
BEFORE THE TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

IN RE:)
RICH ED ACADEMY OF LEADERS) State Board of Education Meeting
Charter School Appeal) October 20, 2017
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)
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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 2, 2017, Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School (“Sponsor”) 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 Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School amended application was not “contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district, or community.”¹ Therefore, I recommend that the State Board affirm the decision of SCS to deny the amended application for Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School.

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 Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School 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, operations plan, financial plan, 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 – 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 pupils, school district, or community.⁴ Because Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School 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 February 1, 2017, the Sponsor submitted a letter of intent to SCS expressing its intention to file a charter school application for Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School.
2. The Sponsor submitted its initial application for Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School to SCS on April 3, 2017.
3. SCS assembled a review committee to review and score Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's application. The review committee recommended denial of the Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School initial application.
4. A SCS panel, which included external expert reviewers, held a capacity interview with Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School.
5. On June 27, 2017, the SCS Board of Education voted to deny Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's initial application based upon the review committee's recommendation.
6. The Sponsor amended and resubmitted its application for Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School to SCS on July 28, 2017.
7. SCS's review committee reviewed and scored Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's amended application and again recommended denial.
8. On August 22, 2017, based on the review committee's recommendation, SCS voted to deny Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's amended application.
9. The Sponsor appealed the denial of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's amended application in writing to the State Board of Education on September 2, 2017, including the submission of all required documents per State Board policy 2.500.
10. At the time of appeal to the State Board, the Sponsor did not submit any corrections to the application as allowed under T.C.A. § 49-13-108(a)(4)(C).

⁴ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.

11. The State Board’s Review Committee analyzed and scored Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School’s amended application using the Tennessee Department of Education’s charter application scoring rubric.
12. On September 21, 2017, the State Board Executive Director and staff held a public hearing in Memphis. At the public hearing, the Executive Director heard presentations from the Sponsor and SCS and took public comment regarding Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School’s application.
13. The Review Committee conducted a capacity interview with the proposed governing board of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School and key members of the leadership team on October 2, 2017, in Nashville.
14. After the capacity interview, the Review Committee determined a final consensus rating of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School’s 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 Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School initial and amended applications consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Gracie Beard	Advisor – Charter School Development Shelby County Schools
Mary Berk	Supervising Psychologist Shelby County Schools
Angela Buckley	Senior Accountant Shelby County Schools
Terilyn McChriston	Science Instructional Advisor Shelby County Schools
Brittany Monda	Executive Director Memphis College Prep
Colleston Morgan	Chief Strategy Officer Orleans Parish School Board
Daphne Robinson	Director of Charter Schools Shelby County Schools
Carin Sanders	Assessment Advisor Shelby County Schools
Tiffany Smith	HR Business Partner Shelby County Schools

The Rich ED Academy of Leaders initial application received the following ratings from the SCS review committee:

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Does Not Meet Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Does Not Meet Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Does Not Meet 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 28, 2017. Based on the review committee's recommendation, the SCS Board of Education voted to deny the initial application of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School.

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

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Does Not Meet Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Does Not Meet 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 August 22, 2017. Based on the review committee's recommendation, the SCS Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School.

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

Following the denial of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's amended application and their subsequent appeal to the State Board of Education, State Board staff assembled a diverse Review Committee of experts to evaluate and score the Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School amended application. This Review Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Hillary Sims	Dean of Students STEM Prep High
Ally Hauptman	Lead Faculty for Instructional Practice Lipscomb University
Lauren Baer	Grants Manager State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE).
Michael Whaley	Founding Regional Director Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE)
Tess Stovall	Director of Charter Schools State Board of Education
Jay Whalen	Deputy Director of Charter Schools State Board of Education

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

The Review Committee conducted an initial review and scoring of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School’s 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 Rich ED Academy of Leaders amended application was as follows:

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Does Not Meet Standard

The Review Committee recommended the denial of Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School’s application be upheld because the Sponsor did not provide sufficient evidence that the academic, operations, and financial review sections within the application met the approval criteria in the rubric. Specifically, the Review Committee found that the academic plan was not strong or clearly aligned with the academic goals stated in the application, and the operations plan lacked information regarding a school facility, stability of the governing board, and professional development that is aligned to the academic goals. Finally, the financial plan relied heavily on philanthropic funds and was incomplete.

