



Executive Director’s Recommendation Knowledge Academy at the Crossings Renewal Appeal

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (“T.C.A.”) § 49-13-121 and Commission Rule 1185-01-01-.02, the governing board of a public charter school may appeal a decision by the local board of education to deny a renewal application to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”). On December 19, 2025, Knowledge Academies, Inc. (“KA” or “operator”), the governing board of Knowledge Academy at the Crossings (“KA at the Crossings”), appealed the denial of its renewal application by the Metro Nashville Public Schools (“MNPS”) Board of Education to the Commission.

Based on the procedural history, findings of fact, analysis, and Review Committee Recommendation Report, attached hereto, I believe that the decision to deny a ten-year renewal for the KA at the Crossings renewal application was in the best interest in the best interest of the students, local education agency (“LEA”), or community.¹ However, given the flexibility the Commission has to grant a charter renewal term upon appeal between five and ten years, I do believe it is in the best interest of the students, the LEA or the community to recommend that the Commission approve a short-term, five-year renewal for KA at the Crossings.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-121, Commission Policy 2.200, and Commission Rule 1185-01-01-.02, Commission staff conducted a review of the documentation included in the notice of appeal and the decision to deny the renewal application, including additional information gathered by Commission staff. The Commission assembled a charter application review committee comprised of highly qualified internal and external evaluators with relevant and diverse expertise to evaluate the application. The Commission provided training to all review committee members to ensure consistent standards and fair treatment of all applications. The Commission’s charter renewal application review committee utilized the State’s Charter Renewal Application Rubric (“rubric”) and evaluated a comprehensive body of objective evidence in the renewal appeal, including the renewal application and the cumulative performance report. In addition, the Commission held a public hearing in the district where the charter school is located.

¹ T.C.A. § 49-13-121

In order to overturn the decision of the local board of education, the Commission must find that the local board's decision to deny the charter renewal application was contrary to the best interests of the students, LEA, or community. If the local board of education's decision is overturned, then the Commission shall approve the renewal application, and authorize the school. If authorized, the Commission shall enter into a new charter agreement with the governing board of the school for a term of at least five years, but no more than ten years, as determined by the resolution of the Commission. If the Commission votes to uphold the local board's decision to deny the renewal application, the school would close at the end of its current ten-year term.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. On May 24, 2011, MNPS approved the charter application for KA to open Knowledge Academy Middle School serving grades 5-8. The term of the agreement allowed for a maximum enrollment of 272 students, expiring on June 30, 2022.
2. KA began operation of Knowledge Academy Middle School at the start of the 2012-13 school year, serving grades 5-6.
3. On June 24, 2014, MNPS approved the charter application for KA to open Knowledge Academies High School serving grades 9-12. The terms of the agreement allowed for a maximum enrollment of 440 students, expiring on June 30, 2025.
4. KA began operation of Knowledge Academies High School at the start of the 2015-16 school year, serving grade 9.
5. On June 23, 2015, MNPS approved the charter application for KA to open KA at the Crossings serving grades 5-8. The term of the agreement allowed for a maximum enrollment of 400 students, expiring on June 30, 2026.
6. KA began operation of KA at the Crossings at the start of the 2016-17 school year, serving grades 5-8.
7. Between April and October of 2019, after entering a charter management agreement with Noble Education Initiative as well as other alleged contractual issues, MNPS and the operators of Knowledge Academies, Inc. engaged in revocation proceedings adjudicated by the State Board of Education.
8. The 2019 decisions of MNPS to revoke the charter agreements of the Knowledge Academies, Inc. were overturned by the State Board of Education, and each of the three schools continued in operation.

9. For the 2021-2022 school year, Knowledge Academy Middle School and KA at the Crossings served grades 5-8, while Knowledge Academies High School served grades 9-12. The three schools, which operated in the same facility, had a maximum total enrollment allowed of 1,112 students across all three schools.
10. On April 1, 2021, the governing board of KA submitted to MNPS an application to renew the charter agreement of Knowledge Academy Middle School.
11. On December 9, 2021, the governing board submitted a letter to the MNPS Board of Education requesting consideration of the consolidation of the charter agreements for Knowledge Academy Middle School, KA at the Crossings, and Knowledge Academies High School into a single charter agreement.
12. Following two deferred votes, on January 11, 2022, the Office of Charter Schools presented a recommendation at the MNPS Board of Education meeting to not renew the charter agreement of Knowledge Academy Middle School. The MNPS Board of Education approved this recommendation.
13. Between January and June of 2022, MNPS and the operators of Knowledge Academies, Inc. engaged in renewal and amendment proceedings adjudicated by the Commission.
14. Following all appellate proceedings, the Commission issued a decision that Knowledge Academy, Knowledge Academies High School, and Knowledge Academy at the Crossings were consolidated into one public charter school, Knowledge Academy at the Crossings, with an enrollment capacity of 1,112 students serving grades 5-12 and a charter term ending June 30, 2026.
15. On April 1, 2025, the governing board of KA at the Crossings applied to renew its charter agreement to MNPS.
16. On December 9, 2025, the Office of Charter Schools presented a recommendation to the MNPS Board of Education not to renew the charter agreement for KA at the Crossings. The MNPS Board of Education voted to not renew the charter agreement for KA at the Crossings.
17. On December 10, 2025, MNPS notified KA at the Crossings of the MNPS Board of Education's decision to not renew the charter agreement for a new, ten-year term.
18. On December 19, 2025, the governing board of KA at the Crossings appealed the denial of its renewal application in writing to the Commission, including submission of all required documents per Commission Policy 2.200.

