

Section I: Instructional Goals and Objectives	Knox County Board of Education Policy		
	Descriptor Term: Public Charter Schools	Descriptor Code: I-450	Issued: 10/11
		Reviewed: 5/26	Revised: 8/23

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EXPECTATIONS

The Board of Education believe high quality charter schools have the potential to be a useful structure to help effectively educate Knox County students and enhance quality public education choices for all students and their families. Charter schools are meant to serve as innovative learning centers where strong teachers and experienced administrators advance each student’s achievement every day, regardless of race, color, national-origin, religion, gender, disability, proficiency in English, academic ability, social capital or family income. Every student in the Knox County Schools deserves high quality opportunities to learn, grow and achieve their full potential.

The Board’s goal is to build a system of schools that provides every student with the foundation of knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to excel in higher education, the work place and in life. All charter schools in Knox County are expected to cultivate strong school capacity to provide high quality academic instruction addressing student performance outcomes in accordance with the Knox County Schools strategic plan.

All charter schools must employ non-selective admission criteria and ensure that students will achieve predetermined goals by the second year of operation

CHARTER SCHOOLS APPLICATIONS

The Board shall annually solicit applications for the establishment of charter schools through a Request for Proposal Process (RFP). The RFP will be posted and maintained on the Knox County Schools website to ensure it is continuously available to prospective charter school operators.¹

Applications will be entertained both for new charter schools as well as potential conversions of existing schools to charters. All applications should demonstrate substantial capacity to support the plan financially and to execute effective instruction and programs fostering teacher effectiveness.

Sixty (60) days before the application process begins pursuant to subsection (b), a prospective charter school sponsor shall submit a letter of intent to the Knox County Board of Education and to the State of Tennessee Department of Education to submit an application to operate a charter school. Applicants who fail to meet this requirement will not be eligible to submit a proposal for that cycle.² The letter of intent shall be completed on the form provided by the Department, and the sponsor shall indicate on the letter of intent the application category selected by the sponsor. The authorizer shall determine whether the sponsor has selected the correct application category within ten (10) business days of receiving the letter of intent and notify the sponsor within five (5) business days of a determination that the incorrect application category has been selected. The sponsor shall correct and resubmit the letter of intent within five (5) business days of receipt of a notice from the authorizer that the wrong application category was selected.

1 Applicants will be assessed a fee of \$2,500 when applications are submitted to offset costs incurred that
 2 are associated with the application and evaluation process.
 3

4 All responsive proposals will be evaluated by a committee recommended by the Director of Schools and
 5 appointed by the Board of Education. The committee shall consist of individuals from the following KCS
 6 departments:
 7

- 8 A. Finance
- 9 B. Operations
- 10 C. Human Resources
- 11 D. Research and Evaluation
- 12 E. Curriculum and Instruction
- 13 F. Law Office
- 14 G. Parent Representative
- 15 H. Community Partner
- 16 I. Other Community Representative

17 **TRADITIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS**

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 20 Applications for new traditional charter schools must offer an innovative, compelling and evidence-based
 21 plan for a high-quality charter school, and demonstrate that the plan was collaboratively developed by a
 22 diverse and expert design team.
 23

24 Applicants in this category must complete the state-mandated application as well as adhere to Board
 25 policy and deadlines for submission.
 26

27 In addition to state requirements, the Board expects proposals to include or demonstrate the following:
 28

- 29 A. A history of proven academic success in currently operating schools or a leadership team with
 30 a record of success in increasing student academic achievement
- 31
 32 B. A strong and well-organized leader committed to educational reform and possessing a record of
 33 success with the proposed educational plan and student profile.
- 34
 35 C. An educational plan rooted in high expectations, in line with the school's stated mission, and
 36 providing a personalized learning environment for all students.
 37
- 38 D. A comprehensive and research-based curriculum and assessment program designed to hold all
 39 students to high-achievement goals, including those with disabilities, limited English
 40 proficiency, and specialized needs and abilities.
- 41
 42 E. Strategies to attract and retain energetic and highly effective teachers and staff who will actively
 43 engage in professional development opportunities and sharing research-based best practices.
 44
- 45 F. A strong understanding of the community that the proposed school will serve and demonstrated
 46 community support.
- 47
 48 G. Meaningful opportunities to involve parents and community along with a sustainable plan for
 49 maintaining strong parental and community participation in and support of the school.
 50

