Charter School Authorization, Renewal, Closure and Revocation, and Replication

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General Application/Authorization Process

The vision of the MNPS Office of Charter Schools is a world where all children and communities are empowered through exemplary public schools, and our mission is to authorize excellent public schools that change lives.

Purpose
The purpose of this guidance is to enhance the clarity and utility of critical information for potential applicants. We strongly recommended that applicants read all the guidelines and use them in developing their responses to the charter application. The Office of Charter Schools staff and review teams consider all elements of the guidance when assessing the quality of proposals.

MNPS seeks charter school applications to cultivate strong school capacity in order to provide high quality academic instruction for all students. The purpose of MNPS charter schools is to advance the district’s vision for excellence and diversity while meeting the needs of a growing city for new school capacity. Therefore, this call for proposals is shaped by analysis of the academic performance of schools, and the diversity goals of the MNPS Diversity Management Plan.

The analysis of these factors suggests that MNPS seek new school proposals that offer one or more of the following:

1. Advance academic achievement for students currently enrolled in schools that underperform (Review and Target) over multiple years on the Academic Performance Framework (APF).
2. Add to and do not diminish the number of schools with student enrollment diversity in Nashville.
3. Demonstrate a strong record of success in improving academic achievement in literacy.
4. Demonstrate a strong record of success in improving academic achievement for English Language Learners.
5. Demonstrate a strong record of success in improving academic achievement for students with disabilities.
Background
MNPS is the 42\textsuperscript{nd} largest urban school district in the nation. The consolidated city-county district covers Nashville and Davidson County, an area of about 525 square miles.

MNPS is a vast and diverse school system, serving students from more than 120 different countries, speaking almost as many languages. MNPS has evolved into one of the most racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse school districts in the country. The district is comprised of 171 schools, serving more than 85,000 students.

A nine-member elected Board and its appointed Director of Schools leads the school district. The Board provides leadership and policy direction to MNPS. As the Board has no taxing authority, the Metropolitan Nashville City Council approves and provides the funding for the school system. Based on a solid foundation of excellence, MNPS has taken public education into the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century with zeal, integrity, creativity, and with growing support of, and collaboration with, city leaders and stakeholders.

The MNPS charter schools serve approximately 13\% of the District’s students. In the past six years, growth in charter capacity has been rapid and of high quality. During this important initial phase of the district’s high-performing schools strategy, the Office of Charter Schools has developed consistent and strong authorizing practices aligned with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers’ (NACSA) Principles and Standards, found at [www.qualitycharters.org/publications-resources/principles-standards.html](http://www.qualitycharters.org/publications-resources/principles-standards.html). MNPS has demonstrated the ability to cultivate strong new schools, support their integration into district strategy and facilities, and deploy them to meet the district needs for capacity, quality, and academic excellence. Tough decisions, whether to deny popular but incomplete applications, or revoke charters when schools do not meet ambitious academic performance targets, have also been a part of this important work. The stage is set for deeper strategic integration of new schools through this approach to quality authorizing.

Application Cycle
The Application Cycle comes at the nexus of important work to define and compare academic performance across schools, the value of highly effective instruction in diverse and personalized settings, and the maturation of several high performing start-up schools. MNPS seeks, and will authorize, new schools with the capacity to operate excellent organizations that drive significant academic gains for all students.

The ambitious goals are supported by the common performance measures that apply equally across all schools in the district regardless of type. The Academic Performance Framework (APF), which has balanced benchmarked results in student growth, achievement, gap closure, school culture, and college/career readiness to report on annual school performance will be replaced with a new academic framework begin developed in conjunction with the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education. The new framework will align with the new ESSA requirements from the federal and state government.
MNPS views school performance and diversity of enrollment as critical factors of success flowing from its vision. Schools are also assessed according to the diversity of their enrollment using the framework adopted in the MNPS Board’s Diversity Management Plan. The diversity framework promotes equity and excellence by analyzing racial diversity as well as socioeconomic needs, special needs, and English Learner enrollments in each school. Nashville’s diversity is an asset that our schools strive to embrace alongside our pursuit of academic excellence. We believe that neither the full value of academic excellence nor diversity is realized in the absence of the other.

MNPS charter schools must develop and implement diversity plans that are consistent with the goals and measures in the District’s plan, and applications are reviewed for the quality of their plans as well as the impact of those plans on the overall district diversity strategy. Proposals must be specific concerning recruiting and enrollment strategies that will result in a diverse school as outlined in the district’s Diversity Management Plan. As of 2017-18, according to the MNPS definition of diversity, 66% of our charter schools are diverse.

Since 2009, charter school growth in MNPS has been strong. Charter schools operate under strict accountability and are recommended to the Board of Education for revocation any time their three-year status on the Academic Performance Framework is in “Falls Far Below Standard” status. Recommendation for revocation may also occur if a school is included on the State of Tennessee’s Priority List for schools performing in the bottom 5% of achievement statewide (based on the state-calculated success rate composed of a 3-year average of Reading/Language Arts, Math, and Science proficiency rates). Likewise, charter schools are expected to maintain exemplary and transparent financial practices, sound organizational policies and processes, and compliance with applicable health and safety laws. Charter schools in MNPS are expected to provide equal access to students with disabilities and English Language Learners just the same as district-run schools. Because of this expectation and commitment, the rates of inclusion in Nashville’s schools have remained strong.

MNPS issues this guidance for new schools in order to advance the best interests of the students of Davidson County, thus expanding the accessible opportunities for academic excellence and diversity available to families and students. Decisions regarding location, facility plans, and transportation plans represent formal commitments that are evaluated for their ability to contribute to the clear and ambitious goals set by the MNPS Board of Education. All applications are evaluated according to:

- the quality of the academic plan, and
- the quality of the financial management/business plan, and
- the quality of the operational plan, and
- the overall capacity of the sponsor as demonstrated by the application that offers clear evidence of its ability to deliver high quality educational opportunities, build a sustainable institution capable of serving students as outlined in its application, and is of clear and compelling benefit to the community.

Applicants who demonstrate this strong capacity for success will also be evaluated on their
ability to advance the best interests of students, the district, and the community of Nashville.

The Tennessee Charter Law provides that districts may authorize charters that are in the “best interests of the pupils, school district, or community”, (TCA §49-13-108). MNPS issues this annual guidance for quality schools in order to clarify and define what the MNPS strategic vision seeks to advance. Our expectation is that Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools will provide every student with the foundation of knowledge, skills, and character necessary to excel in higher education, work, and life. We embrace and value a diverse student population and community. Different perspectives and backgrounds form the cornerstone of our strong public education system.

Additional Guiding Indicators
MNPS encourages all charter school applicants who wish to open schools in 2019 to identify independent facilities. Regardless of where applicants propose to locate, all applicants responding to this guidance will address how their proposed school will directly benefit the students and families in the community(ies) they seek to serve. It is the responsibility of a successful new school to actively draw on local assets and contribute to the life of the community in which they locate. Successful applicants will demonstrate strong ties to the particular community in which their proposed school will be located and provide evidence of parent and community demand and support. Partnerships with parents, community and faith-based organizations, local residents, and other stakeholders are a valuable component of the new school development process. Prioritizing community engagement enables new school developers to effectively provide the most comprehensive and relevant educational opportunities to their respective student populations.

Schools that do not serve the best interest of the students, the district, or the community, or that lack a strong facility plan and commitment deadline will be recommended for denial. The district may utilize its facility capacity to attract and support strong school operators to develop, but such discussions do not constitute a right to occupy a particular facility, and we reserve the right to seek additional capacity through the charter application process in order to meet the needs of a growing district enrollment.
Process and Requirements for Charter School Applicants

Letter of Intent
Applicants are required to submit a letter of intent (LOI) to both MNPS and the State of Tennessee 60 days prior to submitting a completed application on April 1 each year (unless April 1 falls on a weekend or holiday, and then submission can occur on the next business day). The deadline for the letter of intent is February 1 (unless February 1 falls on a weekend or holiday, and then submission can occur on the next business day. Only those applicants submitting a complete letter of intent on or before February 1 will be eligible to submit full proposals for the 2017 application cycle. (see the state website for details concerning what is to be included in the LOI).

| All letters of intent become public record after submission to MNPS. Submission of a proposal is an official waiver of confidentiality, notwithstanding any statements to the contrary that may be contained within the proposal, or in any other notifications submitted by the proposer. |

Application Logistics
The proposal must follow the Charter School Application as found on the State of Tennessee website (http://www.tn.gov/education/topic/charter-schools). The application clearly describes the sections that apply to new starts and replications. Applicants should look closely at the application scoring rubric, also found on the State of Tennessee website. The scoring rubric clearly outlines the criteria under which each section will be evaluated by reviewers.

