



Charter School Authorization Handbook

Updated November 4, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision for Charter Schools	2
Mission for Authorizing	2
Purpose	2
Authorizer Goals and Assurances	4
Demographics and Governance	4
Charter School Support Team	5
Process and Requirements of Charter School Applicants	5
Sample Timeline for Submission of a New Application	5
Letter of Intent	6
Application Logistics	6
Application Review	7
Amending Applications Denied in the First Application	10
Sample Resubmission Timeline	10
Charter School Renewal	11
Sample Renewal Timeline	11
Renewal Application Chart	12
Charter School Closure and Revocation	12
Closure Procedure	13
Performance Monitoring	13
Addressing Substandard Performance of Charter Schools	14
Contract Amendment	16
Sample Timeline for Amendment Application	16
Charter School Waiver	17
Charter School Waiver Request Form	18
Guidelines for Charter School Operators	19
Annual Reporting Requirements	19
Authorizer Reporting	19
Authorizer Reporting Timeline	20
Charter School Reporting Timeline	21
Interim Review Process	23

VISION FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

KCS believes high-quality charter schools can be a valuable structure to educate all Knox County students effectively. All charter schools in Knox County are expected to cultivate strong school capacity to provide high quality academic instruction addressing student performance outcomes in accordance with the Knox County Schools strategic plan.

MISSION FOR AUTHORIZATION

The Knox County Schools Chartering Authority is dedicated to effective oversight by using high quality standards and evaluations to ensure charter schools are of exceptional caliber. The focus will be on success for every student, career empowerment and preparation, and excellence in foundational skills, particularly early literacy, and middle-school math.

PURPOSE

Charter Schools are meant to serve as innovative learning centers where strong teachers and experienced administrators advance each student's achievement every day, regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, proficiency in English, academic ability, social capital, or family income. KCS calls for proposals that consider the academic performance of schools, the goals of the KCS Strategic Plan, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Principles and Standards, and the State Board of Education Authorizing Standards.

KCS is looking for charter schools that specifically address an innovative approach to all the following priorities as identified in the KCS Strategic Plan:

- Increasing student academic achievement and growth, particularly in high poverty and high needs schools/populations where achievement outcomes are in the lowest quintile of the school system
- Enhancing student academic success by focusing on the learning needs of each student and providing access to high quality, rigorous, differentiated instruction and high expectations in every classroom, every day
- Closing achievement gaps defined by income, race, language, disability, or other student characteristics
- Ensuring that the school is staffed with a cadre of highly effective educators who are continually working collaboratively to improve upon their instructional craft and their classroom management with trauma-informed practices and social/emotional learning as central tenets
- Engaging families and the school community meaningfully in the educational process
- Developing an operational infrastructure that enables, facilitates, and supports student learning and success.

KCS is also looking for proposals that aim to address Superintendent Jon Rysewyk's four priorities:

- Excellence in foundational skills, particularly early literacy and middle-school math
- Providing great educators in every school
- Career empowerment and preparation; and
- Success for every student.

Additionally, KCS is seeking:

- New or conversion charter schools that show a deep commitment to effectively educating every child enrolled and embrace diversity in all its forms
- New or conversion charter schools can successfully extend the school day, school week, or school year to provide more abundant, high quality learning opportunities for students to achieve and succeed
- Conversion schools that demonstrate the capacity to radically change both the culture and results of schools in the lowest achievement quintile in the school system
- New or conversion schools that employ evidence-based innovative practices that provide high quality and effective education to students while operating within a resource-constrained fiscal environment

Additional priorities include new or conversion schools that:

- Present evidence that demonstrates outreach to and engagement with the community in which the applicant intends to locate
- Present proof of the sponsoring organization's establishment of 501(c) (3) non-profit status as required by state law
- Have developed a robust instructional technology plan to support excellent classroom instruction
- Have conducted detailed facilities research leading to the likelihood of minimal challenges in identifying and securing an appropriate facility that will support the mission of the school
- Have identified an outstanding potential school leader or have a specific plan for doing so within 90 days of the approved charter

To see the full Request for Proposals, [click here](#) or copy and paste the following link into your browser.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_E-NgSetGx2ILnzeL5KQHvwiGUp8L0c-/view

AUTHORIZER GOALS AND ASSURANCES

Knox County Schools deeply desires that each Charter School it authorizes is successful. Each school goes through a rigorous application process, and only the best candidates are selected. To this end, the KCS Chartering Authority strives to focus on the following goals:

- Improve learning for all students to close the achievement gap
- Provide options for parents to meet educational needs of students
- Encourage the use effective teaching methods
- Provide greater decision-making authority to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance
- Measure performance of students and staff, and ensure that children have opportunities to reach proficiency on state academic assessments
- Provide charters access to high-quality administrative services and professional development
- Encourage schools to afford parents substantial meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children
- Protect charter school autonomy by aligning processes closely to State and Federal laws, therefore minimizing additional requirements, including but not limited to providing equal access to students with disabilities and English Language Learners
- Encourage successful existing charters to replicate to advance opportunities for all students
- Monitor and ensure compliance of charters to all Federal and State law

DEMOGRAPHICS AND GOVERNANCE

Knox County Schools is the 68th largest school district in the United States. The consolidated city-county area includes Knoxville City, covering an area of about 508.3 square miles. As of 2021 the district comprises 91 schools that serve more than 59,188 students, as shown on the following chart.

