
BEFORE THE TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

IN RE:)	
)	
Memphis School of Excellence Cordova)	State Board of Education Meeting
Charter School Appeal)	November 15, 2019
)	

**FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION REPORT
OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-108, sponsors proposing to open new charter schools may appeal the denial of their amended application by a local board of education to the State Board of Education (State Board). On September 26, 2019, Memphis School of Excellence Cordova (MSE) appealed the denial of its amended application by Shelby County Schools (SCS) Board of Education to the State Board.

Based on the following procedural history, findings of fact, and Review Committee Report attached hereto, I believe that the decision to deny the MSE amended application was not “contrary to the best interests of the students, LEA, or community.”¹ Therefore, I recommend that the State Board affirm the decision of SCS to deny the amended application for MSE.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108 and State Board policy 2.500, State Board staff and an independent charter application review committee (Review Committee) conducted a de novo, on the record review of the MSE amended application. In accordance with the Tennessee Department of Education’s charter application scoring rubric, “applications that do not meet or exceed the standard in all sections (academic plan design and capacity, operations plan and capacity, financial plan and capacity, and, if applicable, past performance) . . . will be deemed not ready for approval.”² In addition, the State Board is required to hold a public hearing in the district where the proposed charter school seeks to locate.³

¹ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

² Tennessee Charter School Application Evaluation Rubric – Ratings and Sample Scoring Criteria, pg. 1.

³ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

In order to overturn the decision of the local board of education, the State Board must find that the local board's decision to deny the charter application was contrary to the best interests of the students, LEA, or community.⁴ Because MSE is proposing to locate in a school district that contains a school on the current or last preceding priority school list, the State Board has the ability to approve the application, and thereby authorize the school, or to affirm the local board's decision to deny.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. On January 31, 2019, the Sponsor, the Read Foundation (Sponsor), submitted a letter of intent to SCS expressing its intention to file a charter school application for MSE.
2. The Sponsor submitted its initial application for MSE to SCS on March 28, 2019.
3. Shelby County Schools asked all sponsors to complete a supplement to the Tennessee Department of Education charter school application template in Section 1.2 – Enrollment by responding to Shelby County Schools' 2019 Regional Seats Analysis. This supplement was turned in with the initial application.
4. SCS assembled a review committee to review and score the MSE initial application.
5. On April 15, 2019, a SCS panel, which included external expert reviewers, held a capacity interview with the Sponsor.
6. The review committee recommended denial of the MSE initial application.
7. On June 25, 2019, the SCS Board of Education voted to deny the MSE initial application based upon the review committee's recommendation.
8. The Sponsor amended and resubmitted its application for MSE to SCS on July 25, 2019.
9. SCS' review committee reviewed and scored the MSE amended application.
10. The MSE amended application was recommended for denial based on achieving a "partially meets standard" rating on Section 1.2 - Enrollment of the scoring rubric. The SCS review committee found the application met or exceeded the standards of the state scoring rubric, however, this rating was given based on the regional seat analysis conducted by SCS pursuant to SCS Board Policy #1011 – Charter Schools. The policy states, "the district shall consider whether the establishment of a proposed charter school in a particular geographic location of the LEA is feasible or will create oversaturation in the proposed geographic location."

⁴ Ibid.

11. On September 17, 2019, based on the SCS staff recommendation to deny the amended application because of the regional seat analysis, the SCS Board of Education voted to deny the MSE amended application.
12. The Sponsor appealed the denial of the MSE amended application in writing to the State Board on September 26, 2019, including submission of all required documents per State Board policy 2.500.
13. At the time of appeal to the State Board, the Sponsor did not submit proposed corrections to the application as allowed under T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(4).
14. The State Board's Review Committee analyzed and scored the MSE amended application using the Tennessee Department of Education's charter application scoring rubric.
15. The State Board's Review Committee conducted a capacity interview with the proposed governing board of MSE and key members of the leadership team on November 1, 2019 in Nashville.
16. On November 4, 2019, the State Board staff held a public hearing in Memphis. At the public hearing, the Executive Director, sitting as the State Board's designee, heard presentations from the Sponsor and SCS and took public comment regarding the MSE amended application.
17. After the capacity interview, the Review Committee determined a final consensus rating of the MSE amended application, which served as the basis for the Review Committee Recommendation Report.

FINDINGS OF FACT

- **District Denial of Application.**

The review committee assembled by SCS to review and score the MSE initial and amended applications consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Morgan Ripski	National Association of Charter School Authorizers
Terinni Stafford	Shelby County Schools, Coordinated School Health (initial)
Kimberly Jackson	Shelby County Schools, Curriculum & Instruction
Debra Fratz	Shelby County Schools, English Language Learners
Stacey Jones	Shelby County Schools, Finance (initial)
LaTonya Goodman	Shelby County Schools Finance (amended)
Aisha Thornton	Shelby County Schools, Human Resources
Dr. George Stewart	Shelby County Schools, Mental Health
Michelle Stuart	Shelby County Schools, Operations
Tonya Hervey	Shelby County Schools, Professional Development (initial)
Gina True	Shelby County Schools, Student Support

LaTricea Adams	Shelby County Schools, Manager, Organizational Quality
Daphné Robinson	Shelby County Schools, Director of Office of Charter Schools (initial)
Brittany Monda	Director of Office of Charter Schools, Shelby County Schools (amended)
DeVonté Payton	Shelby County Schools, Advisor, School Development, Office of Charter Schools

The MSE initial application received the following ratings from the SCS review committee:

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD
Operations Plan and Capacity	PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD
Financial Plan and Capacity	MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD
Portfolio Review/Performance Record	PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

After the SCS review committee completed its review and scoring of the initial application, its recommendation was presented to the SCS Board of Education on June 25, 2019. Based on the review committee's recommendation, the SCS Board of Education voted to deny the initial application of MSE.

Upon resubmission, the amended application received the following ratings from the SCS review committee:⁵

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD
Operations Plan and Capacity	MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD
Financial Plan and Capacity	MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD
Portfolio Review/Performance Record	MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

After the SCS review committee completed its review and scoring of the amended application, its recommendation was presented to the SCS Board of Education on September 17, 2019. Although the SCS administration stated that the MSE amended application met or exceeded all standards on the state scoring rubric, SCS stated the application did not meet the supplemental requirements of the regional seat analysis and therefore was rated as only partially meeting the standard in Section 1.2 of the application. Because of this, the amended application was recommended for denial based on a regional seat analysis conducted by SCS pursuant to SCS Board Policy #1011 – Charter Schools. Based on this recommendation, the SCS Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of MSE.

