



Authorizer Oversight Handbook

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Resources:	State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08 Authorizer Evaluation	
	State Board Policy 6.111 - Quality Charter Authorizing Standards	
	State Board Policy 6.113 - Charter School Authorizer Evaluations	
	Tennessee Authorizer Evaluation - Rubric	
	Tennessee Authorizer Evaluation - Evaluation Narrative Form	
	Tennessee Authorizer Evaluation - Non-Evaluation Year Self-Assessment	
	Tennessee Authorizer Corrective Action Plan Template	
	Tennessee Authorizer Evaluation - Evaluator Guide	
	Tennessee Authorizer Evaluation - Evaluator Additional Guidance	
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Part I: Introduction

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to establish additional guidelines and procedures governing authorizer evaluations conducted by the State Board of Education (State Board) pursuant to [Tennessee Code Annotated \(T.C.A.\) 49-13-145](#), [State Board Rule 0520-14-01-08](#), and State Board Policy 6.113. This handbook aims to ensure that the State Board’s authorizer evaluation process is transparent, merit-based, comprehensive, and equitable. The guidelines and procedures included in this handbook pertain to all authorizers in Tennessee and serve two purposes: 1) to set clear expectations for authorizers; and 2) to drive authorizer quality. Statutory changes and/or the needs of authorizers may result in changes to the procedures and expectations described below.

Tennessee Quality Charter Authorizing Standards

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108(f), the State Board’s [Quality Charter Authorizing Standards](#) were established in 2018 to set clear and transparent standards for authorizers based on national authorizing best practices for academic, financial, and organizational oversight of charter schools, and the requirements outlined in State law, rule, and policy. These standards serve as the primary measurement of authorizer performance in the oversight, monitoring, and decision-making processes for their portfolio of charter schools.

The Quality Charter Authorizing Standards define standards to be applied throughout all regular authorizing functions and benchmarks, including ongoing monitoring and annual reporting. For a full description of all aspects of the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards – including indicators, measures, methods, and targets – see the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards and the [Authorizer Evaluation Rubric](#). The Quality Charter Authorizing Standards, along with procedures and process documents for authorizer evaluations, are also published and available on the State Board’s website.

Preserving and Enhancing Authorizer Autonomy

The State Board respects the time and attention required as part of an authorizer’s day-to-day operations and through the evaluation process, attempts to collect evidence in a manner that minimizes administrative burdens, while ensuring that performance and compliance information is sufficiently detailed and timely in order to protect student and public interests.

The State Board has established authorizer evaluations focused on the performance standards set forth in the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards. Results of the evaluations will be presented via an evaluation report that includes ratings by standard, evaluative comments, an overall rating, and any follow-up actions, as needed. Evaluation reports will not prescribe solutions to those areas identified as in need of improvement but, rather, will require the authorizer to propose remedies, except for any area of non-compliance as required by Federal or State law.

Upon the completion of a two-year evaluation cycle, the State Board will review its rule and policy related to authorizer evaluations bi-annually to ensure that its evaluation process upholds authorizer autonomy based on flexibility in the law, streamlines requirements, and continues to hold authorizers to the high bar set forth in the Quality Charter School Authorizing Standards.

Part II: Authorizer Evaluation Cycle

Description of Oversight

Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-13-145, the State Board shall ensure the effective operation of authorizers and evaluate authorizer quality. Thus, one of the fundamental responsibilities of the State Board is to ensure quality authorizer oversight that maintains high standards of authorizer performance, upholds authorizer autonomy, and safeguards student and public interests. One of the primary mechanisms for fulfilling this purpose is a comprehensive evaluation process that sets clear standards for authorizer performance through the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards, promotes authorizer accountability, and includes tools and processes designed to evaluate performance and monitor compliance.

The State Board assesses operations and performance of authorizers in a two-year cycle that culminate in authorizer evaluations (see Section A). The components of the State Board’s monitoring cycle, which are described below, are as follows: evaluation year; non-evaluation year; and corrective actions.

Sample Two-Year Oversight Monitoring Cycle*

	August	September	October – December	January	February	March – July
Year 1	Orientation	Document Submission (through mid-October)	Authorizer Evaluations	Self-Evaluation Submission	State Board Meeting	**
Year 2	Orientation	Document Submission (through mid-October)	Authorizer Evaluations	Self-Evaluation Submission	State Board Meeting	**

Purple = Cohort 1, Blue = Cohort 2

*Exact dates to be determined by the State Board and subject to change.

