



TENNESSEE
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

AUTHORIZER EVALUATIONS

FEBRUARY 15, 2024

EVALUATION HISTORY AND PROCESS

EVALUATIONS IN TENNESSEE

- Spring 2019 – State Board charged with ensuring the effective operation of authorizers and evaluating authorizer quality (T.C.A. § 49-13-145)
- July 2019 – Began development of its evaluation process in collaboration with authorizers, charter school leaders, and other stakeholders
- Fall 2020 – Pilot evaluation with 2 authorizers
- February 2021 – Authorizer Evaluation Rule finalized
- February 2023 – First evaluation cycle completed with all 6 authorizers evaluated
- Fall 2023 – Start of second evaluation cycle

EVALUATION COHORTS

Tennessee authorizers are evaluated in the following sequence:

Cohort 1:

- Hamilton County Schools
- Knox County Schools
- Memphis-Shelby County Schools

Cohort 2:

- Achievement School District
- Metro Nashville Public Schools
- Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

NOTE: Robertson County Schools will be added to Cohort 1 in 2025.

EVALUATION TEAMS

Evaluator	Experience	Role & Evaluation
Ali Reid	State Board Staff	Evaluator for all 3 evaluations
David Hartman	National Charter School Consultant, Venn Education	Evaluator for all 3 evaluations
Lauren Iannuccilli	National Charter School Consultant, Independent	Evaluator for all 3 evaluations
Rebecca Ledebuhr	Data and Accountability Coordinator, Charter Commission	Shadowed Memphis-Shelby County Schools evaluation
Amy Leslie	Charter Schools Coordinator, Metro Nashville Public Schools	Shadowed Knox County Schools evaluation
Jessica Lindsay	Authorizing Manager, Achievement School District	Shadowed Hamilton County Schools evaluation

EVIDENCE BASE

The Evaluation Team considers evidence that occurred during the two-year review term:

- **Documents** and **Narrative** explanations submitted by the authorizer during the submission window;
- Clarifications and additional context provided by the authorizer during the **Document Debrief**;
- Supporting narrative shared during the **School Leader Interview**; and
- **Appeals history**, as applicable.

EVALUATION RUBRIC & RATINGS

The evaluation is based on the 21 standards within State Board Policy 6.111 – Quality Charter Authorizing Standards.

Score	Rating
3.5 – 4.0	Exemplary
3.0 – 3.49	Commendable
2.0 – 2.99	Satisfactory
1.0 – 1.99	Approaching Satisfactory
0 – 0.99	Unsatisfactory/Incomplete

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

COHORT 1: 2023

HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOLS (HCS)

About the Authorizer:	HCS is a district authorizer in Hamilton County. HCS opened its first charter school in 2008 and its charter schools currently serve approximately 5.3% of the district's students.
Operational Schools:	8 schools in the 2022-23 school year
Students Enrolled:	2,539 students in the 2022-23 school year
Approved School(s) in Development:	1 school in development
Closed Schools:	0 schools closed since September 1, 2021

HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Identified Areas of Strength:

- The authorizer **implements a rigorous application review process** by engaging competent teams of internal and external evaluators to complete a thorough review of the application.
- The authorizer **developed and approved a performance framework** that defines academic, financial, and organizational performance expectations for its charter schools.
- The authorizer **established an intervention policy** that clearly states the general conditions and actions that may ensue.

HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Identified Areas for Growth:

- The authorizer's **charter agreement negotiation and execution process** must ensure appropriate term lengths, clearly state the material and non-material terms, and ensure mutual understanding with its schools.
- The authorizer must **establish an oversight and monitoring system** that is comprehensive, streamlined, and provides the necessary data to inform authorizing decisions.
- The authorizer must **define and communicate the criteria for renewal** that's consistent with the charter agreement, board policy, annual performance framework outcomes, and state law.
- The authorizer must **establish a board-approved revocation policy and a closure policy/procedure**.

