



Tennessee Department of Education

Planning for Quality Authorizing

Authorizer Toolkit | August 2026



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Effective authorizing begins with a strong foundation in law, purpose, and systems. Authorizers must understand the statutory and regulatory requirements governing charter schools in Tennessee and build policies and oversight practices that are clear, predictable, and aligned to student outcomes. This section outlines the essential steps for grounding your authorizing work in legal requirements while establishing the structures and relationships needed for effective support and oversight.

Connect with Support

The department provides guidance, training, and coordination to support high-quality authorization statewide. Early engagement helps ensure alignment with state expectations and access to current resources. Ongoing connection with the department helps authorizers stay current on policy updates, reporting expectations, and emerging practices.

The following are suggestions for authorizers to get connected:

- Participate in agency onboarding/orientation sessions if new;
- Reach out to the Charter Program Office and State Board of Education (SBE) for an introduction and contact establishment;
- Review state-provided templates, guidance, and reporting requirements;
- Coordinate timelines and data submissions with state processes; and
- Engage in statewide authorizer exchange meetings, convenings, and professional learning.

The charter program team at the department is available to provide support and assistance to authorizers. General questions can be submitted to Charter.Schools@tn.gov, and the appropriate staff will respond.

First Steps to Get Connected

1. Ensure Contact Information is Submitted

The department maintains a contact list for each charter authorizer, charter school, and charter management organization (CMO) operating in Tennessee. New authorizers should submit their

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contact information to the department using the [Charter Contact Change Request form](#). The charter contacts may be updated at any time if there are staff changes. We maintain primary and secondary contacts for each authorizer.

2. Subscribe to the Charter School Update

The [Charter School Update](#) is a monthly newsletter sent to charter authorizers and operators. It includes reporting reminders, updated information or requests, and information across other divisions within the Tennessee Department of Education, including opportunities for professional development and resources published by the department.

3. Subscribe to Other Department Newsletters

The department provides [newsletters](#) from the Office of Academics, Office of Operations, and Office of Programs, offering important updates, guidance, and best practices across key operational areas. These resources are valuable tools for charter school authorizers to be aware of information that may be helpful for charter leaders as they prepare for the opening of a new public charter school and for ongoing support.

Establish Roles and Responsibilities

The local education agency (LEA) is the organization that primarily supports charter schools. The LEA is responsible for establishing operational and compliance functions for its charter schools. This can involve several different bodies in the LEA. This complex nature makes it essential for all relevant bodies to understand their distinct responsibilities. When roles are not clearly understood internally by the different bodies, charter schools may receive conflicting or duplicative requests, misdirected inquiries, or excessive administrative burdens due to a lack of collaboration.

Aside from the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (TPCSC), charter schools will likely interact with three bodies: the local board of education for the LEA, the LEA district or central office, and the district charter school authorizing office. The general responsibilities of each body are listed in the table below.

Roles and Responsibilities of Charter Bodies	
Local Board of Education	• Makes high-stakes decisions about opening, closing, and renewing schools • Relies on evidence-based recommendations from district charter school authorizing office staff • Ensures district charter school authorizing office staff have the resources and authority to fulfill their responsibilities • Adheres to timelines and statutory requirements
District/Central Office	• Ensures schools meet state and federal requirements (e.g., ESSA, IDEA, civil rights) • Implements districtwide policies while respecting charter autonomy • May provide direct services (e.g., transportation, special education, federal programs)
District Charter School Authorizing Office	• Manages day-to-day authorizing activities across the charter lifecycle • Collects and analyzes school performance data from multiple sources • Prepares recommendations and reports for the local board of education

Clarity in the roles each of these bodies play is essential for the development of the authorizer and charter school relationship and for high-quality oversight. When these bodies are aligned internally, schools experience oversight as predictable, fair, and respectful.

Lane clarity prevents:
• Duplicative monitoring • Contradictory directives • Burdens that distract schools from instruction • Misunderstandings that damage the authorizer–school relationship • Delays in responding to urgent school needs

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Lane clarity promotes:

- Stronger school performance through streamlined communication
- Faster problem-solving
- Trust between authorizers and schools
- More accurate oversight data
- Better services and supports for students
- A healthy ecosystem where authorizers and schools are partners, not adversaries

Authorizing requires clearly defined responsibilities across evaluation, oversight, compliance, and communication functions. Roles should be explicitly assigned so schools know whom to contact and staff understand decision-making authority. Doing the following will provide lane clarity for the charter bodies as well as for the charter schools:

- Designate a primary authorizing lead responsible for charter portfolio oversight.
- Clarify roles for application review, monitoring, data analysis, compliance, and governance support.
- Define decision-making authority (e.g., staff vs. superintendent vs. board) for key actions such as noncompliance findings, interventions, and renewal recommendations.
- Establish internal protocols for cross-department coordination (e.g., finance, special education, facilities, etc.).
- Communicate staff roles and contact information to schools and governing boards.

District Charter School Authorizing Office

The district charter school authorizing office serves as the bridge between charter schools, district leadership, other district/central office staff, and the board, helping everyone stay aligned and informed. The authorizing staff takes responsibility for ensuring clarity and efficiency by serving as a liaison and translator between the charter schools and the rest of the district.

Many challenges that new charter schools face stem from confusion about who to contact and how charter schools fit into existing systems, and the district charter school authorizing office can reduce these challenges in the following ways:

Activities to Proactively Address Challenges	
Facilitate smooth communication through the establishment of clear communication protocols	• Create a single point of contact for charter schools. • Develop protocols specifying when departments should route inquiries through the charter office. • Maintain shared calendars, templates, and workflows for common processes (e.g., testing windows, special education compliance checks, data pulls, etc.). • Filter requests from other departments so that schools are not asked for information already available elsewhere. • Ensure follow-up on charter school concerns as well as district concerns of the charter school in a timely and student-centered way. • Coordinate internal workflows so that the district speaks with one voice.
Educate other departments on charter schools	• Provide annual Charter 101 sessions for district departments. • Share a clear summary of how charters may differ from non-charter public schools in obligations and functions. • Help departments understand what is required versus what is optional.
Ensure the charter school complies with its obligations to the district, the state, and its students	• Provide information and data to the charter school (e.g., equitable services, data sharing, etc.). • Clarify what a district responsibility is versus a school responsibility. • Monitor district requirements to ensure charter schools are included in notices and training to meet district requirements.

Collaboration between the district charter school authorizing office and the other LEA bodies can reduce confusion, support compliance, and build shared understanding. Some ways to promote collaboration are:

- **Joint Orientation Sessions:** Host training for other departments (e.g., human

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resources, special education, finance) to clarify how charter schools fit into the district structure.

- **Shared Communication Channels:** Create regular cadence for coordination, such as monthly check-ins, shared FAQs, or joint newsletters.
- **Problem-Solving Protocols:** Establish clear pathways for issues that require both operational coordination and authorizing oversight.
- **Cross-Functional Teams:** Include district charter school authorizing office staff in LEA planning efforts, such as testing logistics or data reporting.

