027, as indicated in the startup plan on page 123 of the application. This timing limits the applicant's ability to demonstrate on-the-ground operational readiness and leadership capacity during the startup and initial implementation period. In the application and during the capacity interview, the applicant does not clearly articulate how Davidson

County is represented on the governing board or how local community members participate fully in board meetings and governance activities.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Operations Plan and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. Governance
2. Staffing
3. Facilities
4. Transportation
5. Health and Safety
6. Insurance
7. Food Service
8. Start-up Plan
9. Operations Capacity
10. Additional Operations

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Operations Plan and Capacity section Partially Meets Standard.

Governance: The applicant includes powers and duties of the board, including core legal and fiduciary responsibilities such as overseeing academic performance and compliance, setting school policy, approving contracts and legal agreements, hiring and managing the school leader, and ensuring compliance with charter terms and authorizer requirements. While the applicant describes board responsibilities, important details are missing regarding how the board functions in practice. The applicant acknowledges the legal requirement for recruitment of a parent board member and also includes plans to add an advisory school counsel. However, it is unclear in the application or in the capacity interview response how a Nashville parent representative meaningfully participates in a board that does not meet locally, as the applicant relies primarily on virtual participation or travel without describing structures to ensure effective parent engagement. Organization charts are provided to explain the relationship among the school's governing board, leadership, and any related bodies between the school's first year to full operation. Within the documentation, the board to school leader relationship is insufficiently defined as the documentation suggests the board primarily works with the Executive Director rather than the principal, creating ambiguity around oversight of day-to-day school leadership. Additionally, meeting schedules and committee structures appear variable and lack clarity. Finally, the required governance

documents are incomplete since the Articles of Incorporation and related attachments submitted apply to the Read Foundation and are not executed by the applicant's board.

Staffing: The staffing model includes leadership and reporting structures, differentiated academic and operational roles, and a rationale for these decisions. While the applicant describes a professional development plan totaling 121 hours annually, the plan lacks sufficient detail regarding structure, frequency, and duration, and does not clearly connect professional development, particularly related to the school's STEM focus, to the needs of the anticipated student population. The teacher recruitment and retention plan is generally described but reflects a typical approach rather than a multifaceted strategy to attract and retain high-performing teachers. Although details about benefits are provided, they are addressed only briefly and do not differentiate the school from other charter schools or MNPS.

Facilities: The application does not sufficiently meet facility planning standards. While a potential site is identified, the facilities plan remains largely conceptual and is not well aligned to the school's instructional model, including the absence of clearly defined STEM-specific spaces. The applicant notes the possibility of reducing square footage or amenities if budget constraints arise, raising concerns about alignment with projected enrollment needs and program requirements. Significant discrepancies exist between the proposed space program and facilities budget, including underestimation of total square footage, common space needs, and renovation costs. Conservative industry estimates suggest that the proposed renovation budget falls well short of the costs likely required to convert the identified office building into an educational facility that meets applicable codes and program needs.

Transportation: The applicant indicates that transportation services are contracted out and that the director of culture and discipline oversees transportation at the network level, while the dean of students (or principal in year one) oversees transportation at the school level. Limited information is provided regarding geography, enrollment area, and target student populations. The application references legal requirements to provide transportation if required by a student's IEP and confirms that transportation is provided at no cost for those students. Planned transportation includes accommodations for accessibility issues, as needed.

Health and Safety: The applicant demonstrates a general commitment to maintaining a safe and supportive school environment and identifies leadership roles at a high level. There are plans to provide nursing services through a qualified provider for at least four hours a day. The dean of students will be responsible for overseeing the safety of the school with support from the director of culture and discipline. T

The application does not sufficiently detail how building security, inspections, system testing, or ongoing compliance are managed. The school safety plan lacks a detailed, step-by-step process and realistic timeline for development and implementation prior to opening. Planning related to fire and life safety systems, emergency preparedness, and coordination with local authorities is minimal. While not required, because a specific facility has not been secured, the application does not demonstrate how safety procedures can be implemented in practice. Additionally, while the applicant proposes full-time armed security, it does not provide a clear needs-based rationale for this approach compared to alternatives such as School Resource Officers or enhanced facility safety measures.

Insurance: The application includes Attachment 8, which lists the types and corresponding amounts of insurance coverage the proposed school secures and states that coverage is provided upon approval of the charter application. This includes provisions for the insurer to notify the Department of any cancellation of insurance, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-107(b)(19). The types of insurance meet statutory requirements.

Food Service: The application provides a food service delivery model that uses contracted services.

Start-up Plan: While the applicant provides a timeline with task categories and target completion dates, the timeline lacks sufficient detail regarding start dates, task sequencing, ownership, and dependencies. Critical early milestones, such as securing a facility, are not clearly prioritized, limiting assurance of readiness to open on time. The applicant offers contingency plans for not meeting enrollment targets, not meeting fundraising goals, hiring challenges, and facility delays. While the contingency plans are addressed, they largely restate initial plans rather than offering distinct or actionable alternatives.

Operations Capacity: The applicant describes a team with relevant expertise across identified operational competencies. The indicators for assessing organizational health across all phases of operation are provided. A process for board oversight, including how data will inform decisions and ongoing evaluation of organizational health is articulated. There are intervention strategies tied to performance outcomes. While network-level supports and monitoring structures are identified, the majority of these functions are based in Memphis. With the exception of the recruiter and business manager, it is unclear how operational support needs for the Nashville school are effectively met given the geographic distance.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Budget and Finance in the following subsections:

1. Operating Budget
2. Budget and Finance Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the section Partially Meets Standard.

Operating Budget and Budget and Finance Capacity: The budget template required for the application is complete. The Read Foundation showed significant financial improvement in FY2024, with strong revenue growth, increased net position, and solid reserves. While the organization benefited from temporary ESSER funding and enrollment growth, leadership appropriately flagged future funding uncertainty. The single internal control issue is operational in nature and appears manageable, with corrective actions already planned according to their 2024 Audit. While the applicant describes reliance on the existing network's financial infrastructure and external consultants, the application does not sufficiently restate or adapt those policies and procedures for the Nashville school. Financial systems, purchasing protocols, idle funds procedures, and internal controls are described at a high level, with travel policies more clearly defined than other required areas. Several inconsistencies raise concerns regarding financial alignment and reliability. The application includes conflicting statements regarding startup fundraising commitments and cash reserves, as well as discrepancies between the budget narrative and the detailed budget template in Attachment 9. Staffing projections are not consistently aligned across narrative descriptions, charts, and budget tables, including mismatches in the number of core and related arts teachers funded in Year 1 and the timing of specialized instructional roles. Details are provided about the financial systems and processes for planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, as well as the responsibilities of staff members who will be responsible for management and oversight. The application identifies some contracted financial services but does not clearly explain how vendors are selected or how their qualifications address internal capacity gaps. Discussion of financial staff expertise is limited and plans to mitigate gaps through contracted services are underdeveloped. Board oversight of financial health is described in general terms, with limited detail regarding metrics, data use, or intervention strategies.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

APPLICABLE ADDENDA

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for the Applicable Addenda in the following subsections:

1. Addendum A- Supplemental Questions for Sponsors with Past or Present Relationships to Other Charter Schools
2. Addendum B- Supplemental Questions for Sponsors Proposing to Open a New School That Will Create a Network or as Part of an Existing Network/CMO

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the section Partially Meets Standard.