- 1 H. A strong, knowledgeable, diverse, stable, and committed board of governance or leadership team
 2 committed to best practices in school governance and financial management.
 3
- 4 I. A detailed and sustainable plan, including a coordinated five-year plan for growth and
 5 sustainable improvement.
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7 **CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOLS**

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 9 Applicants interested in conversion of an existing school to a charter school, or any non-traditional charter
 10 school structure should contact the Knox County School Board Office to consult with the Charter School
 11 Review Chair before beginning the RFP process.
 12

13 Proposals for conversion schools must meet all of the standards for new traditional charter school
 14 proposals. Additionally, these proposals must:
 15

- 16 A. clearly identify the specific school to be converted and provide detailed documentation of the
 17 need for conversion.
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- 19 B. offer clear and measurable strategies for achieving dramatic academic improvement by
 20 specifically addressing identified needs.
 21
- 22 C. offer evidence of community and stakeholder engagement and overwhelming stakeholder
 23 interest in converting to a charter school as delineated below.
 24
- 25 D. include documentation of how the interests of the Knox County Schools, the students, families,
 26 teachers, staff, school community, and broader community would be well served by a conversion
 27 to a charter school.
 28
- 29 E. identify the specific parameters of conversion as part of the operational and educational plan
 30 proposed.
 31
- 32 F. detail the transition timeline including effective communication strategies and procedures for
 33 exercising options at the family, teacher, staff, and leadership levels.
 34

35 Proposals for conversion charter schools must offer substantial justification for the change, clear planning
 36 and intentionality to meet the needs of the students in the school, evidence of family and community
 37 engagement, and sensitivity to the impact of potential disruptions on the academic environment.
 38

39 Conversion of existing schools to charters may be initiated through reorganization action taken by the
 40 Board of Education, or through consideration of charter petitions by 60% of faculty and/or 60% of
 41 families at the school to be potentially converted. While the Board of Education will consider
 42 application for conversion charter schools based upon the petition of 60% of the school's faculty or
 43 families, preference will be given to petitions demonstrating at least 75% support of the school's
 44 faculty or families. If the local board of education denies the application for conversion, then the
 45 decision is final and is not subject to appeal. [Public Chapter 219, Section 13(6).]
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CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION REVIEW

The deadline for submitting a charter application for review within a particular year is February 1st. The review committee will review all applications and submit recommendations to the Board of Education in such a manner as to facilitate an action of the Board within ninety (90) days of the submission.³

In the event the Board denies the application, the applicant will be issued a letter outlining the specific details that led to the decision to deny the application. Should the applicant decide to remedy the deficits, the applicant will have thirty (30) calendar days to submit an amended application to the Board of Education. The review committee will then have sixty (60) calendar days to review the amended application and make a recommendation based on the amended application to the Knox County Board of Education.⁴

Any new information inserted in the application, including appendices, will be reviewed by the Charter School Review Committee and a new KCS recommendation will be made based on the complete amended application. If the KCS Board of Education's recommendation is "amended application denied" or other final decision to deny, the applicant will have ten (10) calendar days to appeal to the State Board of Education.⁵

- A. The initial review will include an individual review of the application by appropriate KCS staff and community members from demographic, academic, operational, legal, and fiscal perspectives.