The proposed course of study contained in the academic plan presented by the Sponsor did not provide clarity regarding what students would be taught and who would be teaching the students, nor did it provide evidence of how it would implement the curriculum. Moreover, the proposed curriculum was underdeveloped in the way the Sponsor proposed to apply it and it was inconsistent with the assessments selected by the Sponsor or those mandated by law. Additionally, the Review Committee felt the proposed staffing assignments and the suggested strategy of offering intervention for English language learners and student with disabilities during a “skinny” block club time, after school, and on Saturdays did not provide an effective plan to serve these students. In the application, the Sponsor indicated that it would administer the NWEA MAP assessment twice per year; however, during the interview the Sponsor indicated that the assessment would be administered four times per year. Deficiencies in the academic plan notwithstanding, it was clear that the Sponsor had the passion and desire to educate young women in the Memphis area, which exuded through their application, at the public hearing, and in the capacity interview.

In addition, the operations plan presented in the application did not outline a consistent staffing plan for the planning year and years one through five. The application had several inconsistencies around the number of educators, courses, and administrative staff at the school. The Sponsor indicated that board members and community members have volunteered to assist with the school’s start up and year one, but did not provide any written commitments to memorialize such obligations. The Sponsor also does not intend to provide transportation to its students, which is concerning considering their desire to enroll students from across the Memphis area. In contrast, the operations plan was strong in that it noted three viable options in the downtown Memphis area that could serve as the school facility. The Sponsor also has robust community and corporate partnerships already established with more being fostered.

Lastly, the financial plan did not meet the standard because the proposed budget was misaligned with the application, had multiple inconsistencies, was missing several line items, and relied heavily on philanthropic donations. The budget narrative and the actual budget had discrepancies between student

enrollment and anticipated BEP funding, as well as between the staffing projections and pre-opening plan. In addition, the Sponsor did not present a contingency plan for their budget if the school did not meet enrollment projections. The budget was also missing several line items that were essential to the academic plan. Notably, there was no line item for a contract with New Tech Network, which the Sponsor intended to use for its academic supports, professional development, and coaching. Line items for furniture, technology, and outside contractors were also absent from the budget. Finally, the Sponsor's proposed budget relied heavily on fundraising and donations. While the Sponsor has raised thousands of dollars to date and has stated that there are several willing donors; the materials provided by the Sponsor did not include any letters of commitment for gifts and/or donations.

In summary, the Review Committee determined that the academic, operational, and financial plans were incomplete and lacking the needed preparation and detail, and 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 Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School 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 statute and State Board policy 2.500, a public hearing chaired by the Executive Director of the State Board was held in Memphis on September 21, 2017. SCS's presentation at the public hearing focused on the argument that the denial of the Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's amended application was in the best interests of the students, school district, and community. SCS grounded its argument in the deficiencies found by the SCS review committee in the amended application after conducting a review process aligned to the National Association of Charter School Authorizer (NACSA) standards. Specifically, SCS found that Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School's application did not meet the standard for approval based on the lack of evidence that the Sponsor was prepared to address remediation, how special populations would be served, and how the school would implement Response to Instruction and Intervention. SCS also expressed concern with how the Sponsor would adopt the proposed project based learning model. SCS also noted that the Sponsor did not have a contingency plan for low enrollment and that their budget relied heavily on volunteers.

The Sponsor expressed their desire to provide a single-sex education without regard to race and socioeconomic status by chartering an all-girls secondary school targeted toward students in the downtown, uptown, and harbor town areas of Memphis. The Sponsor expressed they feel strongly that girls in Memphis need and deserve a high quality school option and that with the right support and engaging programs, girls can obtain assets that lead to positive outcomes that defy statistics. The Sponsor explained the proposed school was designed to help girls develop into leaders through the use of individualized education programs that prepare each student for post-secondary education. They plan to incorporate 21st century project based learning that is more engaging, mirrors employment, and engages students by using technology. The Sponsor also expressed a desire to develop girls into leaders through collaboration, community, civics, competency, and character. Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School

intends to use a grade level phase-in model with enrollment of 120-160 students in year one, growing to 400-420 students at capacity. The Sponsor acknowledged that their funding model is complex, but stated that it is adequate to cover a high quality learning experience for its students. They affirmed that their amended and appeal applications contained a full plan regarding remediation and that they are prepared to serve all students. The Sponsor also indicated that it has a relationship with New Tech Network, who will provide their professional development.