School Type	Count
Elementary	52
High School	17
Middle School	17
Other Schools	5

Knox County Schools is a diverse school system serving students from more than 122 countries, with 125 languages spoken. The diverse student population includes 3% Asian, 16.9% Black/African American, 10.8% Hispanic/Latino, .4% Native American/Alaska Native, .3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 68.7% White.

A nine-member elected Board and its appointed Superintendent lead the school district. The Board provides leadership and policy direction to KCS. As the Board of Education has no taxing authority, the Knox County Schools funding comes primarily from state and local tax dollars. The KCS budget is approved annually by the Knox County Commission. KCS is committed to continuous improvement and providing students with the best education possible. One Charter School, Emerald Academy, serves approximately 450 students.

Knox County Schools has aligned its practices with the [National Association of Charter School Authorizers \(NACSA\) Principles and Standards](#). To see the standards in their entirety, you may also cut and paste the following link in your browser.

https://www.qualitycharters.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Principles-and-Standards_2015-Edition.pdf

CHARTER SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAM

A Charter School Support Team is available for potential and existing charters. Either Julie Thompson or Kathy Duggan will be the first point of contact. If necessary, they may refer you to additional personnel.

Julie Thompson, Executive Director of Academic Supports (julie.thompson@knoxschools.org)

Kathy Duggan, Charter School Liaison (kathy.duggan@knoxschools.org)

PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS OF CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICANTS

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR SUBMISSION OF A NEW APPLICATION FOR A CHARTER SCHOOL

Due Date <small>Note: If the date falls on a weekend, the due date will be the next business day. Dates are subject to change.</small>	Action
December 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Letters of Intent (LOI) Deadline to KCS and TN Department of Education Office of School Choice
February 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed charter applications due to KCS no later than 4:30 p.m. ● Applications checked for completeness
February 2 –February 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Independent Application Review ● Upload independent rubrics
February 22–February 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborative Analysis of Application ● KCS Staff prepares for a capacity interview
March 1 – March 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct Capacity Interview
March 8 – March 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charter Review Team meets to develop consensus on the rubric
March 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charter Team Leaders turn in completed consensus rubric
March 22 – April 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The KCS staff completes the recommendation report
April 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recommendation Reports due to the KCS Board of Education
April 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● KCS Board of Education vote on Charter School Recommendation

LETTER OF INTENT

The deadline for the Letter of Intent (LOI) is **December 3**. If December 3 falls on a weekend or holiday, and then submission can occur on the next business day. Only those applicants submitting a complete LOI on or before **December 3** will be eligible to submit full proposals for the application cycle. Prospective charter operators can find instructions for the LOI on the [KCS Charter School Webpage](#), or may cut and paste the following link.

<https://www.knoxschools.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=2071>

Applicants are required to submit the LOI to both KCS and the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) 60 days before submitting a completed application on **February 1** each year. If February 1 falls on a weekend or holiday, and then submission can occur on the next business day.

The LOI should be submitted to KCS at charteringauthority@knoxschools.org. Hard copies should be submitted to this address:

Attn: Office of Academic Supports
Knox County Schools
PO Box 2188
Knoxville, TN 37902

The Charter Governing Body must also submit one electronic copy to the TDOE at charter.schools@tn.gov.

APPLICATION LOGISTICS

The proposal must follow the Charter School Application as found on the [TDOE website](#). To see the full application, you may also cut and paste the following link.

<https://www.tn.gov/education/school-options/charter-schools/charter-school-application.html>

The application describes the sections that apply to new charters and replications. Applicants should look closely at the application scoring rubric, also found on the TDOE website. The [scoring rubric](#) outlines the criteria under which reviewers will evaluate each section. Potential charter operators can find additional application assistance on [KCS Charter School Webpage](#) using the link above.

The Knox County Schools will provide guidance when specific requests are made. KCS authorizers will meet with potential applicants *by appointment* to clarify what the applicant should seek to answer. This guidance, if requested, should be considered carefully in crafting the final application and may include references to the law or other resources that may be necessary for developing the application, meeting deadlines, and/or indicate specific documents that must be submitted as a part of the application.