Once this review has occurred and individual review committee members have assigned scores based on the state rubric, the review committee will meet to determine if the application has addressed thoroughly all required areas to advance to the next KCS Charter Application review phase. This includes evidence that demonstrates the following:

1. The ability to operate a school in an educationally effective and fiscally sound manner
2. The proposal is likely to improve student learning, academic growth and achievement
3. Increased learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at risk of academic failure
4. The use of innovative and effective teaching methods
5. Appropriate knowledge of educational pedagogy for the grades proposed by the schools
6. The creation of new professional learning, leadership, and collaboration opportunities for teachers, school leaders, and other school personnel
7. Parents and students are provided with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the Knox County Schools
8. Clear, measurable student achievement criteria with built-in accountability criteria
9. A culture of continuous learning, improvement, and excellence that will reinforce student learning, increase student academic success, and close unacceptable achievement gaps
10. Meets all criteria outlined in state law and stated requirements of the Knox County Schools

1 B. The second phase of the review process includes the following:
2

- 3 1. For proposals considered high quality and meeting all state, legal and local requirements,
4 an interview will be scheduled with members of the proposed school's founding group,
5 which should include the applicants, proposed governing board representatives, and other
6
7 members who speak knowledgably about the proposed academic program, organizational
8 capacity, budget and governance structure.
9
- 10 2. Proposals of sufficient quality and completeness may undergo a Request for Amendment
11 process in an attempt to resolve review committee concerns and assure compliance with
12 all applicable laws and regulations.
13

14 Although the scoring rubric is from the State of Tennessee, the review committee will consider evidence
15 of the following general criteria:
16

- 17 A. A viable plan to meet the needs of special populations: students with disabilities, English
18 Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged students.
19
- 20 B. Increasing high school graduation rates for students at risk of not graduating
21
- 22 C. A focus on middle school students' academic achievement and the transition to high school
23
- 24 D. Use of high quality assessments designed to measure the learning of the critical concepts and
25 are aligned with Tennessee State Standards and Common Core Standards
26
- 27 E. Management and leadership capability to overcome initial start-up challenges and establish a
28 fiscally viable school
29
- 30 F. Increasing the acquisition, adoption and use of professional development systems that provide
31 teachers and school leaders with the information and resources they need to inform and improve
32 instructional practices, decision-making and overall effectiveness
33
- 34 G. Use of data to make instructional decisions with an established system of communication
35 between administration, school director and teachers
36
- 37 H. Partnering with schools located in the area in which the school will locate to share best practices
38 and innovations
39
- 40 I. A well-developed plan to build and extend relationships with community partners, stakeholders,
41 parents and the school district personnel
42
- 43 J. Adherence to the Board's stated charter school priorities
44

45 In cases where the proposed school would partner with a non-profit Charter School Management
46 Organization (CMO) or a business, community or educational partner organization, the review committee
47 will conduct a due diligence process with the organization to ascertain the organization's structure,
48 staffing, finances, plans for the future and the academic performance of other schools it serves that enroll
49 similar populations of students.
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1 The review committee and/or the KCS Director of Schools may also interview representatives of the
2 proposed management or partner organization to discuss the responses to the questionnaire.
3

4 **APPROVED CHARTER SCHOOLS**

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6 A charter school shall be operated in accordance with the Charter Agreement approved by the Board of
7 Education. Should adjustments or amendments to the Charter Agreement be needed, the governing body
8 may apply to the Board for any amendment to or deviation from the Charter Agreement. KCS will follow
9 intervention steps as recommended by the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission and outlined in
10 Administrative Procedure AP-I-450. Material deviations from the Charter Agreement may result in the
11 revocation of the Charter Agreement by the Board.⁶ Examples of substantial deviations may include, but
12 are not limited to, changes to transportation or special education services, changes to the governing board,
13 or alteration of the opening date of school, the location of the school, the targeted student population, etc.
14 Should the Charter School substantially deviate from the charter without prior approval from the Board,
15 the Board may revoke the Charter. See T.C.A. § 49-13-122 for further information on charter revocation.
16

17 A. **Training** - The governing body of an approved charter school is to conduct at least one annual
18 board training course and provide documentation of such training to the Board of Education.
19 The training course must be certified by the Tennessee Charter Schools Association.
20