A portion of the public hearing was dedicated to taking public comment. A total of ten people made verbal comments at the hearing, including a parent, a former school librarian, Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School community partners, and members of the Memphis community. In addition, State Board staff accepted written public comments.⁶

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 pupils, school district, or community.”⁷ In addition, T.C.A. § 49-13-108 requires the State Board to adopt national standards of authorizing. One such standard is to maintain high standards for approving charter applications. In making my recommendation to the Board, I have considered the Review Committee Report, the arguments made by both Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School 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 sound and supported by evidence contained in the application and gained at the capacity interview. For the reasons explicated in the report, I agree that the Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School’s amended application did not rise to the level of meeting or exceeding the standards required for approval.

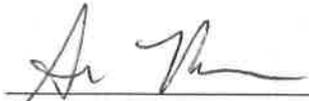
Given the great responsibility of educating students and the amount of taxpayer dollars entrusted to a charter school that is approved by a local district, the State Board expects that only those schools that demonstrate a high likelihood of success and meet or exceed the required criteria in all areas will be authorized. While it appears that the Sponsor of the Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School is a dedicated group that wishes to serve the students in the Memphis community, I agree with SCS that significant concerns remain about the ability of the Sponsor to successfully open and operate a school that will improve academic outcomes for all students.

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 Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School was contrary to the best interests of the students, the school district, or the community. Therefore, I recommend that the State Board affirm the decision of SCS to deny the amended application for Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School.

⁶ Copies of written public comments received by the deadline have been provided to State Board members.

⁷ T.C.A. § 49-13-108.



Dr. Sara H. Morrison, Executive Director
State Board of Education

10/17/16

Date



EXHIBIT A

Charter Application Review Committee Recommendation Report

School Name: Rich Ed Academy of Leaders

Sponsor: The Destiny House

Proposed Location of School: Shelby County Schools

Evaluation Team:

Lauren Baer
Ally Hauptman
Hillary Sims
Tess Stovall
Jay Whalen
Michael Whaley

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 sponsors 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 shall adopt national authorizing standards. As laid out in State Board Policy 6.200 – Core Authorizing Principles, the State Board committed to implementing these authorizing standards aligned with the core principles of charter school authorizing including setting high standards for the approval of charter schools in its portfolio.

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 three sections of the application: Academic Plan Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, and Financial Plan and Capacity.
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, operational, 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 three 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: school mission and goals; enrollment summary; school development; academic focus and plan; academic performance standards; high school graduation standards (if applicable); assessments; school schedule; special populations and at-risk students; school culture and discipline; marketing, recruitment, and enrollment; community involvement and parent engagement; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - b. Operations Plan and Capacity: governance; start-up plan; facilities; personnel/human capital; professional development; insurance; transportation (if applicable); food service; additional operations (if applicable); waivers; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - c. Financial Plan and Capacity: budget narrative; budget; cash flow projections; related assumptions; financial policies and procedures; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.

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 the 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: Rich Ed Academy of Leaders

Proposed Location of School: Shelby County Schools

Mission:¹ The mission of Rich Ed Academy of Leaders (REAL) is a 21st century project-based learning institute and educational incubator that strives to provide an individualized and innovative approach to teaching and learning that incorporates rigor, relationships, and responsibility for students. The school will provide a single-gender program for girls in grades 6-12.

Number of Schools Currently in Operation by Sponsor: 0

Proposed Enrollment:²

Grade Level	Year 1 (2018)	Year 2 (2019)	Year 3 (2020)	Year 4 (2021)	Year 5 (2022)	At Capacity (2021)
6	60	60	60	60	60	60
7	0	60	60	60	60	60
8	0	0	60	60	60	60
9	60	60	60	60	60	60
10	0	60	60	60	60	60
11	0	0	60	60	60	60
12	0	0	0	60	60	60
Total	120	240	360	420	420	420

Brief Description of the Application:

REAL is proposing to open a single-gender, middle- through high-school in downtown Memphis, TN to serve young women in grades 6-12. REAL plans to locate in downtown Memphis and will operate as a one-to-one school utilizing project-based learning. Additionally, REAL will incorporate community and corporate partnerships in the Memphis area as well as engage in learning civics.³

The proposed school will be sponsored by an existing non-profit entity, The Destiny House. Relevant members of The Destiny House Board would simultaneously sit on the REAL Board of Trustees as needed until such time as the REAL Board no longer needs that support.