⁵ Please see **Exhibit B** for a copy of the SCS review committee report.

- **State Board Charter Application Review Committee’s Evaluation of the Application**

Following the denial of the MSE amended application and their subsequent appeal to the State Board, State Board staff assembled a diverse Review Committee of experts to evaluate and score the MSE amended application. This Review Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Jarrett Fields	Assistant Principal, Houston, Texas
Chad Fletcher	Federal Programs Supervisor and District Testing Coordinator, Bedford County Schools
Kelly Kroneman	Coordinator of Special Populations and Operations, Tennessee State Board of Education
Hillary Sims	Exceptional Education Coach, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools
Jay Whalen	Charter School Program Grant Administrator, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Teneicesia White	Instructional Leader, Aurora Collegiate Academy

The Review Committee conducted an initial review and scoring of the MSE amended application, a capacity interview with the Sponsor, and a final evaluation and scoring of the amended application resulting in a consensus rating for each major section. The Review Committee’s consensus rating of the MSE amended application was as follows:

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD
Operations Plan and Capacity	PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD
Financial Plan and Capacity	MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD
Portfolio Review/Performance Record	PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

The Review Committee recommended that the application for MSE be denied because the applicant failed to establish that its network-level operational structure will provide the necessary qualifications, competencies, and capacity to carry out coordination of English Learner (EL), Special Education (SPED), and RTI² services across all four of its campuses during the first few years of operation. In addition, the applicant lacked a plan for overcoming its self-identified anticipated challenge of establishing strong school culture. Finally, the review committee recommends denial of the application because the applicant did not provide sufficient evidence of producing successful student outcomes in math at the middle school level.

The overall academic plan was a strength of the application, providing opportunities for students to engage in STEM-based activities throughout the year and ample instructional supports for teachers. The application provided a clear rationale for the choice of the intended community as well as a compelling explanation for how the school will serve as a needed alternative within the community. The

applicant also included a robust recruitment and family engagement plan with a variety of opportunities for engaging parents and community partners in the life of the school.

The operations plan presented by the applicant included a network staffing structure that would undermine the applicant's capacity to operate a high-quality school, specifically for students requiring SPED, EL, or RTI² supports and interventions. Although the applicant has strategies in place to ensure the stability and sustainability of the network and schools, the fact that the network would be effectively doubling in size during the 2020-2021 school year puts a greater emphasis on the need for adequate capacity to coordinate services for at-risk students across the four campuses. The review committee did not find evidence that the network could operationalize supports for these students if they were to double the size of their network. Furthermore, the applicant identified establishing strong school culture at the new campus as being one of its primary anticipated challenges, but lacked a compelling plan to adequately address this challenge.

The financial plan presented by the applicant provided the review committee confidence in MSE Cordova's ability to financially support the school. The proposed budget was reasonable and realistic and detailed the network's capacity to financially support the school during its pre-opening and opening years. The network has several years of experience operating in good financial health, and the governing board is engaged with monitoring and oversight of the budget and financial reports.

Finally, the evidence of past performance of the network schools detailed the challenges of the operator's two current schools in proficiency and growth, particularly in middle school math. While the network shared several strategies it has implemented to boost supports for teachers and students with the goal of improving math outcomes, there is currently a lack of evidence of the success of these strategies in improving student proficiency. Although the network has sustained higher ACT scores than the resident district for three years in a row, and a higher graduation rate than both the district and the state since 2014, there is not yet enough evidence that MSE's existing middle school academic program will result in the proficiency or growth worthy of replication.

In summary, the Review Committee determined that the Sponsor did not provide sufficient evidence in the operational and performance sections of the MSE application to meet the required rubric ratings for approval. The capacity interview with the Sponsor did not provide further clarification that would have resulted in a higher rating. Therefore, the Review Committee recommended that the MSE application be denied.

For additional information regarding the Review Committee's evaluation of the application, please see **Exhibit A** for the complete Review Committee Report, which is fully incorporated herein by reference.

- **Public Hearing**

Pursuant to statute⁶ and State Board policy 2.500, a public hearing chaired by the Executive Director was held in Memphis on November 4, 2019. SCS's presentation at the public hearing focused on

⁶ T.C.A. § 49-13-108(b)(4).

the argument that the denial of the MSE amended application was in the best interests of the students, LEA, and community. SCS grounded its argument in SCS Board Policy #1011 – Charter Schools, which requires applicants to demonstrate a community need by addressing one of three options: academic underperformance of area schools, over enrollment of schools in an area, or new programmatic options. SCS stated that all charter school applicants were required to complete a supplement to the charter school application where sponsors were asked to address how the proposed school met community needs. As a part of its rationale for denial of the MSE amended application, SCS stated that 32% of the charter schools (18 of 56) in Memphis are at least 30% below the enrollment capacities listed in their applications, and the SCS 2019 regional seat analysis was an additional tool to analyze the best interests of the community. Using its regional seats analysis, SCS stated that the applicant did not meet any of the three criteria as there are over 1000 unfilled seats at the middle school level, both in traditional public schools and charter schools, in the Cordova area of the city. Because of the oversaturation in the Cordova area, the intended location of the school, SCS stated that MSE could not demonstrate a community need, and therefore, the application was denied. When asked if the SCS Board of Education was aware of the State Board rule 0520-14-01-.01 that prohibits districts from denying charter school applications for failure to address additional priorities, SCS stated the Board was aware of this rule. However, SCS stated that the Board hoped the State Board would consider oversaturation as a “lens through which the [district’s] charter review team reads Section 1.2 – Enrollment.” SCS further stated, “the application of the Board Policy #1011 through the use of the regional seats analysis guided the review of the applicant’s rationale and the community’s need.”