**Task may include completing corrective action plan items and updating documents.

All authorizers will typically follow this two-year cycle. However, in accordance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08, based on the authorizer evaluation ratings received by authorizers, the following exceptions exist:

- Authorizer receiving an “Exemplary” rating:
 - Exemption from an upcoming evaluation if the authorizer has achieved an “Exemplary” rating for two (2) consecutive evaluation years;
- Authorizer receiving an “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” rating:
 - Requirement to participate in another authorizer evaluation the year immediately following a rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete.”

Section A: Evaluation Year

Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-13-145, the State Board will conduct authorizer evaluations of all authorizers that oversee at least one (1) charter school. Evaluations are aligned to the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards and will be staggered, with a cohort of authorizers evaluated each year.

The key components of the authorizer evaluations are outlined below. For a full, comprehensive description of all aspects of the authorizer evaluations, see the [Evaluation Rubric](#), the [Evaluation Narrative Form](#), the [Evaluator Guide](#), and the [Evaluator Additional Guidance](#).

Cohort	Authorizers
Cohort 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hamilton County Schools• Knox County Schools• Shelby County Schools
Cohort 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achievement School District• Metro Nashville Public Schools• Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

Authorizer Evaluation Timeline and Process

During the summer prior to evaluations, State Board staff will conduct an orientation for authorizers regarding the standards, ratings, documents, evaluation process, and submission process. Every authorizer being evaluated that year is required to attend; non-evaluation year authorizers may choose to attend but are not required to attend. During a non-evaluation year, authorizers have the opportunity for an authorizing staff member to participate on an evaluation team. Authorizer evaluations will be conducted in the Fall, with final reports being shared with the authorizer in January and final ratings approved by the State Board at their next quarterly or specially-called meeting.

The authorizer evaluation process includes the following steps (see the [Evaluator Guide](#) for a comprehensive description):

1. Authorizers upload documentation to a Box folder assigned by State Board staff between September and October;
2. Evaluation team members participate in a mandatory training that includes an overview of the evaluation and scoring processes, a review of the rubric, and norming on ratings and the writing of evaluative comments;
3. Evaluation team reviews the submitted documentation for each authorizer;
4. Evaluation team reviews the authorizer's appeal history, if applicable, which shall include any findings and recommendation report(s) issued by the Executive Director of the appeals body and the final decision by the appeals body (State Board or Charter School Commission) for any appeals that occurred within the two (2) years prior to the authorizer's first evaluation or within the timeframe immediately following the authorizers' most recent evaluation;
5. Evaluation team schedules and conducts an interview with school leaders from the authorizer's portfolio;

6. Evaluation team schedules and conducts a meeting with the authorizer, known as the Document Debrief, to discuss the submitted documentation and request a list of the standards the authorizer plans to discuss during the meeting;
7. Preliminary evaluation ratings are reviewed with the authorizer;
8. Draft authorizer evaluation report shared with the authorizer;
9. Final authorizer evaluation report shared with the authorizer;
10. Evaluation ratings approved by the State Board; and
11. Evaluation report and rating published on the State Board’s website.

The evaluation team is responsible for objectively evaluating the evidence submitted by the authorizer, the authorizer’s appeal history, if applicable, and the information shared during the school leader interview and Document Debrief. The evaluation team compares evidence of the authorizer’s processes and practices against the evaluation rubric. In order to maintain consistency across evaluations, evaluators will participate in an orientation prior to conducting evaluations, which will include norming. Additionally, evaluators will follow the guidelines set forth in the [Evaluator Guide](#).

Final ratings and evaluative comments will be documented in a completed [Evaluation Rubric](#) for each authorizer that will be shared with authorizers. Authorizers will receive an advanced copy of their report and have an opportunity to make factual corrections before final reports are released to the public. The final ratings will be presented to the State Board for approval at its next quarterly or specially-called Board meeting following release of the final evaluation report to the authorizer at the conclusion of an evaluation year.