REAL projects the school will have \$1,209,820 in revenue Year 1 and \$1,199,275 in expenses for Year 1, resulting in positive balance of \$10,545. In Year 5, the school projects to have \$4,082,820 in revenue and \$3,410,296 in expenses, resulting in positive balance of \$672,524.⁴ The school assumes that 65 percent of its student population will qualify as Economically Disadvantaged, 5 percent of the student

¹ Rich ED Academy of Leaders Charter School Application, pg. 1.

² Ibid., pg. 29.

³ Ibid., pg. 11.

⁴ Ibid., Attachment O – Planning and Budget Worksheet.

population will be students with disabilities, and 1 percent of the student population will be English Learners.⁵

Summary of the Evaluation

The review committee recommends that the application for REAL be denied because the applicant failed to provide sufficient evidence in the academic, operational, and financial review sections that the application met the required criteria of the rubric. The academic plan presented by the applicant lacks strength and clear alignment with academic goals. Furthermore, there appear to be significant misunderstandings regarding the necessity of providing separate direct services to students with disabilities and English Learners.

The operations plan lacked detailed information regarding a secured facility plan, timeline, and budget, a stable and consistent governing board, and a comprehensive professional development plan. In addition, the absence of providing transportation without details contingency plans leads to concern about meeting enrollment targets necessary for aligned budget revenue. The financial plan indicated a strong reliance upon philanthropic monies and had several missing or unsubstantiated line items. Even after the capacity interview the budget remained fluid and undefined, in addition to the dependence on individual and organizational donors without written commitments.

Summary of Section Ratings

In accordance with the Tennessee Department of Education’s charter application scoring rubric, “applications that do not meet or exceed standard in every area . . . will be deemed not ready for approval,” and strengths in one area of the application do not negate material weaknesses in other areas.⁶ 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.

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Does Not Meet the Standard

⁵ Ibid., pg. 29.

⁶ Tennessee Charter School Application – Evaluation Ratings and Sample Scoring Criteria, pg. 1.

Analysis of the Academic Plan Design and Capacity

Rating: Partially Meets the Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Academic Plan Design and Capacity partially meets the standard because the applicant lacked a clear description of curriculum. During the interview, curriculum creation was described; however, the applicant failed to provide sufficient clarity to allay concerns around what would be taught when and by whom. During the interview, the applicant indicated New Tech Network (NTN) would be providing supports, professional development, and coaching; however, there was no written commitment or contract provided, nor was this included in the budget. The desire of the school leader is to pull curriculum from teachers hired and blend that with TN Core and NTN parameters from hire date to the weeks prior to the start of the school year; however, this plan lacked clarity or evidence of how this process would be implemented. Within the application there was evidence of a plan to hire an Instructional and Curriculum Dean during the pre-opening year, but during the interview, school leaders indicated this position would not be filled until Year 1. Ultimately, the committee felt the curriculum for REAL would be underdeveloped and inconsistent in its alignment to both selected and mandated assessments.

The review committee found there was an acutely underdeveloped plan to serve students with disabilities, as well as English Learners. During the interview, REAL representatives stated that during year one, a special education coordinator would provide direct services to students with disabilities. However, the review committee did not find evidence that this individual would have the capacity to provide adequate services to both 6th grade and 9th grade students. Additionally, the applicant stated that students requiring language intervention would be served by contracted employees, and that intervention times for students not meeting academic performance measures will be during a "skinny" block club time, after school, and on Saturdays. This was noted within the application as well as restated during the interview. The committee found this strategy both insufficient as well as inequitable. The applicant stated the need for contracted services from Shelby County; however, conversations with the district have not taken place and contracted services were not a line item within the submitted budget. Overall, the review committee found the applicant deficient in comprehension of federal education programs relative to students with disabilities and English Learners.