The Knox County Schools will be impartial to all potential applicants seeking assistance. KCS will not compose application sections for applicants or complete research and development for which the applicant is responsible. Applicants must take full accountability for what is written and submitted to KCS. KCS has developed a web page to provide charter school information, FAQ's, and appropriate contact information for developing and submitting a charter school application. In addition, the State of

Tennessee charter school website also offers guidance, as well as necessary forms. Before requesting an appointment applicants are encouraged to consult the [website for additional information](#).

All charter school application materials can be found on the Tennessee Department of Education website by cutting and pasting the following link:

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/nonpublic/chtr_sch/CharterSchoolApplicationforSY202223.pdf

After the LOI is submitted, full application proposals are due **on February 1, no later than 4:30 p.m. ET on or before the year preceding the year in which the proposed public charter school plans to begin operation**. Knox County Schools will not accept submissions received after this date. *If applications are submitted earlier, please note that the ninety-day application review will not begin until February 1.* Late or incomplete applications will be returned at the applicant's expense or destroyed after 30 days. Applications must be accompanied by a \$2,500.00 application fee made out to Knox County Schools, which will be used to defer the cost to review the application. If an application is insufficient and is returned to the applicant without review, KCS will return the fee. Once the review process has begun, the fee is nonrefundable.

All submitted proposals become a public record after submission to KCS. Submission of a proposal is an official waiver of confidentiality.

When submitting your application, please provide KCS one (1) electronic copy and five (5) hard copies. E-mailed proposals should be submitted to KCS at charteringauthority@knoxschools.org. Hard copies should be submitted to this address:

Attn: Office of Academic Supports
Knox County Schools
PO Box 2188
Knoxville, TN 37902

The Charter Governing Body must also submit one electronic copy to the TDOE (charter.schools@tn.gov). Email submission via online file transfer service (e.g., box.net) is preferred, but charter operators may also submit electronic copies via CD, USB drive, etc. Please use the contact information below:

Director of Charter Schools
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

If the review team deems that an application requires an amendment, the same number of copies of any updates or revisions submitted during the review process should also be submitted to the above entities. Please note that no additions or revisions will be accepted during the initial ninety-day application review process.

APPLICATION REVIEW

The State application comes with a scoring rubric, which the committee will use to guide the review committee's final recommendations. However, there are certain *minimum* general criteria the committee will consider when reviewing the proposals. These criteria are:

- Letter of Intent is submitted by **December 5, 2022**.
- Application is submitted by the **February 1, 2023** deadline.
- The focus of the application must be aligned with all relevant KCS priorities outlined at the beginning of the Request for Proposal (RFP). Proposals that meet the minimum criteria outlined above will then be evaluated by the review committee on the application evidence. The focus of the application is outlined in the RFP.

When formatting the application, please use the following guidelines:

- Font is either Arial or Times New Roman.
- The font size is no smaller than 11 (Arial Narrow font will not be accepted.).
- Pages have been numbered consecutively with a one-inch margin on all sides.
- The application does not exceed 250 pages; appendices and budget pages are in addition to the 250 page limit.
- Section titles have been highlighted within the narrative, labeled, and tabbed, following the state application template.
- The submitted application has been formatted in Adobe Acrobat.
- Budget documents may be created in Microsoft Excel then formatted in Adobe Acrobat for submission and are not considered part of the 250 page limit. Budget documents should include evidence of sufficient funding and/or source for start-up funding of the charter school.
- Five (5) hard copies and one electronic copy have been submitted. In the event of any discrepancies between the hard and electronic copies, KCS will consider the electronic copy as the official copy.
- Each application, whether submitted on a flash drive or hard copies, contains appropriate signatures on all copies.
- At the time of submission, all applications will include a check in the amount of \$2,500.00 made payable to Knox County Schools.
- We caution applicants to not use a "cut and paste" from vendor internet curriculum/software programs without providing rationale and evidence of research and exploration of best practices for the pupil demographics to be served.

Only proposals that meet the above criteria will be recommended for approval. The review committee reserves the right to discontinue its review if it is determined that a proposal does not meet these minimum requirements.

Knox County Schools is interested not only in the potential of proposed schools to successfully navigate the challenges of the application process and the challenges of the start-up period, but also whether the school is likely to meet the criteria for renewal at the end of the initial ten-year charter period.

The application review consists of an evaluation of the application as submitted, and a capacity interview with the prospective applicant and their proposed governing board. The district has 90 calendar days from February 1 to submit recommendations to the KCS Board of Education for vote.

Each application will be reviewed by the Charter School Review Committee using the [TDOE Rubric](#). The applications will be reviewed for the academic, operational, and financial capacity. Evidence of overall capability to open and sustain long-term and high-quality learning environment that offers opportunities to all students is also required.

Legal and technical review of sections such as discipline, finance, transportation, insurance, facilities, special education, 504, and ELL will be undertaken by qualified reviewers with the appropriate expertise.

