



Charter School Authorization by the State Board – Frequently Asked Questions

This document is meant to serve as a resource for charter schools that may become authorized by the State Board until December 31, 2020. Below are frequently asked questions about what it means to be authorized by the State Board through the appeal process in Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A) § 49-13-108 and T.C.A. § 49-13-121. This document applies only to applicants who are eligible to be directly authorized by the State Board. These are applicants who propose to locate in a school district with a priority school on the current or last preceding priority school list.

1. Does the State Board collect an authorizer fee?

Yes. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-118, the State Board shall receive an annual authorizer fee of up to three (3%) percent of the charter school's per student state and local funding.

2. Who is the LEA for charter schools authorized by the State Board?

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-142, the State board is the LEA for all charter schools it authorizes.

3. Do all educators need a license?

Yes. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-5-101 and State Board rule 0520-02-03, all educators, regardless of content area, responsible for the instruction of students must hold a current and valid educator license for the state of Tennessee.

4. What student information system will the charter school use?

Each State Board-authorized charter school will adopt and use the state-approved student information system used by the State Board. All charter schools will use the same system with all required student information reported to the Tennessee Department of Education through the State Board. The student information system currently used by State Board schools is PowerSchool.

5. Who is responsible for providing transportation services for students?

Each authorized charter school is responsible for providing transportation services according to the transportation plan in the approved application. If the charter school plans to provide transportation services to its students, the charter school may run its own transportation service, contract with a third party vendor, or contract with the local district in which the charter school is geographically located. The charter school's transportation plan shall also include a plan to provide transportation for special education students. A transportation plan that is different from the plan in the approved application (e.g. to provide transportation or not to provide transportation) is a material change to the charter agreement and requires approval by the State Board. Please note, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-142, a charter school may contract with the local district in which the school operates for transportation services, but the local district is not obligated to contract with the State Board authorized charter school.

6. Who is responsible for providing food services for students?

Each authorized charter school is responsible for providing food services for its students. Authorized charter schools shall either:

- Register with the Tennessee Department of Education to operate a National School Lunch and Breakfast program and contract with a third party vendor; or
- Contract with the local district in which the charter school is geographically located.

Please note, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-142, a charter school may contract with the local district in which the school operates for food services, but the local district is not obligated to contract with the State Board authorized charter school.

7. What assessments is the charter school responsible for administering?

Each authorized charter school is required to administer all state-mandated assessments, including but are not limited to, TN Ready, End of Course assessments, ACT, and English Learner assessments required by the Tennessee Department of Education. Charter schools may use additional assessments of their own choosing.

8. How is accountability handled for state-mandated assessments?

As the LEA, the State Board will be held accountable under the Tennessee Department of Education's accountability framework. Each authorized charter school's state assessment data will be reported as part of the State Board's LEA, not the local district in which it is geographically located.

9. Who handles background checks for qualified personnel?

All employees, contractors and volunteers who have or will have contact with children must complete a criminal background check as required by state law. Each authorized charter school shall obtain an ORI number with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. It is the responsibility of the charter school to require background checks for all applicants, and the State Board will verify that the school conducted all background checks.

10. What policies and procedures must an authorized charter school adopt?

Each authorized charter school must adopt policies and procedures that comply with all federal and state rules and regulations as well as the State Board Local Educational Agency (LEA) policies and procedures. Please review the list of State Board LEA policies and procedures [here](#).

11. Who is responsible for providing special education services?

Each authorized charter school will be responsible for providing special education services. Each school must have a qualified special education coordinator who is responsible for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of all special education services.

12. How will schools receive Basic Education Program (BEP) funds?

The State Board will distribute all local, state, and federal funds to its authorized charter schools. Each authorized charter school is responsible for its financial management and performance and must comply with all federal and state rules and regulations regarding spending federal funds.

13. How will schools receive Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds?

Pursuant to US Department of Education rules and regulations, IDEA funding is generated based on a district's prior year enrollment. Therefore, any IDEA funding generated by the district will be on a one (1)-year lag. Additionally, all IDEA funding generated by an LEA is to be distributed among all schools within an LEA, in accordance with federal rules and regulations.

14. What is included in the charter agreement with the State Board?

Upon authorization, each authorized charter school shall sign a charter agreement with the State Board that will govern the relationship between the charter school and the State Board. Examples of signed charter agreements between charter schools and the State Board are available [here](#).

15. How will the State Board evaluate its authorized charter schools?

Each authorized charter school will be held to the [performance framework](#) adopted by the State Board and monitored in accordance with State Board [LEA policies](#) and State Board [authorizer policies](#). The State Board's Performance Framework annually assesses each authorized schools' academic performance, financial performance, and operational performance.

16. Can an authorized charter school delay its opening?

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-110(b), an authorized charter school may delay the initial opening of the school for one (1) academic year. If the charter school requires a delay in its initial opening of more than one (1) academic year, the authorized charter school shall obtain annual approval of the delay from the State Board.