The review committee also found insufficient evidence of a comprehensive assessment plan. There were inconsistencies noted within the application regarding types of exams given as well as the timeline for these assessments. Within the application, it states that NWEA MAP assessments will be given twice; however, during the interview school leaders indicated the NWEA MAP would be administered four times during the school year. Further, the committee noted concerns around utilizing real-time data to form instruction. Given the vague professional development plan to create curriculum and collaborate to create project based learning lessons, there is concern that instructors would not receive professional development to become proficient with data analysis and remediation plans.

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

While the Academic Plan Design and Capacity only partially meets the standard because of the weaknesses described above, the review committee did find evidence of strengths within the section. Specifically, the applicant clearly articulated the need within the community to create a learning environment for young women in the Memphis area. Further, the applicant described a number of



established community and corporate partnerships. The desire for success of the mission and vision the applicant submitted radiated throughout both the application and the interview.

Analysis of the Operations Plan and Capacity

Rating: Partially Meets the Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Operations Plan and Capacity partially meets the standard because the applicant failed to outline a specific and consistent staffing plan, provide clarity around contracted professional development to be provided by New Tech Network, lacked a clear plan, timeline, and budget for facility renovation, and has presented a governance structure that is ambiguous with a fluid list of board members to date. Throughout the application, there were inconsistencies around the number of teachers, courses to be taught within a day or year, and the number of administrative staff. During the interview, the staff pattern shifted again, which caused concern by the committee. These staff inconsistencies are found within the planning year as well as Years 1-5. These staffing adjustments are in an effort to stay within budget. During the interview, the applicant shared that several volunteers assisted with the creation of the budget, likely leading to some of the inconsistencies and confusion. On multiple occasions, the applicant mentioned board members and community leaders pitching in to assist with start-up and Year 1. Without direct written commitments, contractual commitments, or aligned roles on the school board, the stated efforts of volunteers presented a confusing and shifting plan. The applicant also articulated that a Director of Operations would be in charge of handling finances for REAL starting in Year 1. This position was another noted inconsistency throughout the application. Overall, it appears as though there has been turnover with respect to several key stakeholders throughout this application process, leading to some confusion regarding specific roles and responsibilities.

The applicant shared they are in the process of locating and securing a facility. During the interview, three locations were discussed. While they discussed three possible locations, the applicant did not provide a clear plan, timeline, and budget for renovations. Even though all three would require small renovations, as they are marketed to charter schools and are already set up with common spaces, classrooms, cafeteria space, and technology infrastructure, no renovation expenses were included in the budget. One space would require installation of a sprinkler system and others may have unforeseen renovation costs. It was evident in both the application and interview that the applicant is not familiar with the financial responsibilities associated with acquiring, renovating, and maintaining a facility fully outfitted to educate their desired student population.

The committee is concerned with the decision not to provide transportation to students when the school plans to draw from across the metropolitan Memphis area. The committee is also concerned about whether the school will be able to meet its enrollment projections without a contingency plan for transportation. School leaders discussed forming a relationship with Uber to provide transportation, but it is unclear how this would meet the pupil transportation requirements. Additionally, students and families who are significantly disadvantaged may still struggle to enroll and attend REAL. REAL representatives stated that many families seeking school choice are car riders and do not rely upon metropolitan transportation.

Further, many additional services will need to be provided, including the provision of speech and language pathologists for students with speech and language goals, as well as school psychologists to evaluate students for an Individualized Education Program. No firm plans have been established to provide these services, either through contracting with Shelby County Schools or another external provider. There is concern the applicant has yet to fully build out adequate staffing projections, both



internally and externally, to address these needs. Lastly, the applicant's professional development model was based on the partnership with the New Tech Network; however, answers around how this would be integrated within weekly professional development sessions lacked clarity.

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

While the Operations Plan and Capacity only partially meets the standard, the review committee did find evidence of strengths within the operations plan. Specifically, the applicant had identified three viable facility options in the downtown Memphis area and appeared to be moving forward to secure a space within their timeline. Another strength are the corporate and community partnerships already established and currently being fostered. There is clear momentum between school leaders and the community.