Identify Authorizing Responsibilities

[T.C.A. § 49-13-102](#) defines the purposes for the Charter School Act. These purposes are the foundation for every authorizer's work and should guide all decisions throughout the life of a charter:

- Improve learning for all students and close achievement gaps between high- and low-performing groups;
- Provide families with meaningful educational options that meet their children's needs;
- Encourage innovative teaching methods and empower schools and teachers with more decision-making authority;
- Ensure accountability for results, helping every child reach proficiency on state academic standards;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers to lead, innovate, and grow; and
- Engage parents as active partners in their children's education.

Authorizers play a critical role in shaping a high-quality public education landscape which provides all students with excellent schools and families with meaningful choices. When done well, authorizing expands opportunity, encourages innovation, and ensures that every charter school meets its promises to students and the public. In short, authorizers determine the quality of charter schools in a state so that more students attend excellent schools.

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Authorizers are the gatekeepers of quality within the charter sector, ensuring that every school provides students with an excellent public education. Quality authorizing strengthens public education by:

- Ensuring that every charter school offers a safe, equitable, and high-quality education;
- Expanding access to excellent schools that meet the diverse needs of Tennessee families;
- Encouraging innovation in teaching and learning while safeguarding taxpayer resources; and
- Upholding the public's trust through transparent and fair oversight.

Relevant Laws and Rules

A charter school authorizer is defined in [T.C.A. § 49-13-104](#) as “a local board of education or the Tennessee public charter school commission that makes decisions regarding the approval, renewal, and revocation of a public charter school application or agreement.” While the definition seems simple, there are numerous requirements associated with each step in the decisions made. A review of all laws and relevant rules governing authorizing in Tennessee is an important first step in identifying authorizing responsibilities. The following are links to resources that should be reviewed:

- [T.C.A. §§ 49-13-101 through -145](#)
- [Chapter 0520-14-01 of the State Board of Education \(SBE\) Rules](#)
- [SBE Policy 6.111](#)

Authorizer Reporting Requirements

Tennessee law and SBE rules outline requirements for authorizers of public charter schools, including the reporting requirements cited below.

Reporting Requirements	
Projected Authorizing Budget (See SBE Rule 0520-14-01-.05)	• Due December 1 • Submit the upload form, to SBE
Authorizer Fee Report	• Due December 1 of each year

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Reporting Requirements	
(See T.C.A. § 49-13-128(f))	Submit the upload form to SBE
Annual Authorizer Report (See T.C.A. § 49-13-120(b))	- Due January 1 of each year - Submit the upload form to SBE - Notify each charter school of its status for renewal
Authorizer Non-Evaluation Year Self-Assessment (See SBE Rule 0520-14-01-.08(1)(f)1.)	- Due January 1 of non-evaluation year - Submit the upload form to SBE
Enrollment Projections for New and Expanding Charter Schools (See SBE Rule 0520-14-01-.03(1)(f)1.)	- Due April 15 each year - Submit the New and Expanding Charter School Enrollment Projections Template to the department via the Charter Document Upload Form
Underutilized or Vacant Property Report (See T.C.A. § 49-13-136(c)(2))	- Due May 1 of each year - Submit the Underutilized or Vacant Property Template to the department via the Charter Document Upload Form and to the Comptroller via email at LGA.Web@cot.tn.gov
Interim Review (See T.C.A. § 49-13-121(k))	- Occurs during year 5 of the charter term - Governing body of charter school submits a progress report to the authorizer - Authorizer conducts the interim review and shares with charter school governing body
Cumulative Report (See T.C.A. § 49-13-121(c))	- Due three months prior to the renewal application deadline - Submit to charter school governing body
New Charter School Applications Received (See T.C.A. § 49-13-107(b))	- Due no later than 10 days from the receipt of the application - Submit to TPCSC via email at Charterschool.Applications@tn.gov.
Renewal Applications Received (See T.C.A. § 49-13-121(a))	- Due no later than 10 days from the receipt of the application - Submit to TPCSC via email at Charterschool.Applications@tn.gov
Approval or Denial of a New Charter	Due no later than 10 days after the decision

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Reporting Requirements	
Application or Renewal Application (See T.C.A. §§ 49-13-108(g) and 49-13-121(i))	• Submit the decision resolution to the department via the Charter Document Upload Form and to TPCSC via email at Charterschool.Applications@tn.gov
Revocation of Charter Agreement (See T.C.A. § 49-13-122(e) and (g))	• Notification to be submitted to charter school governing body 30 days prior to a decision • Notification of decision due no later than 10 days after the decision • Submit the decision resolution to the department via the Charter Document Upload Form and to TPCSC via email at Charterschool.Applications@tn.gov

Financial Obligations to Charter Schools

Pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-13-112](#), the department disburses the state share of the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) directly to public charter schools. The geographic LEA is responsible for local funding payments and the disbursement of any applicable federal entitlement funding. Responsibilities of the charter authorizer to charter schools include:

- Distribute local funding payments in no fewer than nine installments to public charter schools;
- Distribute other funding that charter schools are entitled to, including but not limited to, a proportional share of any fast-growth funding received by the district or outcomes funding generated by the school;
- Adjust payments to public charter schools based on department-provided interim calculations at least five times per year—in October, February, April, and June—based on changes in revenue or student membership;
- Collaborate with public charters to resolve any data or reporting discrepancies;
- Process final payments within 30 calendar days after the department shares final amounts; and
- Provide charter schools with information on federal entitlements applicable to the school and how those funds are made available to the school.

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The [TISA Guide](#) provides a more in-depth look at how the TISA funding is generated, and the [Funding Quick Guide: Charter Schools](#) provides detailed information on charter school funding. For specific questions, email tnedu.funding@tn.gov.

Implementation of Effective Authorizing Duties

Under [T.C.A. § 49-13-145](#), the SBE is responsible for ensuring the effective performance of charter school authorizers across Tennessee and for assessing authorizer quality. [SBE Rule 0520-14-01-.08\(1\)\(b\)](#) designates that SBE evaluates Tennessee charter school authorizers at least once every two years to monitor compliance.

Authorizers should familiarize themselves with the authorizer evaluation process, as outlined in [SBE Rule 0520-14-01-.08](#) and [SBE Policy 6.113](#). Authorizer evaluations assess compliance with the [Quality Charter Authorizing Standards](#), the effectiveness of authorizing practices and operations, charter application and oversight processes, and evidence of continuous improvement. Additional resources, guidance materials, and examples of prior evaluation reports are available on the [SBE website](#).

Develop Policies and Processes

Before developing new authorizing systems, authorizers should review and organize existing materials to identify what already meets requirements, what needs revision, and what must be created. This ensures alignment with Tennessee law and reduces duplication. Authorizers should research and review the policies and processes to ensure alignment with rules and law, consistency across documents, clarity of expectations for schools, and gaps or outdated practices.

The district's existing policies and procedures should be reviewed with district staff. Many district policies will closely resemble the types of policies needed as an authorizer and may be adapted directly to support the charter authorizing work. Collaboration with other district staff not only ensures consistency across systems but also helps streamline the creation of authorizing resources that reflect established district practices.

Some valuable resources can be adapted from established authorizers, state agencies, and national organizations such as [NACSA](#) or [NN4DA](#). These sources often provide high-quality tools, frameworks, and exemplars that can be customized to support your authorizing work.