HAMILTON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Overall Rating: 2.39 Satisfactory

Required Follow-Up Actions:

- Submission of a self-assessment in the 2024-25 school year

Standard		2021 Ratings	2023 Ratings
1a	Planning and Commitment to Excellence	2	2.2
1b	Human Resources	0.6	2.66
1c	Financial Resources	2.5	3.33
2a	Proposal Information, Questions, and Guidance	2.1	3
2b	Fair, Transparent, Quality-Focused Process	1.6	3
2c	Rigorous Approval Criteria	3	3
2d	Rigorous Decision Making	2.3	3.4
3a	Charter Agreement Negotiation and Execution	1	1.5
3b	Terms, Rights and Responsibilities	1	2.2
3c	Performance Standards	1	3
3d	Provisions for Educational Service Provider (ESP) (if applicable)	N/A	N/A
4a	Performance Evaluation and Compliance Monitoring	1.2	1.28
4b	Respecting School Autonomy	2.2	2.33
4c	Protecting Student Rights	1.2	2
4d	School Intervention	3	3.6
4e	Public Reporting	1	2
5a	Amendments to the Charter Agreement	N/A	2.5
5b	Renewal Process	2	N/A
5c	Renewal Decisions Based on Merit and Inclusive Evidence	1.3	2.5
5d	Revocation	3	1
5e	Closure	2	1

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS (KCS)

About the Authorizer:	KCS is a district authorizer in Knox County. KCS opened its first charter school in 2015, which currently serves approximately 0.75% of the district's students.
Operational Schools:	1 school in the 2022-23 school year
Students Enrolled:	457 students in the 2022-23 school year
Approved School(s) in Development:	1 school in development
Closed Schools:	0 schools closed since September 1, 2021

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

Identified Areas of Strength:

- The authorizer demonstrates a **strong commitment to the quality charter authorizing standards and to continuous improvement** through ongoing professional development for staff and decision-makers.
- The authorizer **implements a charter application process** that is clearly defined, open, well-publicized, and transparent.
- The authorizer annually **evaluates its schools against a performance framework** that defines the targets for academic, financial, and organizational performance.

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

Identified Areas for Growth:

- The authorizer does not **define the sources of organizational data** within its performance framework
- The authorizer does not have a clear process for **determining when intervention in non-emergency situations is needed.**
- The authorizer does not clearly define and communicate the **criteria for renewal and non-renewal decisions.**

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

Overall Rating: 3.19 Commendable

Required Follow-Up Actions:

- Public recognition and highlighting best practices by the State Board
- Submission of a self-assessment in the 2024-25 school year

Standard		2021 Ratings	2023 Ratings
1a	Planning and Commitment to Excellence	2.1	3.6
1b	Human Resources	3	2.66
1c	Financial Resources	3.2	4
2a	Proposal Information, Questions, and Guidance	3.6	4
2b	Fair, Transparent, Quality-Focused Process	4	3.25
2c	Rigorous Approval Criteria	4	4
2d	Rigorous Decision Making	2.1	3.8
3a	Charter Agreement Negotiation and Execution	4	3.5
3b	Terms, Rights and Responsibilities	3	3.66
3c	Performance Standards	1	2.5
3d	Provisions for Educational Service Provider (ESP) (if applicable)	N/A	N/A
4a	Performance Evaluation and Compliance Monitoring	2.2	3.28
4b	Respecting School Autonomy	2.7	3
4c	Protecting Student Rights	2	3
4d	School Intervention	2.8	3
4e	Public Reporting	3	2
5a	Amendments to the Charter Agreement	N/A	3
5b	Renewal Process	2	N/A
5c	Renewal Decisions Based on Merit and Inclusive Evidence	N/A	2.5
5d	Revocation	3.5	3
5e	Closure	2.4	3