19. On January 7, 2026, the Commission staff held a public hearing at Davy Crockett Tower in Nashville, Tennessee. At the public hearing, the Executive Director, sitting as the Commission’s designee, heard presentations from MNPS and KA at the Crossings, and took public comment regarding the KA at the Crossings renewal application.
20. The Commission’s Review Committee independently analyzed and scored the KA at the Crossings renewal application including the submitted required documents using the state’s scoring rubric.
21. The Commission’s Review Committee conducted a capacity interview with key members of the KA at the Crossings leadership team on January 12, 2026 via Microsoft Teams.
22. After the capacity interview, the Commission’s Review Committee determined a final consensus rating of the KA at the Crossings renewal application, which served as the basis for the Review Committee Recommendation Report, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.
23. The Commission staff conducted a full review of the record which includes the application submitted by KA at the Crossings, documentation submitted by MNPS, and the findings of the public hearing and public comment. The Commission’s General Counsel conducted a full review and legal analysis of the record.
24. The Executive Director considered the Review Committee’s Recommendation Report, the documentation submitted by the LEA and the school, the discussion at the public hearing, and the public comments received by Commission staff in drafting this report.

FINDINGS OF FACT

District Denial of Application

KA at the Crossings submitted its renewal application on April 1, 2025 to MNPS, and the Office of Charter Schools assembled a team to review the renewal application submitted by the school. The Review Committee’s rating was as follows:

Section	Rating
Academic Success	Does Not Meet Standard
Operational Stability	Partially Meets Standard
Financial Health	Partially Meets Standard
Future Plans and Projections	Partially Meets Standard

After the MNPS Review Committee completed its review and scoring of the renewal application, its recommendation for denial was presented to the MNPS Board of Education on December 9, 2025. At the December 9, 2025 board meeting, the MNPS Board of Education voted to deny the renewal application of KA at the Crossings.

Commission Review Committee’s Evaluation of the Application

Following the denial of the KA at the Crossings renewal application and subsequent appeal to the Commission, Commission staff assembled a diverse review committee of internal and external experts to independently evaluate and score the KA at the Crossings renewal application. The Review Committee consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Sophie Binenfeld Gilmore	Commission Staff
Erin Conley	External Reviewer
Beth Figueroa	Commission Staff

The Review Committee conducted a review and scoring of the KA at the Crossings renewal application, and a capacity interview. The Review Committee’s consensus rating of the KA at the Crossings application was as follows:

Section	Rating
Academic Success	Partially Meets Standard
Operational Stability	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Financial Health	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Future Plans and Projections	Partially Meet Standard

The Review Committee recommends the denial of the renewal application for Knowledge Academy at the Crossings for a new ten-year charter term. This is based on the determination that while the school has achieved operational and financial stability, it has failed to provide a sufficiently rigorous academic model or a detailed, evidence-based plan for future growth. The school’s current record of inconsistent academic performance and the lack of a formalized strategic roadmap for the next charter term do not provide confidence in the school’s ability to sustain recent progress.

In the area of Academic Success, the school earned a rating of Partially Meets Standard. Although Knowledge Academy at the Crossings has shown commendable growth over the last two school years, earning a TVAAS composite score of Level 4 and a C letter grade in the 2024-25 school year, achievement levels remain consistently below the resident district, Metro Nashville Public Schools. Furthermore, the Review Committee found the academic model to be underdeveloped, making it difficult to assess how recent gains would be sustained. Chronic absenteeism is an ongoing issue at the school, with a current rate of 38.6%, yet the strategies named in the application and capacity interview have not yet proven effective in reducing this rate.