Charter Agreements

The authorizer and the charter school must execute a written charter agreement signed by both parties. In accordance with [T.C.A. § 49-13-104](#) and [T.C.A. § 49-13-110](#), a charter agreement is a legally binding, fixed-term, renewable contract between a public charter school and its authorizer that establishes the rights, responsibilities, and performance expectations of each party that aligns with and clearly articulates the following:

- Charter term, which is for ten (10) academic years from the first day of student instruction unless a shorter term is approved pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-13-121](#);
- Rights and responsibilities of the charter school and the authorizer;
- Statutory, regulatory, and procedural terms and conditions for the charter school's operation, including but not limited to:
 - i. Compliance requirements under [T.C.A. § 49-13-111](#):
 1. Required reporting as set forth in [T.C.A. § 49-13-120](#);
 2. A minimum of 180 school days;
 3. The administration of state-mandated assessments according to the state testing calendar; and
 4. The pre-opening requirements and conditions for new charter schools;
- Autonomies to which charter schools are entitled based on statute, waiver, rules, and policies, including those related to educational programs, governance and management, operations, and finance;
- Collection of an annual authorizer fee as set forth in [T.C.A. § 49-13-128](#);
- LEA performance standards, criteria, and conditions for renewal, intervention, revocation, and non-renewal, while establishing the consequences for meeting or not meeting standards or conditions;
- Responsibility and commitment of the charter school to admit and serve all eligible students so long as space is available, and not expelling or counseling out students except pursuant to a legal discipline policy approved by the authorizer;
- Responsibility and commitment of the charter school to adhere to essential public education obligations, especially concerning admissions and enrollment of students with disabilities and English learners; and

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- Responsibilities of the charter school and the LEA in the event of school closure.

Creating a charter agreement can seem like a daunting task. However, NN4DA's [model charter agreement](#) can serve as a valuable resource for authorizers and school operators when drafting or revising a charter agreement. The model agreement provides a framework that can be customized to meet the specific requirements and expectations of the parties involved while supporting clarity, consistency, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Charter Agreement Amendment Petitions

Once the written charter agreement is established, charter school operators may petition the authorizer to amend the material terms of the charter agreement. Important highlights outlined in [T.C.A. § 49-13-110\(d\)](#) and by the [TPCSC Rule 1185-01-01-.04](#) include:

- The minimum types of material changes which require an amendment petition;
- The requirement of the charter operator to submit a letter of intent and an amendment petition by the fall and spring deadlines;
- The process for petitioning to amend the charter agreement; and
- The role that the authorizer plays in reviewing the amendment petition.

Authorizers should develop an internal process for requesting an amendment and communicate this information with their charter schools.

Additional information on the amendment petition, including the emergency petition, can be found on the [SBE website](#).

Waiver Process

One of the defining features of public charter schools is the balance between greater autonomy and a higher level of accountability. [T.C.A. § 49-13-111](#) allows a public charter school to request a waiver from either its authorizer or the commissioner of education if needed to achieve its goals or fulfill its mission. This flexibility allows charter schools to innovate and operate effectively while remaining accountable for meeting the performance expectations outlined in their charter agreement. Some waivers that cannot be granted by either the authorizer or the department, and these are outlined in law and the [Local Education Agency and Public Charter School Waiver Guidance](#).

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Waivers may be requested when a charter school applies for authorization. If the application is approved, then the waivers included in the application are approved, and there is no need for the school to submit an additional request for a waiver.

However, charter schools may request waivers outside of the application process. The commissioner's process for acting on waiver requests from public charter schools includes a requirement that public charter schools first submit waiver requests to their authorizer. If the authorizer denies the request, the request may then be submitted to the commissioner for consideration. Authorizers should develop an internal procedure for the submission of waiver requests, which includes the following:

- Instructions for public charter schools to request a waiver outside of the public charter school application process;
- A form for public charter schools to use to submit waiver requests;
- Legal review to ensure that the authorizer has the legal authority to grant the waiver requested; and
- The length of time (i.e., term) for approved waivers.

All approved waivers must be reported yearly in the annual authorizer report per [SBE Annual Authorizer Report Guidelines](#), and authorizers should have a system to track approved waivers in order to provide that data.

Data Collection and Reporting Processes

[Tennessee Code, Title 49, Chapter 13](#) and State Board of Education rules establish specific reporting requirements for public charter school authorizers. Because these requirements may change, authorizers should review legally mandated reporting obligations annually to ensure compliance. It is also important to review the [charter school website](#) and the [SBE website](#) for guidance on reporting requirements that are aligned with the Charter Schools Act.

Authorizers should develop, publicize, and consistently follow a fixed, streamlined, and well-designed reporting timeline. A reporting timeline helps to promote rigorous and consistent oversight, reduces administrative burden on schools, and increases the likelihood that schools meet their obligations. Authorizers should consider limiting required submissions to those mandated by contract and/or law and ensure that all required submissions are clearly included

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in the reporting timeline. For additional support, see the [NACSA Core Reporting Timeline](#) or the [Sample Reporting Timeline](#) included in the appendices. When used effectively, the reporting timeline can also serve as an accountability tool for charter school leadership.

Performance Framework

Pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-13-143](#), authorizers shall evaluate charter schools “based on a performance framework that clearly sets forth the academic and operational performance indicators, measures, and metrics.” An authorizer may either create and adopt its own performance framework or use one that aligns with the [Model Performance Framework](#) or the [Model Performance Framework for Opportunity Public Charter Schools](#).

Additionally, [State Board Policy 6.111](#) requires authorizers to embed a performance framework within each charter agreement. This framework must clearly define the indicators, measures, metrics, and performance targets for academic, financial, and organizational outcomes.

Site Visit Protocols

To maximize time on site, clear and proactive communication is essential. Establishing a protocol for planning site visits helps ensure that charter school leaders understand the purpose of the visit, are aware of expectations, have necessary documents prepared, and can support an efficient schedule for the day. Clearly defined expectations allow charter leaders to plan effectively and help make the site visit productive and meaningful.

We have included a comprehensive section in this toolkit dedicated to school site visits, providing guidance, tools, and resources to support effective planning, implementation, and follow-up activities. The [TPCSC Charter School Site Visit Protocol](#) provides an example of a structured site-visit process, including evidence-collection and reporting practices that authorizers may adapt to their own contexts. A few items to consider when planning the site visit include:

- The purpose and focus of the visit;
- The proposed schedule and length of the visit;
- Individuals who should be available (e.g., school leaders, teachers, board members);
- Documents or data that should be prepared in advance;
- Classroom observations or meetings to be conducted;

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- Time for follow-up questions or feedback; and
- Method of reporting information to the school.

Noncompliance and Intervention Protocols

Part of the evaluation cycle is having a process in place for noncompliance and intervention. The most common conditions that may require intervention include:

- Failure to meet academic performance expectations, as defined by the performance framework;
- Failure to meet indicators of financial viability or sustainability;
- Violations of federal or state statutes and applicable board policy and/or breaches of contract;
- Issues pertaining to student safety, equity, or access;
- Adverse findings in routine oversight; or
- Material, substantiated complaints from parents or other stakeholders.