Addendum A- Available performance data from the applicant’s affiliated schools reflect uneven academic outcomes between the 2023-2024 and current 2024-2025 state accountability results, especially for schools with the same proposed grade band. While 2023-2024 growth for Memphis School of Excellence Cordova was Level 5 and Memphis School of Excellence was Level 4, current results show a sharp decline for Memphis School of Excellence Cordova (Level 1 2024-2025) and indicates persistent achievement gaps, particularly for Students with Disabilities (Level 2 2024-2025) and growth for students with highest needs (Level 2 2024-2025). There is limited evidence of current achievement results for Memphis School of Excellence (Level 2 2024-2025) and Memphis School of Excellence Cordova (Level 2.3 2024-2025). Current federal achievement accountability data is lower than state achievement accountability data, suggesting relatively stronger performance in science and social studies compared to English Language Arts and mathematics, as federal accountability measures only include ELA and math, whereas state measures include all four core subjects. Although the applicant references some improvement across affiliated schools, the application does not provide sufficient evidence of sustained high performance across all indicators, nor does it clearly identify the instructional or organizational practices driving improved outcomes. The 2024–25 Tennessee Department of Education data download report indicates an ACT composite score of 17.4 for Memphis School of Excellence, which is below state and Metro Nashville Public Schools averages. Additionally, claims related to college acceptance rates lack critical context, including graduating cohort size and the types of postsecondary institutions students attend. While the applicant highlights a high graduation rate at Memphis School of Excellence, it does not disclose that the cohort consisted of a small population of students. Further, authorizer evaluation data is either missing or incomplete, which limits confidence in external validation of school quality. LEA-reported data for the 2024–25 school year indicates that Memphis School of Excellence Cordova—one of the two network schools serving the same grades (6–12) as the proposed new-start charter—did not meet standards on the 2024–25 Model Performance Framework (MPF). The application also provides limited comparative analysis between existing schools and the proposed Nashville school, offering general statements without specific data on demographic differences or clearly articulated adjustments to the model. While the applicant acknowledges previous challenges, including instructional staffing vacancies that adversely affected student outcomes, particularly in mathematics, the application does not sufficiently explain root causes or present concrete strategies to prevent similar disruptions in the future.

Addendum B- The application does not clearly state how network level costs are allocated to the proposed charter school or reconcile revenue inconsistencies between the budget narrative and the operating budget when comparing the application pages 136 and 146, compared to Attachment 9, Operating Budget Template. Additionally, the roles and financial decision-making authority of the proposed charter school’s governing board versus the Read Foundation network are not sufficiently defined, nor are the responsibilities of third-party partners providing day-to-day accounting and long-term financial planning clearly described (Budget & Finance and Addendum B narrative sections). Finally, the application does not fully address network level financial risk management, including how potential the

proposed charter school's specific risks, such as under enrollment or facilities debt outlined in Attachment 10, Network Budget would be contained to avoid impact on other schools in the network.

OVERALL RATING

According to the state's rubric, once all sections have been evaluated, review members must assign an overall evaluation rating to the application based on the cumulative ratings of each section. For an application to be deemed ready for approval, the summary rating for each of the major sections must meet the standard. The review team concluded that the new start application Partially Meets Standard.

New Start Charter Application Review Team Findings The Empowerment Academy

Proposed Model: Agriculture and STEM (males only)

Grades	K-5
Enrollment	50
Location/Zone	Nashville, TN

Submitted April 23, 2026



METRO
NASHVILLE
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Section 1: New Start Application Overview

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Sponsors must submit all application materials – the application narrative, required attachments, and applicable addenda – to the authorizer on or before 11:59 p.m. CT on February 1 of the year preceding the year in which the proposed public charter school plans to begin operation. If February 1 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the application is due on the next business day.

Section 1: The Evaluation Process

THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

To ensure our review team consisted of cross departmental experts, MNPS appointed a core team specifically trained to assess the quality and sustainability of a proposed school. Individuals with specific expertise in Business and Finance, Curriculum, Facilities, Data Quality, and Operations evaluate each application to provide the needed expertise in those areas. Finally, the review team includes an external consultant who has experience and expertise in specialized areas.

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- Executive Officer of Operations
- Data Coach Research and Assessment
- Resource Strategy Coordinator
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THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Initial Application Submission

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Initial Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(2), authorizers must rule by resolution, at a regular or specially called meeting, to approve or deny a public charter school application no later than 90 calendar days after receipt of the initial completed application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny a public charter school application within 90 days, the public charter school application will be deemed approved.

Amended Application Submission

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an initial charter school application is denied, the charter school sponsor will have 30 calendar days from receipt of the grounds for denial to submit an amended application using this same application form to correct the deficiencies.

Amended Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an amended application is submitted, the authorizer has 60 days from receipt of an amended application to approve or deny the amended application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny the amended application within 60 days, then the amended application will be deemed approved.

The analysis of the new start application is based on four categories:

- Educational Plan Design and Capacity
- Operations Plan and Capacity
- Budget and Finance
- Applicable Addenda

This report includes a summary of evidence justifying the review team's scores and the applicant's responses to the capacity interview.

Section 2: Waiver Request(s)

The applicant did not submit any waiver requests.

Section 3: Summary Ratings for The Empowerment Academy

SUMMARY RATINGS

There are three ratings (Meets, Partially Meets, or Does Not Meet). The committee's evidence findings are outlined on the following pages.

THE MNPS REVIEW COMMITTEE'S RATINGS The Empowerment Academy	
CATEGORY	RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Does Not Meet Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Does Not Meet Standard
Budget and Finance	Does Not Meet Standard
Applicable Addenda	Partially Meets Standard
Overall Rating	Does Not Meet Standard

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Educational Program Design and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. School Overview
2. School Mission and Model
3. Anticipated Student Population
4. Family and Community Engagement and Support
5. School Culture and Discipline
6. Curriculum and Instruction
7. Special Populations
8. Student Assessment and Evaluation
9. Educational Program Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Educational Program Design and Capacity Does Not Meet Standard.

School Overview: The Empowerment Academy is a proposed charter school network with current applications in Davidson County, Hamilton County, and Shelby County. The applicant

has an Agriculture and STEM focus with a K-5 grade structure and a projected enrollment of 50 male students. The applicant states their design is to address early literacy gaps by focusing on reading proficiency by the end of third grade through small class, personalized instruction aligned to Tennessee academic standards for historically underserved male students.

School Mission and Model: The application describes a school model based on early literacy and an equity-driven, whole-child approach and includes a daily instructional schedule with designated blocks. However, the mission statement is described as a commitment “to developing the intellectual and moral aspects of each student to ensure they make significant contributions to better our society.” While information is provided about the mission statement, it is not measurable, and the application does not articulate specific, measurable academic goals or long-term performance targets. The proposed school model lacks strategic coherence; while the applicant references an Agriculture and STEM focus, it also cites an educator preparation program without clearly connecting it to the core educational program. Additionally, the application narrative and education program do not clearly indicate that the intended student population is male-only; this information is identified only through marketing materials and responses during the capacity interview.

Academic goals are articulated in broad terms and lack defined metrics, limiting the ability to monitor progress or evaluate outcomes. The application does not include a data-driven needs assessment to justify the proposed school. Although a daily schedule is included, it functions primarily as a general overview and does not clearly align instructional time to core academic priorities, particularly foundational literacy, nor does it differentiate instruction by grade band, daily or weekly structure, or student subgroup.

Anticipated Student Population: The application does not provide a description of the anticipated student population that can be evaluated as aligned to the proposed location. While Tables 1 and 2 are included and completed, the projections are largely unsupported by the narrative explanation, rely on small or declining enrollment across grade levels, and contain inconsistencies within the application, attachments, written materials, and capacity interview responses. The methodology used to determine student population, enrollment, and demographic projections is unclear, with repeated reliance on U.S. Census and Hamilton County data without an explanation of their relevance to Davidson County. The proposed school location is not clearly identified, which limits the ability to assess whether projected demographics reflect the surrounding community.

Academic and non-academic student needs are referenced but not explained in sufficient detail to understand how they were identified or how they informed population projections. The

narrative and some marketing materials highlight young males as a focus of the curriculum; however, this emphasis is not reflected in the demographic projections, subgroup data, or in any targeted recruitment strategies. No student recruitment plan is fully developed for either pre-opening or ongoing enrollment, and the application does not explain whether the school intends to backfill open seats or how such a policy would be implemented.