Once final ratings are approved by the State Board, the authorizer will receive written notification of approval and the final evaluation reports will be made publicly available on the State Board’s website. The evaluation report will include ratings by standard, evaluative comments, an overall rating, and any follow-up actions required, if applicable. See Section C for details about follow-up actions for authorizers receiving a rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete.”

Authorizer Evaluation Rating System

The State Board has established an evaluation and rating system focused on the following categories:

1. Agency Commitment and Capacity
2. Application Process and Decision Making
3. Performance Contracting
4. Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation
5. Revocation and Renewal Decision Making
6. Advanced Standards (Bonus Category)

For each of the categories above, authorizers will receive scores aligned to criteria for 24 standards (see the [Evaluation Rubric](#) for a complete listing of standards and criteria). Each standard will be given a numerical rating of 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 (see Chart 1), and each standard is made up of sub-standards. Sub-standards within each standard are not individually scored and are considered as met or not met.

Chart 1

0	1	2	3	4
No explanation or documentation	Narrative and/or documentation addresses and satisfies less than 50% of the standard	Documentation addresses most but satisfies less than 50% of the standard	Documentation addresses and satisfies more than 50% of the standard	Documentation addresses and satisfies 100% of the standard

Additionally, scores for the standards contained within each of the six categories defined above will be averaged (by category) in order to determine category scores. The overall score is determined by averaging all of the standard scores and aligned to one of the following overall ratings: Exemplary, Commendable, Satisfactory, Approaching Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory/Incomplete. See Chart 2 that outlines the score thresholds for each rating. At the conclusion of each two-year evaluation cycle, the State Board may review and adjust the evaluation score ranges as needed.

Chart 2

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

Authorizer Evaluation Rating Implications

The overall rating received on the evaluation report may include, but are not limited to, the following actions, in accordance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08:

- Exemplary:
 - a) Public recognition and highlighting authorizer best practices by the State Board;
 - b) Exemption from an upcoming evaluation if the authorizer has achieved an “Exemplary” rating for two (2) consecutive evaluation years; and
 - c) Submission of a self-assessment during the non-evaluation year.
 - d) An authorizer shall not be rated as “Exemplary” if the authorizer receives a zero (0) or one (1) rating for any rubric standard.
- Commendable:
 - a) Public recognition and highlighting authorizer best practices by the State Board; and
 - b) Submission of a self-assessment during the non-evaluation year.
- Satisfactory:
 - a) Submission of a self-assessment during the non-evaluation year.
- Approaching Satisfactory:
 - a) Submission of a [corrective action plan](#);
 - b) Submission of a self-assessment during the non-evaluation year; and
 - c) Submission of documentation demonstrating completion of requirements outlined in the corrective action plan. Failure to complete the requirements outlined in the corrective action plan and/or receiving a rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” in the next authorizer evaluation may result in the reduction of the authorizer’s authorizer fee in compliance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08.
- Unsatisfactory/Incomplete:
 - a) Requirement to participate in another authorizer evaluation the year immediately following a rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete;”
 - b) Submission of a [corrective action plan](#); and
 - c) Submission of documentation demonstrating completion of requirements outlined in the corrective action plan. Failure to complete the requirements outlined in the corrective action plan and/or receiving a rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” in the next authorizer evaluation may result in the reduction of the authorizer’s authorizer fee in compliance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08.

Section B: Non-Evaluation Year

As required by State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08, in a non-evaluation year, authorizers will complete and submit the following to the State Board as part of the annual authorizing report:

- A [non-evaluation year self-assessment](#) using the template provided by the State Board; and
- A completed corrective action plan (if applicable) that includes any supporting documentation to demonstrate resolution of identified deficiencies. Please see Section C for further details about the corrective action plans.

Section C: Corrective Actions

The State Board has been tasked by the General Assembly to ensure the effective operation of authorizers in the State and to evaluate authorizer quality. Through the authorizer evaluation process, the State Board may uncover academic, financial, or operational oversight practices that do not meet the standards established by the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards or in alignment with State law and/or State Board rule.