The [NACSA Sample Intervention Protocols](#) and [Monitoring & Intervention: A look at what authorizers with strong portfolios do differently](#) are valuable resources available to charter authorizers. These resources guide the development of intervention frameworks, the monitoring of school performance, the identification of early warning indicators, and the implementation of appropriate corrective actions to support school improvement and accountability.

Renewal Process

Charter school renewal is a multi-phase process that includes an interim review, issuance of a cumulative performance report, and submission of a renewal application. Each phase provides an opportunity to evaluate the school's academic, operational, and financial performance and informs the authorizer's renewal decision. When developing internal renewal processes, authorizers should:

- Become familiar with the charter school renewal information on the [SBE webpage](#) and in any applicable law;
- Develop a process for the interim review;
- Develop a cumulative performance report and a process for sharing with charter leaders;

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- Develop a process for submitting the renewal application; and
- Comply with the renewal reporting requirements outlined in the [Authorizer Reporting Requirements](#) and in [T.C.A. §§ 49-13-121](#), [49-13-122](#), and [49-13-130](#).

Additional guidance can be found in the High-Stakes Decisions section of the toolkit.

Closure Process

A charter school may close for any number of reasons, but it is imperative that any closure be handled with care and consideration for the benefit of its students, faculty, and staff. Before creating closure processes, authorizers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with legal requirements found in [T.C.A. §§ 49-13-121](#), [49-13-122](#), and [49-13-130](#).

Charter Revocations

[T.C.A. § 49-13-130](#) states that authorizers must have a charter school closure process in place before deciding to deny renewal or revoke a charter agreement. The law also requires both the authorizer and the charter school operator to take specific steps to support an orderly closure, including forming a transition team made up of representatives from both the school and the authorizer.

Aligned with [T.C.A. § 49-13-130](#), the transition team is tasked with driving the closure process, including the following considerations:

- Transfer of students;
- Release and transfer of student records to the chartering authority or the department;
- Release and transfer of personnel records to the chartering authority or the department;
- Submission of financial statements to the appropriate chartering authority or the department;
- Disposition of school funds;
- Disposition of school assets;
- School audit pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-2-112](#); and
- Communication of information to the families of students enrolled in the school about all other public school options available.

Voluntary Closure

While [T.C.A. § 49-13-130](#) specifically discusses closures related to non-renewal and revocation, it is highly encouraged that authorizers have a process for voluntary closures as well. The process can be similar to the one for non-renewals and revocations, including the establishment of a transition team. This allows for continued support and guidance for students, families, staff, the authorizer, and the charter leaders. When the closure is voluntary, the charter school agreement ends on the charter school's closing date.

Closure Checklist

The [Sample Charter School Closure Action Plan](#) is adapted from NACSA's [Sample Action Plan for Charter School Closure](#). The action plan includes the following sections for authorizers to address once the decision has been made to close the charter school:

1. Immediate Action Items
2. Notification and Communication
3. Records Action Items
4. Financial Matters

Each of these areas should be addressed with urgency by the transition team in the manner most conducive to the authorizer's context. The document is tailored primarily to instances in which an authorizer revokes or does not renew a school's charter agreement; however, the steps outlined are equally applicable to a voluntary school closure. The action plan should help create a smooth closure process for the authorizer, charter leaders, students, family, and staff.

Build An Effective Support and Oversight System

Authorizers must meet their core oversight responsibilities as required under state charter law, SBE charter rules and policies, and all applicable federal and state education laws. The charter agreement and performance framework contain obligations for charter schools that necessitate oversight. While compliance and accountability are essential, high-quality charter authorizers also support their charter schools through the development of a long-term partnership grounded in high expectations and a shared goal of positive outcomes for students.

This partnership is rooted in clear expectations and communications, transparent timelines,

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and mutual respect. It is strengthened when authorizers intentionally cultivate strong professional relationships with school leaders and governing boards. This holistic approach improves the quality of support and oversight while reducing unnecessary friction for everyone involved.

When building the support and oversight system, authorizers should adhere to the four basic tenets of effective support and oversight: predictable, purposeful, proportionate, and professional.

Predictable

The cycle and activities associated with oversight should never come as a surprise to schools. They should be aware of what is involved and be able to anticipate what will happen and when.

- Information is provided via an annual calendar on what each school must submit or make available.
- Schedules, due dates, and timelines are clearly communicated.
- Data requests contain clear information on how and in what format the information must be provided (e.g., portal upload, email, board minutes).
- The mechanism for sharing back information (e.g., annual reports, site visit reports, interim review summaries) is clearly communicated.
- All activities are transparent, with clear expectations, deadlines, processes, and decision-making criteria.
- Practices are consistent, with stable processes and communication norms that do not shift from year to year.

Purposeful

Oversight should always be grounded in a clear “why.” Authorizers do not collect information simply because it exists or because it has historically been requested. Each activity, data request, meeting, or site visit should serve a defined purpose connected to student outcomes, legal obligations, or upcoming high-stakes decisions (such as intervention or renewal). When schools understand how information will be used—and how it connects to performance expectations in the charter contract and performance framework—oversight feels coherent rather than burdensome. A purposeful system ensures that authorizers:

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- Address all obligations and legal requirements: Data requests and oversight processes are clearly tied to law, rules, charter agreement, performance framework, or LEA functioning.
- Prioritize monitoring what matters most for students: Oversight prioritizes indicators that meaningfully reflect student success, financial sustainability, and sound governance.
- Focus on outcomes over inputs: Data requests include how the information will be used (e.g., for early-warning analysis, annual reporting, or renewal planning).
- Align oversight activities to the performance framework and renewal criteria: Oversight activities are aligned to the performance framework and renewal criteria, so schools understand how today's monitoring connects to future high-stakes decisions.
- Avoid duplicative or unnecessary requests: The administrative burden is reduced by checking to see if information can be obtained elsewhere before requesting it.
- Use collected information to inform action: Information collected is analyzed and used to inform feedback, intervention, or strategic decision-making.

Proportionate

Oversight and intervention should be calibrated to a school's performance, risk level, and context. Not all schools require the same level of monitoring and treating every school identically, regardless of track record, can undermine both autonomy and effectiveness.

A proportionate system differentiates oversight based on evidence. High-performing schools with strong governance and financial stability should experience streamlined monitoring that respects their capacity and autonomy. Schools demonstrating risk factors, compliance concerns, or declining performance may require more frequent engagement, additional reporting, or formal intervention. Being proportionate means:

- Monitoring intensity increases as risk increases;
- Intervention escalates only when concerns are severe, persistent, material, or unremedied;
- High-performing schools are not subject to unnecessary administrative burden; and
- Authorizers focus their limited time and resources on where students and the public interest face the greatest risk.

Proportionate oversight also requires clear thresholds. Schools should understand in advance what performance levels, compliance issues, or financial indicators may trigger increased

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monitoring, formal notices, or probationary status. This transparency builds trust and reduces perceptions of arbitrariness.

Importantly, proportionate oversight does not mean inconsistent standards. All schools are held to the same academic, financial, and organizational expectations. What differs is the level of engagement, support, and intervention based on performance against those expectations.

Professional

This tenet focuses on *how* authorizers interact with their charter schools. It is built on professionalism, trust, mutual respect, and partnership.