Family and Community Engagement and Support: The application presents an intent to engage families and community partners with practices centered on prevention, restorative approaches, and social-emotional learning. Examples of ongoing family engagement activities are mentioned in general terms; however, the evidence of actual community engagement to date is limited. Documentation primarily reflects one type of summer enrichment program offered twice, without information on attendance, participant demographics, feedback collected, or how these activities informed the school's design or recruitment strategy. No clear evidence is provided in the application or during the capacity interview showing how community input shaped the school's mission, academic model, or programmatic decisions. Supporting documentation demonstrating community interest or endorsement is for the Empowerment Academy summer program, rather than the proposed charter school. Table 3 and related attachments do not substantiate varied engagement with community stakeholders. Plans for future family and community engagement outline intentions and general strategies but lack specificity, measurable goals, timelines, or implementation detail, making it difficult to assess how engagement would be sustained or how two-way communication would occur after opening.

School Culture and Discipline: The school culture is described in general terms related to core values and community norms, discipline philosophy, restorative practices, staff training and family engagement, and safety and support. However, there are limited details on specific strategies, practices, or structures for establishing and reinforcing culture. There is little explanation of how culture would be intentionally launched from day one and how shared norms and expectations would be introduced across stakeholder groups. Attendance expectations are not addressed, with no measurable goals, tiered supports, or systems described to prevent or respond to chronic absenteeism. Similarly, the discipline approach is discussed at a high level but lacks clarity, coherence, and implementation detail, including how restorative practices would function in practice or how the approach aligns with state law, the school's mission, or the needs of the anticipated student population.

Curriculum and Instruction: The applicant presents a basic summary of the educational program which includes the day-to-day student experience, class size, core instructional strategies, differentiation and support within the core classroom, curriculum selection and

rationale, foundational literacy implementation, and a daily schedule. However, the overall plan lacks several required components. The instructional model is described in general or conceptual terms without sufficient detail on how strategies would function in daily practice or meet the needs of the anticipated student population. Key elements of the learning environment are omitted or described inconsistently, making it difficult to understand how the program would operate. Class size, teacher-to-student ratios, staffing levels, and enrollment figures are contradictory across sections of the application and interview responses, raising feasibility and compliance concerns. Curriculum descriptions are limited, and while the application states an intent to implement CKLA, it does not provide an evidence-based rationale or sufficient detail on how curriculum materials would be used effectively with the proposed student population. The foundational literacy plan is not clearly described in how it will implement aligned to the Tennessee Foundational Literacy Skills Plan. Additionally, required instructional areas, including art, music, and physical education, are not included in the proposed schedule, which also raises concerns regarding compliance issues.

Special Populations: The applicant states a commitment to equitably serve all students who fall within the federally and state-defined term of special populations. A general plan for differentiation for students with disabilities, English Learners, economically disadvantaged students, and boys of color as a targeted subgroup is provided. However, the application does not present a clear plan to staff or serve special populations, including students with disabilities, English Learners, or gifted students. There is no defined strategy for hiring or contracting appropriately licensed and endorsed staff, and staffing responsibilities for special population services are not clearly outlined or aligned to anticipated student needs. Descriptions of special education and EL services are limited to high-level, compliance-focused statements without sufficient detail on implementation, instructional delivery, or roles and responsibilities. The process for identifying students with disabilities and ELs is underdeveloped, lacks specificity, and is not aligned with current state guidelines. Similarly, there is no clear description of a continuum of services or progress monitoring for students with mild, moderate, or severe disabilities.

Student Assessment and Evaluation: The application identifies SAT10 as an assessment but does not specify administration frequency, including additional formative or summative assessments, or address state-mandated testing. Descriptions of data use are general and do not explain how data will be systematically analyzed or used to inform instruction or shared with all required stakeholders. The application also lacks description of a multi-tiered intervention system or how assessment data would trigger supports for underperforming students.

Educational Program Capacity: While Table 4 is complete and resumes are provided, clear evidence of leadership capacity, staffing coherence, and governance readiness is not provided. The proposed school leader is not clearly identified, and the individual presumed to fill the head of school role has limited school-based leadership experience and no demonstrated track record in charter school leadership. The school-based team's roles and responsibilities are unclear, with limited evidence of instructional leadership, performance management expertise, or central office capacity needed to operate and grow a charter school. Capacity interview responses indicate those roles may also include duties that include teaching classes which raises concerns that a leadership position with multiple responsibilities will stretch capacity and limit effectiveness in both areas. No analysis of leadership or team gaps is provided, and clear plans to address deficiencies in charter, financial, or instructional expertise are not provided. Governance elements are described, but the board's composition and structure are not well defined. The application does not clearly identify board member roles, provides insufficient detail on collective qualifications across required oversight areas, and lacks a transparent process or criteria for board selection and ongoing recruitment.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Does Not Meet Standard.

OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Operations Plan and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. Governance
2. Staffing
3. Facilities
4. Transportation
5. Health and Safety
6. Insurance
7. Food Service
8. Start-up Plan
9. Operations Capacity
10. Additional Operations

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Operations Plan and Capacity section Does Not Meet Standard.

Governance: The application provides a general description of board roles and responsibilities, indicating an understanding of core governance functions; however, these descriptions lack detail. A legal requirement to add a parent representative is acknowledged, but the recruitment, selection, timeline, and support mechanisms for the parent representative are not clearly defined. The organization chart is included but does not clearly depict reporting relationships, governance versus management distinctions, or how structures will evolve over time. Required board policies are not clearly referenced or described in the narrative. Additionally, while documentation shows submission of a nonprofit status application, confirmation of approval is not provided.

Staffing: The application provides a listing of proposed positions and FTE counts with general role descriptions, but it does not offer clear, well-defined leadership and staffing structures with logical reporting lines or meaningful differentiation between academic and operational roles. Conflicting information about the number of teachers overall and per grade level, coupled with concerns about feasibility (e.g., 19.5 FTEs for approximately 50 students), limits confidence in the staffing model and its rationale. The section does not describe a teacher recruitment or retention plan. There is no discussion in the application of pipeline strategies, outreach, incentives, benefits, or salary ranges, nor any evidence that compensation would be competitive with local schools. Similarly, professional development is not addressed in this section. While PD topics are referenced elsewhere in the application, there is no detailed plan of the professional development or how it aligns to the school model or instructional strategies.

Facilities: The application identifies general facility criteria aligned to the proposed instructional model, including the need for flexible learning spaces, small-group instruction, SEL supports, and specialized areas such as STEM labs and outdoor learning. The applicant describes early-stage steps toward securing a facility, including preliminary site visits and engagement with real estate contacts, indicating some progress in the facility search. However, no specific property has been identified as under serious consideration, and final site selection is deferred until after charter approval, which does not fully demonstrate readiness. While the application references compliance with legal and practical requirements, it does not adequately demonstrate how the proposed facility needs would be delivered in a specific building or operated within the stated facilities budget. Key details such as total square footage, program-specific space requirements, and feasibility of delivering required instructional spaces are missing. Budget assumptions for maintenance and facilities operations do not align with the lease terms or typical costs, raising concerns about operational feasibility. Additionally, the application does not clearly identify a firm or external partner with local real estate expertise leading the facility search.

Transportation: The application demonstrates transportation planning and indicates that the final approach will depend on the eventual school site. Each campus in the network will have a tiered approach of family-provided transportation, targeted transportation support for families, contracted transportation services, and limited school-directed transportation. Multiple transportation options are listed without identifying a definitive provider model, operational approach, or clear rationale for which options would be implemented. The plan does not include estimates for the number of buses required, routing considerations, daily operations, or projected costs, and it is unclear whether transportation expenses are accounted for in the budget. The application references the legal requirement to provide transportation for students whose IEPs require it and states an intent to comply.

Health and Safety: While the application references legal requirements related to fire safety, building codes, and general safety features, it does not provide a sufficient plan to meet student medical or safety needs. There is no plan to hire or contract for nursing services, and student medical needs are not meaningfully addressed. Although the application notes that the school director oversees operations broadly, it does not clearly identify a specific individual or position responsible for school safety and compliance, and concerns were raised about whether the role as described could realistically manage safety responsibilities given competing duties. The application indicates an intent to develop a school safety and emergency operations plan but does not outline critical steps in that process. No step-by-step process or timeline for developing and finalizing the safety plan prior to school opening is provided. Additionally, while not required, no facility has been identified, so it cannot be determined how site-specific safety considerations would be addressed.