Using the rubric to score, The Chartering Authority will prepare questions to conduct a capacity interview with each applicant and their governing board. The purpose is to further evaluate the leadership team's capacity before making a recommendation to the KCS Board of Education. After reviewing the written application review and conducting the capacity interview, the review team will reach a consensus recommendation.

Strength in one area of the application does not negate weaknesses in other areas. Every area must meet or exceed the standard to be recommended for approval by the KCS Board of Education. These areas include:

- Academic Plan
- Operational Plan
- Financial Plan
- Evidence of Capacity

Although the scoring rubric is from the State of Tennessee, the KCS review committee looks at strong proposals that have the following general criteria throughout the proposal:

- A viable plan to meet the needs of special populations: pupils with disabilities, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged pupils. How will your school close the achievement gap for these pupils?
- Increasing high school graduation rates for pupils at risk of not graduating
- A focus on middle school pupils' academic achievement and the transition to high school
- Using high quality assessments designed to measure the learning of the critical concepts and are aligned with Tennessee State Standards
- Management and leadership capability to overcome initial start-up problems and establish a fiscally viable school
- Increasing the acquisition, adoption and use of professional development *systems* that provide teachers and school leaders with the information and resources they need to inform and improve instructional practices, decision-making and overall effectiveness
- Demonstrated use of data to make instructional decisions with an established system of communication between administration, school director and teachers
- Partnering with schools located within the area in which the school will locate to share best practices and innovation
- Adherence to the stated charter school priorities for KCS

AMENDING APPLICATIONS DENIED IN THE FIRST APPLICATION

TCA 49-13-108(3) provides applicants 30 days from the date of receipt of denial to submit an amended application to correct deficiencies. The KCS Board of Education has 60 days after receiving the amended application to deny or approve the application based on the recommendation of the review team.

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 recommend the KCS Board of Education to approve or deny the application.

SAMPLE RESUBMISSION TIMELINE

Due Date	Item
Note: If the date falls on a weekend, the due date will be the next business day. Dates are subject to change.	
April 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● KCS will send a letter to the applicant regarding the denial
May 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amended application due to KCS no later than 4:30 p.m.
May 31 – June 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Independent Review of Amended Application ● Independent rubric to be uploaded
June 21 – June 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charter Review Team meets to develop consensus rubric.
June 28 – July 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charter Team Leaders turn in completed consensus rubric
July 12 – July 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The KCS staff completes the recommendation report
July 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recommendation Report due to the KCS Board of Education
July 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● KCS Board of Education vote on Charter School Recommendation
July 28 – August 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the KCS Board of Education denies the Amended Application, the applicant will have 10 (ten) days to appeal to the State Board.

The following guidelines apply to the resubmissions:

- Amended applications will be due to the Board of Education’s Administrative Assistant on the 30th day after the KCS Board of Education votes to deny an application. Amended applications will not be accepted after that date.
- The potential charter operator may make corrections only to those areas of the application that the review team has deemed deficient. KCS will not accept a complete rewrite of the application.
- One electronic copy and five (5) printed 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 with page numbers should be submitted 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 specifically requested by the review team.

CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL

The [Charter School Renewal Application](#) can be found on the TDOE Website, or you may cut and paste the following link in your browser.

<https://www.tn.gov/education/school-options/charter-schools/charter-renewal-application.html>

KCS is guided by the Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act of 2002. As a charter school authorizer, KCS is responsible for evaluating current charter schools’ performance and achievement levels as the most pertinent indicators as to whether to renew a school’s charter.

The original charter contract is for a period of ten years, during which the charter is reviewed annually. KCS grants renewals to charter schools that demonstrate evidence of:

- Meeting academic goals
- Adherence to mission and charter design
- Effective governance
- Fiscal stability
- Parent and student satisfaction
- Meeting all legal obligations
- Ability to achieve goals for the next charter term

SAMPLE RENEWAL TIMELINE

Due Date:	Action:
February 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of Intent (LOI) Deadline to KCS and TDOE
April 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed renewal charter applications due to The Chartering Authority no later than 4:30 p.m. • Renewal applications will be checked for completeness
September 1 – October 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent review of the renewal application
October 18 - October 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter Review Team meets to develop consensus
October 25 - November 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter Review Team completes recommendation report
November 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation Report due to KCS Board of Education
December 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCS Board of Education votes on the recommendation
December 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant will receive a letter with the KCS Board decision
December 9 – December 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the application is denied, the applicant will have 10 days to appeal to TDOE

When submitting a renewal application, please provide KCS one (1) electronic copy and five (5) hard copies of the renewal. E-mailed proposals should be submitted to KCS at charteringauthority@knoxschools.org. Hard copies should be submitted to this address:

Attn: Office of Academic Supports
 Knox County Schools
 PO Box 2188
 Knoxville, TN 37902

The governing body must also submit one electronic copy to the TDOE (charter.schools@tn.gov). Email submission via online file transfer service (e.g., box.net) is preferred, but charter operators may also submit electronic copies via CD, USB drive, etc. Please use the contact information below:

Director of Charter Schools
 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

RENEWAL APPLICATION CHART

School	Term expires (June 30)	Renewal Application Due (April 1)	Decision (February 1)
Emerald Academy	2025	2024	2025

CHARTER SCHOOL CLOSURE AND REVOCATION

Knox County Schools’ desires that charter schools succeed. If a school must be closed, The Knox County Schools LEA is bound by a responsibility to students, parents, stakeholders, and the broader public to ensure that the students affected are transferred to schools where they can be successful. The information below outlines the procedures KCS may take when a charter school closes.