Full application proposals are due on April 1 by no later than 4:30 p.m. CT. MNPS will not accept any proposals received before or after this date. Late or incomplete applications will be returned at the applicant’s expense or will be destroyed after 30 days. Applications must be accompanied by a $2,500.00 application fee made out to the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. In the event an application is insufficient and returned to the applicant without review, the fee will be returned.

| All submitted proposals become public record after submission to MNPS. Submission of a proposal is an official waiver of confidentiality, notwithstanding any statements to the contrary that may be contained within the proposal, or in any other notifications submitted by the proposer. |

- Applications must include sections and numbering that align with and correspond to each set of questions found on the application. Full proposals should include a table of contents noting the page number on which each section and each appendix begins.
- **One electronic copy (pdf) and five (5) hard copies of the application are required.** The electronic copy is considered the master copy in the event of
discrepancies, and may be submitted through e-mail, flash drive, or Drop Box. E-mailed proposals should be submitted to Dr. John Thomas at john.thomas@mnps.org. Hard copies should be submitted to John Thomas at this address:

Dr. John Thomas  
Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education  
Office of Charter Schools, B308B  
2601 Bransford Avenue  
Nashville, TN 37204

- Applicants should copy each question as posed on the application at the beginning of each section, and sub-sections should be clearly referenced in the answers. The questions may be in smaller font if preferred to save space. Each section, sub-section and appendix should be tabbed, labeled, and inserted into a three-ring binder. (NOTE: Loose applications, or those not in binders, will be sent back to the applicant without review).

- Applications must be typed with at least 1-inch page margins and no smaller than 11 point font (suggested fonts are Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri).

- Applications must not exceed 350 pages including appendices, but excluding the budget document and the diversity plan.

- Pages should be numbered consecutively.

- Appendix items should be clearly labeled at the top and bottom of the page citing the title of the appendix and the section of the proposal to which it corresponds.

- Applicant must be a 501(c)(3) non-profit, or submit evidence that they have applied for such status as per Tennessee Charter Law.

- Each governing body resume should be labeled with the individual’s affiliation with the proposed school (e.g. design team, founding Board member, treasurer, etc.) Note: It is suggested that resumes be no more than 1-2 pages so the page restrictions can be observed.

- If a specific question does not apply to the proposed school, please respond “Not Applicable”, with a rationale explaining why that particular question does not apply to your organization.

- Spell out all acronyms the first time they are mentioned in the application.

- Do not assume that reviewers are familiar with all of the organizations, programs, service providers, curricula, vendors, etc., referenced in your application. Please provide descriptions either in the text or in a footnote.

- When citing research studies, or articles, please include full citations in a footnote or separate reference section. Research should be current and relevant to the premises outlined in the application.

- Replicators should provide links to their original applications. It is highly likely that the reviewers who are evaluating the application to expand an existing school are not the same ones who reviewed the original application. Providing access to the original application gives some context to the current one.
Proposals will be checked for completeness to ensure all components of the application have been thoroughly addressed and all required attachments have been provided. **Applications missing components or required attachments may not be considered for further review.**

The following constitutes a complete submission:

- All required questions in the state charter application have been addressed
- All attachments have been provided
- Required financial documents on the correct forms provided by the state have been attached
- Diversity Plan is included
- Required formatting as described in this application guidance has been followed
- Required application fee is attached
- Required number of bound copies have been submitted
Application Review

The application review consists of an evaluation of the application as submitted and an interview with the prospective applicant and their proposed governing board. The district has 90 calendar days from April 1 to submit recommendations to the MNPS Board of Education and for the Board to vote on those recommendations. Please note the exact timeline outlined in this guidance.

The application review will include the following steps:

1) Each application will be reviewed by the Executive Officer of Charter Schools, Director of Charter Schools, and the Coordinator of Charter Schools independently using the appropriate forms. The applications will be reviewed for:
   - Academic Plan Capacity
   - Operational Plan Capacity
   - Financial/Business Plan Capacity
   - Evidence of overall capability to open and sustain long-term a high quality learning environment that offers opportunities to all students

2) Each charter application will also be reviewed by a core team of at least three (3) independent reviewers. Each reviewer will complete a separate evaluation report and submit it to the Office of Charter Schools.

3) Legal/technical review of specific sections will be undertaken by qualified reviewers with the appropriate expertise. Discipline, finance, special education, 504, and ELL will be reviewed by thoroughly trained application evaluators with expertise in those areas. Facilities, transportation, and insurance will similarly be reviewed by reviewers with expertise in those areas.

4) The Office of Charter Schools will review the independent reviewers’ reports and prepare questions to elicit further specific information during an in-person interview with each applicant and their governing board.

5) The purpose of the interview phase is to evaluate the capacity of the leadership team, governing board members, and others in the proposed organization as they address specific questions and/or concerns that have arisen during the review process. Both internal and external reviewers may be added to the interview team as needed. During the interview, the Executive Officer of Charter Schools, the Director of Charter Schools, the Coordinator of Charter Schools, and the Core Team will ask specific questions to draw out further information and may record sound bites, conclusions, objective strengths, weaknesses and questions for further consideration when making a recommendation to the MNPS Board of Education.
6) At the conclusion of both the written application review and the capacity interview with each applicant, the Office of Charter Schools and the Core Team, in conjunction with the expert satellite reviewers, will reach a consensus recommendation for each applicant.

7) The recommendation report will be compiled from the combined analysis of this entire process and presented to the MNPS Board of Education for their review and vote on each application presented.

It is important for applicants to remember that strength in one area of the application does not negate weaknesses in other areas. Every area (Academic Plan, Operational Plan, Financial Plan, and Evidence of Capacity) must meet or exceed standard to be recommended for approval to the MNPS Board of Education.

The standards are specifically outlined in each section of the scoring rubric.

8) Tennessee law authorizes consideration of “substantial negative fiscal impact” in decisions to deny charter applications (TCA §49-13-108 (b). “The local board of education may consider whether the establishment of the charter school will have a substantial negative fiscal impact on the LEA such that authorization of the charter school would be contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community.”

In order to assist the MNPS Board of Education with consideration of “substantial negative fiscal impact,” the Office of Charter Schools will make its presentation of the work of the review teams to the Board in the following manner:

- Schools which do not meet or exceed quality thresholds will be recommended for denial on objective grounds, and those grounds will be provided to the Board for its consideration in approving or rejecting those recommendations.
- Administration will continue to articulate the per school fiscal impact of all new schools proposed so the Board may consider the possibility that new schools, if approved, would carry substantial, negative fiscal impact (be unaffordable).
- Administration will rank order applications recommended for approval so Board members may take potential approvals one-by-one in descending order of need and determine, as a Board, the threshold beyond which further approval constitutes substantial negative fiscal impact.
Timeline for Submission of Application for a Charter School Opening in 2020

- **Feb. 1, 2019**
  - Letters of Intent (LOI) Deadline to MNPS and the TN Department of Education Office of School Choice

- **April 1, 2019**
  - Completed charter applications are due in the MNPS charter office no later than 4:30 p.m.
  - Applications will be checked for completeness

- **April 2 - May 10, 2019**
  - Independent Application Review

- **May 13-17, 2019**
  - Collaborative Analysis of Independent Evaluations

- **May 20 - 24, 2019**
  - Reviewers and charter office staff prepare for capacity interviews.