Insurance: The application includes a narrative summary describing the types of insurance coverage the school intends to secure, and Attachment 8 contains insurance-related documents. However, the materials do not clearly demonstrate that all required coverage is included. Attachment 8 appears to consist of insurance proposals rather than a consolidated, comprehensive listing of policies, and it cannot be verified whether all legally required coverages are quoted. The submission does not include a broker letter confirming coverage upon charter approval.

Food Service: The application provides a food service delivery plan through a contracted meal delivery model for breakfast and lunch and state the intention to comply with federal and state nutrition guidelines.

Start-up Plan: The application includes an implementation timeline that addresses start-up categories such as recruitment, staffing, and facilities; however, the timeline lacks specific

detail. Ownership of key tasks is not clearly identified, which limits confidence in execution readiness. Contingency planning demonstrates general awareness of potential challenges, but lacks clear ownership of key tasks and overall preparation to open on time.

Operations Capacity: The descriptions of the operational team are general, particularly at the site level, where key individuals have not yet been identified. As a result, it is difficult to assess whether the team has the experience needed to carry out required operational functions. Plans for monitoring organizational health are also described in broad terms through monthly dashboards, quarterly analyses, board committee reviews, and annual performance reviews tied to organizational health metrics. The plans provided have limited specificity regarding timelines, responsible parties, or how monitoring activities would be carried out in practice.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Does Not Meet Standard.

FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Budget and Finance in the following subsections:

1. Operating Budget
2. Budget and Finance Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the section Does Not Meet Standard.

Operating Budget and Budget and Finance Capacity: The feedback identifies significant weaknesses and inconsistencies across the budget, financial systems, and financial oversight components. While the application describes governance and oversight structures and references monthly budget-to-actual reporting, the underlying financial assumptions and projections raise substantial concerns. Enrollment projections appear to remain flat at 50 students through Year 5, creating sustainability concerns that are not clearly explained or justified. The budget reflects a substantial startup-year deficit with no programmed startup revenue, limited reliance on per-pupil funding, and no secured grants or fundraising commitments. During the capacity interview, responses reflected a misunderstanding of Year 0 funding, charter financial responsibilities, and how deficits would be addressed. The budget

omits or underfunds several major cost categories, including employer benefit contributions, transportation, textbooks, and sufficient technology to support the proposed instructional model. Salaries for school-based staff appear below market; staffing levels are limited, and overall funding for staffing is insufficient to support operations. Financial systems, procedures, and policies are described in general terms, with limited detail on internal controls, vendor procurement, contracted services, or team expertise. Monitoring of financial health and board intervention strategies are referenced at a high level but do not demonstrate a clear, phase-specific approach or a strong understanding of financial oversight.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Does Not Meet Standard.

APPLICABLE ADDENDA

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for the Applicable Addenda in the following subsections:

1. Addendum B-Supplemental Questions for Sponsors Proposing to Open a New School That Will Create a Network or as Part of an Existing Network/CMO
2. Addendum D-Supplemental Questions for Sponsors Seeking Approval of Multiple Schools in this Application Cycle

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the section Partially Meets Standard.

Addendum B- The applicant presents a high-level vision and a general five-year growth plan for operating schools in Tennessee, including proposed opening timelines, the number and type of schools, pending applications, targeted markets, and projected enrollments; however, the plan lacks sufficient specificity. The network leadership team is identified with defined roles and responsibilities. The network budget (Attachment 10) provides a high level, multi-site financial model outlining the operation of multiple schools through a shared central office structure. It includes projected enrollment by site, per-pupil revenue assumptions, centralized staffing and operating costs, and the allocation of those costs across schools based on enrollment. Overall, the budget reflects positive net positions for each school and the network as a whole. However, during the capacity interview, the network demonstrated limited understanding of how per-pupil funding would be captured and reflected within the network

budget, raising concerns about their understanding of fund flow between the school and network levels.

The applicant identifies shared services to include finance, instructional framework, compliance, and family engagement and recruitment; however, the discussion of the associated costs and allocation methodology is incomplete. General information is provided regarding decision-making authority and lines of accountability among the board, school leadership, and staff, as well as limited information on how school-level performance is reported to the board.

Addendum D- The table for additional network schools is complete and lists all new start schools the governing body is applying for in the current cycle. The applicant provides a general timeline identifying key deliverables but does not include detailed breakdown or distribution of key tasks. The application does not clearly address how capacity will be sustained over time as the organization grows.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

Evidence Findings

OVERALL RATING

According to the state's rubric, once all sections have been evaluated, review members must assign an overall evaluation rating to the application based on the cumulative ratings of each section. For an application to be deemed ready for approval, the summary rating for each of the major sections must meet the standard. The review team concluded that the new start application Does Not Meet Standard.

New Start Charter Application Review Team Findings The Gate School

Proposed Model: Harkness Method and AI Enhanced Learning

Grades	6 th – 8 th
Enrollment	360
Location/Zone	Nashville, TN- West Davidson County

Submitted April 23, 2026



METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

Section 1: New Start Application Overview

ABOUT THE STATE LAW

In Tennessee, charter schools are public schools and can be established in one of the following ways:

- Creating a new public charter school or opportunity public charter school
- Converting a traditional public school to a charter school

Tennessee law limits who may sponsor a charter school and prescribes the type of entity may operate a charter school. Only entities that are exempt from federal taxation under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code may operate a public charter school in Tennessee. Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-106, a charter will not be granted to a for-profit corporation, a nonpublic school, as defined in T.C.A. § 49-6-3001, or other private, religious, or church school. Cyber-based public charter schools are not allowed.

Sponsors must submit all application materials – the application narrative, required attachments, and applicable addenda – to the authorizer on or before 11:59 p.m. CT on February 1 of the year preceding the year in which the proposed public charter school plans to begin operation. If February 1 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the application is due on the next business day.

Section 2: The Evaluation Process

THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

To ensure our review team consisted of cross departmental experts, MNPS appointed a core team specifically trained to assess the quality and sustainability of a proposed school. Individuals with specific expertise in Business and Finance, Curriculum, Facilities, Data Quality, and Operations evaluate each application to provide the needed expertise in those areas. Finally, the review team includes an external consultant who has experience and expertise in specialized areas.

A team of seven (7) people reviewed the new start applications and produced the evidence findings. The review committee members included:

- Deputy Chief of Schools
- Executive Director of Maintenance and Construction
- Director of Boundary and Planning
- Executive Officer of Operations
- Data Coach Research and Assessment
- Resource Strategy Coordinator
- External Reviewer

THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Initial Application Submission

During the initial application review, the authorizer's review team will evaluate each application using the State Board's required scoring rubric and will conduct a capacity interview with the sponsor to elicit evidence-based explanations that allow the sponsor to determine clear evidence of capacity to execute the charter school plan successfully. The capacity interview will be scheduled by the authorizer in advance of the authorizer's initial vote on the application.

Initial Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(2), authorizers must rule by resolution, at a regular or specially called meeting, to approve or deny a public charter school application no later than 90 calendar days after receipt of the initial completed application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny a public charter school application within 90 days, the public charter school application will be deemed approved.

Amended Application Submission

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an initial charter school application is denied, the charter school sponsor will have 30 calendar days from receipt of the grounds for denial to submit an amended application using this same application form to correct the deficiencies.

Amended Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an amended application is submitted, the authorizer has 60 days from receipt of an amended application to approve or deny the amended application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny the amended application within 60 days, then the amended application will be deemed approved.

The analysis of the new start application is based on four categories:

- Educational Plan Design and Capacity
- Operations Plan and Capacity
- Budget and Finance
- Applicable Addenda

This report includes a summary of evidence justifying the review team's scores and the applicant's responses to the capacity interview.