There are three ways a charter school can be closed:

- The Charter Operator can voluntarily surrender its charter.
- The KCS Board of Education can choose not to renew a charter.
- The KCS Board of Education can revoke the charter.

Besides poor academic outcomes, a charter school may have its charter revoked for the following reasons:

- Serious violations of law
- Material and substantial breach of the charter contract
- Fiscal mismanagement
- Receiving priority school status by the state will result in the school automatically closing at the end of the school year pursuant to TCA 49-13-122(a).

CLOSURE PROCEDURE

A decision to revoke or not renew a charter occurs at the end of the school year, unless a school meets the criteria outlined in Tennessee Charter Law that warrants immediate closure. TCA §49-13-122(4) states:

“Nothing in this subsection (a) shall prohibit a chartering authority from revoking or denying renewal of 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 outlined in the charter agreement
2. Failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward the performance expectations outlined in the charter agreement
3. Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.

When the decision to close a charter school has been made, Knox County Schools has three primary goals:

- Providing educational services per 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.

When school closure is necessary, KCS will follow the closure action plan available on the state website. Some tasks may not apply, depending on the particular school being closed. Detailed Charter School [closure guidance](#) can be found on the TDOE website or you may cut and paste the following link in your browser.

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/nonpublic/chtr_sch/charter_closure_guidance.pdf

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The authorizer will make rigorous and standards-based decisions using the performance framework. Performance monitoring includes:

- Ongoing monitoring for compliance including documenting when compliance is not met, or schools fall below standards. The authorizer will consult with charters as they correct discrepancies to meet compliance.
- Each year the authorizer will complete an annual performance review.

NASCA’s three core principles guide all aspects of Knox County Schools’ work for charter authorizing. The three core principles are:

- maintaining high standards for all schools,
- upholding high performing school’s autonomy, and
- protecting student and public interest.

Knox County Schools will monitor schools regularly based on their individual needs in academics, operations, and finance. High performing schools will meet the following criteria:

- Student success rate: ELA, and Math at or above the district averages
- No financial findings in the yearly audit
- Submit required information and reports on time

To effectively monitor each school, Knox County personnel will do the following:

- Conduct at least two site visits per year.
- Meet with Charter personnel on a consultative basis as often as needed.
- Attend public Charter School Board meetings as often as possible.
- Provide weekly updates regarding policies, deadlines, or other items of interest to Charters.
- Forward pertinent information to Charter Schools.
- Connect Charter School personnel with appropriate resources

ADDRESSING SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

When there are breaches in charter contracts or violations of State and Federal laws, Knox County Schools must ensure that schools correct deficiencies. Charters are granted autonomy for methods used to achieve the goals outlined in the Charter; however, Knox County Schools must ensure that charter schools are held to the same laws as district-run schools. The table following table summarizes charter school standing and possible actions to address the standing. Charter schools that do not correct deficiencies will not be renewed or may have their contract revoked.

*Note: While the Charter School will be assigned a status following the annual monitoring process, Knox County Schools reserves the right to put schools at any status at any time if more immediate actions are warranted. Offenses of serious or dangerous nature could lead to immediate revocation of the Charter School.		
Status*	Possible actions in response to status	Explanation of Notices and Letters
<i>Good Standing:</i> The Charter School is functioning as agreed upon in the Charter Agreement. Some minor infractions may occur, but when notified of concerns, the Charter School promptly comes into compliance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standard timeline and procedures followed by KCS and Charter School ● Phone call made to discuss and rectify any minor infractions (if needed) ● <i>Notice of Concern</i> sent to Charter School detailing area of concern with the process for the administrative review and possible corrective plan request with timeline for rectifying the concern(s) 	A charter school may receive a <i>Notice of Concern</i> if KCS has been made aware of or notices any signs of weak performance identified through routine monitoring, through implementation, compliance, or performance review, or by any other means. Corrective action steps with a timeline will be requested to address each area of concern.
<i>Deficient:</i> The Charter School has functioned inadequately in an identified area(s). When notified, the Charter School creates a Performance Improvement Plan to address the area of deficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Notice of Deficiency</i> sent to Charter School Director and CEO with a requirement that a Performance Improvement Plan is developed with improvements, objectives, timelines, and measures (The Performance Improvement Plan must be approved by KCS.) ● The Charter School will have ten days to submit a Performance Improvement Plan with improvements, objectives, timelines, and measures. 	A charter school may receive a <i>Notice of Deficiency</i> for failure to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet multiple performance targets ● Comply with applicable state laws and/or district policies, ● Comply with terms of the charter ● Rectify any infractions or concerns
Status*	Possible actions in response to status	Explanation of Notices and Letters