- **May 27-31, 2019**
  - Capacity Interviews

- **June 14, 2019**
  - Recommendation reports completed

- **June 25, 2019**
  - MNPS Board of Education Vote on Charter School Recommendations
Process and Timeline for Amending Applications Denied in the First Application Round

TCA 49-13-108(3) gives applicants 30 days from the date of receipt of grounds for denial to submit an amended application to correct the deficiencies. The MNPS Board of Education then has 30 days after the receipt of the amended application to either deny or approve the application based on the recommendation of the review teams.

The same review team that read and made recommendations on the initial application will evaluate the amended applications to determine if the deficiencies have been corrected and make a recommendation to the MNPS Board of Education to either approve or deny the application.

The following guidelines apply to the resubmissions:

- Amended applications will be due to the Office of Charter Schools on 60 days after the MNPS Board of Education vote to deny an application. **Amended applications will not be accepted prior to or after that date.**
- Corrections may be made only to those areas of the application that the review teams have deemed deficient. **A complete re-write of the application will not be accepted.**
- One electronic copy and five (5) written copies will be submitted – these should be the same applications submitted previously with changes outlined or shaded so the review team will be able to see all corrections easily.
- A table of contents should be submitted with page numbers so corrected work can be found quickly. It should be clear to reviewers the changes made, where they are located, and which area of the application they replace.
- Additional information will not be accepted unless the review team specifically requests it.
- The same review team that evaluated the application during the first round will evaluate the amended application.
Amended Application Timeline

- **August 26, 2019**: Amended Applications Deadline
- **August 30, 2019**: Amended Applications Evaluated
- **October 22, 2019**: MNPS BOE Vote on Amended Applications
Charter School Renewal Policy and Benchmarks 2018-19

Pursuant to the Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act of 2002, the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) has adopted this policy for considering applications for renewal of public charter schools operating under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.

Purpose and Goals
A charter school trades greater autonomy granted by charter law for greater accountability to which it is held by MNPS. The original charter contract is for a period of ten (10) years, during which the charter is held to academic, organizational and financial goals yearly. In setting out and using this policy, a charter school and/or its management corporation, will know well before renewal what the MNPS Board of Education expects it to accomplish, along with the evidence which must be compiled to demonstrate the school has earned renewal status.

Performance Frameworks
Each charter school is monitored yearly by the Office of Charter Schools, using academic, organizational and financial performance frameworks which create standards each school must meet. The culmination is a yearly school report card released each October in an Annual Report to the MNPS Board of Education that includes a statement about renewal, with three possible outcomes: Full Renewal, Conditional Renewal, and Non-Renewal. As schools approach the 10 year renewal mark, there should be no doubt in which category they fall, and what is required for renewal.

While the law provides grounds for revoking a school’s charter or its authority to operate a school at any time during its charter period, the specific grounds are such that the renewal review is the principal point when MNPS assesses the total performance of a charter school over time and makes a decision whether to continue to contract with the charter as it currently exists.

Renewal Criteria, Evaluation Process and Outcomes
To assist the MNPS Board of Education in capturing the necessary information on renewal, the application for charter renewal asks that the following questions be answered:

- Is the school an academic success?
- Has the school met its non-academic goals and been faithful to its mission and charter design?
- Has the governing board been effective and do they have policies and procedures in place that ensure strong organizational and financial performance?
- Are parents, teachers, and students satisfied with the school?
- Has the school provided all required fiscal documents and are they fiscally sound?
• If renewed, what are the academic, operational and financial goals for the next ten (10) years and are they reasonable, feasible and achievable?

• Does the school have a diversity plan in place that is in alignment with the diversity goals outlined by the MNPS Board of Education, and has there been progress toward meeting those goals?

Review and Decision Process

The MNPS school renewal process is designed to be open and rigorous. We follow the Tennessee State Charter Law 49-13-121, from which we developed the following process:

On or before April 1 of the year prior to the year in which the charter expires, the governing body of the charter school shall submit a renewal application to the Office of Charter Schools.

Renewal applications must be accompanied by a $2,500.00 application fee made out to the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. In the event an application is insufficient and returned to the applicant without review, the fee will be returned.

• The extent of information needed in the application is listed below:

• The Office of Charter Schools will convene a review team which will analyze and evaluate the renewal application. The review team will make a recommendation to the Office of Charter Schools based on measurable, evidentiary criteria.

• By February 1 of the following year, MNPS will issue a written decision on whether to renew the charter school, and deliver that recommendation to the MNPS Board of Education for a ruling by resolution on the renewal application.

• If the decision is to approve, MNPS and the charter school will immediately enter into a new ten (10) year contract.

• If the decision is to deny renewal, the charter school governing board has ten (10) days to appeal to the state board of education. If the state board of education upholds the denial, that decision is final and there is no appeal.

• If the state board of education does not uphold the denial, the school will continue to operate under authorization of the State Board of Education.
**Tiered Renewal Options**
The extent of the renewal application/documentation required is predicated on the charter school’s performance over the previous contract period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Renewal Review</th>
<th>Conditions/Triggers for Review Type</th>
<th>Documents Required</th>
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| **Simple Renewal Review Criteria** | During the current term, the charter school will have attained:  
  • A three-year status of “Excelling or Achieving” on the Academic Performance Framework in the year preceding the renewal petition  
  • A record free of “target” status on the Academic Performance Framework for any year during the full term of the charter  
  • A record of organizational performance has been in “achieving or excelling” status over the life of the previous charter term, with no years in the “target” status as determined by the organizational performance framework  
  • A financial record demonstrated through audited financials that has been in “achieving” or “excelling” status as determined by the financial performance framework, with no significant findings over the previous charter term  
  • A status of “on track to renew” on the annual school report card for each year of the charter term | Short narrative that includes the following:  
  • Academic plans for the next charter term with updated academic benchmarks  
  • Updated organizational changes (if applicable) including governing board, planned expansion, changes that improve alignment with school’s mission and vision  
  • Projected financials for the next charter term  
  • Lessons learned and challenges that may arise during the next charter term |

| Full Review Criteria     | During the current term, the charter school will have attained:  
  • Three year status of “satisfactory” or above on the academic performance framework in the two years | Renewal application will include:  
  • Updated academic plan with emphasis on addressing academic deficits, including new academic benchmarks, projected growth targets, |
prior to submission of the renewal application
- Within the previous charter term, the school has not been identified in “target” status on the academic performance framework
- Organizational performance over the past charter term has been in “satisfactory” status, and at no time been identified in “target” status
- Audited financials have been in the “satisfactory” status, with any findings satisfactorily addressed by the school
- Over the life of the charter term, school has received a status of “renew with conditions” on the annual school report card
- A timeline for achieving “achieving” or “excelling” status
- Plan to overcome defined organizational deficits, such as including changes to governance, governing board, personnel, staffing patterns, etc., that align with academic plan
- Updated and expanded financial information, including comprehensive plan to correct any financial deficits, reduce debt, project expenses and revenues, and plans to ensure financial solvency in the next charter term.
- Narrative on current and anticipated challenges, contingency plans to meet those challenges, and lessons learned

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Conditional Review Criteria</th>
<th>During the current term, the charter school will have attained:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>• A three year status of “review” or “target” on the academic performance framework</td>
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<td>• Within the previous charter term, a status of “target” two or more times on the academic performance framework</td>
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<td>• Within the previous charter term, school has received “review” or “target” status on the organizational performance framework</td>
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<td>• Audited financials have not been appropriately prepared according to state law, and/or three-year average as determined by the financial performance framework has been “review” or “target”</td>
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Renewal application will contain the following information:
- Full academic plan with new academic benchmarks, plan for correcting academic deficits with appropriate controls to ensure school meets the targets, and a timeline with specific checkpoints to ensure school is on track
- New organizational structure addressing organizational deficits with a plan for correcting those deficits and timeline with specific checkpoints to ensure school is on track
- Updated financial plan that addresses fiscal irregularities, audit findings, and financial performance framework issues, including
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<td>• School has been cited within the charter term more than twice</td>
<td>new budget assumptions as well as projected financials</td>
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<td>for violations of its charter, and/or been put on probation</td>
<td>and a plan to remain fiscally sustainable and financially</td>
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<td>once or more for material violations of their contract</td>
<td>sound</td>
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<tr>
<td>• School has consistently over the charter term been given</td>
<td>• Narrative explaining academic, organizational and fiscal</td>
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<td>“on track to non-renew” status on the yearly school report card</td>
<td>challenges with contingency plans for meeting those challenges</td>
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Evaluation of Renewal Applications
Renewal applications allow MNPS to address the following questions:

- Is the school an academic success?
- Is the school an effective, viable organization?
- Is the school fiscally sound?
- Is the renewal plan for the next charter period reasonable, feasible and achievable?