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS: BEST PRACTICES

- Developed an internal trackers to prioritize updates and assign responsibilities in response to feedback received in its 2021 evaluation
- Prioritized professional development for key staff members using authorizer fee funds
- Develops and publicly posts a request for proposals for charter school applicants
- Built a strong working relationship with its authorized charter school through regular communication and two-way feedback

MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS (MSCS)

About the Authorizer:	MSCS is a district authorizer in Shelby County. MSCS opened its first charter school in 2003 and its charter schools currently serve approximately 18% of the district's students.
Operational Schools:	54 schools in the 2022-23 school year
Students Enrolled:	18,116 students in the 2022-23 school year
Approved School(s) in Development:	3 schools in development
Closed Schools:	3 schools closed since September 1, 2021

MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS

Identified Areas of Strength:

- The authorizing staff **implements an application process** that is rigorous, well-publicized, and open to all applicants.
- The authorizer **respects charter school autonomy** over day-to-day operations and collects information in a manner that minimizes administrative burdens.
- The authorizer **executes a closure process** that is clearly communicated and consistent with the agreement and state law.

MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS

Identified Areas for Growth:

- The authorizer's **charter agreement negotiation and execution process** must ensure mutual understanding and timely execution of agreements.
- The authorizer's **lack of clearly stated reasons regarding application, renewal, and amendment decisions** make it difficult to determine how authorizing decisions are made.
- The authorizer's **organizational performance monitoring** does not sufficiently evaluate whether its schools are appropriately serving all students and are implementing fair, legal, and equitable discipline policies.

MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS

Overall Rating: 3.51 Exemplary

Required Follow-Up Actions:

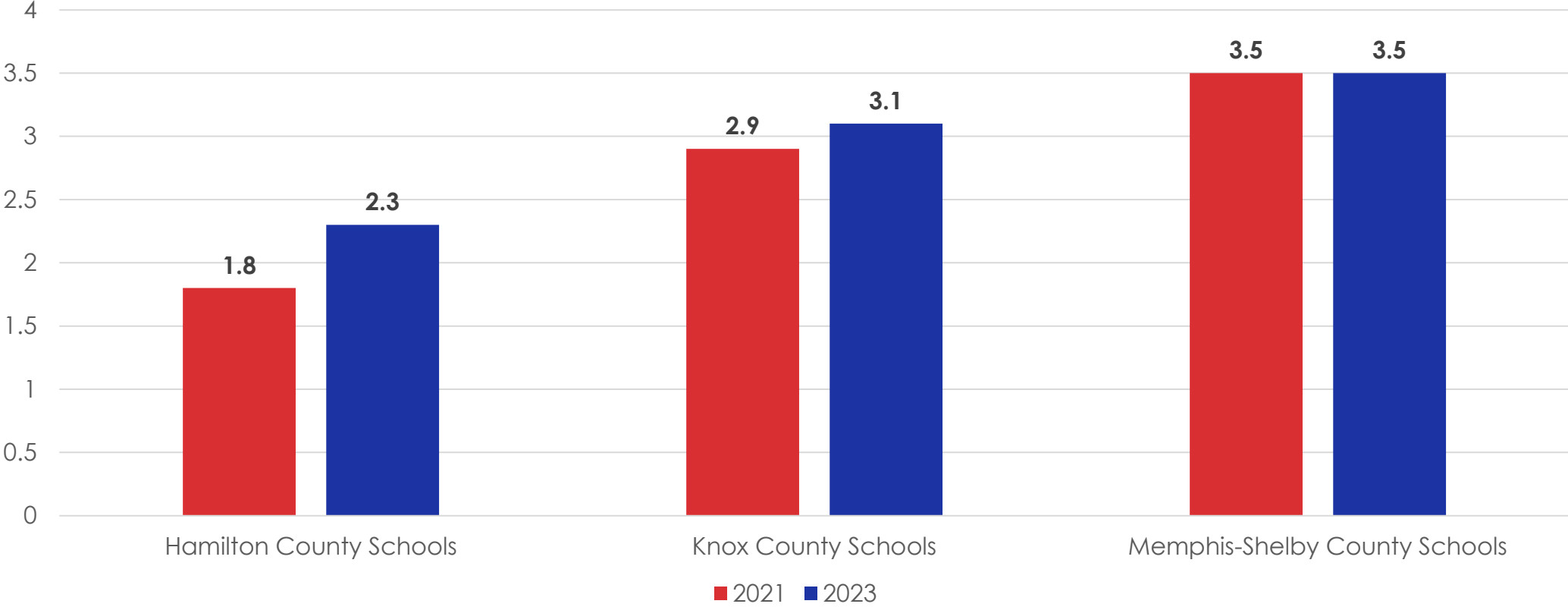
- Public recognition and highlighting best practices by the State Board
- Exemption from 2025 evaluation for receiving 2 consecutive “Exemplary” scores
- Submission of a self-assessment in the 2024-25 school year