To that end, the State Board has identified corrective actions (see the following Chart 3) for authorizers in order that authorizers respond to areas of deficiency in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner. Chart 3 describes corrective actions and possible consequences as outlined in State Board rule 0520-14-01-.08 that will be implemented in response to deficiencies identified in the authorizer evaluations. The conditions that trigger corrective actions are directly aligned to the results of the authorizer evaluations, which assess authorizers' performance against the [Quality Charter Authorizing Standards](#). Pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08, authorizers who receive an overall rating of "Approaching Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory/Incomplete" shall be subject to corrective actions, including the creation and submission of a corrective action plan (CAP). See Chart 3 for specific examples of triggers and resulting actions.

Chart 3

Note: Corrective actions are directly informed by deficiencies identified through the authorizer evaluations.

Status	Possible Triggers	May Result In
<p style="text-align: center;">Corrective Action Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overall rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” during the evaluation year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter to the authorizer detailing area(s) of deficiency with a requirement that a corrective action plan (CAP) be developed and implemented (with specific improvements, timelines, and measures). The CAP must be approved by the executive director of the State Board or his/her designee. See the following for further detail about the CAP.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overall rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” during the evaluation year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter to the authorizer detailing area(s) of deficiency with a requirement that a corrective action plan (CAP) be developed and implemented (with specific improvements, timelines, and measures). The CAP must be approved by the executive director of the State Board or his/her designee. See the following for further detail about the CAP. Requirement to participate in another authorizer evaluation the year immediately following.

<p>Recommendation for Authorizer Fee Reduction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overall rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” during the evaluation year and failure to complete the requirements and timelines outlined in the authorizer’s CAP; or • An overall rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” during the evaluation year and failure to complete the requirements and timelines outlined in the authorizer’s CAP; or • An overall rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” or “Approaching Satisfactory” during two (2) consecutive evaluation years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director’s recommendation to the State Board to reduce the authorizer’s authorizer fee. • Absent an Executive Director’s recommendation, the State Board may still consider reduction of an authorizer’s authorizer fee if the authorizer meets any of the conditions stated here.
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Corrective Action Plan (CAP)

After the State Board approves an authorizer’s final evaluation ratings and sends written notification to the authorizer, authorizers who receive an overall rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” on the authorizer evaluation will be required to acknowledge receipt of the written notification and create and submit a CAP, in accordance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08. In order to ensure consistency, the State Board will provide a [CAP template](#) that authorizers will complete, which will include identification of the deficiency, specific improvements, responsible person(s), timelines, and measures. The State Board reserves the right to require specific items and timelines to be included in an authorizer’s CAP. Initial CAPs and any other required follow-up actions must be submitted to the Executive Director or his/her designee for approval.

CAP Determination

Authorizers who receive an overall rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” on the authorizer evaluation will be required to create and submit a CAP. The Executive Director of the State Board will determine which sub-standards of the Rubric (with a rating of 0 or 1) must be addressed in the CAP and will communicate this to the authorizer.

CAP Timeline

For authorizers receiving an overall rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete”, and thus required to participate in another authorizer evaluation the following year, the CAP timeline is as follows:

- Authorizers submit the initial CAP to the State Board’s Executive Director for approval within ten (10) business days of the written notification of final ratings.
- The Executive Director will review the CAP within five (5) business days and send a letter either confirming acceptance of the CAP or requesting revisions. If revisions are requested, the authorizer must submit the revised CAP within two (2) business days, and the Executive Director will review within five (5) business days.
- During the subsequent authorizer evaluation, authorizers submit the completed CAP (along with any supporting documentation to demonstrate resolution) with the authorizer evaluation document submission. The CAP may require evidence of completion to be submitted sooner than the document submission window.
- Failure to complete the requirements in the CAP may result in a recommendation by the executive director of the State Board for the authorizer to receive a reduction in the authorizer fee, per State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08.

For authorizers receiving an overall rating of “Approaching Satisfactory”, the CAP timeline is as follows:

- Submit the initial CAP to the Executive Director for approval within ten (10) business days after receiving written notification of final ratings.
- During the non-evaluation year, submit the following documents by January 1 (as part of the annual authorizing report submission):
 - Completed non-evaluation year self-assessment;
 - Completed CAP (along with any supporting documentation to demonstrate resolution). The CAP may require evidence of completion to be submitted sooner than January 1.
- Failure to complete the requirements in the CAP may result in a recommendation by the executive director of the State Board for the authorizer to receive a reduction in the authorizer fee, per State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08.