Section 2: Waiver Request(s)

This application includes a proposed waiver request for TCA 49-6-2206 for the use of unapproved textbooks and instructional materials to support the school's ability to deliver instruction fully aligned to their model.

Section 3: Summary Ratings for The Gate School

SUMMARY RATINGS

There are three ratings (Meets, Partially Meets, or Does Not Meet). The committee’s evidence findings are outlined on the following pages.

THE MNPS REVIEW COMMITTEE’S RATINGS The Gate School	
CATEGORY	RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Budget and Finance	Partially Meets Standard
Applicable Addenda	N/A
Overall Rating	Partially Meets Standard

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state’s rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Educational Program Design and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. School Overview
2. School Mission and Model
3. Anticipated Student Population
4. Family and Community Engagement and Support
5. School Culture and Discipline
6. Curriculum and Instruction
7. Special Populations
8. Student Assessment and Evaluation
9. Educational Program Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Educational Program Design and Capacity Partially Meets Standard.

School Overview: The Gate School’s describes their vision as centering on the belief in middle school students’ potential and the role of excellent teaching in preparing them for success in high school and beyond. The applicant states the school design is based on three core features: a teaching focused staffing model and career pathways for educators; integration of artificial intelligence to learning and instruction and to personalize feedback; and an emphasis on communication through daily, discussion-based learning centered around the Harkness method.

School Mission and Model: The application states the mission is to “cultivate student independence, effective communication, and academic excellence in the middle grades through outstanding teaching and purposeful use of technology, preparing every student for success in high school and beyond.” The mission is clear and concise but not clearly measurable. The application includes mission-specific goals aligned to the mission and describes systems for monitoring progress and communicating outcomes to stakeholders, but the goals do not fully align to all the state accountability indicators for student performance to clearly understand how school effectiveness and organizational outcomes are measured and evaluated. The application describes the need for the proposed school primarily around the quality of educational options rather than an analysis of overall school availability and capacity in the target community and does not address the attrition trends of families who move out Davidson County for more affordable housing options. Much of the quality seat data is subjective as it is internally developed by the applicant and contains inaccuracies in the identification of magnet schools. In addition, the data used to support the needs assessment contains inconsistencies, including references to datasets that do not align with the stated school years which does not fully support community demand based on availability, capacity, and seat quality. Discussion of existing seat capacity is limited, and the application does not address surplus capacity at the middle school level as the district has capacity in the middle school tier in the targeted location of West Davidson County. Additionally, some of the existing charter schools in the area experience enrollment challenges, and two are adding middle school grade levels in the near future.

The application provides a daily and weekly school schedule, including designated time for Response to Intervention (RTI). While the overall structure of the day is outlined, the schedule lacks sufficient detail to fully describe the student experience across all components of the academic program. The application does not clearly explain how annual access to art and music instruction will be ensured for all students as required by TCA 49-6-1025.

Anticipated Student Population: The application describes the anticipated student population using local data tied to the proposed school location and addresses academic needs through enrollment patterns and middle school mobility data. The enrollment projections table is complete and presents projections aligned with the school’s proposed grade configuration and scaling plan. Although the methodology for projecting enrollment relies on local data, the application does not clearly reconcile references to middle school attrition with evidence of increased enrollment at targeted middle schools or explain how these differences inform demographic projections based on the targeted area of West Nashville. While the

academic needs are addressed, the non-academic needs are not developed based on the targeted community.

The application outlines several recruitment strategies, including open houses, school tours, and virtual or technology-based outreach. These strategies provide a framework for recruitment and how strategies will be differentiated for preopening versus ongoing enrollment. The plan provides limited evidence of targeted outreach to diverse student populations within the community, nor does the applicant address how their recruitment strategies will differ from existing MNPS charter schools in the targeted area who are not meeting enrollment targets. The application states that the school plans to backfill open seats and provides a rationale aligned with the school's mission, academic model, and operational capacity, as well as when and how it will occur.

Family and Community Engagement and Support: The application documents outreach efforts that include engagement with families, students, and community stakeholders using multiple strategies. These efforts demonstrate outreach across varied audiences and provide evidence that community input informed aspects of the application and school design. Materials reflect outreach beyond recruitment, including activities connected to programmatic themes such as exposure to artificial intelligence concepts for younger students, which aligns with the school's proposed middle school focus. While the applicant provides multiple types of evidence of authentic engagement with and support from community stakeholders, the application attachments indicate that a notable portion of outreach participants do not reside in targeted area of West Nashville and some respondents are not Davidson County residents, which raises questions about the extent to which engagement efforts reflect the intended local community and how non-county input was incorporated into planning.

School Culture and Discipline: The application describes a school culture that is aligned with the instructional model and student outcomes. Connections between the stated culture, academic expectations, and instructional approach are described. The application explains how expectations are intended to support a positive academic environment. Steps are provided for establishing school culture for enrolled students and staff at launch. However, the plan lacks concrete and meaningful strategies regarding how expectations will be introduced and reinforced across all stakeholder groups, especially for students who enroll midyear.

The application references attendance goals and the importance of regular student attendance. Some structures intended to support attendance are mentioned. However, the goals are not clearly measurable, and the application does not provide a detailed, tiered systems of support to address chronic absenteeism. Limited information is provided regarding family engagement strategies, progress monitoring, or partnerships to support sustained attendance improvement.

The application describes a discipline framework that relies on a point-based behavior system modeled after another school. While the approach outlines consistent expectations and responses, the application does not sufficiently explain how the system prioritizes behavior change or restorative practices over point accumulation. Additionally, the application does not

clearly address how the discipline model has been adapted to align with the anticipated student population, including differences in demographics and student needs.

Curriculum and Instruction: The application describes an instructional model with an emphasis on student discussion and communication, and collaborative learning. The educational program is connected to the school’s mission and intended outcomes. The need for differentiation is acknowledged, but the application does not provide sufficient detail around instructional strategies and differentiation for all students.

Related arts programs are mentioned, but it is not clear how these requirements will be implemented or supported in the curriculum. The application identifies curricular materials for core subjects with a rationale for selecting the materials. Based on the application and the capacity interview response, more information is needed to understand the rationale for requiring all students to take Algebra I in 8th grade. Additionally, some proposed materials are not currently state-approved, and the application does not clearly outline a path to compliance, such as a timeline for alignment with approval requirements.

Special Populations: The application provides a commitment to serving diverse learners, including students with disabilities, English Learners, and gifted students. The response outlines plans to provide appropriate services and support for these populations and reflects an understanding of the need to meet varied academic and learning needs.

Student Assessment and Evaluation: The application describes assessment systems used to measure student learning and monitor progress. The assessment structure supports regular data collection and connects to the school’s instructional framework.

However, the application provides limited discussion of how data will be used to inform instructional quality beyond grouping or intervention identification.

Educational Program Capacity: The application identifies a founding team with relevant charter school experience, particularly within MNPS charter schools. However, school leadership experience and depth of experience across the team does not fully align with the complexity of the proposed school model. The application references board recruitment and selection processes; however, these processes need additional detail regarding criteria, recruitment strategies, and how identified gaps in board expertise will be addressed over time.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state’s rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Operations Plan and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. Governance
2. Staffing
3. Facilities
4. Transportation
5. Health and Safety
6. Insurance
7. Food Service
8. Start-up Plan
9. Operations Capacity
10. Additional Operations

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Operations Plan and Capacity section Partially Meets Standard.

Governance: The applicant provides a description of powers and duties of the board, including core legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

The response includes a compliant plan to add a parent representative to the board within the required six-month window, along with the recruitment and selection process to ensure equitable access and representation and includes mechanisms for orienting and supporting the parent board member. Additionally, the applicant provides relevant details about the defined relationship between board and school leaders. There is a clear distinction between the board's oversight role and the school leader's role in day-to-day management providing support. The organization chart demonstrates how the relationship between the school's governing board, leadership, and any related bodies will evolve between the school's first year of operation and full capacity.