Benchmarks for evaluating each question follow.

MNPS Charter Renewal Benchmarks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Category</th>
<th>MNPS Renewal Benchmarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Academic Performance Framework** | Over the accountability period, the school has met the “achieving” or “excelling” categories on the academic performance framework in the following areas:  
  • English language arts  
  • Mathematics  
  • Science  
  • Social Studies  
  • High School graduation and college preparation (if applicable)  
  • Optional academic goals included in the original application by the school |
| **Use of Assessment Data** | The school has an assessment system, outside of the required state assessments, that improves instructional effectiveness and student learning.  
  • The school regularly administers valid and reliable assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum and state performance standards  
  • The school makes assessment data accessible to teachers, school leaders, and board members  
  • Teachers use assessment results to inform instructional practice  
  • School leaders use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness and to develop professional development and coaching strategies  
  • School regularly communicates with parents/guardians about their students’ progress and growth |
| **Curriculum**              | The school’s curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning.  
  • The school has a curriculum framework with student performance expectations aligned with state and Common Core standards and across grades  
  • Teachers know what to teach and when to teach it |
- School has a process for selecting, developing, and reviewing chosen curriculum for effectiveness
- Teachers plan purposeful and focused lessons and those plans are approved by school instructional leadership

### Instructional Leadership

**The school has strong instructional leadership.**
- School’s leadership establishes an environment of high expectations for teacher performance in content knowledge and pedagogical skills
- The instructional leadership is adequate to support the development and mentoring of the teaching staff
- Instructional leaders provide sustained, systemic, and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers’ instructional effectiveness
- Instructional leaders implement a comprehensive professional development system designed to develop the competencies and skills of all teachers
- Instructional leaders regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers’ strengths and weaknesses
- School holds teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement

### At-Risk Students

**The school meets the educational needs of at-risk students.**
- The school uses clear procedures for identifying at-risk students with disabilities, English language learners, and those struggling academically
- The school implements the state’s RTI2 program with respect to meeting the needs of all students
- School adequately monitors the progress and success of at-risk students
- School follows state requirements for English Language Learners and has appropriately licensed teachers
- School provides adequate professional development to identify, differentiate instruction and meet the needs of students with disabilities for both general and special education students.
## Evidence Category
### Mission and Key Design Elements
The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented key design elements included in its original charter.
- The school follows its original mission and/or has worked with the district to change its original mission in the best interests of the students, families and community
- The school has implemented its key design elements

### Parents and Students
Parents and Students are satisfied with the school.
- School regularly communicates each student’s academic performance results to families
- As demonstrated on the district student survey, students are satisfied with the school
- Parents are satisfied with the school and keep their students enrolled from year to year

### Organizational Capacity
The school organization effectively supports the delivery of the educational program, as demonstrated on the organizational performance framework.
- School has established an administrative structure with staff, operational systems, policies and procedures that allow the school to carry out its academic program with fidelity
- Organizational structure establishes clear lines of accountability with clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- School has published complaint policy in place and works with families to resolve issues in a timely manner
- School recruits and retains highly qualified staff
- School has a clear student discipline plan in place that has been communicated to families and is differentiated for students with disabilities.
- School maintains adequate student enrollment
- School has a diversity plan in place that aligns with the MNPS Diversity Plan, with procedures to monitor progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets for special education students, ELL students, and economically disadvantaged students
- School regularly monitors and evaluates its programs and makes needed changes
- School complies with applicable health and safety laws
- School maintains adequate facilities

### Board Oversight
The school’s governing board works effectively to achieve the school’s academic, organizational and financial goals.
- Board members possess adequate skills and have in place the structures and procedures with which to govern the school and oversee management
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>The board implements, maintains, and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Board requests and receives sufficient information to provide</td>
<td>• Board effectively communicates with key contractors such as back-office providers and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rigorous oversight of the school’s programs and finances</td>
<td>ensures value in exchange for contracts and relationships it enters into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board establishes clear priorities, objectives, and long range goals</td>
<td>• Board takes appropriate and timely corrective action when there are organizational,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and has in place benchmarks for tracking progress as well as a process</td>
<td>leadership, management, facilities or fiscal deficiencies and puts in place benchmarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for regular review and revision</td>
<td>for determining if the corrections are effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board successfully recruits, hires, and retains key leadership personnel</td>
<td>• Board effectively recruits and selects new members in order to maintain adequate skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and provides them with sufficient resources to function effectively</td>
<td>sets and expertise for effective governance, and has in place an orientation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board evaluates its own performance and that of school leaders,</td>
<td>for new members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attends at least one board training per year as required by Tennessee</td>
<td>• Board has clear conflict of interest policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>law, and holds leadership accountable for academic achievement</td>
<td>• Board has clear, transparent process for dealing with complaints, makes the complaint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board effectively communicates with school community, including school</td>
<td>policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy, including acting on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership, staff, parents, and students</td>
<td>complaints in a timely manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Board holds all meetings in accordance with the state’s Open Meetings law and records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>minutes for all meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Legal Requirements                                                          | The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules, and regulations and the  |
|                                                                           | provisions of its charter.                                                               |
|                                                                           | • School compiles a record of substantial compliance with the terms of its charter and   |
|                                                                           |   applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations including but not limited to,  |
|                                                                           |   reporting in a timely manner, teacher licensing, open meetings, conflict of interest,  |
|                                                                           |   and audits                                                                          |
|                                                                           | • School implements effective systems and controls to ensure it meets legal and charter  |
|                                                                           |   requirements                                                                        |
|                                                                           | • School has an active and on-going relationship with either in-house or independent     |
|                                                                           |   legal counsel who reviews and makes recommendations on relevant policies, documents,   |
|                                                                           |   transactions, and incidents and handles other legal matters as needed                 |
|                                                                           | • School manages any litigation appropriately, and provides litigation papers to insurers |
|                                                                           |   and MNPS in a timely manner                                                          |

• Board has clear conflict of interest policies
• Board has clear, transparent process for dealing with complaints, makes the complaint policy clear to all stakeholders, and follows the policy, including acting on complaints in a timely manner
• Board holds all meetings in accordance with the state’s Open Meetings law and records minutes for all meetings

Legal Requirements
The school substantially complies with applicable laws, rules, and regulations and the provisions of its charter.

The board implements, maintains, and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.

Governance
The board implements, maintains, and abides by appropriate policies, systems and processes.
## Renewal Question 3
### Is the School Fiscally Sound?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Category</th>
<th>MNPS Renewal Benchmarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Budgeting and Long Range Planning** | The school operates pursuant to a long-range financial plan in which it creates realistic budgets that it monitors and adjusts when appropriate.  
• School has clear budgetary objectives and budget preparation procedures  
• Board members, school staff and administration contribute to the budget process as appropriate  
• School frequently compares its long-range fiscal plan to actual progress and adjusts it to meet changing conditions  
• Yearly audit required by the state is turned in by the due date and is in compliance with state requirements.  
• Audited financial statements show appropriate levels of revenues/expenses when run through the formulas contained within the financial performance framework |
| **Internal Controls**          | The school maintains appropriate internal controls and procedures.  
• School follows a set of comprehensive written fiscal policies and procedures  
• School keeps accurate records and appropriately documents transactions in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles  
• School identifies/analyzes risks and takes mitigating actions  
• School has controls in place to ensure management decisions are appropriately carried out and monitors and assesses controls to ensure their adequacy  
• School ensures duties are appropriately segregated and proper controls are in place  
• School has systems in place to provide the appropriate information needed by staff and the board to make sound financial decisions and to fulfill compliance requirements  
• School ensures that employees, or vendors who handle cash, payroll, or other payments are bonded and trained appropriately  
• School takes corrective action in a timely manner to address any internal control or compliance deficiencies identified by an external auditor |
| **Financial Reporting**        | The School has complied with financial reporting requirements by providing the required financial reports on time, ensuring their accuracy and completeness  
• Annual budget turned into the Office of Innovation, Budget Office and State Department of Charter Schools |
| Financial Condition | The school maintains adequate financial resources to ensure stable operations. Critical financial needs of the school are not dependent on variable income (grants, donations, fundraising).