Analysis of the Financial Plan and Capacity

Rating: Does Not Meet the Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee:

The Financial Plan and Capacity does not meet the standard because the applicant's budget was misaligned with the application, contained numerous internal inconsistencies, lacked several necessary line items, lacked reasonable and detailed budget assumptions, and is heavily reliant upon philanthropic donations. With regard to misaligned items from the budget narrative to the budget, student enrollment and BEP projections do not align, nor do staffing projections or the pre-opening plan, and there is no contingency plan for the budget if enrollment falls below expectations.

With regard to missing line items, the contract with NTN was absent from the pre-opening budget, yet existed within the narrative. Furthermore, there were no costs indicated for typical items such as school furniture, technology, and outside contracting for needed services. The committee found the narrative section of the application in conflict with the budget section, causing both confusion and concern that opportunities the applicant desires to provide for students may not be realized due to budget constraints. During the interview, the applicant spoke about budget revisions that others more adept with handling budgets assisted to reconfigure; however, the committee was not privy to the revised budget and cannot be confident that the revised budget is complete, realistic, and viable.

The review committee also found that the application and budget relied heavily upon fundraising and philanthropic donations. During the interview, REAL representatives indicated they have already raised a few thousand dollars and have several individuals and organizations ready to donate; however, the applicant provided no evidence of written commitments during the interview or in the application. On a few occasions, the applicant indicated that a board member or friend of the school will provide services. Two examples are construction to be provided by a board member's company and financial back-office work to be provided for no fee from a board member for a year. The desire and commitment to the REAL mission is duly noted by these community leaders and board members; however, REAL's reliance upon in-kind contributions as well as the reliance of the outlined fundraising strategies give the committee cause for concern. Given these issues, the review committee found insufficient evidence that the applicant's budget was complete, realistic, and viable or that the applicant group could implement the financial plan.



Evaluation Team

Lauren Baer is the Grants Manager at the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE). As such, she leads the day-to-day oversight of grants for SCORE and on behalf of partner organizations. Prior to working at SCORE, Lauren was responsible for grants management at The Learning Coalition, a private foundation based in Honolulu, Hawaii. She has a bachelor's degree in political science and biblical and theological studies from Wheaton College and is pursuing a master's of education in community development and action at Vanderbilt University.

Allyson Hauptman is the Lead Faculty for Instructional Practice at Lipscomb. She has a Ph.D. in Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education from the University of Nebraska, and has taught first and fifth grades as well as special education. She also has experience as a literacy and math coach. Her research interests include reading and writing motivation and best practices in literacy instruction.

Hillary Sims Following 6 years of service to STEM Prep students and families as Founding Dean of Students and Support Services, Ms. Hillary P. Sims serves in the role of Dean of Students for STEM Prep High. Hillary has been educating youth and leading high-performing organizations for nearly two decades. A graduate from both East Tennessee State University and The University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Ms. Sims aspires to inspire youth to actualize dreams. Having served as a school administrator for more than 15 years as well as actively supporting the charter school movement, state- and nation-wide, since 2005, Ms. Sims enthusiastically leads faculty and staff in achieving ambitious outcomes both in and out of the classroom. Ms. Sims was appointed by Governor Haslam to serve on the Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities and has gratefully served in this capacity for several years. In an effort to support the State Board of Education, Ms. Sims assists in the yearly review of charters seeking SBE approval.

Tess Stovall serves as the Director of Charter Schools for the Tennessee State Board of Education. In this role, she manages the charter school application process and authorization duties of the State Board, and she was a member of the 2015 National Association of Charter School Authorizer's Leaders Program. Prior to joining the staff of the board, she served as the Transformation Facilitator at Cameron Middle School, the first district-led conversion of a traditional public school to a charter school in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. While in Washington, D.C., Tess worked for Congressman Jim Cooper (TN-05) and a centrist think tank, Third Way, on economic and education policy. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of The George Washington University earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and Sociology and a graduate of the London School of Economics with a Master of Science Degree in Political Sociology.

Jay Whalen serves as Deputy Director of Charter Schools for the Tennessee State Board of Education. In this role he works on the charter school application process and authorization duties of the State Board. Prior to joining State Board staff, Jay was the Data Analyst at KIPP Nashville, a charter school organization operating multiple schools in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. He was responsible for all data management, collection, analysis, and reporting for the region. 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.