Staffing: There is a leadership and staffing structure with reporting lines and differentiated academic and operational roles and a rationale for the structure and approach. Additionally, the applicant provides a plan for attracting and retaining high-performing teachers and describes employment benefits and incentive structures to recruit and retain teachers. The application outlines professional development aligned to the school's instructional model and describes the types of instructional strategies for which teachers will receive training. However, the professional development approach is modeled after schools serving different populations than the anticipated demographics of the proposed school's target population and does not clearly explain how the professional development plan will be adapted to meet their specific needs. In addition, details related to summer planning and preparation are limited.

Facilities: The application identifies facility needs for Year 1, including a proposed 12,000 square foot facility, and references a space program intended to align with the instructional model and projected enrollment. Relevant legal and practical considerations, including zoning, code compliance, accessibility, and fire/life safety, are acknowledged. However, the application does not fully demonstrate how the proposed facility size and configuration can be brought into compliance and aligned to the instructional model within the stated tenant improvement budget

which is more consistent with light renovation work. The application does not sufficiently explain how this level of investment would support necessary upgrades to meet occupancy, accessibility, safety, and instructional requirements and be made ready for school use. The application demonstrates early planning for facility acquisition and includes a rubric for site evaluation outlining basic criteria for reviewing potential sites. Individuals leading the facility search and external partners supporting the process are identified. The application does not provide evidence of a specific site under serious consideration, documented lease or purchase negotiations, or other concrete milestones demonstrating progress toward securing a facility. The application also references an intent to conduct a request for proposals process for architectural services in alignment with Tennessee Public Procurement requirements but includes information about a K-12 architectural firm without clarifying whether that firm has been procured through the stated process or how it is currently engaged which makes the role and status of architectural support.

Transportation: A transportation plan and provider model that considers geography, enrollment area, and target student populations is provided which explains the daily operational detail and how all students will be accommodated. The applicant references legal requirement to provide transportation if required by a student's IEP and confirms transportation will be provided at no cost for those students and offers planned transportation details including accommodating accessibility issues, as needed. However, the plan described does not include details about how it clearly aligns with the budget.

Health and Safety: The applicant identifies how the school will safely and legally meet student medical needs, including a plan to contract for nursing services in Years 1 and 2, and hire a licensed nurse in Years 3 and beyond. The application specifies the Director of Operations for overseeing school safety. A timeline is provided that includes the development and implementation of the school safety plan.

Insurance: The applicant lists the types and corresponding amounts of insurance coverage the proposed school will secure; states that the company will provide the required coverage upon approval of the charter application; and includes provisions for the insurer to notify the Department of any cancellation of insurance, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-107(b)(19) and the types of insurance meet requirements in law.

Food Service: The applicant provides a food service delivery model and process and outlines vendor procurement process and evaluation criteria.

Start-up Plan: The application includes a timeline covering student recruitment, staffing, and facilities planning. The timeline identifies ownership of key tasks and demonstrates preparation to open the school on schedule. The application describes mitigation strategies and contingency plans for potential challenges. The response demonstrates an ability to respond to identified risks and outlines actions to address challenges as they arise.

Operations Capacity: The application describes a team with experience across key operational areas which align with the proposed school model. The application identifies areas where additional expertise is needed and includes a plan to address those gaps through future

hiring. The application identifies metrics and indicators used to assess organizational performance across preopening, early operations, and long-term sustainability. There is a process for board oversight, including how data will be reviewed and used to inform decisions and ongoing evaluation. The applicant specifies board level intervention strategies tied to performance outcomes.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Budget and Finance in the following subsections:

1. Operating Budget
2. Budget and Finance Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the section Partially Meets Standard.

Operating Budget and Budget Finance Capacity: The application includes an operating budget and presents multiyear projections; however, there are areas of misalignment and limited clarity between the budget narrative, application text, and budget template. Key staffing and cost assumptions are not consistently clear across documents. The application indicates that each grade will have a dedicated special education teacher and projects that approximately 14% of students will have IEPs; however, the budget does not clearly identify special education teacher positions and includes limited allocations for special education services and materials. In the capacity interview, the applicant provided an explanation that special education staffing was embedded within other line items, but this approach does not provide transparency or alignment between the narrative and the budget. Additionally, employee benefits are combined into a single line item set which limits visibility into specific benefit components and cost drivers, including employer health care contributions. The budget projects positive but minimal cash balances at the end of each year, providing limited margin for error, and relies on significant external funding sources in Years 1 and 2. The budget funds one bus in Year 1 while the application indicates that free transportation will be provided to all students. Based on projected enrollment, the number of buses appears insufficient to support universal access, and similar concerns persist in later years as enrollment grows. In addition, questions remain about whether the budget remains viable if enrollment projections are not met, particularly given the noted enrollment challenges noted in the target area.

The applicant provides a description of financial systems and processes for planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll. The staff members who will be responsible for daily

financial management and oversight are identified. The applicant indicates there will be policies to provide internal control and compliance with state, federal, and authorizer financial reporting. The Memorandum of Understanding with Vertex Education includes policies for deposit of idle funds, purchasing procedures, and travel regulations.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

APPLICABLE ADDENDA

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for the Applicable Addenda in the following subsections:

This section is not applicable based on the applicant's category type.

Evidence Findings

Not applicable

OVERALL RATING

According to the state's rubric, once all sections have been evaluated, review members must assign an overall evaluation rating to the application based on the cumulative ratings of each section. For an application to be deemed ready for approval, the summary rating for each of the major sections must meet the standard. The review team concluded that the new start application Partially Meets Standard.

New Start Charter Application Review Team Findings Music City Academy

Proposed Model: Team Centered, Career Connected Learning

Grades	9-12
Enrollment	480
Location/Zone	Davidson County, District 5,8, and 9

Submitted April 23, 2026



METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

Section 1: New Start Application Overview

ABOUT THE STATE LAW

In Tennessee, charter schools are public schools and can be established in one of the following ways:

- Creating a new public charter school or opportunity public charter school
- Converting a traditional public school to a charter school

Tennessee law limits who may sponsor a charter school and prescribes the type of entity may operate a charter school. Only entities that are exempt from federal taxation under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code may operate a public charter school in Tennessee. Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-106, a charter will not be granted to a for-profit corporation, a nonpublic school, as defined in T.C.A. § 49-6-3001, or other private, religious, or church school. Cyber-based public charter schools are not allowed.

Sponsors must submit all application materials – the application narrative, required attachments, and applicable addenda – to the authorizer on or before 11:59 p.m. CT on February 1 of the year preceding the year in which the proposed public charter school plans to begin operation. If February 1 falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or state-observed holiday, the application is due on the next business day.

Section 2: The Evaluation Process

THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

To ensure our review team consisted of cross departmental experts, MNPS appointed a core team specifically trained to assess the quality and sustainability of a proposed school. Individuals with specific expertise in Business and Finance, Curriculum, Facilities, Data Quality, and Operations evaluate each application to provide the needed expertise in those areas. Finally, the review team includes an external consultant who has experience and expertise in specialized areas.

A team of seven (7) people reviewed the new start applications and produced the evidence findings. The review committee members included:

- Deputy Chief of Schools
- Executive Director of Maintenance and Construction
- Director of Boundary and Planning
- Executive Officer of Operations
- Data Coach Research and Assessment
- Resource Strategy Coordinator
- External Reviewer

THE APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Initial Application Submission

During the initial application review, the authorizer's review team will evaluate each application using the State Board's required scoring rubric and will conduct a capacity interview with the sponsor to elicit evidence-based explanations that allow the sponsor to determine clear evidence of capacity to execute the charter school plan successfully. The capacity interview will be scheduled by the authorizer in advance of the authorizer's initial vote on the application.

Initial Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(2), authorizers must rule by resolution, at a regular or specially called meeting, to approve or deny a public charter school application no later than 90 calendar days after receipt of the initial completed application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny a public charter school application within 90 days, the public charter school application will be deemed approved.

Amended Application Submission

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an initial charter school application is denied, the charter school sponsor will have 30 calendar days from receipt of the grounds for denial to submit an amended application using this same application form to correct the deficiencies.