The school's Operational Stability section meets or exceeds standard. The governing

board and leadership team demonstrated the capacity to manage complex organizational shifts, including a management transition to Noble Education Initiative (“NEI”) and a significant consolidation of schools. The school maintains a stable professional culture with a 93% teacher retention rate and structured, data-driven professional development systems. While the committee has concerns regarding high student attrition rate of 35.8% and declining enrollment, Knowledge Academy at the Crossings demonstrated during the capacity interview that it possesses the operational and financial capacity to remain viable even if the student enrollment remains at or near the current enrollment totals.

Regarding Financial Health, the school meets or exceeds standard. Since the transition to NEI, the school has successfully resolved historical fiscal deficits, currently maintaining a healthy fund balance of over \$3.9 million. The school has a record of clean independent audits and a collaborative budgeting process that ensures expenditures are aligned with student needs. The governing board and school leadership provide transparent and rigorous oversight, showing a deep familiarity with long-term financial modeling and contingency plans.

Finally, the Future Plans and Projections section partially meets standard. The school’s future goals were often vague and, in some cases, contradictory. For example, while the written application set an annual chronic absenteeism reduction target of 15%, leadership cited a 3% reduction target during the interview, a goal that lacks the necessary rigor given the school’s high baseline. Additionally, the governing board’s focus has remained primarily on the immediate renewal process, resulting in the absence of a long-term strategic plan should a new charter term be granted. This lack of strategic foresight is compounded by a lack of data-driven evidence to determine which academic interventions are most effective. Absent a formalized plan to prioritize high-impact initiatives or a cohesive strategy to sustain academic progress, the school has failed to demonstrate the foundational structures and systems necessary to warrant a new charter term.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Review Committee found that the sponsor did not meet or exceed the standard for approval based on the state’s scoring rubric.

For additional information regarding the Review Committee’s evaluation of the Knowledge Academy at the Crossings renewal application, please see **Exhibit A** for the complete Review Committee Recommendation Report, which is fully incorporated herein by reference.

Public Hearing

Pursuant to Commission Policy 2.200, a public hearing chaired by the Executive Director was held on January 7, 2026. Representatives from MNPS at the public hearing focused on the district’s role as a quality authorizer and the comprehensive process used to evaluate the renewal application over the school’s ten-year charter term. Representatives from MNPS

indicated that the Knowledge Academy at the Crossings renewal application was denied based on an overall rating of Does Not Meet Standard for Academic Success, as well as Partially Meets Standard ratings in Operational Stability, Financial Health, and Future Plans and Projections. MNPS's presentation highlighted that the decision, which resulted in a 9-0 vote by the local board, was based on a holistic review that prioritized historical academic underperformance, including prior TVAAS Level 1 scores, and a lack of evidence that the school's academic trajectory reached the goals set forth in the original charter agreement. Additionally, the district cited operational concerns, specifically regarding the school's historical governance structure, inconsistencies in administrative oversight during the charter term, and a lack of evidence that the school's operational foundations could sustain the capacity levels outlined in its future projections. MNPS further raised financial concerns regarding the school's significant enrollment gap between current enrollment and the renewal application. The district concluded its presentation by requesting that the Commission uphold the denial, confirming that MNPS has the building capacity to accept students currently attending Knowledge Academy at the Crossings and will work with families to ensure a smooth transition to district schools.

In the operator's opening statement, the representatives for Knowledge Academy at the Crossings argued that the district's decision was contrary to the best interests of the students, the local education agency, and the community. The operator shared that since its reorganization and the transition to a new charter management organization in 2019, the school has undergone a significant instructional turnaround, resulting in an overall success rate that has nearly doubled and an English learner success rate that has tripled between the 2022-23 school year and the 2024-25 school year. The operator presented evidence that the school received a TVAAS Level 4 growth score for 2024-25, which they argued is the most accurate reflection of the school's current leadership and instructional quality. Knowledge Academy at the Crossings shifted its presentation to focus on the impact of closure, noting that students would be rezoned to district schools currently on the state's Priority List, or schools with other federal designations, whereas the operator is not. Lastly, the school challenged the transparency of the MNPS renewal process, citing the State Board of Education's authorizer evaluation which found that MNPS lacked clearly defined renewal criteria, and argued that the district disproportionately weighted historical data from 2017-2019 that had already been addressed in previous appeals.

During questioning by the Commission, MNPS stated that the district does not have a standard renewal criterion for all its charter schools, but that each school's renewal criterion is based on the goals established in the original charter agreement for that school. Then, MNPS addressed how the district reconciled the school's recent growth with its recommendation to deny. The Commission questioned how a TVAAS Level 4 rating, indicating growth exceeding expectations, did not result in a higher academic rating. The district responded that while growth

was noted, it did not overcome the decade-long trend of low absolute achievement. The district was further questioned on whether they had communicated whether the school was on track or off track for renewal. MNPS confirmed that while feedback was provided during annual site visits and through the performance framework, the district does not communicate the on-track or off-track status, as that is the role of the review committee while evaluating the renewal application. Additionally, the district stated that the renewal process is viewed as a cumulative evaluation of the entire ten-year term rather than using a weighted approach that prioritizes performance or notices arising in the later portion of the charter term. Finally, the Commission questioned MNPS on the student attrition data and the calculation of the rate. The district stated that it uses the calculation from the state's model performance framework, and the school's most recent attrition rate was approximately 40%.