- School maintains sufficient cash on hand to pay current bills, including those owed to the district such as benefits
- School maintains adequate liquid reserves to fund expenses in the event of income loss (generally three months)
- School prepares and monitors cash flow projections
- If philanthropy is included in the budget, school monitors progress toward its development goals on a periodic basis |

**Renewal Question 4**

Is the Renewal Plan for the Next Charter Period Reasonable, Feasible and Achievable?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Category</th>
<th>MNPS Renewal Benchmarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Plans for School’s Structure | Key structural elements of the school, as defined in the Renewal Application, are reasonable, feasible and achievable
- School is likely to fulfill its mission in the next charter period
- School has an enrollment plan that can support the school program
- School calendar and daily schedule clearly provide sufficient instructional time to meet all legal requirements, allow the school to meet its stated academic benchmarks, and abide by its proposed budget
- Key design elements are consistent with the mission statement and are feasible given the budget and staffing projections
- Curriculum framework for added grades aligns with the state’s performance standards and Common Core |

| Plans for the Educational Program | The school’s action plan for implementing the educational program to meet academic goals.
- School has plans for sustaining and improving upon student outcomes compiled during the previous charter period
- For schools providing secondary instruction, the graduation requirements meet or exceed state standards, and the school will have met the accreditation requirements as set forth by the State of Tennessee before the first graduating class occurs. |

| Plans for Board Oversight and Governance | The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable plan for board oversight and governance. |
- School governing board possesses wide range of experience, skills and abilities sufficient to oversee the academic, organizational and fiscal performance of the school
- If governing board oversees more than one school within the organization, board has sufficient resources and skills to ensure all schools are monitored efficiently
- Plans are in place for additional board members to be added as needed expertise is identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal, Facility, and Transportation Plans</th>
<th>The school provides a reasonable, feasible and achievable fiscal plan including plans for an adequate facility.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School’s budgets adequately support staffing, enrollment, facility and transportation projections (if school provides transportation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fiscal plans and projections are based on sound use of financial resources to support academic program needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information on enrollment demand provides clear evidence for enrollment projections and school growth (where applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Facility plans are adequate to meet educational program needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPLICATION FOR TENNESSEE CHARTER RENEWAL 2019**
**EXPEDITED/SIMPLE RENEWAL**

**Purpose**

Tennessee charter school renewal applications must provide an overview of students’ academic performance (including applicable standardized test scores) and an overview of the school’s operations and finances. The renewal application does not need to include copies of previously submitted performance reports and financial audits or reports, but those prior statements and reports may be referred to in the renewal application and considered by MNPS as part of the review process.

A school qualifies for an expedited/simple renewal only if:

- The school has a three-year status of “approaching or mastery” on the MNPS Academic Performance Framework (APF), in alignment with the state of Tennessee.

- Within the previous contract term, the school has never been in “target” status on the Academic Performance Framework (APF)

- Organizational performance has been in “achieving or excelling” status over the life of the previous charter term, and has not at any time been in “target” status as determined by the organizational performance framework

- Audited financials have been in the “achieving or excelling” status as determined by the financial framework with no significant findings over the previous charter term

- Each year of the charter term, the charter school has received a status of “on track to renew” on the MNPS annual charter school report card

**Overview of Guidelines for Renewal Application**

**Applicant Information Sheet and Assurances (forms attached)**

**Section I – Executive Summary (3 pages maximum)**

Provide a concise narrative that includes future goals and plans for the next ten year charter term. Explain why the students’ academic performance, the school’s financial and operational condition, and the school’s community impact merit renewal of the charter.

**Section II – Academic Performance (3 pages maximum)**

Include renewed academic benchmarks and any significant changes to the original educational plan (if applicable). Address progress toward decreasing achievement gaps and increasing diversity in both student and staff populations. Share how leader and teacher professional development has affected student achievement.
Section III – Operations and Governance (2 pages maximum)
Explain any changes in board membership during the current term, along with any future significant board changes (if any). Explain how this aligns with the school’s mission and vision. Include your plan to incorporate and expand parent participation on the board.

Section IV – Budget and Finance (3 pages maximum)
Address the alignment between expenditures and the school’s mission and plans for student academic growth and staff professional development. Review how any significant fiscal challenges were addressed during the current charter term, and describe the challenges that may arise during the next charter term (if renewed). Include a new ten year budget on the state budget form (budget form does not count towards the three pages).

Evaluation of Renewal Applications
Renewal applications should allow MNPS to address the following questions, as outlined in the MNPS Charter Renewal Policy (see policy for specific evidence categories under each question):

- Is the school an academic success?
- Is the school an effective, viable organization?
- Is the school fiscally sound?
- Is the renewal plan for the next charter period reasonable, feasible and achievable?
Renewal Application Submission Instructions

Renewal applicants are urged to contact the chartering authority during the ninth year of operation to verify the deadline for submission, whether any hard copies are required and any other local submission requirements or guidelines.

Page Order
Page 1 - School specific cover sheet
Page 2 - Charter Renewal – Applicant Information Sheet
Page 3 - Assurances
Application narrative (20 pages maximum)

Format
1. The expedited/simple renewal application, including the information sheet, narrative, any appendices and the assurances pages, may be no more than 15 pages.

2. All pages in the application should be sequentially numbered (e.g. 1 of 18).

3. Any appendices (if included) should be clearly labeled and referenced in the narrative of the application.

Filing Instructions
Please provide MNPS one (1) electronic copy and five (5) hard copies of the renewal application. **Renewal applications must be accompanied by a $2,500.00 application fee made out to the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.** In the event an application is insufficient and returned to the applicant without review, the fee will be returned.

The governing body must submit one electronic copy to the department of education, division of charter schools. Email or submission via online file transfer service (e.g., box.net) is preferred, but electronic copies may also be submitted via CD, USB drive, etc. Please use the contact information below:

Director of Charter Schools
charter.schools@tn.gov
Tennessee Department of Education
9th Floor – Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee  37243-0379
Phone:  615-532-6274
Fax #:  615-532-4791
Timeline
No later than April 1 of the year prior to the year in which the charter expires, the governing body must submit a renewal application to the authorizer. The authorizer must rule by resolution by the following February 1 whether to approve or deny the renewal application. Decisions not to renew charters may be appealed to the State Board of Education. Any appeal must be filed within 10 days of the chartering authority’s denial. The state board must rule on any appeals within 60 days of receipt of the appeal.

Materials must be received by the close of business on the date specified. Tennessee law provides that when the deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or State observed holiday, the letter of intent and application materials are due to the State on the next business day.
Charter Renewal – Applicant Information Sheet

Year current charter expires: ____________________________

Name of Charter School: 
__________________________________________________________________________

Name of Sponsor/Sponsoring Agency (if different from governing body)
__________________________________________________________________________

Primary Contact Person: ______________________________________________________
Telephone: ___________________  Email: ____________________________

Mailing Address:
__________________________________________________________________________

Proposed Grade Levels and Student Enrollment for next charter term:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First year of new charter term:</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Total Student Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year One</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Two</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Three</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Four</td>
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<td>Year Five</td>
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<td>Year Seven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Eight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Nine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Ten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature of Primary Contact Person_________________________  Date________________
Assurances
As the authorized representative of the sponsor, I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for a charter for [name of school] is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and if awarded a charter, the school:

1. will operate as a public, nonsectarian, non-religious public school, with control of instruction vested in the governing body of the school under the general supervision of the chartering authority and in compliance with the charter agreement and the Charter School Act;

2. will follow all federal, state and local laws and regulations that pertain to the operation of a public school, unless waived according to T.C.A. § 49-13-105;