Amended Application Vote

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(3), if an amended application is submitted, the authorizer has 60 days from receipt of an amended application to approve or deny the amended application. If the authorizer fails to approve or deny the amended application within 60 days, then the amended application will be deemed approved.

The analysis of the new start application is based on four categories:

- Educational Plan Design and Capacity
- Operations Plan and Capacity
- Budget and Finance
- Applicable Addenda

This report includes a summary of evidence justifying the review team's scores and the applicant's responses to the capacity interview.

Section 3: Summary Ratings for Music City Academy

SUMMARY RATINGS

There are three ratings (Meets, Partially Meets, or Does Not Meet). The committee's evidence findings are outlined on the following pages.

THE MNPS REVIEW COMMITTEE'S RATINGS
Music City Academy

CATEGORY	RATING
Educational Program Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Budget and Finance	Meets Standard
Applicable Addenda	Not Applicable
Overall Rating	Partially Meets Standard

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Educational Program Design and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. School Overview
2. School Mission and Model
3. Anticipated Student Population
4. Family and Community Engagement and Support
5. School Culture and Discipline
6. Curriculum and Instruction
7. Special Populations
8. Student Assessment and Evaluation
9. Educational Program Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Educational Program Design and Capacity Partially Meets Standard.

School Overview: The applicant proposes Music City Academy (MCA) as a school model that integrates academics, athletics, wellness, and career preparation to support students' postsecondary readiness. The proposed program organizes students into small teams led by coach-advisors who provide guidance and academic support embedded across huddle (advisory), classrooms, athletics, and interventions, with progress monitoring through indicators such as attendance and engagement. The applicant aims to connect Career and Technical Education pathways to local industries, including health sciences and audio/visual

production. Wellness is embedded into the proposed daily schedule through physical activity, social-emotional learning, and mental health support. The applicant states that MCA would enroll students from across Nashville, with a focus on targeted catchment areas of MNPS Districts 5, 8, and 9, to reflect the city's racial and socioeconomic diversity. The program description also indicates that all students will participate in athletics as part of a shared student-athlete identity.

School Mission and Model: The applicant's proposed mission is aligned to the school's academic and athletic model. The mission is a belief in the "unifying power of sports to bring student-athletes together in pursuit of both academic excellence and athletic success, preparing for post-graduation." While the mission statement is provided, it is not measurable. While the mission specific goals and targets reference ambitious outcomes, such as being a top 10 school in the state, the specific academic targets do not fully support that claim and are not fully aligned to required state accountability indicators. The academic program includes an extended day and the inclusion of RTI and intervention support; however, there are concerns about whether staffing and programmatic capacity are sufficient to achieve these goals. The needs analysis includes zoned school data, but the applicant does not adequately account for the availability of existing high-quality seats across district, charter, magnet, and private options, nor does it demonstrate unmet demand in their targeted districts that mainly demonstrate satisfactory school letter grades and relatively low concentrations of high-need students. Additionally, the data provided on page 19 that was used to assess the need for the proposed school contains errors by underreporting the number of state championships achieved by MNPS zoned traditional and magnet high schools since 2020.

Concerns are also raised about the coherence and feasibility of the athletic and programmatic vision, including limited sports offerings, omissions of commonly offered sports, lack of options for individual sports, and insufficient opportunities to ensure all students can participate as claimed. Furthermore, the athletic and programmatic vision does not adequately address how the school will achieve the three primary objectives that member schools of the TSSAA should achieve through the following bylaws (1) maintaining athletics in its proper perspective as subordinate to the primary academic mission of the schools; (2) preventing the exploitation of students for athletic purposes; and (3) fostering fair competition, or a "level playing field," among the TSSAA member schools.

Finally, while the daily schedule includes dedicated time for intervention and student support, gaps remain in clarity regarding foreign language instruction, advanced coursework, and elective opportunities, limiting confidence that the schedule fully supports the school's academic goals and college-readiness focus.

Anticipated Student Population: The application demonstrates use of local data to describe the anticipated student population, and the overall enrollment projections are reasonable. While the anticipated student population is described, the data relies primarily on MNPS high school-level data and does not consistently reflect the specific targeted areas within Districts 5, 8, and 9. Additionally, demographic projections presented mirror district-wide data rather than the identified focus areas.

The anticipated academic and non-academic supports are described and include some evidence of how those supports were determined; however, the Panorama data used to support non-academic needs for high schools contains inaccurate data. The recruitment plan

includes strategies but raises concerns about potential conflicts with zoned high schools, which may affect outreach efforts. Finally, the backfilling policy is described in alignment with the school's mission, academic model, and operational. While the policy specifies when and how it will occur, the decision not to backfill grades 11 and 12 is not fully explained in the application or in the capacity interview response and conflicts with enrollment projections that assume stable enrollment across upper grade levels.

Family and Community Engagement and Support: The application presents evidence of broad community outreach conducted through multiple platforms, including surveys, sign-in sheets, photographs, and related materials, indicating authentic efforts to engage families and stakeholders. However, the response does not clearly explain how community input was analyzed and used to inform the school's design, and statistical summaries of outreach results are limited. The application attachments indicate that a notable portion of outreach participants do not reside in Davidson County. While the applicant indicated during the capacity interview that the focus is on Nashville recruitment, the evidence provided raises questions about the extent to which engagement efforts reflect the intended local community and how non-county input was incorporated into planning. Additionally, a plan for ongoing family and community engagement outlines general intentions and a broad list of activities and opportunities to gather input, including a parent coaching staff to provide families with a formal voice on academics, athletics, wellness, and school culture.

School Culture and Discipline: The application articulates a school culture that aligns with the proposed school model through the core values of Team over Self, Passion to Purpose, and Wellness for Life which is aligned to the school's mission, model, and student outcomes. However, the description relies heavily on general language and provides limited detail regarding how culture systems will be implemented in practice. Strategies and structures for school culture center primarily on the Willow Education curriculum delivered through the daily huddles. Plans to integrate students who enroll mid-year are provided through a four-week timeline and a 30-day review of integration and adjustment.

The applicant includes measurable attendance goals that include families and external partners; however, the rationale for the chronic absenteeism target of less than 15 percent does not align with current trends in the targeted areas. The applicant's reliance on championship outcomes in Memphis to justify the effectiveness of the athletic model is not supported by attendance data. Memphis reports a 2024–25 high school chronic absenteeism rate similar to MNPS high schools, undermining the claim that the athletic model leads to improved chronic absenteeism outcomes.

Attendance strategies are described in general terms and mirror district practices, making it difficult to understand how they are uniquely aligned to the school's model or tailored to the anticipated student population. Similarly, the discipline approach largely reflects existing district policies and does not sufficiently articulate how the philosophy, practices, and responses are distinctively connected to the school's mission or responsive to student needs. In particular, the zero-tolerance offense section needs more clarity and refinement to demonstrate alignment with TCA 49-6-3401 related to possession of a firearm, assault on staff, and terroristic behavior.

Curriculum and Instruction: The application presents an overview of the proposed educational program using a structured, movement-based instructional model that integrates

wellness and kinesthetic learning into daily academic blocks. The description lacks specificity to fully evaluate alignment with the school’s mission, anticipated student population, and stated outcomes. The learning environment is described in general terms, and the connection between instructional design and academic excellence is unclear, particularly where small class sizes are cited as foundational while the proposed teacher-to-student ratios align with standard district high school models. Instructional strategies are listed broadly and are aligned to the school’s mission and culture, but they are not consistently tied to specific content areas or supported with clear explanations of how they will be implemented to meet the needs of diverse learners. Plans for differentiation and day-to-day classroom practice require additional detail. Curriculum selections, including core and career and technical education (CTE) materials with rationales for why they were chosen; however, some statements regarding curriculum approval processes and graduation requirement waivers are inaccurate or inconsistent with state policy. The applicant identifies Sport and Human Performance, Emergency Services, Therapeutic Services, and Audio Visual as the proposed CTE focus but does not provide information about how these offerings will differ from the existing offerings in MNPS high schools within the targeted areas of MNPS districts 5, 8, and 9 (provided in the chart below) in order to demonstrate a clear and urgent need as indicated in the application.