In response to SCS’s argument, the Sponsor highlighted the work of their existing charter schools in the Hickory Hill area. First opening in 2011, the Sponsor stated their schools have consistently achieved strong overall TVAAS composite scores of a Level 3 or higher, and in the 2016-2017 SCS School Performance Framework (SPF), MSE was ranked 4th of all charter schools in SCS in academic results. On the 2017-18 SPF, MSE was ranked 6th of all charter schools in SCS in academic results. Furthermore, the Sponsor stated that the 2018 and 2019 SPF academic scores for the existing MSE schools were higher than the two middle schools and one high school in the Cordova area. The Sponsor also highlighted the high graduation and ACT rates of its existing high school, both of which exceed SCS as a whole. Additionally, the Sponsor presented that MSE received some of the highest scores on the operational section of the SPF in 2017, 2018, and 2019. The Sponsor shared information about some of the unique programs offered by MSE, including Science Olympiad and a robotics team. Lastly, the Sponsor presented evidence that the enrollment in Cordova area schools had increased by 19.7% in the last five years and stated that there is a need for more seats at the high school level in Cordova. The Sponsor stated that they had already received enrollment interest from nearly 500 individuals in the Cordova community. In totality, the Sponsor stated that the approval of MSE would be in the best interest of the students, the school district, and the community because of the high performance of their current schools, the unique program options offered by the Sponsor, and demand in the Cordova community.

A portion of the public hearing was dedicated to taking public comment. One (1) person made verbal comments in support of MSE at the hearing. In addition, the State Board received written public comments on MSE application from forty-six (46) people via email, all in support of the MSE application.

- **Alignment of Shelby County Schools’ Application Process to State Board Quality Authorizing Standards**

State Board staff collected and analyzed detailed information regarding SCS’s application review process to determine alignment with State Board Quality Authorizing Standards as set forth in State Board policy 6.111. At the public hearing, State Board staff questioned SCS regarding its authorization process and alignment to the Quality Authorizing Standards. SCS articulated that its application process is fair, transparent, and focused on quality with rigorous criteria for approval. As evidence of this, SCS pointed to their use of the State Charter Application, the formation of a review committee made up of both internal and external experts trained on the process to evaluate each application, and hosting a capacity interview with every applicant to ensure a fair review. Additionally, SCS highlighted their use of informational sessions for applicants as a means to increase transparency in their process. Based on the information presented by SCS, this part of the district’s process appears in alignment with State Board Quality Authorizing Standards.

However, the SCS stated that the SCS Board of Education was aware of the State Board’s rule prohibiting the denial of applications for failure to address a district’s additional priorities, but the Board proceeded with the denial of the MSE amended application despite this rule. This decision making process does not align with the Quality Authorizing Standard that states, “a quality authorizer makes authorizer decisions that will result in positive student outcomes, in accordance with state law.”

ANALYSIS

State law requires the State Board to review the decision of the local board of education and determine whether the denial of the proposed charter school was in the “best interests of the students, LEA, or community.”⁷ In addition, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the State Board adopted Quality Charter Authorizing Standards set forth in State Board policy 6.111, and utilizes these standards to review charter applications received upon appeal. One such standard is to maintain high but attainable standards for approving charter applications. In making my recommendation to the Board, I have considered the Review Committee Report, the documentation submitted by both the Sponsor and SCS, the arguments made by both the Sponsor and SCS at the public hearing, and the public comments received by State Board staff and conclude as follows:

The Review Committee’s report and recommendations are thorough and cite specific examples in the application and reference information gained at the capacity interview in support of its findings. For the reasons explicated in the report, I agree that the MSE amended application did not rise to the level of meeting or exceeding the standards required for approval.

Pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.01 Approval of a Charter School, a local board of education may ask sponsors to address additional priorities as a means of evaluating the best interests of the students, LEA, or community. However, “chartering authorities may not deny or refuse to review an application for failing to address additional priorities.” At the public hearing, SCS officials acknowledged that applicants were asked to complete a supplement to the state’s application in Section 1.2 – Enrollment

⁷ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

to demonstrate community need, per SCS Board Policy #1011 – Charter Schools. Furthermore, SCS confirmed that the application was recommended for denial on the basis that it did not meet the additional SCS regional seat analysis priority contained in SCS Board Policy #1011 – Charter Schools. Based on the information collected, the regional seat analysis priority contained in SCS Board Policy #1011 – Charter Schools is an additional priority outside of the state’s scoring rubric and application, and pursuant to State Board rules, was not a permissible reason for SCS to deny MSE’s application.

Given the great responsibility of educating students and the amount of public funds entrusted to a charter school that is approved by a local district, the State Board expects that only those schools that have demonstrated a high likelihood of success and meet or exceed the required criteria in all areas will be authorized. It is readily apparent that the Sponsor has assembled a highly capable board and staff with a passion for students and dedication to the communities they currently serve. However, the Sponsor already has a third school, approved by SCS in September 2019, which is projected to open in August 2020. If the MSE amended application were to be approved as well, the Sponsor would be responsible for opening two schools in approximately ten months, which would double the size of the current network. I agree with the Review Committee’s assessment that this would put a significant strain on the network, particularly moving into a new area of Memphis. It is imperative that I take into account the fact that the Sponsor already has a third school approved to open when considering the network’s capacity to open a fourth school as well. While I have great confidence in the network’s ability to successfully open the approved elementary school, I also recognize the operational capacity needed to serve two additional schools in one year, particularly in the area of special populations. I agree with the Review Committee that a fourth school would result in a gap in network capacity to effectively meet the needs of all students across all campuses.

Furthermore, while I applaud the Sponsor’s success on the SCS SPF in both academics and operations, I also recognize that the Sponsor has struggled in its student performance in middle school math over the last three years, specifically in growth. To meet or exceed the standard on the state’s scoring rubric in past performance, a Sponsor must provide clear and compelling evidence of successful student outcomes for each school in the network. I concur with the Review Committee’s concerns regarding the TVAAS levels of 1 and 2 in numeracy in 2017, 2018, and 2019 for the grade span that the Sponsor intends to replicate in the MSE amended application. While I appreciate the Sponsor’s strategies to date to improve the middle school math performance at its Hickory Hill campus, the Sponsor has not yet provided adequate evidence that their academic program has a high likelihood of success in this subject area in a replication.

Lastly, I do believe that the Sponsor identified a clear need within the Cordova community for more high quality school options, particularly at the high school level. I recognize the community demand that has been demonstrated by the Sponsor for this school; however, this community need does not outweigh the importance that the school be able to open strong on day one and have high academic outcomes for all students. Therefore, because of the uncertainty of the network capacity to open a second school in August 2020 as well as concerns regarding past performance, I cannot recommend that the State Board approve the Sponsor’s application for an additional school. I have confidence that the Sponsor has the ability to continue improvements at its current schools while opening its elementary school in the

upcoming school year, and I will be eager to observe their results in the coming years. However, at this time I agree with SCS and the Review Committee that concerns remain about the ability of the Sponsor to successfully open and operate the proposed school in a manner that will improve academic outcomes for their target population.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, and for the reasons stated in the Review Committee Report attached hereto, I do not believe that the decision to deny the amended application for Memphis School of Excellence Cordova was contrary to the best interests of the students, the LEA, or the community. Therefore, I recommend that the State Board affirm the decision of SCS to deny the amended application for Memphis School of Excellence Cordova.