<p><i>Probation:</i> The Charter School is demonstrating weak performance and is working with the KCS to follow a given Corrective Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notice of Probation</i> sent to the Charter School Director, Charter School CEO, and Charter Governing Board to serve as notification of probationary status and outlining terms of probation. KCS will create a Corrective Plan of Action with the Charter School that addresses the deficits and has measurable outcomes, a timeline, and improvement expectations 	<p>A charter school may receive a <i>Notice of Probation</i> if there is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued failure to meet performance targets • Failure to meet objectives set forth in the Performance Improvement Plan • Continued failure to comply with state laws and/or district policies • Continued failure to comply with conditions of the Original Charter
<p><i>Revocation Review:</i> The Charter School is underperforming. A KCS committee will conduct a review to determine if the school should continue to serve students or if the Charter Agreement should be revoked.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Revocation Review Letter</i> sent to the Charter School Director, Charter School CEO, and Charter Governing Board to serve as notice of potential school closure • KCS recommendation sent to the KCS Board of Education to review the Charter School status and consider revocation • Decision by the KCS Board of Education to revoke or not revoke the charter or impose lesser sanctions. • Charter School can elect to self-revoke the Charter Agreement. 	<p>A charter school may receive a <i>Revocation Review Letter</i> if there is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to successfully address the terms of a previous probation • Flagrant disregard of the charter agreement such as fraud • Misappropriation of funds • Extended patterns of failure to comply with applicable law • Extended pattern of failure to comply with the terms of the charter including fiscal management and academic performance <p>A copy of this letter will be sent to the KCS Board of Education, the governing body of the charter school and the parents and staff of the charter school.</p>
<p>Status*</p>	<p>Possible actions in response to status</p>	<p>Explanation of Notices and Letters</p>
<p><i>Revocation:</i> The Charter School has failed to meet Performance Standards and will no longer remain open. The Closure Plan will begin upon notification by KCS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Revocation Letter</i> sent to the Charter School Director, Charter School CEO, and Charter Governing Board • Charter School to submit closure action plan to KCS • Follow TDOE Charter School Closure Guidance 	<p>A Charter School will receive a <i>Revocation Letter</i> if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is included on the Tennessee Department of Education’s State Priority list (See law 49-13-122) • The Revocation Review results in a recommendation to revoke • The Charter School has done any of the following: committed a material violation of any conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the charter agreement and/or in the original charter goals, achievement of the state’s accountability system • failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management. <p>A copy of this letter will be sent to the KCS Board of Education, the governing body of the charter school and the parents and staff of the charter school.</p>

CONTRACT AMENDMENT

If a charter school would like to modify its charter agreement materially, it must seek an amendment. A “material modification” to a charter agreement is defined as a substantive change to the terms of the charter agreement regarding a charter school’s governance, financial, operational, or academic structure. Material modifications include, but are not limited to:

- A change in governance structure (including, but not limited to, a change in the nonprofit entity governing the school), or addition of or changes to the charter management organization
- The addition or removal of a grade level or levels
- Changes in student enrollment that fall outside of the minimum or maximum enrollment thresholds set forth in the charter school’s charter agreement
- The addition or removal of a plan to provide transportation to students attending the charter school
- Changes to the charter school’s location, if outside the geographic area set forth in the charter agreement
- Changes to the charter school’s academic focus set forth in the charter agreement
- Changes identified in the charter agreement as material modifications or amendments

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR AMENDMENT APPLICATION

	Date	Item
Fall Dates	September 1	Letters of Intent (LOI) due to the KCS Executive Director of Teaching and Learning
	October 1	Completed charter amendment application is due to the KCS Executive Director or Teaching and Learning no later than close of business.
	October 2	KCS will check the application for completeness.
	October 5-16	Independent application review begins.
	October 19- 20	The review team will complete rubrics.
	October 21- 30	The review team will meet and develop a recommendation report.
	November 10	The Superintendent will present the recommendation to the KCS Board of Education.
Spring Dates	January 15	Letters of Intent (LOI) Deadline to the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning.
	February 14	Completed charter amendment application is due to the KCS Executive Director or Teaching and Learning no later than close of business.
	February 15	KCS will check the application for completeness.
	February 16- March 2	Independent application review begins.
	March 3-4	The review team will complete rubrics.
	March 8-19	The review team will meet and develop a recommendation report.
	April 13	The Superintendent will present the recommendation to the KCS Board of Education.