3. will provide special education services for students as provided in Tennessee Code Annotated Title 49, Chapter 10, Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;

4. will adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students who are limited English proficient (LEP), including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, that are applicable to it;

5. will follow all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services;

6. will comply with all provisions of the Charter Schools Act, including, but not limited to
   a. employing individuals to teach who hold a license to teach in a public school in Tennessee;
   b. complying with Open Meetings and Open Records laws (T.C.A. §§ 8-44-101 et seq.; 10-7-503, 504) (guidance is available from the Office of Open Records Counsel);
   c. not charging tuition, except for students transferring from another district to the school pursuant to the local board’s out-of-district enrollment policy and T.C.A. § 49-6-3003;
   d. following state financial (budgeting and audit) procedures and reporting requirements according to T.C.A. § 49-13-111, 120 and 127;
   e. requiring any member of the governing body, employee, officer or other authorized person who receives funds, has access to funds, or has authority to make expenditures from funds, to give a surety bond in the form prescribed by T.C.A. § 8-19-101; and

7. Will, at all times, maintain all necessary and appropriate insurance coverage

________________________________________________________________________

Signature

________________________________________________________________________

Name and Title of Authorized Signer
## Renewal Application Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Term expires (June 30)</th>
<th>Renewal Application Due (April 1)</th>
<th>Decision (February 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAD</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithson Craighead Elementary</td>
<td>2018</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Vision</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2019</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>East End Prep</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM Prep</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nashville Prep</td>
<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberty Collegiate</td>
<td>2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cameron College Prep</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEAD Southeast</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPP High School</td>
<td>2022</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick Church College Prep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intrepid Academy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose Prep</td>
<td>2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nashville Classical</td>
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<td>KIPP Nashville College Prep</td>
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<td>Explore Community School</td>
<td>2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rocketship Nashville Northeast Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valor Flagship</td>
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<tr>
<td>KIPP Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academy of Computer Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM HS</td>
<td>2025</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocketship United</td>
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<td>2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valor Voyager</td>
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<td>2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPP Academy Nash @Kirkpatrick</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strive Collegiate</td>
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<tr>
<td>KA @ The Crossings</td>
<td>2026</td>
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<tr>
<td>East End Prep (6-8) (see above)</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td>2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIPP Academy</td>
<td>2026</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td>2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithson Craighead Academy</td>
<td>2029</td>
<td>2028</td>
<td>2029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charter School Closure and Revocation
Policy and Procedures Manual
Narrative

The Office of Charter Schools recognizes that starting and managing a charter school is hard work, and requires tremendous commitment and determination, all within an often uncertain environment full of significant challenges.

All of those who embark on this journey deserve our deepest respect for embracing the challenge of educating the next generation of students. The power of charter schools to drive broader change is dependent on their ability to rise above the prevailing mediocrity. If charter schools serve only to expand parental choice without significantly raising the bar on student achievement, this innovative and ambitious reform will have little or no impact on the wider landscape of public education and it will only serve to ensure the neediest and most at-risk students will fall farther behind.

While it is the policy of the Office of Charter Schools to be collaborative with the charter schools and to encourage their success, charter schools exist to achieve meaningful results for their students as demonstrated by a sound body of evidence. Charter schools that cannot deliver results showing significant student achievement gains must be closed. The Office of Charter Schools has a responsibility to the students, parents, stakeholders and the broader public to ensure a school that is not performing is closed and those students affected are transferred to schools where they can be successful. Appendix A outlines the procedures the Office of Charter Schools may take when a school is clearly not meeting standards, up to and including a closure recommendation.

There are three ways a charter school can be closed: it can voluntarily surrender its charter, the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education can choose not to renew a charter, or the charter can be revoked.

As outlined in the Accountability Framework, the Office of Charter Schools looks at many factors when exercising oversight of charter schools. In broad terms, the factors include:

- Academic Performance
- Operational Performance
- Financial Stability

A charter school in the bottom 5% of the state’s academic accountability system and labeled as a priority school will be automatically closed at the end of the school year.
Besides poor academic outcomes, a charter school may have their charter revoked for the following reasons:

- Serious violations of law;
- Material and substantial violation of the charter contract
- Fiscal mismanagement

**Closure Procedure**

Each October, the Office of Charter Schools prepares an annual report on the state of charter schools for the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education which includes recommendations of closure when necessary, with supporting documentation and evidence so the MNPS Board of Education has the necessary information to make a decision. A decision to revoke a charter, or not renew a charter, takes place at the end of the school year unless a school meets the criteria outlined in Tennessee Charter Law that allows immediate closure. TCA §49-13-122(4) states

“Nothing in this sub-section (a) shall prohibit a chartering authority from revoking or denying renewal a charter agreement of a charter school that fails to meet minimum performance requirements set forth in the charter agreement.

(b) A public charter school agreement may be revoked at any time or not renewed by the final chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the school:

1. Committed a material violation of any conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter agreement;
2. Failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward the performance expectations set forth in the charter agreement;
3. Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.”
When it becomes evident that a school must be closed for any reason, the following tables and guidelines will apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Conceptual Timeline for Closure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Decision</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>NOTIFICATION AND INITIAL STEPS</td>
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Upon reaching the decision to close a charter school has been made, the Office of Charter Schools has three primary goals to be accomplished:

- Providing educational services in accordance with the charter contract until the end of the school year, or the agreed upon date when instruction will cease.
- Reassigning students to schools that meet their educational needs.
- Addressing the school’s financial, legal and reporting obligations.
These goals are given the highest priority during the closure process. The attached framework and timeline will be followed as it applies. Some tasks will not apply, depending on the particular school being closed. The Office of Charter Schools will work closely with the school’s governing board prior to the beginning of closure proceedings to agree on which tasks are necessary and outline how the Office of Charter Schools intends to supervise the closure. Responsible parties and completion dates will be agreed upon to ensure a transparent and smooth closure, and the Office of Charter Schools will attend parent and community meetings to explain not only the mechanics of the closure process, but exactly why the school is being closed. See Appendix B for Closure Protocol.
## Appendix A – Procedures for Sub-Standard Performance of a Charter School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status*</th>
<th>Possible Triggers</th>
<th>Possible Actions/Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Notice of Concern| • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring, implementation, compliance, or performance reviews, or through any other means identified by the Charter Authorizer.  
• Signs of financial weakness identified through an annual financial audit and/or internal review.  
• Achievement of “falls far below standard” in one area of the performance frameworks or achievement of “does not meet standard” in multiple areas of the performance frameworks.  
• Repeated failure to submit required documents on a timely basis.                                                                                           | Letter to the school's governing board and CEO detailing areas of concern.                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | The following MNPS individuals will be cc’d on all communication:                                                                                                                  |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of Schools                                                                                           |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Chief of Schools                                                                                                  |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Chief of Staff                                                                                                   |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of BOE Relations and Management                                                                          |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of BOE Members                                                                                           |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of Charter Schools                                                                                       |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Coordinator of Charter Schools                                                                                     |
| Notice of Deficiency| • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  
• Achievement of “falls far below standard” in multiple areas of the performance frameworks or achievement of “does not meet standard” in a significant number of areas of the performance frameworks.  
• Signs of significant financial weakness identified through an annual financial audit and/or internal review.  
• Failure to comply with applicable state laws, district policies, and/or State Board rules/policies, or other regulations.  
• Failure to comply with terms of charter agreement with LEA.                                                                                                             | Letter to the governing board detailing areas of deficiency with a requirement that a Performance Improvement Plan is developed and implemented (with specific improvements, objectives, timelines, measures). The Performance Improvement Plan must be approved by the Office of Charter Schools. |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | The following MNPS individuals will be cc’d on all communication:                                                                                                                  |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of Schools                                                                                           |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Chief of Schools                                                                                                  |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Chief of Staff                                                                                                   |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of BOE Relations and Management                                                                          |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of BOE Members                                                                                           |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of Charter Schools                                                                                       |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Coordinator of Charter Schools                                                                                     |
| Notice of Probation| • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Letter to governing board to serve as notification of probationary status and outlining terms of probation; Office of Charter Schools creates a Corrective Action Plan |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | The following MNPS individuals will be cc’d on all communication:                                                                                                                  |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of Schools                                                                                           |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Chief of Schools                                                                                                  |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Chief of Staff                                                                                                   |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of BOE Relations and Management                                                                          |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of BOE Members                                                                                           |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Director of Charter Schools                                                                                       |
|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Coordinator of Charter Schools                                                                                     |
| Charter Review | • Continued failure to meet performance targets (state accountability, charter contract, or performance frameworks).  
• Failure to meet objectives set forth in the Plan of Correction.  
• Continued or significant signs of financial weakness identified through annual financial audits or other means.  
• Continued or significant failure to comply with applicable state laws, State Board rules/policies, or other regulations.  
• Continued or significant failure to comply with conditions of the charter agreement.  

with the charter school that addresses deficits and has measurable outcomes, a timeline and very specific improvement expectations.  