Dr. Sara Morrison, Executive Director
State Board of Education

11/12/2019

Date



EXHIBIT A

Charter Application Review Committee Recommendation Report

November 8, 2019

School Name: Memphis School of Excellence Cordova

Sponsor: Read Foundation

Proposed Location of School: Shelby County Schools

Evaluation Team:

Jarett Fields

Chad Fletcher

Kelly Kroneman

Hillary Sims

Jay Whalen

Teneicesia White

This recommendation report is based on a template from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.



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Introduction

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-108 allows the sponsor of a public charter school to appeal the denial of an application by the local board of education to the State Board of Education. In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the State Board of Education shall conduct a de novo, on the record review of the proposed charter school's application, and the State Board of Education has adopted national and state authorizing standards. As laid out in State Board policy 6.200 - Core Authorizing Principles, the State Board is committed to implementing these authorizing standards that are aligned with the core principles of charter school authorizing, including setting high standards for the approval of charter schools in its portfolio.

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the State Board adopted State Board policy 6.111 - Quality Charter Authorizing Standards. The State Board has aligned the charter school appeal process to these high standards to ensure the well-being and interests of students are the fundamental value informing all State Board actions and decisions. The State Board publishes clear timelines and expectations for applicants, engages highly competent teams of internal and external evaluators to review all applications, and maintains rigorous criteria for approval of a charter school. Annually, the State Board evaluates its work to ensure its alignment to national and state standards for quality authorizing and implements improvement when necessary.

The State Board of Education's charter application review process is outlined in T.C.A. § 49-13-108, State Board policy 2.500 – Charter School Appeals, and State Board policy 6.300 – Application Review. The State Board assembled a charter application review committee comprised of highly qualified internal and external evaluators with relevant and diverse expertise to evaluate each application. The State Board provided training to all review committee members to ensure consistent standards and fair treatment of all applications.

Overview of the Evaluation Process

The State Board of Education's charter application review committee developed this recommendation report based on three key stages of review:

1. **Evaluation of the Proposal:** The review committee independently reviewed the amended charter application, attachments, and budget submitted by the sponsor. After an independent review, the review committee collectively identified the main strengths, concerns, and weaknesses as well as developed specific questions for the applicant in the four sections of the application: Academic Plan Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, Financial Plan and Capacity, and Portfolio Review and Performance Record.
2. **Capacity Interview:** Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the review committee conducted a 90-minute in-person interview with the sponsor, members of the proposed governing board, and identified school leader (if applicable) to address the concerns, weaknesses, and questions identified in the application, and to assess the capacity to execute the application's overall plan.

3. Consensus Judgment: At the conclusion of the review of the application and the capacity interview, the committee submitted a final rubric and developed a consensus regarding a rating for each section of the application.

This recommendation report includes the following information:

1. Summary of the application: A brief description of the applicant's proposed academic, operations, financial plans, and performance record.
2. Summary of the recommendation: A brief summary of the overall recommendation for the application.
3. Analysis of each section of the application: An analysis of the four sections of the application and the capacity of the team to execute the plan as described in the application.
 - a. Academic Plan Design and Capacity: enrollment summary; community involvement and parent engagement; existing academic plan; and performance management.
 - b. Operations Plan and Capacity: network vision and growth plan; network management; network governance; and network personnel/human capital.
 - c. Financial Plan and Capacity: budget narrative; budgets of network and school; cash flow projections; related assumptions; financial policies and procedures; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - d. Portfolio Review and Performance Record: evidence of successful student outcomes in network; evidence that schools within network are high-performing; detailed narrative of high-performing and low-performing schools; latest audit presented without findings; and organization in good standing with authorizers.

The State Board's charter application review committee utilized the Tennessee Department of Education's Charter School Application Evaluation Ratings and Sample Scoring Criteria (the rubric), which is used by all local boards of education when evaluating an application. The rubric states:

An application that merits a recommendation for approval should present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; be detailed in how this school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic and operational plans. In addition to meeting the criteria that are specific to that section, each part of the proposal should align with the overall mission, budget, and goals of the application.

The evaluators used the following criteria and guidance from the scoring rubric to rate applications:

Rating	Characteristics
Meets or Exceeds Standard	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It clearly aligns with the mission and goals of the school. The

	response includes specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation.
Partially Meets Standard	The response meets the criteria in some aspects, but lacks sufficient detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
Does Not Meet Standard	The response is significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; is unsuited to the mission and vision of the district; or otherwise raises significant concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.



Summary of the Application

School Name: Memphis School of Excellence Cordova

Sponsor: Read Foundation

Proposed Location of School: Shelby County Schools

Mission:¹ The mission of Memphis School of Excellence is to provide a safe and collaborative environment which will cultivate the academic and social development of its students by emphasizing math, science, and technology for the purpose of students setting and meeting higher education goals.

Number of Schools Currently in Operation by Sponsor:

Memphis: Two (2)—Memphis School of Excellence Middle and High Hickory Hill and Memphis School of Excellence Elementary Hickory Hill; a third school will open in Fall 2020, Memphis School of Excellence Elementary Cordova

Proposed Enrollment:²

Grade Level	Year 1 (2020)	Year 2 (2021)	Year 3 (2022)	Year 4 (2023)	Year 5 (2024)	At Capacity (2026)
6	75	75	75	75	75	75
7	50	75	75	75	75	75
8	50	50	75	75	75	75
9	50	50	50	75	75	75
10	0	50	50	50	75	75
11	0	0	50	50	50	75
12	0	0	0	50	50	75
Total	225	300	375	450	475	525

Brief Description of the Application:

The sponsor, Read Foundation, is proposing to open a middle/high school in Memphis, Tennessee and serve students in 6th through 12th grades. The school, Memphis School of Excellence Cordova (MSE Cordova), is a new-start school and would be the fourth school for the sponsor. The school intends to operate in the Cordova community in Memphis to help “alleviate the problem of over-enrollment of the public schools currently in operation in Cordova”, “expand public school choice”, and “offer students the opportunity to engage in [a] STEM-centered academic program”.³ The school will replicate the academic model of the sponsor’s current middle/high school, Memphis School of Excellence Middle and High,

¹ Shelby County Schools Initial Recommendation Summary for Memphis School of Excellence - Cordova, pg. 1.