- Oversight is supportive and proactive, with an emphasis on solving problems early.
- Both work collaboratively to meet student and family needs.
- Activities are improvement-oriented and focused on ensuring the students' and public interests are at the forefront of discussions.
- Communication is two-way, with space for schools to share context, raise questions, and give feedback.
- The LEA respects the school's authority over its day-to-day operations.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Establishing a Foundation for Authorizing

The table below outlines suggested milestones for the first three months of planning.

Timeline	Key Priorities
First 30 Days	• Review T.C.A. §§ 49-13-101 through -145, SBE Chapter 0520-14-01, and SBE Policy 6.111. • Identify and assign roles for staff involved in authorizing. • Conduct an inventory of existing policies, contracts, and tools. • Connect with the department's Charter School Programs Office for onboarding and support.
First 60 Days	• Develop or refine authorizing policies (e.g., application, renewal, closure). • Establish an annual authorizing calendar. • Customize model forms for applications, contracts, and performance frameworks. • Build relationships with existing charter operators and governing boards. • Participate in NACSA or TDOE training sessions.
First 90 Days	• Complete the Quality Authorizing Self-Assessment to identify strengths and needs. • Draft a multi-year authorizing plan aligned to the five phases of the cycle. • Create a data tracking and record-retention system. • Develop a communication and transparency plan for stakeholders. • Prepare for your first monitoring or application cycle, as appropriate.

Appendix B: Sample Charter School Reporting Timeline

This is a sample reporting timeline that authorizers may want to create for their charter operators.

Date	Reporting Requirement
Immediately After Lottery	Verification/Certification of enrollment lottery T.C.A. § 49-13-113(d)(7)(A) requires charter schools that conduct an enrollment lottery to verify to the department that the lottery was conducted in compliance with state statute.
As soon as Practical after June 30	Annual audit T.C.A. §§ 49-13-127(b) and 49-13-111(k) require each charter school to furnish an annual audit to the chartering authority, the commissioner of the department, and the Comptroller of the Treasury. Notifying the department that the audit has been provided to and posted by the comptroller suffices as delivery to the commissioner.
Prior to the first student day	Completed staff background checks T.C.A. § 49-5-413(a) requires that before employment and every five (5) years thereafter, any person applying for a position or holding a teaching position or any other position where they are in the proximity to school children.
Prior to school opening	Teacher evaluation system selection SBE Rule 0520-02-01-.15(4) and SBE Policy 5.201 allow charter schools to propose their own evaluation model. Evaluation models must be submitted to the commissioner for approval. The SBE 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. § 49-13-111(p) requires charter schools to submit waiver requests to the chartering authority or the commissioner of education.

Planning for Quality Authorizing

As Needed	Teacher Evaluation Data Teacher evaluation data must be submitted per the rules and regulations of the state board of education.
	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 in T.C.A. § 8-19-101.
Mid-July	Opening of School Reporting Schools submit any information required by the authorizer prior to the opening of the school. • 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's improvement plan
August 31	Annual Charter Management Organization (CMO) Financial Report (if applicable) T.C.A. § 49-13-127(a)(2)(B) requires CMOs to file an annual financial report with the comptroller of the treasury. The report must detail transactions between the CMO and any charter school operating in Tennessee for the

Planning for Quality Authorizing

August 31	fiscal year ending June 30 in a form prescribed by the comptroller of the treasury. Annual Financial Report T.C.A. §§ 49-13-111(m) requires each charter school to prepare and publish an annual financial report, including the audited financial statements of the school.
Late September	Monitoring Documentation Schools submit any annual monitoring documentation not already provided as evidence for the performance review. As applicable, the charter school may provide evidence, which includes, but is not limited to: • Implementation of material terms of educational program • Compliance with educational requirements • Protection of rights of students with disabilities • Protection of rights of ELL students • Financial reporting and compliance • Use of generally accepted accounting principles • Compliance with governance requirements • Compliance with reporting requirements • Protection of rights of all students • Compliance with staff credentialing requirements • Compliance with employee rights laws • Completion of required background checks • Compliance with facility and transportation requirements • Compliance with health and safety requirements • Documentation of appropriate information handling • Compliance with all other obligations
October	First annual site visit Schedule the first annual site visit for the school year.

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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.
Early March	Second annual site visit
	Schedule the second annual site visit for the school year.
May-June	Annual Board Training Documentation
	T.C.A. § 49-13-111(o) requires the charter school governing body to conduct at least one annual board training course. The charter school governing board must provide documentation of the training to the authorizer. Training must be approved by the SBE. The charter school governing body members must meet specific training requirements by June 30 each year.

Appendix C. Sample Charter School Closure Action Plan

Please note the timelines in the “Completion Date” column are recommendations unless a specific legal authority is cited. Charter schools are strongly encouraged to work with legal counsel to determine which records must be maintained by federal or state law, where the records must be transferred to, and when the records must be transferred by.