Michael Whaley is the founding Regional Director of Leadership for Educational Equity (LEE) in Memphis. Prior to joining LEE in June 2016, Michael served as the Founder and Executive Director of Memphis College Prep, a kindergarten through fifth grade charter school. A member of the 2006 Teach For America charter corps in Memphis, Michael taught elementary school before being selected for the Building Excellent Schools Fellowship, nationally recognized for its rigorous, year-long training program in charter school management. Michael is active in the Memphis community, serving on several advisory boards including the Shelby County Schools Charter Compact Advisory Committee. Michael previously worked in Legislative Affairs for Southwest Airlines and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Public Policy from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX.



Rich Ed Academy of Leaders

Review Committee Recommendation: **Deny**

Proposed School Name	Proposed School Focus	Proposed Region/Location
Rich Ed Academy of Leaders	6-12 Single gender (all-girls)	Downtown

School Mission

The mission of Rich Ed Academy of Leaders (REAL) is a 21st century project-based learning institute and educational incubator that strives to provide an individualized and innovative approach to teaching and learning that incorporates rigor, relationships and responsibility for students. The school will provide a single gender program for girls in grades 6-12.

School Plan Summary

The school will provide a project based learning model with a curriculum focused on advocacy, policy and business. The school states that they are focused on enhancing the learning capabilities of all students.

Leadership and Governance

Full Name	Current Job Title and Employer	Position with Proposed School
Tamika Jefferson	Owner, Fresh Touch Publicity	Community and Public Relations
Crystal Chopin	Operations Manager, Oasis of Hope	N/A
Robert S. Harvey	Pastor, Covenant Church Memphis	Board Member
Lytania Black	Assistant Director Coordinator- Hope Works	Dean of Students/Student Support
Keshia Giboney	Administrative Coordinator, F&H Store	General Office Manager
Dr. Kelvin Lake	Founder/Pastor-Rhema Life Church	Director of Operations
April Terrell	Program Coordinator-The College Initiative	Pathways Coordinator: College and Career Readiness

Proposed Grade Structure and 5-year Enrollment Projections

Academic Year	Planned # of Students	Grades Served
2018-19	120	6 th and 9 th
2019-20	240	6 th , 7 th , 9 th , and 10 th
2020-21	360	6 th -11 th
2021-22	420	6 th -12 th
2022-23	420	6 th -12 th

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
<p>Academic Plan Design and Capacity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet</p>	<p>The applicant has entered into a formal agreement with New Tech Network to help with training and implementation of their project based learning program. This partnership signals a more intentional approach to ensuring the project based learning model is implemented with fidelity. The mission of REAL is inclusive and will draw a broader range of students.</p>	<p>The concerns referenced during the initial review remain relevant during the amended application review process. The proposed school did not provide clear and rigorous goals; nor was it clear how the proposed school will measure success of goals. The proposed school did not provide additional detail around academic supports and interventions they will provide to the students. Overall, the academic section requires more detail to suggest the proposed school would be able to meet the needs of all students in a project based learning program.</p>
<p>Operations Plan and Capacity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet</p>	<p>The applicant provided a more detailed start up plan that included activities related to academics.</p>	<p>Overall, the operational planning and capacity section of the application was still missing a detail that was noted in the first application review. Although REAL has contracted with New Tech Network to provide on-going support and professional development, the information provided was rather general. The application lacked evidence that suggests that the applicant has a firm professional development plan in place for the teachers. The school has both a short term and long-term plan for facilities, however both plans appear to be unpredictable.</p>
<p>Financial Plan and Capacity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet</p>		<p>Given the project based learning program, the technology and startup costs are significant. Overall, the budget narrative was very general and lacked evidence that suggests that the applicant has strong financial systems and capacity that will support their mission and vision for the students they will support. The application lacked a contingency plan in the event that unsecured funds are unavailable or not disbursed when needed by the school. The applicant was also asked to comment how they would respond if they fall below projected enrollment projections. The response lacked enough detail to suggest that the school would be able to appropriately adjust resources in order to continue to serve those students who are enrolled. There also appeared to be inconsistencies regarding staffing, additional services that the school will provide and the budget for those particular services.</p>
<p>Performance Record (if applicable)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Meets or Exceeds</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet</p>		