District	MNPS High School	Comparable Academy Offerings
9	James Lawson	Audio Visual Production Therapeutic Services
8	Hillsboro	Therapeutic Services Sports and Human Performance Audio Visual Production
5	Nashville School of the Arts	Visual Arts
5	Pearl Cohn	Audio Visual Production Therapeutic Services

The college and career readiness plan references opportunities such as dual enrollment, advanced placement (AP), and early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs); however, these offerings are not clearly reflected in the schedule or fully explained in terms of student access and implementation. Additionally, the absence of a foreign language requirement and a World Language teacher along with the exclusive focus on a CTE elective pathway do not support how the program will ensure students are prepared to meet college readiness expectations.

Special Populations: The application outlines processes and plans for serving students with disabilities and other special populations, including an identified RTI framework that can

support early intervention and ongoing instructional decision-making. Methods for identifying EL students through home language surveys and English language proficiency screeners to prevent misidentification are provided. There is a plan to support EL students in accessing the full general education curriculum and an ongoing process for monitoring EL students who exit. The response demonstrates an understanding of required service components and includes procedures for identification and support; however, the proposed staffing levels may be insufficient to align with anticipated service requirements and student needs.

Student Assessment and Evaluation: The application provides an approach to assessment, data review, and student progress monitoring, demonstrating the use of data to inform instruction. The assessment framework includes both formative and summative measures across subjects and grade levels. A multi-tiered system of academic intervention plan is provided that includes programs and strategies, frequency and duration, and progress monitoring. The applicant indicates an understanding that the practices should be consistent with State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.03.

Educational Program Capacity: The applicant provides all members of the school-based team, governing board, and applicant team with corresponding resumes. A plan and timeline for hiring, including qualifications, selection criteria, and recruitment strategies aligned with the school's mission and needs is provided. The application describes the process for board member selection and includes an acknowledgment of existing gaps in board expertise but does not provide a sufficient plan of how to address those gaps. The information provided about the leadership and board capacity does not sufficiently address how they will support the complexity of the proposed school model. Additionally, more clarity is needed to fully demonstrate how current board members were selected and vetted, as the application suggests continuity from the founding board without clearly documenting a formal selection or evaluation process for those members.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Operations Plan and Capacity in the following subsections:

1. Governance
2. Staffing
3. Facilities
4. Transportation
5. Health and Safety
6. Insurance
7. Food Service
8. Start-up Plan
9. Operations Capacity

10. Additional Operations

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the Operations Plan and Capacity section Partially Meets Standard.

Governance: The applicant provides a detailed description of powers and duties of the board including core legal and fiduciary responsibilities such as overseeing academic performance and compliance, setting school policy, approving contracts and legal agreements, hiring and managing the school leader, and ensuring compliance with charter terms and the authorizer. The parent representative plan is detailed and includes representation for diverse families. However, the timeline for adding a parent representative lacks detail. The organizational charts do not reflect the LEA as part of the related oversight. In addition, the bylaws include provisions only for annual and special meetings, and that the meeting schedule provided elsewhere is not binding on the governing board. The complaint procedures are not in the bylaws and limits complaints to written submissions with discretion granted to the Board Chair to refer matters back to the COO.

Staffing: The applicant provides leadership and staffing structures with reporting lines and differentiated academic and operational roles. A professional development plan is described which includes professional learning, with designated summer professional development days, coaching cycles, daily collaborative planning, learning communities, and leadership development. The plan identifies opportunities for professional development intended to support staff throughout the school year and during school launch. While professional development topics and activities are identified, the structure, sequencing, and delivery of professional development are not consistently articulated. The scope of the plan is ambitious for initial implementation, and the connections between the listed activities and a professional development system are not fully defined. While the plan references instructional strategies and support structures, it does not consistently describe how professional development is aligned to the school's specific instructional model or tailored to the anticipated student population.

Facilities: The applicant does not demonstrate a clear understanding of legal and practical requirements as space planning references outdated standards and does not adequately account for current high school standards, There is minimal alignment with the instructional model as the plan does not include Career and Technical Education requirements or the facilities needed for the proposed programming needs. While the applicant describes general efforts to identify a facility and potential partnerships, there is no evidence of a secured site, identified properties, or concrete milestones demonstrating how shared or public facilities would meet program demands.

Transportation: The application outlines a transportation approach that considers geography, enrollment area, and target student populations. The plan may not be sufficient considering the school's city-wide attendance patterns or the extended school day and mandatory athletic participation required of all students, particularly given the likelihood of widely dispersed

students and students with special needs. While the applicant explains the daily operational details and how all students will be accommodated, the estimated allocation for specialized transportation may also be insufficient.

Health and Safety: The applicant provides a limited plan for student medical services. The proposal relies on contracted nursing services, with a full-time nurse not planned until Year 3, which does not align with the anticipated health needs of student athletes. The applicant indicates that the Director of Operations will oversee the school safety functions. A general safety plan timeline is included.

Insurance: The insurance document provided by the applicants lists the types and corresponding amounts of insurance coverage the proposed school will secure; states that the company will provide the required coverage upon approval of the charter application; and includes provisions for the insurer to notify the Department of any cancellation of insurance, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-107(b)(19).

Food Service: The applicant provides a food service delivery plan which indicates plans to use a vendor.

Start-up Plan: The applicant presents a timeline that incorporates student recruitment, staffing, facilities, and ownership of key tasks. However, key tasks are concentrated primarily among a few individuals and the board, raising concerns about capacity and distributed leadership. While the timeline reflects general strategies, it lacks sufficient detail in terms of specific milestones to clearly demonstrate the capacity for overcoming challenges.

Operations Capacity: While some relevant experience is present, all resumes do not consistently demonstrate the level of experience needed across the identified operational competencies as some of the leadership experience is relatively limited in duration, and prior roles do not fully align with the anticipated responsibilities. Additionally, the application relies heavily on board members as experts across multiple operational areas, which is inconsistent with governance norms. There are gaps in the leadership team, including unfilled key roles such as Chief Academic Officer and Dean of Students, with limited detail provided regarding plans or timelines to fill these positions.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Partially Meets Standard.

FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for Budget and Finance in the following subsections:

1. Operating Budget
2. Budget and Finance Capacity

Evidence Findings

The review team found the following strengths and concerns in the new start application and concluded that the section Meets Standard.

Operating Budget and Budget and Finance Capacity: The applicant's budget and financial narrative for the enrollment plan and scaling from Year 1 to Year 5 are reasonable, and the application includes a complete multi-year operating budget aligned to projected enrollment, staffing, and facilities assumptions. The Operating Budget Template presents both minimum and planned budget scenarios, and the narrative explains key assumptions and financial risks, indicating an overall understanding of fiscal planning. Additional context is needed related to staffing adequacy and cost assumptions for benefits, the part-time nurse salary, technology, transportation, textbooks, and lease and facility expansion costs that may affect the accuracy of some projections.

The application provides clear policies and procedures for internal controls and financial monitoring, as described in the application. The applicant outlines systems for accounting, oversight, and compliance, demonstrating preparation to manage public funds responsibly. Appropriate board oversight and internal control processes consistent with state and authorizer expectations are clear and detailed. The application identifies key financial indicators and includes a framework for monitoring financial health across multiple years. The narrative explains how the board will engage in financial oversight, review data, and respond to risks which demonstrate the capacity to manage financial performance and maintain organizational health over time.

To restate, the review team consensus determined the section Meets Standard.

APPLICABLE ADDENDA

The Criteria

According to the state's rubric, the review committee should consider if the application addresses the characteristics of a strong response for the Applicable Addenda in the following subsections:

This section is not applicable based on the applicant's category type.

OVERALL RATING

According to the state's rubric, once all sections have been evaluated, review members must assign an overall evaluation rating to the application based on the cumulative ratings of each section. For an application to be deemed ready for approval, the summary rating for each of the major sections must meet the standard. The review team concluded that the new start application Partially Meets Standard.