Immediate Action Items

Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
Notice of Possible Revocation or Receipt of Closure Notice If a revocation, notify the charter school in writing of the possibility of revocation and the reasons for the possible revocation. If a voluntary closure, notify the charter school of any submission requirements (i.e., board resolution).	Authorizing Lead	No later than 30 days prior to any decision by LEA to revoke a charter agreement (T.C.A. § 49-13-122(e)) For voluntary closures, no later than 30 days after the decision to close is made	
Provide Guidance Documents Provide the school with guidance documents that detail the LEA processes for closure and provide a high-level overview of transitioning students and staff, an overview of transition steps, a general timeline, a checklist, and contact	Authorizer Lead	Recommended to have this established prior to either situation occurring	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
information.			
Closure Notification to TDOE Provide notice of revocation or closure that includes a copy of the authorizing board's resolution setting forth the decision and reasons for the decision or the school governing board's notice of closure.	Authorizer Lead	Within 10 days of the decision to revoke (T.C.A. § 49-13-122(g)) or notification of school closure	
Parent/Guardian/Staff Closure Transition Letter Distribute letter to faculty, staff, and parents outlining: • Closure decision; • Timeline for transition; • Information on obtaining student records before the end of classes; and • Contact information for parent/guardian assistance questions.	Charter School Administrator Leader and Authorizer Lead	Within one calendar week of the decision to revoke (T.C.A. § 49-13-130(1)) or notification of school closure	
Establish Transition Team and Assign Roles Establish a team dedicated to ensuring the smooth transition of students and staff and the closure of the school's business.	Authorizer Lead and Charter School Board Chair	Within two calendar weeks of the decision to revoke (T.C.A. § 49-13-130(2)) or notification of school closure	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
The transition team should include: • Lead person from authorizer staff; • Lead finance contact from the charter school and authorizer; • Other authorizing staff as needed; • Charter school board chair; • Lead administrator from the charter school; and • Lead person from the charter school parent organization. Distribute contact information to all transition team members, set calendar for meetings, and assign dates for completion of each charter school closure item.			
Talking Points Create talking points for students, parents, staff, community, and press. Focus on communicating plans for the orderly transition of students and staff.	Transition Team	Within one calendar week of the establishment of the transition team	
Convene School Staff Meeting The board chair should communicate:	Charter School Board Chair and Charter School	Within one calendar week of the establishment of the transition	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
• Commitment to continuing school operations through closure process; • The plan to assist students and staff by ensuring a smooth closure; • Reasons for closure; • The timeline for transition details; • The compensation and benefits timeline; and • Contact information for ongoing questions.	Administrator Leader	team	
Continue Instruction for Current Students Continue high-quality instruction in accordance with the charter agreement for the remainder of the school year for currently enrolled students. No new students may be enrolled.	Charter School Administrator Lead	Continuous after decision until the end of the school year (T.C.A. § 49-13-130(6))	
Convene Parent Closure Meeting Plan and convene a parent closure meeting. At the parent meeting: • Provide a list of all other public school options for which students are eligible to enroll; • Make copies of “Closure FAQ” document	Authorizer Lead, Charter School Administrator, and Charter School Parent Organization Leads	Within 30 days of the authorizing board’s vote to revoke (T.C.A. § 49-13-130(3)) or the decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
available; • Provide an overview of the authorizer board's closure policy and closure decision; • Provide a calendar of important dates for parents; • Provide specific remaining school vacation days and date for end of classes; • Present timeline for transitioning students; • Present timeline for closing down of school operations; and • Remind parents/guardians of the right to access students' records and provide contact information.			
Convene Faculty/Staff Meeting Board Chair to communicate: • Commitment to continuing coherent school operations throughout closure transition; Plan to assist students and staff by making the closing as smooth as possible; • Reasons for closure; • Timeline for transition details; • Compensation and benefits timeline; and	Charter School Board Chair, Charter School Administrator Lead and Charter School Faculty Lead	Within 30 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or the decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
Contact information for ongoing questions. Provide the authorizer with copies of all materials distributed at the Faculty/Staff Meeting.			
Establish Financial Transition Plan Outline the school's remaining financial obligations and incoming funding to support the orderly closure of the school.	Authorizer Financial Lead, Charter School Board Chair, and Charter School Financial Lead	Within two calendar weeks of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or the decision to close	
Secure All Records Ensure all financial records are organized, up to date, and maintained in a secure location.	Charter School Board Chair, Administrator, and Financial Lead	On-going	
Secure All Assets The school's assets and any assets in the school that belong to others must be protected against theft, misappropriation, and deterioration. The school should: Maintain existing insurance coverage until the disposal of such assets under the	Charter School Board Chair, Administrator, and Financial Lead	On-going	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
school closure action plan; • Continue existing insurance for the facility, vehicles, and other assets until 1) disposal or transfer of real estate or termination of lease, and 2) disposal, transfer, or sale of vehicles and other assets; • Maintain any officer and staff insurance and coverage (such as surety bonds) required under state law until the official • Continue or obtain appropriate security services; and • Plan to move assets to secure storage after closure of the school facility.			

Notification and Communication Action Items

Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
Staff/Faculty Closure Transition Letter Outline transition plans and timelines for staff, including but not limited to: • Employee end date; • Commitment of the board to transitioning staff; • Commitment to positive transition of	Charter School Board Chair	Within 30 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
children into new educational settings; - Any transition to new employment assistance being provided (such as job fairs); - Timelines for compensation and benefits; - Timelines for outstanding professional development issues; - COBRA information; - Pertinent licensure information; - Faculty lead contact information; and - Transition team member contact information. Provide a copy of letter and any accompanying materials to authorizer.			
Parent/Guardian Closure Transition Letter Distribute letter with detailed guidance regarding transition plan. Notification should include, but not be limited to: Date of the last day of regular instruction;	Charter School Board Chair	Within 30 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
• Cancellation of any activities planned beyond closure date; • Notification of mandatory enrollment under state law; • Dates of any planned school choice fairs; • Listing of the contact and enrollment information for charter, parochial, public, and private schools in the area; • Information on obtaining student records pursuant to the state Freedom of Information Law before the end of classes; and • Contact information for parent/guardian assistance/questions. Provide a copy of letter and any accompanying materials to authorizer.			
Notification of Employees and Benefit Providers The school should establish an employee end date and should:	Charter School Board Chair and Charter School Financial Lead	Within 45 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
• Notify all employees of the end of employment and/or contracts; • Notify benefit providers of pending release of all employees; • Notify employees and providers of release of all benefit programs; and • End all programs as of the last date of service in accordance with applicable law and regulations (i.e., COBRA), including: • Health care/health insurance; • Life insurance; • Dental plans; • Eyeglass plans • Cafeteria Plans; • 401(k) retirement plans; and • Pension plans. Specific rules and regulations may apply to such programs, especially teachers' retirement plans, so legal counsel should be consulted. Provide copies of all materials to authorizer.			
Notification of Vendors and Contractors	Charter School	Within 30 days of the authorizing	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
The school must formulate a list of all contractors and vendors (including any education service providers) and: • Notify them regarding school closure, including the final date of operations; • Provide notice of non-renewal in accordance with the management contract if applicable; • Request the final invoice and accounting, including an accounting of retained school funds and grant fund status if applicable; • Instruct contractors to make arrangements to remove any contractor property from the school by a certain date (such as copy machines or other rented property); • Retain records of past contracts as proof of full payment; and • Maintain telephone, gas, electric, and water long enough to cover the time period required for all necessary	Financial Lead	board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

Planning for Quality Authorizing

Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
closure procedures to be complete.			
Notification to Creditors and Debtors Solicit from each creditor a final accounting of the school's accrued and unpaid debt. • Compare the figures provided with the school's calculation of the debt and reconcile; • Where possible, negotiate a settlement of debts consummated by a settlement agreement reflecting satisfaction and release of the existing obligations; and • Contact all debtors and demand payment. If collection efforts are unsuccessful, consider turning the debt over to a commercial debt collection agency. All records regarding such collection or disputes by debtors regarding amounts owed must be retained.	Charter School Financial Lead	Within 30 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

Records Action Items

Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
Disposition of Records In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-130, follow the appropriate disposition of records policy. In all cases, the school board shall maintain all records related to: • Loans, bonds, mortgages, and other financing; • Contracts; • Leases; • Assets and asset sales; • Grants (records relating to federal grants must be kept in accordance with the Uniform Grants Guidance); • Governance (minutes, by-laws, policies); • Employees (background checks, personnel files); • Accounting/audits, taxes, and tax status; • Employee benefit programs and benefits; and • Any items provided for in the closure action plan.	Charter School Board Chair	Within two months of the end of classes and ongoing	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
Final Report Cards and Student Records Notice The school must ensure the following: • All student records are organized and secure; • All student records and report cards are complete and up to date; • Parents/guardians are provided with copies of final report cards; and • Parents/guardians are given notice of where student records will be sent with specific contact information.	Authorizer Lead and Charter School Administrator Lead	Aligned with deadlines for district-managed schools	
Transfer of Student Records In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-130 , the school must transfer all student records to the new schools or LEAs. Student records should include the following: • Grades/academic information; • All records associated with any student support services provided; • Immunization records; and • Parent/guardian information	Charter School Administrative Lead and Authorizer Lead	Within one month after the end of classes	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
Documenting Transfer of Records Written documentation of the transfer of records must accompany the transfer of student materials. The written verification must include the: • Number of general education records transferred; • Number of special education records transferred; • Date of transfer; • Signature and printed name of the charter school representative releasing the records; and • Provide copies of all materials documenting the transfer of student records to the authorizer.	Charter School Board Chair and Charter School Administrative Lead	Within one month of the end of classes	