Standard		2021 Ratings	2023 Ratings
1a	Planning and Commitment to Excellence	2.7	3.4
1b	Human Resources	3	4
1c	Financial Resources	3.7	4
2a	Proposal Information, Questions, and Guidance	3.6	4
2b	Fair, Transparent, Quality-Focused Process	3.8	4
2c	Rigorous Approval Criteria	4	4
2d	Rigorous Decision Making	3.1	3.2
3a	Charter Agreement Negotiation and Execution	4	2
3b	Terms, Rights and Responsibilities	3	3.6
3c	Performance Standards	2	3
3d	Provisions for Educational Service Provider (ESP) (if applicable)	N/A	N/A
4a	Performance Evaluation and Compliance Monitoring	3.6	3.71
4b	Respecting School Autonomy	3.7	3.6
4c	Protecting Student Rights	3	2.5
4d	School Intervention	3.8	3.4
4e	Public Reporting	4	4
5a	Amendments to the Charter Agreement	N/A	3.25
5b	Renewal Process	3.5	3.5
5c	Renewal Decisions Based on Merit and Inclusive Evidence	3.3	3.33
5d	Revocation	4	3.8
5e	Closure	2	4

MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS: BEST PRACTICES

- Actively trains decision-makers, authorizing leadership and staff on the quality charter authorizing standards
- Develops and publicly shares application resources and priorities with prospective charter applicants
- Clearly defines its compliance reporting and performance monitoring systems with schools and develops tools to minimize administrative burdens
- Developed a comprehensive closure policy that is well communicated and clearly outlines responsibilities of the authorizer and charter school

COHORT 1 EVALUATION HISTORY



CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN UPDATES

REQUIRED FOLLOW-UP FROM OUR 2022 EVALUATIONS

ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

- The Achievement School District (ASD) was required to create and complete a Corrective Action Plan in 2023.
- The ASD developed a plan that included 9 action items aligned to evaluation outcomes with deadlines ranging between August 2023 and September 2024.
- The ASD will be evaluated again this Fall. If the ASD earns a score of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” in this evaluation, a reduction in its authorizer fee may be recommended.

EVALUATION REFLECTIONS

EFFECTIVE CHANGES TO OUR PROCESS

- Streamlined our Quality Authorizing Standards
- Developed guiding questions to ensure mutual understanding of standards
- Requested superintendents and school board chairs be involved in the process
- Allowed authorizers to submit additional evidence
- Introduced “evaluation shadows”
- Began hosting charter school application overview sessions for superintendents, local school board members, and board attorneys

ONGOING RESOURCES

- **Bi-Monthly Authorizer Connect meetings**
 - Topics based on authorizer request and evaluation outcomes
 - Professional development opportunity for authorizing staff
 - Relationship building
- **Quality Authorizing Series**
 - Designed for districts who are unfamiliar with the application process
- **Engagement with TOSS and TSBA**
 - Building additional superintendent and school board member buy-in and engagement through trainings and evaluation participation



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