² Memphis School of Excellence – Cordova Amended Application, pg. 321.

³ Ibid. pg. 2.

located in the Hickory Hill community of Memphis, to provide an innovative academic program with a strong STEM focus in a small school environment.⁴

The proposed school will be organized under the existing charter management organization, Memphis School of Excellence (MSE), and the current Board of Directors will govern the new school. MSE has budgeted \$0 in revenue and projects \$282,796 in expenses for the school in Year 0, with a plan to cover expenses incurred in Year 0 with a \$1,500,000 network cash balance. MSE projects the school will have \$2,285,388 in revenue and \$2,255,502 in expenses in Year 1 resulting in a net income of \$29,885. By Year 5, the school projects to have \$5,094,974 in revenue and \$4,500,372 in expenses, resulting in a positive ending fund balance of \$594,602.⁵ The school anticipates that 35% of the student population will qualify as economically disadvantaged, 12% of the student population will be students with disabilities, and 7% of the student population will be English Learners.⁶

⁴ Ibid. pg.3.

⁵ Attachment Q: Network-Wide Budget and School Level Budget Summaries.

⁶ Ibid. pg. 10.

Summary of the Evaluation

The review committee recommends denial of the application for MSE Cordova because the applicant failed to establish that its network-level operational structure will provide the necessary qualifications, competencies, and capacity to carry out coordination of English Learner (EL), Special Education (SPED), and RTI² services across all four of its campuses during the first few years of operation. In addition, the applicant lacked a plan for overcoming its self-identified anticipated challenge of establishing school culture. Finally, the review committee recommends denial of the application because the applicant did not provide sufficient evidence of producing successful student outcomes in math at the middle school level.

The overall academic plan was a strength of the application, providing opportunities for students to engage in STEM-based activities throughout the year and ample instructional supports for teachers. The application provided a clear rationale for the choice of the intended community as well as a compelling explanation for how the school will serve as a needed alternative within the community. The applicant also included a robust recruitment and family engagement plan with a variety of opportunities for engaging parents and community partners in the life of the school.

The operations plan presented by the applicant included a network staffing structure which would undermine the applicant's capacity to operate a high-quality school, specifically for students requiring Special Education, EL, or RTI² supports and interventions. Although the applicant has strategies in place to ensure the stability and sustainability of the network and schools, the fact that the network would be effectively doubling in size during the 2020-2021 school year puts a greater emphasis on the need for adequate capacity to coordinate services for at-risk students across the four campuses. The review committee did not find evidence that the network could operationalize supports for these students if they were to double the size of their network. Furthermore, the applicant identified establishing school culture at the new campus as being one of its primary anticipated challenges, but lacked a compelling plan to adequately address this challenge.

The financial plan presented by the applicant provided the review committee confidence in MSE Cordova's ability to financially support the school. The proposed budget was reasonable and realistic and detailed the network's capacity to financially support the school during its pre-opening and opening years. The network has several years of experience operating in good financial health, and the governing board is engaged with monitoring and oversight of the budget and financial reports.

Finally, the evidence of past performance of the network schools detailed the challenges of the operator's two current schools in proficiency and growth, particularly in middle school math. While the network shared several strategies it has implemented to boost supports for teachers and students with the goal of improving math outcomes, there is currently a lack of evidence of the success of these strategies in improving student proficiency. Although the network has sustained higher ACT scores than the resident district for three years in a row, and a higher graduation rate than both the district and the state since 2014, there is not yet enough evidence that MSE's existing middle school academic program will result in the proficiency or growth worthy of replication.

Summary of Section Ratings

In accordance with the Tennessee Department of Education's charter application scoring rubric, "applications that do not meet or exceed the standard in all sections...will be deemed not ready for



approval,”⁷ and strengths in one area of the application do not negate material weaknesses in other areas. Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. The review committee’s consensus ratings for each section of the application are as follows:

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Portfolio Review and Performance Record	Partially Meets Standard

⁷ Tennessee Charter School Application Rubric – Evaluation Ratings and Sample Scoring Criteria, pg. 1.

Analysis of the Academic Plan Design and Capacity

Rating: Meets or Exceeds Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Academic Plan Design and Capacity meets or exceeds standard because the applicant presented a compelling description of how the school will serve as a needed alternative in the intended community, comprehensive recruitment and family engagement strategies, and a clear academic plan with a STEM focus that is grounded in the replication of an existing school model.

The applicant intends to open MSE Cordova in the Cordova neighborhood of Memphis. The applicant provided a clear rationale for this choice of community, including projected population growth, limited secondary school options with smaller class sizes, and a lack of high-quality charter school options in the area. In the application, the applicant describes how the proposed school would provide a needed alternative for Cordova area families: their academic program would provide Cordova students with unique STEM-based opportunities in a small-school setting. Furthermore, as a public charter school, MSE Cordova provides a high-quality, cost-free alternative to families who cannot afford to send their students to one of the area private schools. While the application concedes that middle schools in the Cordova area are currently under capacity, there is only one high school option in the community and it is currently over capacity. Once fully enrolled, MSE Cordova would serve students in grades 6-12, thus creating additional middle and high school seats.

Additionally, the network includes a thorough plan for recruitment and a variety of family engagement opportunities in the application. The application outlines a recruitment plan that includes outreach to churches, daycare centers, and area businesses, as well as marketing through online platforms. Prior to submitting the application, the network collected signatures from families who intend to enroll their students in the school, accounting for over 50% of their overall enrollment target for Year 1. During the capacity interview, the review committee asked for more information about how the network will ensure that the school will meet its enrollment targets. MSE shared that it has a waitlist of over 850 students for its current schools. The network also cited its experience successfully opening its first school with a much shorter pre-opening timeline and its structure of shared recruitment responsibilities across campus and network roles as evidence of its capacity to effectively recruit students. The application further describes the network's family and community engagement strategies, including open houses for families and prospective students at least seven (7) times throughout the year, multiple orientation sessions for parents to inform them about the school policies and procedures, and home visits for each family during the first semester. In addition to these engagement strategies, parents and community members can further engage with the school through monthly newsletters, virtual and campus-based suggestion boxes, seats on the governing board for a parent from each of the Hickory Hill and Cordova communities, an advisory council, and a parent-teacher organization. The network also recognizes the need for providing translation and interpretation services to enable all families to engage with the school.