CHARTER SCHOOL WAIVER

A charter school may apply to either the local education agency or the Commissioner of Education for a waiver of any state board rule or statute that inhibits or hinders the charter school's ability to meet its goals or comply with its mission statement.

The charter school authorizer may not grant waivers for requirements related to:

- Federal and state civil rights
- Federal, state, and local health and safety
- Federal and state public records
- Immunizations
- Possession of weapons on school grounds
- Background checks and fingerprinting of personnel
- Federal and state special education services
- Student due process
- Parental rights
- Federal and state student assessment and accountability
- Open meetings
- At least the equivalent time of instruction as required in regular public schools
- Requirements in the charter school statute (T.C.A. 49 Chapter 13) or State Board of Education rules and regulations specific to charter schools

CHARTER SCHOOL WAIVER REQUEST FORM

Charter School Information

Charter School Name: _____

Charter School Contact Name: _____

Contact Title: _____

Phone: (____)-____-____ EXT. _____

Email address: _____

Term of the charter contract: ____/____/____ (MM/DD/YY) through ____/____/____ (MM/DD/YY)

Effective date of waiver being requested: _____

Please include the following waiver information on the Charter School letterhead in an attachment:

1. List the statute(s) and/or board rule(s) for which waiver is being requested
2. Mission and goals of the charter school as contained in the application filed with the local board of education pursuant to § 49-13-107
3. Explanation of how the statute(s) and/or state board rule(s) inhibits or hinders the charter school's ability to meet its goals or comply with its mission statement

Waiver Process: Knox County Schools will review the requests and either grant or deny them within 30 days of receipt. All waivers approved by the chartering authority shall be effective for the term of the charter contract unless stated otherwise. KCS will not consider incomplete requests.

Please submit this waiver request to the Knox County Schools Chartering Authority via email or mail:

Attn: Office of Academic Supports
 Knox County Schools
 PO Box 2188
 Knoxville, TN 37902
charteringauthority@knoxschools.org

Print Name: _____ Charter School Contact (Signature): _____

Date: _____ Approved _____ Denied _____

Reason for Denial:

GUIDELINES FOR CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATORS

Charter school operators should use interim reviews to measure progress toward the goals outlined in their charter, adjust operations based on this information, and gauge the likelihood of renewal of their charters. Tennessee law requires that the interim review include a report from the charter school on the school's progress in achieving the goals, objectives, pupil performance standards, content standards, and other terms of the approved charter agreement.

ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

AUTHORIZER REPORTING

As the Charter School Authorizer, Knox County Schools must regularly and thoughtfully evaluate each school's performance, protect student rights, and regularly communicate school performance. It is essential to adhere to Charter School law, protect Charter School autonomy, and build positive working relationships with Charter Schools. In addition to any reporting otherwise referenced in this document, four reports are required from authorizers by the State Department each year. These hold the authorizer accountable and help Knox County continuously reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of the authorizing process. The Authorizer Reporting timeline can be found on the following page.

AUTHORIZER REPORTING TIMELINE

Submission Deadline	Report	Requirements
August 1	Charter School Office Budget	The authorizer must provide a projected charter school office budget for the upcoming school year to the TDOE by August 1. The TDOE posts each projected budget to its website by August 15.
October 1	Underutilized and Vacant Properties Report	The LEA submits a comprehensive listing of all underutilized or vacant properties to the TDOE and the comptroller of the treasury. The TDOE must make an LEA's list available to any charter school operating in the LEA or to any sponsor seeking to establish a public charter school in the LEA.
December 1	Annual Authorizer Fee Report	The authorizer reports to the TDOE total authorizer fees received from charter schools and obligations fulfilled using the fees. The TDOE provides a standard document for this report and posts the reports on its website.
January 1	Annual Authorizer Report	The authorizer submits an annual report to the State Department and TDOE. For each charter school, the authorizer report must include the operating status of all charter schools, the oversight and contracted services provided by the authorizer, and a performance report for each charter aligned to the authorizer's School Performance Framework.
Within 10 days of approving or denying a charter application		Approval or Denial of Charter Applications. T.C.A. § 49-13-108 requires each chartering authority to report to the department of education whether the chartering authority has approved or denied any charter school applications.
Within 10 days of voting to renew, not renew, or revoking a charter		Renewal or Revocation of Charter Agreements. T.C.A. § 49-13-122 requires each chartering authority to report to the department of education the decision to renew, not renew, or revoke a charter agreement, and provide a copy of the chartering authority's resolution setting forth the decision and reasons for the decision.
Student Information sharing		Student Information Sharing. T.C.A. § 49-13-132 requires each chartering authority to provide at no cost a list of student names, ages, addresses, dates of attendance, and grade levels completed in accordance with T.C.A. § 10-7-504 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g).