The following MNPS individuals will be cc’d on all communication:  
Director of Schools  
Chief of Schools  
Chief of Staff  
Director of BOE Relations and Management  
Director of BOE Members  
Director of Charter Schools  
Coordinator of Charter Schools  

| Charter Revocation | • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  
• Pattern of failure to comply with or meet performance targets (state accountability, charter contract, or performance frameworks).  
• Three consecutive years of achieving “falls far below standard” on the performance frameworks in the same category.  
• Failure to successfully address the terms of the probationary status, including the Plan of Correction.  
• Flagrant disregard of the charter agreement (T.C.A. § 49-13-122); fraud, misappropriation of funds (T.C.A. § 4913-122); extended pattern of failure to comply with the terms of the charter; failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.  
• Performed any of the acts that are conditions for non-approval of a charter school under T.C.A. § 49-13-108.  

Recommendation to revoke, or not to revoke, the charter, or impose lesser sanctions (at this, or any point in the process, a school can voluntarily surrender its charter).  
Decision by the MNPS Board of Education to commence or not commence revocation proceedings.  

The following MNPS individuals will be cc’d on all communication:  
Director of Schools  
Chief of Schools  
Chief of Staff  
Director of BOE Relations and Management  
Director of BOE Members  
Director of Charter Schools  
Coordinator of Charter Schools  

| Charter Revocation | • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  

Letter stating reasons for proposed revocation to governing board.  
Charter timeline (attached to this policy) goes into effect immediately.  

| Charter Revocation | • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  

| Charter Revocation | Letter stating reasons for proposed revocation to governing board.  
Charter timeline (attached to this policy) goes into effect immediately.  

| Charter Revocation | • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  

| Charter Revocation | Letter stating reasons for proposed revocation to governing board.  
Charter timeline (attached to this policy) goes into effect immediately.  

| Charter Revocation | • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  

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| Charter Revocation | Letter stating reasons for proposed revocation to governing board.  
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| Charter Revocation | • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  

| Charter Revocation | Letter stating reasons for proposed revocation to governing board.  
Charter timeline (attached to this policy) goes into effect immediately.  

| Charter Revocation | • Signs of weak performance in any of the three key areas (academic, operational, and/or financial) identified through routine monitoring.  

| Charter Revocation | Letter stating reasons for proposed revocation to governing board.  
Charter timeline (attached to this policy) goes into effect immediately.
**Charter Review results in recommendation to revoke.**
- The school has done any of the following:
  1. Pattern of failure to comply with or meet performance targets (state accountability, charter contract, or performance frameworks).
  2. Three consecutive years of achieving “falls far below standard” on the performance frameworks in the same category.
  3. Failure to successfully address the terms of the probationary status, including the Plan of Correction.
  4. Flagrant disregard of the charter agreement (T.C.A. § 4913-122); fraud, misappropriation of funds (T.C.A. § 49-13-122); extended pattern of failure to comply with the terms of the charter; failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.
  5. Inclusion on the TDOE’s Priority School List of the bottom 5% of schools in the state (T.C.A. § 4913-122).
  6. Performed any of the acts that are conditions for non-approval of a charter school under T.C.A. § 49-13-108.
- Except in the cases of fraud, misappropriation of funds, flagrant disregard of the charter agreement, or similar misconduct, a decision to revoke shall become effective at the close of the academic year (T.C.A. § 49-13-122).

*NOTE: The outlined procedures are not a step by step process. The Office of Charter Schools reserves the right to put schools at any status without going through the steps if more immediate actions are warranted.*

The following MNPS individuals will be cc’d on all communication:
- Director of Schools
- Chief of Schools
- Chief of Staff
- Director of BOE Relations and Management
- Director of BOE Members
- Director of Charter Schools
- Coordinator of Charter Schools
Appendix B – Closure Action Plan

(see attached plan)
Charter School Replication Policy
Background: Meeting a Demonstrated Need

The Office of Charter Schools, started in 2009, has authorized a large number of charter schools that have excelled in student academic achievement on state assessments and growth measures. Despite steady growth in the number of authorized schools, demand from Nashville families for more high quality seats has far outpaced the rate at which new schools are opening.

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools and the Office of Charter Schools have sought a way to be responsive to this demand without sacrificing the rigor and quality of its existing new school application review process. MNPS focused on the replication of existing successful schools as a possible area where efficiencies in its review process could be identified. While MNPS has already approved seven (7) replications of existing, successful schools, it has largely done so one at a time and generally used the same application, contract, monitoring and renewal policies and practices as it uses for new schools.

Other factors that support our focus on replication include amendments to the original 2002 Tennessee Charter Law, which now allows for open enrollment schools and provides new pathways to opening both new charter schools and to charter replication. Charter networks and single successful independent schools across Tennessee and the country seek to replicate on a larger scale and at a faster pace than envisioned by MNPS’s existing authorizing practices.

In order to continue our record of granting charters to only the most worthy applicants, MNPS needed to differentiate its authorizing practices to allow for authorizing replication organizations while maintaining the rigor and accountability for which MNPS is known.

In 2011, MNPS won a grant from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to support its work in performance management, replication and closure of charter schools. Through this work, we have engaged national experts, MNPS staff, and representatives from charter schools in specific dialogue relating to replicating, as well as closing, charter schools. This conversation has been essential in shaping our thinking about replication and informing the considerations and policy included within the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools array of innovation school policies.

MNPS Considerations Specific to Replication

Among the issues specific to charter school replication, four in particular guide MNPS’s policy-driven approach:

Creating more high-quality charter school seats. Nationwide, a subset of charter schools has achieved extraordinary results, particularly with disadvantaged students. These include stand-alone schools, networks of schools and schools that partner with a charter management organization (CMO) or educational management organization (EMO – NOTE that EMO’s are not allowed under Tennessee Charter Law as they are operated on a for-profit basis). These high performing charter schools have shown that it is possible for disadvantaged children to achieve at high levels, and for families to have an array of excellent educational choices. Through charter school replication, MNPS has a tremendous opportunity to build portfolios of high performing schools by enabling highly successful schools to serve more students. That should be the goal of all replications – to increase the number of high quality seats for students – rather than increasing quantity alone. At the same time, MNPS will continue to close low performing schools in accordance with its Policies and Procedures for Renewal of Charter Schools and its
Policies and Procedures for Closure of Low Performing Charter Schools to assure on-going quality of the charter schools we authorize.

**Manage Risk.** As MNPS takes on growing portfolios of charter schools and approves network expansion to larger numbers of schools, we will unavoidably take on more risk – risks that a successful school cannot duplicate its success in another location; that the success of multiple schools hinges on one charismatic leader; or that a successful network will exceed its capacity by opening more schools and perhaps even decreasing the performance of the original school, among others. Just as successful charter schools balance the need for growth against resources, human capacity, facilities and other challenges, MNPS must pursue strategies that enable us to meet the needs of growing numbers of students while maintaining the highest quality standards for which we have been nationally recognized. Risk assessment of replicating schools seeks to focus more heavily on capacity areas that are high risk to the network or CMO operating multiple schools. Recent research shows that even the strongest CMO’s cannot simply pick up their model in one area of the country and successfully move it to another without considering numerous factors such as culture, community, state laws, and demographics. MNPS will want to look closely at already established, successful, CMO’s to determine if they are willing to adjust their model to the needs and culture of Nashville.