The network describes several features of the academic plan for the proposed school in the application, as well as specific goals and targets around the key features of academic achievement, EL programming, STEM programming, and college readiness. As a replication of the academic program at the existing middle and high school in Hickory Hill, the academic plan will include several STEM-based features. Some of these features include a Google certification class for high school students, coding

classes, additional instruction time in science, and multiple STEM activities including a science Olympiad, robotics club, and opportunity to work with a 3-D printer.. Although the review committee was concerned that the applicant's RTI² program did not align with state guidance, which suggests identifying students scoring in the bottom quartile for tiered interventions, the applicant's academic program does provide tiered interventions for students scoring in the bottom 15% on the universal screener, NWEA's MAP assessment, which is administered three times yearly. Furthermore, the academic program includes a particular focus on providing instructional support for teachers. The network will hire four (4) full-time academic coaches during the 2021 school year, with plans to hire additional coaches as enrollment increases. The coaches will provide instructional support to teachers by subject area, and the network has created a plan to delegate coaching responsibilities to school administrators as needed to ensure that instructional coaches maintain a reasonable workload. In totality, the review committee found clear and compelling evidence that the proposed academic plan met the standard.

Analysis of the Operations Plan and Capacity

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Operations Plan and Capacity partially meets standard due to concerns about the capacity of the network to support coordination of its EL, Special Education, and RTI² services, as well as the extent to which the network is prepared to address potential challenges associated with opening additional schools.

During the capacity interview, the applicant discussed the growth in number of EL students over the past few years at its existing schools and described the increased supports they plan to provide to EL students and general education teachers in response to this growth to ensure that students are appropriately served. The applicant plans to hire a separate network-level coordinator for Special Education in Year 2 of operation of the new school, and separate EL and RTI² coordinators in Year 4. Until this time, the Director of Academics would be responsible for coordinating these services across all four (4) schools in addition to "overseeing, implementing, and supporting the network's academic programming, including instruction, assessment, and professional development".⁸ While the network clarified during the capacity interview that the Director of Academics would be partnering with the school-level Academic Coordinators to provide oversight and coordination for these special populations services, the review committee is concerned that the network will lack the necessary capacity to effectively provide and coordinate services for these populations. The applicant shared during the capacity interview that it has previously relied on EL and Special Education consultants provided by Shelby County Schools; however, MSE Cordova would not have access to these same resources for a school authorized by the State Board of Education. During the capacity interview, the applicant shared that the new school would have one (1) full-time Special Education and one (1) full-time EL teacher and would hire more if needed to maintain the required ratios. While having a sufficient number of endorsed SPED and EL teachers is necessary, the review committee is concerned that this does not represent a compelling contingency plan and will not adequately address the gap in capacity at the network level for coordinating these services across the four (4) schools.

The review committee had additional concerns regarding the applicant's plans and capacity for supporting special populations of students. The applicant lacks a clear plan or experience supporting students with significant disabilities as well as students experiencing homelessness or in foster care as the network has not had students in need of these services enroll at any of their existing schools. According to the rubric, applicants must have chosen leaders that have the necessary qualifications, competencies, and capacity for their assigned roles. Given that the network would be doubling the number of schools it currently operates in one (1) year, it is unclear whether its proposed network staff would have the capacity to carry out coordination of EL, Special Education, and RTI² services across all four (4) of its campuses during the first few years of operation.

In addition to the review committee's concerns about the network's capacity to support special populations, the committee noted that the applicant lacked a plan to address its anticipated challenge of establishing a school culture in the new community. During the capacity interview, the applicant expressed that developing school culture at the new campus would be one of its primary challenges.

⁸ Ibid. pb.50.

When the review committee asked them to explain how they would address this challenge, the applicant described copying the culture of the current middle and high school through offering sports opportunities over an unspecified amount of time and monthly events throughout the school year, then adjusting the culture at the new campus if needed. The principal of the existing middle and high school shared a number of suggestions for establishing culture, such as having friendly faces from day one, greeting parents, and having an open-door policy so that students feel that the school administrators are accessible. While these strategies can certainly contribute to building a healthy school culture, they do not reflect a clear or compelling plan for addressing the network's challenge of replicating the culture of the current middle and high school or differentiating the culture for the intended community. As stated in the rubric, applicants must provide a "realistic presentation of anticipated challenges and risks over the next five years associated with opening additional schools, along with a plan to overcome them to achieve the organization's stated outcomes." Given the applicant's vague description of potential strategies for establishing culture at the proposed campus, and the fact the applicant identified this as a challenge but did not present a compelling plan for addressing it, there is little evidence that the applicant is prepared to effectively address this issue associated with opening additional schools.

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

The review committee found evidence of strengths within the Operations Plan and Capacity section in the experience of the network and governing board, the capacity and support of the network, their plans for training across roles and recruiting leaders through a "Grow Your Own" program to ensure network sustainability and stability, and a realistic timeline for securing their new facility. Additionally, during the capacity interview, the applicant shared that it had a database of more than 1,900 teaching candidates with whom they advertise open positions. The applicant also provided a clear and compelling plan to provide instructional coaching to all teachers, including a plan to utilize school administrators as coaches to ensure that the full-time instructional coaches have a manageable caseload.

Analysis of the Financial Plan and Capacity

Rating: Meets or Exceeds Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Financial Plan and Capacity meets or exceeds standard because of their reasonable and realistic operating budgets, the network's strong history of sustained financial health, and close oversight from the network's governing board.

As presented in the application, the budget contains reasonable assumptions and budget numbers that reflect all operating costs, including staffing, contracting, and insurance. The applicant provided evidence of a clear plan for covering costs incurred during Year 0 with the \$1.5 million network fund balance. Additionally, the applicant included detailed financial procedures for the school and at the network level with a budget narrative that clearly aligned with the budget worksheet. The school's per-pupil funding projections were reasonable, and the school plans to operate with a positive ending fund balance each year beginning in Year 1. Furthermore, the review committee was impressed with the network's plan to refinance their current debt obligations at a lower interest rate through the loan they plan to secure for their new facility.