Financial Action Items

Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
IRS Status If the school has 501(c)(3) status, it must take steps to maintain that status until dissolved, including (but not limited to) the following: • Notification to IRS regarding any address change of the school corporation; and • Filing of required tax returns or reports (e.g., IRS form 990 and Schedule A). If the school corporation proceeds to dissolution, notify the IRS of the dissolution of the education corporation and its 501(c)(3) status, and provide a copy to the authorizer.	Charter School Board Chair and Charter School Financial Lead	Date to be determined depending on 501(c)(3) status	
UCC Search The school should perform a Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) search to determine if there are any perfected	Charter School Board Chair and Financial Lead	Within 30 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
security interests and to which assets security interests are attached.			
Audit The school must establish a date by which to complete a final close-out audit by an independent firm or state auditor, as determined by statute. Provide a copy of the final audit to the Comptroller.	Charter School Board Chair and Charter School Financial Lead	Within 120 days of the end of classes	
Inventory The school must: • Provide a fixed asset list segregating state and federal dollars; • Note source codes for funds and prices for each purchase; and • Establish fair market value, initial and amortized for all fixed assets. Provide the authorizer with a copy of all documents.	Charter School Financial Lead	Within 45 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
Disposition of Federally Funded Equipment Check with the authorizer's federal programs staff and the Tennessee Department of Education (if necessary) regarding proper procedures for the disposition of property purchased with federal funds.	Authorizer and Charter School Financial Lead	Within 45 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	
Disposition of Inventory Establish a disposition plan and establish a payment process (e.g., cash, checks, credit cards) for any remaining items. Provide the authorizer with a copy of all documents.	Authorizer and Charter School Financial Leads	Within 45 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	
Property Purchased with Charter School Program (CSP) Funds Establish under state or individual school agreements required disposition of property purchased with CSP funds. Generally, property purchased with CSP funds should first be offered to other	Charter School Financial Lead	Within two weeks of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
charter schools within the same region in which the closing school is located. If no schools want the property, an auction may be held to dispose of the CSP assets.			
Disposition of Facilities Determine state requirements for real property acquired from a public school district to determine right of first offer and other applicable requirements for disposition.	Charter School Board Chair and Financial Lead	Within two calendar weeks of the end of classes	
Payment of Funds The school should prioritize a payment strategy considering state and local requirements in collaboration with its authorizer. Use available revenue and auction proceeds to pay the following: • Retirement systems; • Teachers and staff; • Employment taxes and federal taxes	Authorizer and Charter School Financial Lead	Within 45 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
• Audit preparation; • Private creditors; • Overpayments from state/district; and • Other as identified by the authorizer. Provide a copy of all materials associated with this action to the authorizer.			
Expenditure Reporting Ensure that Federal Expenditure Reports (FER) and the Annual Performance Report (APR) are completed. Provide a copy of all materials to the authorizer.	Charter School Financial Lead	Plan complete within 45 days of the authorizing board's vote to revoke or decision to close, and ongoing until completed	
Itemized Financials Review, prepare, and make available the following: • Fiscal year-end financial statements; • Cash analysis; • A list of compiled bank statements for the year, all unused checks and	Charter School Financial Lead	Within 45 days of the end of classes	

Planning for Quality Authorizing

Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
bank accounts; • A list of payables; and • Accounting of petty cash. Collect and void all unused checks and close accounts once transactions have been cleared.			
Payroll Reports The school must generate a list of all payroll reports including taxes, retirement, or adjustments on employee contracts.	Charter School Financial Lead	Within 30 days of the end of classes	
List of Creditors and Debtors Formulate a list of creditors and debtors and any amounts accrued and unpaid with respect to such creditor or debtor. The list should include the following: • Contractors to whom the school owes payment; • Lenders; • Mortgage holders; • Bond holders;	Charter School Board Chair and Financial Lead	Within 30 days of the end of classes	

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Action Item	Completed By	Completion Date	Status
• Equipment suppliers; • Secured and unsecured creditors; • Persons or organizations who owe the school fees or credits; • Lessees or sub-lessees of the school; and • Any person or organization holding property of the school			

Appendix D: Sample Closure Letters to Parents from Authorizer

No one wants to disrupt a community with a school closure. It's the hardest part of the charter bargain. When a school does close, the school itself should take the lead on communicating the closure, but that might not always happen. That's when an authorizer must lead. This sample letter to parents can help you establish strong communication from the start.



Audience: Parents and guardians

Goal: Communicate closure decision and inform parents and guardians of important next steps in the closure process.

NACSA developed this sample letter based on contributions from Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Michigan's Charter School Association (MAPSA).

TIP: Making every resource available for parents in one place—a one-stop shop—is convenient, efficient, and eases tensions. Consider the following types of parental transition support:

- On-site counseling for students and families;
- Coordinated school choice activities, including;
- On-site enrollment fairs;
- School tour opportunities; and
- School resource guide and/or webpage.

[DATE]

Dear [PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME],

Behind every charter school is an authorizer. Authorizers ensure charter school leaders have the freedom and flexibility needed to innovate and meet student needs, while also ensuring the school is succeeding and open to all. As the authorizer of [SCHOOL NAME], I write to you with a heavy heart to inform you of our decision to close the school, whose last day of operation will be [DATE].

The closure of a school is not an easy decision and is always a last resort—our process was

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extensive and thoughtful. Our decision was made final after a thorough evaluation of evidence that demonstrated [ISSUE, e.g., poor financial health and concerning academic results] over multiple years.

Our primary concern is making sure every child has a smooth transition to their new school. We encourage you and your family to attend one of several parent information meetings to assist your student(s) with the transition to their new school next year. At each meeting, you can talk with representatives from area schools and learn more about the educational options for the coming school year. Enrollment information and materials will also be available.

The parent information meetings will be held on the following dates and times:

[DAY, DATE, TIME, LOCATION #1]

[DAY, DATE, TIME, LOCATION #2]

[DAY, DATE, TIME, LOCATION #3]

If you have any questions or concerns before these meetings, please contact [NAME], who is happy to meet with you either in person or via phone to discuss any aspect of the closure process. We know this is a challenging and emotional time.

The [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME] board is 100 percent committed to seeing this school year through successfully. In partnership with the school [and the MANAGEMENT COMPANY NAME, IF APPLICABLE], we are also committed to helping the teaching staff successfully complete the remainder of the school year. We will provide assistance to teachers and staff to help them find new positions for the next school year.

Let's make the most of the time we have together, stay positive and committed to our community, and focus on giving our students all that we can to prepare them for academic success after this year.

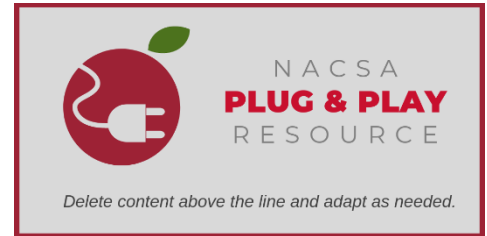
Sincerely,

[AUTHORIZER STAFF NAME]

[AUTHORIZER]

Appendix E: Sample Teacher and Staff Closure Letter from Authorizer

When a school does close, the school itself should take the lead on communicating a closure, but that might not always happen. That's when an authorizer must lead. This sample letter to teachers and staff can help you establish strong communication from the start.