**Increase efficiency with scale.** Given current trends, MNPS will increasingly face constraints to the existing investments of time, resources, and personnel we can devote to individual schools. Oversight of 29 + schools open or approved to open by 2018, and with access to the newly approved authorizer fees, will necessitate restructuring processes related to replicating the design of streamlined processes and capitalizing on efficiencies available while maintaining MNPS’s rigorous authorizing practices and standards. Resource gains made through replication can then be applied to the traditional one-school-at-a-time application process to promote innovative and strategic schools as well as support other volume-sensitive authorizing functions. Maintain school-level accountability. For accountability purposes, replicated schools are held accountable in the same manner as MNPS authorized schools that are not replications. While some monitoring and special network-wide accountability will occur at the network level, academic, financial and operational performance should continue at the school level, with the primary focus on the academic success of each school’s students. In addition, certain new network or CMO level fiscal and capacity monitoring will be required to help ensure those entities can support their schools. The Comptroller’s office can now look at audit information from not only individual schools, but also the network audits, which will give the district additional insight into a CMO’s financials.

**Legal Context.** Prior to the 2011 Tennessee Charter School amendment, charter schools could only be approved one at a time. The change which opened up charter enrollment to any student residing within Davidson County has allowed MNPS to provide more high quality charter seats and will provide new pathways to do so as well as be effective and efficient at the charter review level. The challenge of multi-school authorizing is to do it in a way that ensures quality while not granting more charters to networks and existing schools than their human and fiscal resources can handle, and to keep the collective and individual risk of school failure low.

By allowing a charter school CMO or existing stand-alone school to operate more than one school, several pathways for replication/multi-school/multi-site are opened. They are:
Add a new school to an existing charter. MNPS can allow the addition of a new school or schools to an existing school or CMO whether or not that school is an exact replica of the existing school. The CMO or existing school can operate under the same governing board and may utilize the same officers. Individuals may serve on multiple boards under the same CMO as well.

Initially charter multi-school networks. With a newly designed replication application, MNPS will be able to replicate high performing networks that do not currently operate in Nashville, or create sub-networks of schools intended to be replications that are legally separate from the schools upon which they are modeled. Significantly, this can be accomplished at the application stage.

Separation of corporate renewal from school renewal. One education corporation operating multiple schools that began operation at different times and therefore are at different states of their accountability plans presents challenges to MNPS’s renewal process. The current renewal process was designed for one school with one accountability plan even if it operated with multiple campuses (of different grades) in multiple locations. The high stakes closure decision at the center of renewal turns on whether the school has met the student performance goals in its accountability plan. Replication presents a challenge because schools within the same CMO would need to be reviewed pursuant to their individual accountability plans every year, with high stakes review every five years, while the corporate renewal (so long as it is justified) would take place before the end of the ten year charter term. All contracts going forward with CMO’s will account for that difference in accountability.

Research Findings. The best practices from latest research, cited below are listed as key findings:

The replication of proven successful charter schools is a critical tool for increasing the number and accelerating growth of high-quality public schools.\(^1\) Experts suggest authorizers should permit replication only of those schools with proven track records of success and the capacity to replicate successfully while sustaining excellence at existing schools.\(^2\) Experts have noted the importance of authorizers articulating clear definitions of school quality and systems to measure it in order to make decisions about renewal and replication. Scaling up successful ventures presents some specific challenges, for schools and for organizations outside of education.\(^3\)


Researchers have documented the importance of frequent, hand-on monitoring to school oversight, particularly in the context of rapid growth. Especially with replications, strong school-level relationships and accountability are crucial to detect and capitalize on successes, and to detect and intervene when an effort is off track.⁴

According to NACSA, “A quality authorizer executes contracts with charter schools that articulate the rights and responsibilities of each party regarding school autonomy, funding, administration and oversight, outcomes, measures for evaluating success or failure, performance consequences, and other material terms.”⁵

Some multi-school efforts struggle to balance the need for faithful replication of their original model with the conflicting need to vary their successful designs to address local needs. Network central offices also confront tension between supporting new schools with key challenges, as district offices do, and structuring relationships with individual schools to encourage decentralized control and school-level autonomy. Those that opt to decentralize may do so at the cost of creating a common network-wide culture or ensuring fidelity to their models. Scaling up also brings new challenges to successful schools, such as how quickly to grow, where to site new schools, and what kinds of alliances to form with other networks, schools, districts, and community-based organizations.

National best practice aligns the majority of focus on performance at the school level and will help prevent problems at one school from jeopardizing programs at other schools in a network or other multi-school effort. This is in addition to monitoring network and board activities to ascertain legal, fiscal, or other issues that may impact performance across schools.

**Implications for the Office of Charter Schools**

The Office of Charter Schools was created in 2009 to assist the district in carrying out its responsibilities as a charter school authorizer under Tennessee Charter School law. The work of the Office is guided by the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education policies and priorities. These policies are continually monitored and updated to reflect national best practice, guided by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Principles and Standards.

The intent of the Office of Charter Schools’ replication policy is to continue our record of chartering strong schools as successful programs to serve more students, but in a way that is intentional and deliberately ensures quality. The Office of Charter Schools anticipates a marked increase in new school seats as more existing charter schools, both local and around the country, demonstrate their interest in and qualifications for, replication.

The Office of Charter Schools will evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and is committed to continuous quality improvement. It is also expected that lessons learned as part of its replication work will inform not only refinements to the replication policies and practices, but also improvements to the


already rigorous one-at-a-time authorizing practices which will remain a key component of the Office of Charter Schools’ now differentiated approach to charter school authorizing.
Policy Statements

Application and Review Process

Policy Statement 1. MNPS will consider replication applications from existing district charter schools that have demonstrated successful practices and advanced student achievement as well as organizations with multiple campuses either in Tennessee or from around the country, but will maintain strict quality standards. Replication applications must have a high likelihood of improving student learning and academic achievement. **Applications must be accompanied by a $2,500.00 application fee made out to the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.** In the event an application is insufficient and returned to the applicant without review, the fee will be returned.

Policy Statement 2. MNPS shall offer an “expedited” or streamlined application process specifically for replication applicants who can demonstrate they have met specific criteria, but meeting such criteria shall not alone qualify an application for approval.

Policy Statement 3. Applicants may be deemed eligible to enter an expedited application process if they have compiled a strong and compelling record of meeting the original school’s accountability plan goals (or similar standards for one or more existing schools not authorized by MNPS) as determined by the replication application and scoring rubric developed in conjunction with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, or that the replicated school meets the needs of MNPS due to overcrowding, specific programmatic themes, etc.

Policy Statement 4. Prior to approval of any replication application a due diligence review of the charter management organization (CMO), its management partners and partner organizations will be conducted.

Policy Statement 5. The Office of Charter Schools will maintain close oversight of the replication process through specific approval recommendations of each new charter management organization or school which is part of it. This approval process will not be delegated to an education corporation, charter management organization or network.

Oversight, Evaluation, Revocation and Renewal

Policy Statement 6. The performance of each school within a Charter Management Organization will continue to be assessed on its own student achievement data, and not based on an aggregation of data across the organization. Each individual school will continue to face high stakes closure decisions in alignment with MNPS Renewal and Closure Practices. The academic, organizational and financial performance management frameworks adopted by the Office of Charter Schools will provide the triggers for which such decisions will be made.

Policy Statement 7. Charter Management Organizations shall not be permitted to avoid the consequences of school closure by attempting to merge with a higher performing charter management organization unless first approved by the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools Board of Education. This could take the form of a “rescue” organization stepping in and taking over a low performing school or organization and would require board of education approval.
Supplemental Practices, Policies and Procedures
The MNPS Replication Policy provides an overview governing approval, monitoring, and renewal of replication and describes its central elements. It does not delineate every detail of the process employed by the Office of Charter Schools or the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education. Supplemental, interstitial practices and procedures may be required and employed to ensure the integrity, comprehensiveness and excellence of the charter school program and replications in particular. Such amendments and supplements, if material, may be made either through action of the MNPS Board of Public Education or the Office of Charter Schools.