MSE is an experienced operator in strong financial health, operating two (2) schools with a positive cash flow. The network has more than \$1.5 million in cash available to offset any revenue shortfall during the pre-opening or the first two (2) years of operation of its proposed school as well as its recently approved school opening in 2020. Additionally, the applicant provided a complete, realistic, and viable budget for the network with reasonable and conservative cost assumptions, which was not reliant on grant and fundraising sources.

During the capacity interview, the applicant spoke about the grants that were not included in their budget, including a CSP grant and an anticipated grant from the Walton Foundation. The applicant also elaborated on its contingency plan should either of the new schools not meet their enrollment targets; the applicant stated that should this be the case, the network would make staffing adjustments at the school level and ensure that the schools maintain the necessary student to teacher ratios. The applicant also explained that it prioritizes efficiently staffing the network with roles that are instrumental to the academic program, thus minimizing network overhead costs.

Analysis of the Portfolio Review and Performance Record

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Portfolio Review and Performance Record partially meets standard because of a lack of evidence that the operator's existing middle school academic program will result in the proficiency or growth worthy of replication.

The review committee expressed concerns regarding the network's history of low TVAAS numeracy scores and underperformance in math proficiency at the current middle school compared to the district. MSE has shown inconsistent and low growth in numeracy at the middle school level for the past three (3) academic years, earning a TVAAS level 1 in 2017, a level 2 in 2018, and a level 1 in 2019. Furthermore, in 2019 MSE had 20.6% of students score on-track or mastered in math and 18.6% of students score on-track or mastered in ELA, compared to the district averages of 27.2% and 20.6%, respectively. When asked how the applicant plans to address these academic challenges during the capacity interview, the network described its plan to provide additional math supports to students including a 90-minute math period, standards-aligned textbooks, software to build foundational skills, and increased coaching and support for math teachers. While these strategies are sound options for improving the network's math program, there is no evidence yet that the implementation of these changes will result in improved student outcomes. The charter school application rubric states that charter schools must provide clear and compelling evidence of successful student outcomes for each school in the network and evidence that the operator's schools are high performing and successful by meeting state standards. Given the history of underperformance of the school the network intends to replicate compared to the resident district, the applicant does not yet have adequate evidence that their current academic program will be able to produce successful student outcomes that should be replicated.

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

The review committee also noted some strengths in the applicant's Portfolio Review and Performance Record, particularly in its English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) results and high school ACT and graduation data. The applicant has shown evidence of its ability to generate strong student outcomes on the state ELPA, the WIDA ACCESS test. In 2018, 83.33% of MSE Elementary EL students met or exceeded their growth standards on the ELPA, compared to the district average of 48.42%. In 2019, the network again showed strong outcomes compared to Shelby County, with 59.1% of EL students across both MSE schools meeting or exceeding the growth standard, compared to the district average of 39.2%.

In addition to the network's strong comparative performance on the WIDA ACCESS test, the network has significantly increased its ACT score average over the past five (5) years, ranking it in the top quartile of all Shelby County high schools in 2018. The application also cited the network's consistently high graduation rate: since 2014, MSE has graduated 98-100% of its seniors. The comparatively strong performance on the ACT and consistently high graduation rate are evidence that MSE has successful student outcomes at the high school level.



Evaluation Team

Jarett Fields has been in the education field for over fifteen years. Currently, he is Assistant Principal of a middle school in Houston, Texas. Prior to that role, he led a federal grant program for low-income, first-generation students at Beloit College in Wisconsin. His work with charter schools began almost ten years ago working with elected officials in Milwaukee and across the nation. Eventually, Jarett led charter school authorizing for the City of Milwaukee and served on the National Advisory Board for the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). After completing NACSA's Leaders Program, Jarett began consulting with charter schools and charter school authorizers around the country.

Chad Fletcher is the Federal Programs Supervisor and District Testing Coordinator for Bedford County Schools. Chad began his career as a high school History and Geography teacher in Metro-Nashville/Davidson County Schools. After gaining valuable classroom teaching experience, Chad served as a school and district administrator for 18 years in Murfreesboro City, Knox County, and Manchester City Schools before joining Bedford County in July 2019. Chad earned his Bachelors, M.Ed., and Ed.S. degrees from Middle Tennessee State University and previously served on the Tennessee Department of Education's Personalized Learning Taskforce.

Kelly Kroneman serves as the Coordinator of Special Populations and Operations for the Tennessee State Board of Education. In this role, she supports the State Board in carrying out its charter authorization duties and charter appeals process. Kelly has enjoyed working with and for students in different capacities, including as a research assistant for a federally-funded special education intervention project at Vanderbilt University and as a first grade teacher in Richmond, Virginia. Kelly graduated from James Madison University with a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies with a focus in Elementary Education and Women and Gender Studies, and holds a professional teaching license for grades pre-K through 6 in Virginia. Kelly has two graduate degrees: a Master of Arts in Teaching in Elementary Education from James Madison University and a Master of Public Policy in Education Policy from Vanderbilt University. She is passionate about supporting school leaders and teachers in prioritizing the needs of at-risk students to improve educational equity for all.

Hillary Sims has been a founding member of several Tennessee charter schools beginning shortly after the passage of Chapter 13. She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology & Sociology from East Tennessee State University, a Master's of Science in Holistic Teaching and Learning from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and an Education Specialist Degree in Comprehensive and Modified, K-12 Special Education from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Hillary holds endorsements in six highly qualified subject areas in both Tennessee and Georgia. Having taught in traditional public and private schools as well as served as a school administrator for greater than 10 years, Hillary brings a broad scope of school academics, culture, operations, and governance. Hillary has contributed to charter school improvement across the United States while working for a global charter management organization. Hillary has served on the Governor's Advisory Council for Students with Disabilities as well as served as a charter review team member for the State Board of Education for the last six years. Her areas of expertise include students with disabilities, emotionally disturbed, mental health diagnoses, compliance, holistic learning



strategies, special populations, discipline/culture, and instructionally appropriate IEPs. Hillary currently serves as an Exceptional Education Coach for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools.

Jay Whalen serves as the CSP Program Administrator with the Office of Charter Schools at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Prior to this role, Jay served as the Deputy Director of Charter Schools for the Tennessee State Board of Education and Data Analyst at KIPP Nashville, a charter school organization operating multiple schools in Metro Nashville Public Schools. Jay is a former high school social studies teacher, spending time in both rural and urban Title I public schools, and has also done consulting work for the Tennessee Department of Education. He holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in Secondary Education and History from the University of Rhode Island.