Audience: School staff and teachers

Goal: Inspire teachers to stay through the year, show appreciation and support for their past and future work, and inform them of important next steps in the closure process.

NACSA developed this sample letter based on contributions from Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Michigan's Charter School Association (MAPSA).

TIP: Encourage the school to consider and communicate specific Human Resources support for teachers, such as:

- Letters of recommendation from school;
- Letter stating the organization's commitment to meet contract obligations;
- Possible bonuses and/or extension of benefits for staff who remain on staff through closure

process;

- Flexible scheduling for interviewing; and
- Contract extension for HR services.

[DATE]

Dear [FIRST NAME],

I want to thank you for your hard work and professionalism this year on behalf of the children at [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME]. As you know, the [AUTHORIZER NAME] Board recently voted to deny the school's application for charter renewal. As such, the school will continue to serve students through [DATE].

Planning for Quality Authorizing

The decision to close a school is never easy, and always a last resort. The [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME] board is fully committed to seeing this school year through successfully. In partnership with school leadership [and MANAGEMENT COMPANY, IF APPLICABLE], we are committed to helping the teaching staff complete the remainder of the school year successfully.

To assist you and your colleagues in transitioning to new opportunities, we will be hosting a job fair of select area schools on [DATE AND TIME]. The event will take place at [LOCATION] and will provide teaching staff with the opportunity to meet with representatives from area schools that are seeking teachers for the next school year. Information on grade level and subject area openings, as well as information on how to apply to each employer, will be available at the meeting as well.

[NAME 1] will be the point person for all staff questions related to the closure. [NAME 2] will be the point person for all parents and parent issues related to the closure.

[NAME] would be happy to meet with you to discuss any aspect of the closure process. We know this is a challenging and emotional time. While the day-to-day operations of the school won't change between now and the end of the school year, [NAME] will forward a timeline to staff within the next [XX] days containing important dates and information related to the winding down of operations following the last day of classes on [DATE].

Please also be aware that our primary concern is the well-being of the school's students and families. Therefore, we will be hosting a series of parent meetings to assist students and parents with the transition to their new school next year. These meetings will be held at [LOCATION, e.g., the school] on the following dates and times. We strongly encourage you to attend to show your support for the students and the community.

- [DAY, DATE, TIME, LOCATION #1]
- [DAY, DATE, TIME, LOCATION #2]
- [DAY, DATE, TIME, LOCATION #3]

I again thank you for your commitment and dedication to your students. Let's make the most of the time that we have together, stay positive and committed to our community, and focus on giving students all that we can to prepare them for academic success after this year.

Sincerely,

[AUTHORIZING STAFF NAME]

[AUTHORIZER]

Appendix F: Sample Press Release

An authorizer's decision to close a school is guaranteed to generate local media coverage. Use the sample press release below to think through critical messages in advance of the closure vote, and to distribute facts quickly and efficiently about the closure to control the narrative from the start.



Audience: Media, parents and guardians

Goals:

- Communicate reason(s) for closure decision;
- Highlight authorizing board closure policies;
- Provide history of the school;
- Acknowledge school leaders;
- Outline support for students, parents, and staff; and
- Highlight press contact for the authorizer and the school.

NACSA developed this sample press release based on contributions from the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, the South Carolina Public Charter School District, and the State University of New York Charter Schools Institute.

For Immediate Release: [RELEASE DATE]

Contact: [NAME OF INFORMATION OFFICER OR MEDIA CONTACT, (XXX) XXX-XXXX]

[AUTHORIZER NAME] Board Votes to [REVOKE, CLOSE, ETC.] Charter of [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME].

Decision means school to close on [DATE]

[CITY, STATE]—During the [AUTHORIZER NAME] [DATE] meeting, the board denied the request made by [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME] to continue in operation after the close of the [XXXX-XX] school year. This decision means that the [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME] will close on [DATE] at the end of the current school year. [AUTHORIZER NAME] will start working with the community to ensure all students have a smooth transition to a new high-quality school.

Planning for Quality Authorizing

The decision to close a school is never easy and always a last resort—the process was extensive, thoughtful, and made final after a thorough evaluation of evidence that demonstrated [CONCERNS, e.g., poor financial health and concerning academic results] over multiple years. Specifically, the [AUTHORIZER NAME] board was unable to find that the school had demonstrated the evidence of success necessary to earn renewal under the [AUTHORIZER NAME's] "Policies & Procedures for Charter Renewal" (available at [INSERT YOUR WEBSITE]). The recommendation to the [AUTHORIZER NAME], the board's policies, and other pertinent information is available online at [INSERT YOUR WEBSITE].

Prior to the Board's vote to deny the school's renewal application, [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME] requested a hearing and was afforded such opportunity on [DATE]. The committee reviewed and considered the written appeal submissions offered by the school. In addition, parents, governing board members, and staff representing the school were given the opportunity to speak directly to the committee.

[SCHOOL NAME], a public charter school serving grades [XX to XX], is located in [CITY, STATE]. The school was founded in [YEAR]. The school states its mission is "[INSERT SCHOOL'S MISSION]". As of [MONTH YEAR], [SCHOOL] has a current enrollment of approximately [XX] students.

"Today's difficult decision was made first and foremost with the interests of students, families, and taxpayers in mind," said [AUTHORIZING SPOKESPERSON, TITLE]. "While we never set out to close a school when we grant a charter, we know we must act when we see [REASON FOR CLOSURE, e.g., severe deficiencies in academic performance and fiscal health]. We honor the dedication of the school's board, leadership, and staff over the years and wish them the best."

"Our attention will now turn to ensuring each child has a smooth transition to their next school and to minimize disruption to families and the community," [SPOKESPERSON] concluded.

Over the coming weeks, [AUTHORIZER], [CHARTER SCHOOL], and community partners will be working closely together to provide the following supports to the students and parents of the school:

- [EXAMPLE] The Charter Schools Office will hold an information meeting for [CHARTER SCHOOL NAME] parents on [DATE]. Charter School Office staff will provide parents with information on other public school options available to students and explain the transition of student records and other pertinent information at that time
- [EXAMPLE] The Charter School Office's Parent Advocate, [NAME], will be available to parents at the school beginning [DATE] and can be reached at [(XXX) XXX-XXXX].
- [INSERT AS NEEDED].

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Charter schools are independently run public schools that are granted greater flexibility to meet children's needs in return for greater accountability for meeting their promises to families and taxpayers. Each school is accountable to an authorizer, such as [AUTHORIZER NAME] that decides who can start a new charter school, sets academic and operational expectations, oversees school performance, and decides whether a charter should remain open or close at the end of its contract. All charter schools must continually apply for and demonstrate that they have earned the right to continue the privilege of educating the children of this state.

This school year, the [AUTHORIZER NAME] oversees [XX] public charter schools serving more than [X,XXX] students across the state. [XX] new charter schools from the [DATE] application cycle are scheduled to open in fall [YEAR].