CHARTER SCHOOL REPORTING

Each of the following reports must be submitted to the State Department and/or the Authorizer, as listed below. Please note the different colors that indicate to whom each report should be submitted.

Date	Reporting Requirement
	*Report to both TDOE and KCS *Report only to KCS
Immediately After Lottery	Verification/ Certification of enrollment lottery. T.C.A. § 49-13-113 requires charter schools that conduct an enrollment lottery to verify it was conducted in compliance with state statute.
As Soon as Practical after June 30	Annual audit. T.C.A. §§ 49-13-127 and 49-13-111 require each charter school to furnish an annual audit to the chartering authority, the commissioner, and the comptroller of the treasury. Notifying TDOE that the audit has been provided to and posted by the comptroller suffices as delivery to the commissioner.
Prior to School Opening	Teacher evaluation system selection. State Board of Education policy allows charter schools to propose their own evaluation model. Evaluation models must be submitted to the commissioner for approval. The State Board of Education must approve any evaluation models from which results will be used to inform licensure advancement.
60 Days Prior to Implementation	Waiver requests. T.C.A. § 49-13-105 requires charter schools to submit waiver requests to the chartering authority or the commissioner of education.
As Needed	Teacher evaluation data. Teacher evaluation data must be submitted per the rules and regulations of the state board of education.
As Needed	Teacher licensure advancement forms. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-111 charter school teachers must have a current valid Tennessee teaching license.
As Needed	Surety bonds. T.C.A. § 49-13-111(n) requires 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 the Comptroller's office.
Mid-July	Opening of School Reporting - Charter School may provide (if not publicly posted): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Current School Roster by Grade Level and Demographics ● Master Schedule Detailing Instructional Day/Minutes ● Organizational Chart ● Assessment Schedule ● Student Handbook ● Fee-Based Service Agreement(s) for current year if applicable ● Calendar of Family Engagement Events ● Current Fiscal Year Annual Budget ● Any updates to Special Populations Policies ● Any updates to Previous Year Improvement Plan
August 31	Annual CMO Financial Report (if applicable). CMOs file an annual financial report with the comptroller of the treasury. The report must detail transactions between the CMO and any charter school operated in TN for the fiscal year ending June 30 in a form prescribed by the comptroller of the treasury.
August 31	Annual Financial Report. T.C.A. §§ 49-13-112 and 49-13-120 require each charter school to annually provide to the chartering authority and the commissioner a detailed accounting report. The report should include revenues, expenditures and sources of funds received. This information should be included with the school's annual progress report. Please note the annual audit may satisfy the financial report requirements.
Late September	Any annual monitoring documentation not already provided as evidence for the performance review including previous year teacher evaluation scores

	<p>As applicable, the charter school may provide evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● implementing material terms of educational program, ● compliance with educational requirements, ● protecting rights of students with disabilities, ● protecting rights of ELL students, ● meeting financial reporting and compliance, ● following generally accepted accounting principles, ● compliance of governance requirements, ● holding management accountable, ● compliance of reporting requirements, ● protecting the rights of all students, ● meeting staff credentialing requirements, ● compliance of employee rights laws, ● completing required background checks, ● compliance of facility and transportation requirements, ● compliance with health and safety requirements, ● handling information appropriately, and ● compliance of all other obligations
October 1	Annual progress report. T.C.A. § 49-13-120 requires each charter school to annually report to the chartering authority and the commissioner on the progress toward achieving the goals outlined in its charter.
October	First Annual Site Visit - See Protocol
Late November	Prior Year Annual Performance Review: Charter school response to report (optional)
February	Enrollment Projection: Annually, the charter school will provide a total school enrollment projection for the upcoming school year.
January 31	Annual Board Training Documentation. The charter school governing board provides documentation of annual training to the authorizer. Training must be certified by the TCSC and approved by the SBE
Early March	Second Annual Site Visit - See Protocol

INTERIM REVIEW PROCESS

The authorizer shall conduct an interim review of a public charter school in the fifth (5th) year of a public charter school's initial period of operation and in the fifth year following the renewal of a charter agreement under guidelines developed by the department of education. The guidelines must require a public charter school to submit a report to the authorizer on the progress of the public charter school in achieving its goals and objectives, including student performance and other terms of the approved charter agreement.

The Charter Authority shall submit an electronic copy of the completed interim review report to the KCS Executive Director of Office of Teaching and Learning (charteringauthority@knoxschools.org) and the TDOE (charter.school@tn.gov) no later than December 1 of the charter school's fifth operational year.

[Interim Review Guidance](#) can be found on the TDOE website, or by cutting and pasting the following link in your browser.

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/nonpublic/chtr_sch/chtr_sch_interm_review_guidelines.pdf

Questions regarding information in this handbook should be directed to Julie Thompson at julie.thompson@knoxschools.org or Kathy Duggan at kathy.duggan@knoxschools.org.