Teneicesia White is in her fifth year with Aurora Collegiate Academy, currently serving in her third year as the instructional leader. Aurora Collegiate Academy is a tuition-free public elementary school serving students in grades K-5 in Northeast Memphis. Previously, Teneicesia served as the Dean of Students at Aurora. A former social studies teacher and district instructional coach for Memphis City and Shelby County schools, she holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Memphis, a Master in Education degree from Union University and an Educational Specialist degree from Cambridge College. She is a wife, mother, and woman of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.



Memphis School of Excellence-Cordova

Review Committee Recommendation: **Deny**

Proposed School Name	Proposed School Focus	Proposed Region/Location
Memphis School of Excellence Cordova	STEM	Cordova

School Mission

The mission of Memphis School of Excellence is to provide a safe and collaborative environment which will cultivate the academic and social development of its students by emphasizing math, science, and technology for the purpose of students setting and meeting higher education goals.

School Plan Summary

MSE's school model is rigorous (prepares students for college), relevant (reinforces math and science skills) and is underpinned by a tight web of relationships (a strong culture reinforced by teachers and parents). Student achievement/outcome will be built on 3 core principles within the school model: a challenging math and science curriculum supported by theory; a focus on assessment; and a culture of constructive competition, discipline and parental engagement. MSE will utilize technology across all of these dimensions to reinforce its school model and curriculum.

Leadership and Governance

Full Name	Current Job Title and Employer	Position with Proposed School
Muhhamet Turkey	Executive Director	Executive Director
Samuel Beyhan	Director of Operations	Director of Operations
Gabriella Nelson	Director of Academics	Director of Academics
Gregory Thompson	Financial Advisor-Consultant	Financial Advisor-Consultant

Proposed Grade Structure and 5-year Enrollment Projections

Academic Year	Planned # of Students	Grades Served
2019-20	0	0
2020-21	225	6-12
2021-22	300	6-12
2022-23	375	6-12
2023-24	450	6-12

Application Ratings and Comments by Section

This section should include a summary of comments from all reviewers.

Section/Rating	Strengths/Highlights	Concerns/Areas for Improvement
Academic Plan Design and Capacity <input type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet	<p>The application reflects a parent interest survey that is specific to families representing the Cordova community with school-aged children. Additionally, there were robust descriptions of the proposed STEM programing. There was evidence of performance assessment goals surrounding WIDA testing to support ELL students.</p>	<p>Per SCS Board Policy #1011, Section VI, B. 5 – “the district shall consider whether the establishment of a proposed charter school in a particular geographic location of the LEA is feasible or will create oversaturation in the proposed geographic location.” According to the most recent strategic regional analysis, the Cordova neighborhood has a current student capacity of 5,421 seats and 4,581 students enrolled in 6-12; this means the East region is oversaturated in 6-12 by 840 seats.</p>
Operations Plan and Capacity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet	<p>The Operations Plan and Capacity section of the application effectively describes a plan for growth, including both network and school-by-school expansion plans. This section also shows strengths in high level governance plans with a committee structure, and roles and responsibilities of each board member are described clearly. Additionally, the application includes a detailed plan for staff recruitment and hiring that has proven successful at the applicants existing school.</p>	N/A
Financial Plan and Capacity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet	<p>The Financial Plan and Capacity Section meets the standard because this section of the application includes a balanced, reasonable budget and evidence of prior success.</p> <p>The network budget, which is inclusive of individual schools and the central staff, appears reasonable and is balanced, showing a significant and increasing cash balance over time (Attachment O).</p> <p>Fiscal procedures and policy, as described in the application narrative are adequate, though brief. The application includes a sound contingency plan if costs exceed revenue.</p> <p>Finally, the organization provides evidence of capacity for financial health as existing schools have a record of fiscal success</p>	N/A
Performance Record (if applicable) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet	<p>Per SCS Board Policy #1011, Section IX, B.2 (b) – “A charter school operator that operates two or more charter schools or campuses will have its request for charter school replication recommended to the Board for approval if (1) each of the operator’s schools or campuses has a current composite score of 3.5 or better in each of the three core components of the Performance Accountability Framework....{or} if all but one of the operator’s schools or campuses has a current ..score of 3.5 or better.”</p> <p>At present, MSE has two schools with academic data that meet the board’s policy of 3.5 or above, operations data meets a 3.5 or above, and in good standing financially.</p>	
Section	Summary of Application Supplement	
Application Supplement	There is a need for high school seats in the East region but, at present, the region and the neighborhood (Cordova) is under-enrolled at the 6-8 Level.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed region (East) is currently under-enrolled in the Cordova neighborhood by 1,001 seats at the 6-8 Level • The proposed neighborhood (Cordova) currently needs 161 seats at the High School Level • At present, 66% of the seats in the East region are at a level '3' or above on the School Performance Scorecard for K-12 Level
Section	Summary of Financial Hardship & Impact
Financial Hardship & Impact	<p>Expansion of charter schools imposes a cost on SCS – both directly and indirectly. It is also clear from Section 4 of the <u>Fiscal Impact Report</u> that the loss of operating funds caused by the transfer of BEP funds cannot be made up through a reduction in capital or facility costs or through the collection of an authorizer fee or lease agreements.</p> <p>Memphis School of Excellence Cordova fiscal impact on SCS includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The District losing 225 to 450 students over a 5-year period; • Per pupil cost is projected at \$9,096 and \$9,319, including transportation cost, for Year 1 and increase to \$9,845 and \$10,087, including transportation cost by Year 5; Per pupil is projected to increase at a rate of 2% for inflationary cost; • Transferring BEP funds of \$2,096,730 to \$4,791,310, including transportation cost, without reducing operational costs; • Fixed costs, such as electricity, custodial, etc., will be required regardless of reduced enrollment; • Variable costs, such as instructional materials, supplies, etc., associated with each student will increase or decrease directly proportionate to the number of students enrolled; • A large decline in enrollment may prompt reduction in teaching staff, but may not offset total loss of revenue; reduction in operating cost may offset the loss of resources; • Maximum authorizer fee is \$35,000, which is not enough to recover the cost of additional services provided by the District; and • Additional seats will become available within the Cordova community.