21 B. **Reporting Requirements** - The Governing Body of an approved charter school shall make a
22 written report to the Board annually between August 1 and September 1.⁷ This reporting
23 requirement shall begin in the year after the year in which the charter school begins operation.
24 This annual report shall include:
25

- 26 1. The progress of the public charter towards achieving the goals outlined in the school's
27 charter agreement;
- 28 2. Financial records of the public charter school, including revenues and expenditures; and
- 29 3. A detailed accounting, including amounts and sources, of all funds received by the public
30 charter school, other than the funds received under T.C.A. § 49-13-112(a).
31

32 These funds shall include, but not be limited to, any funds received from sources under T.C.A.
33 § 49-13-112(e).⁸
34

35 C. **Renewals** - Not later than April 1st of the year prior to the year in which the charter agreement
36 expires, the governing body of a public charter school may submit a renewal application to the
37 Board.⁹ The Board shall make its renewal decision based on the Governing Body's annual report.
38 The Board shall rule by resolution to approve or deny the charter school renewal application by
39 February 1st of the year in which the charter expires. The Board may revoke or deny renewal of
40 a public charter school agreement for:
41

- 42 1. a material violation of the conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the Charter;
- 43 2. a pattern of failure to meet expectations through the annual authorizer report; or
- 44 3. failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.¹⁰
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48 D. **Waiver of Requirements** - Waivers granted by the Commissioner of Education must be presented in
49 writing. The Director of Schools may grant waivers with regard to the Knox County Schools rules,
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1 procedures, requirements or any other administrative regulation that applies to the Charter School.
2 Any application for waiver that conflicts with the Charter Agreement will be denied.

- 3
- 4 1. All waiver requests shall be submitted in writing no later than sixty (60) days prior to the
- 5 Charter School’s intention to implement the waiver, if granted.
- 6
- 7 2. All waiver requests shall include a listing of the specific administrative regulation
- 8 requested to be waived.
- 9
- 10 3. All waiver requests shall include detailed documentation of the grounds for requesting the
- 11 waiver and specific evidence showing how the administrative regulation currently inhibits
- 12 or hinders the proposed charter school’s ability to meet its goals or comply with its mission
- 13 statement.
- 14
- 15 4. All waiver requests filed with the administration shall contain information on any other
- 16 waiver requests filed with the Commissioner of Education, including the status of those
- 17 waiver requests.
- 18

19 E. The Board will annually withhold 3% of a charter school’s funds or \$35,000, whichever is lesser,
20 for the performance of the authorizing obligations and responsibilities by Knox County
21 Schools. If, for the school year, the total amount of the authorizer fees collected by the LEA
22 exceeds the amount used by the LEA to perform its authorizing obligations and responsibilities,
23 the LEA shall distribute the amount remaining to its authorized charter schools. This allowance
24 may also prevent a substantial loss if the Knox County Schools provides services, such as food
25 service, transportation or other contracted student services, and a charter closes prior to paying
26 for such services or obligations.

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33 Legal References:

- 34 1 See, generally, T.C.A. § 101, et seq., and specifically, T.C.A. § 49-13-107 (b).
- 35 2 T.C.A. § 49-13-107(a), TN Comp. R & Regs: 0520-14-01-01.
- 36 3 T.C.A. § 49-13-108.
- 37 4 T.C.A. § 49-13-108; TN Comp. R & Regs: 0520-14-01-01.
- 38 5 T.C.A. § 49-13-108.
- 39 6 T.C.A. § 49-13-122.
- 40 7 T.C.A. § 49-13-120.
- 41 8 T.C.A. § 49-13-120.
- 42 9 T.C.A. § 49-13-121.
- 43 10 T.C.A. § 49-13-122.
- 44 11 T.C.A. § 49-13-128

45 Approved as to Legal Form
46 By Knox County Law Director 1/11/2023
47 /Gary T. Dupler/Deputy Law Director
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