The Commission then questioned the operator regarding its proposed enrollment structure, noting that a maximum capacity of over 1,100 students appeared inconsistent with the school's recent trends and current enrollment of approximately 400 students. The operator explained that the enrollment cap reflects the board's long-term strategic vision, which includes exploring expansion into elementary grades and an early learning center to meet community needs. When questioned about data-driven reasoning behind the escalation of enrollment projections and financial viability, the operator attributed previous recruitment difficulties to a strained relationship with the authorizer and noted that the school remains sustainable at its current size of 350 students. In response to concerns regarding a perceived lack of depth in proposed academic strategies, the operator provided specific internal benchmark goals, including an annual goal of 1.5 years of growth, a 3% increase in success rates, and a 4% annual reduction in chronic absenteeism, all supported by teacher coaching and professional learning communities. Regarding chronic absenteeism rates of 38-40%, the operator detailed the implementation of early warning systems and early flags to identify students at risk, alongside weekly attendance incentives. When questioned about the school's student attrition rate, the operator identified the highly mobile local population and the school's strict cultural policies, such as cell-phone-free environments and mandatory clear backpacks, as factors, noting that they have implemented mandatory enrollment meetings and exit interviews to improve retention. Finally, the Commission questioned why the school merits a ten-year renewal given its record on the district framework. The operator acknowledged the challenges but emphasized that the school today is showing proficiency rates at a higher level, with post-pandemic performance trends and TVAAS growth demonstrating a fundamentally different path forward.

The public hearing concluded with closing statements by both parties and the receipt of twelve in-person comments, with four speaking in support of MNPS and eight speaking in support of KA at the Crossings. The Commission also accepted written comments, and the

Commission received seventy-one written comments, with one writing in support of MNPS and seventy writing in support of KA at the Crossings.

Analysis

State law requires the Commission to review the decision of the local board of education and determine if the “decision to deny renewal of a charter agreement is contrary to the best interest of the students, LEA, or community.”² In making my recommendation to the Commission, I have considered the Review Committee’s Recommendation Report, the documentation submitted by both the operator and MNPS, the arguments made by both parties at the public hearing, and the public comments received by Commission staff and conclude as follows:

The Review Committee’s report and recommendations are thorough, citing specific examples in the renewal application and referencing information from the capacity interview to support its findings. While I agree with the Review Committee’s assessment that the renewal application and performance of the school do not merit a renewal for a ten-year charter term, there are places within the record evidence that the school has made academic progress in recent years, and its performance is on par with zoned options in the area. While the school does not meet academic standards on the authorizer’s performance framework, I do acknowledge the improvements that it has demonstrated since the 2022-23 school year. Given the flexibility available to the Commission under the statute for a renewal appeal, I recommend that the Commission consider the approval of the renewal application for a shorter five-year term with a maximum enrollment of 700 students.

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-121, the Commission is to determine if the “local board of education’s decision to deny renewal of a charter agreement is contrary to the best interest of the students, LEA, or community....” Further, as a result of the 2025 legislative session, the Commission is authorized to approve a renewal appeal application for a charter term between five and ten years. This flexibility is not an authority granted to the local board of education. If the Commission’s approval authority were confined to a ten-year renewal, I would share the Review Committee’s recommendation. However, there is sufficient evidence within the record for the Commission to consider a limited renewal term for Knowledge Academy at the Crossings.

Unfortunately, much of the record in this appeal, including submissions and testimony by both parties, attempted to relitigate previous decisions and place blame on others. With this recommendation, my analysis will focus on the renewal process conducted by MNPS and

² T.C.A. § 49-13-121.

whether KA at the Crossings has demonstrated sufficient progress in its current charter term to merit a short-term renewal.

First, I will begin with the MNPS renewal process and renewal criteria. A quality authorizer is responsible for defining conditions for renewal and nonrenewal, and for establishing consequences for meeting or failing to meet standards or conditions.³ During the public hearing, MNPS testified that it does not have a standard renewal criterion for all charter schools and that the district's process does not indicate to schools whether they are on track or off track for renewal. However, the district stated that schools should not be surprised at the charter office's recommendation based on site visits. While I cannot compel greater clarity from MNPS in the renewal process, I believe a more direct indication of a school's progress would improve the renewal process. If a school is aware of whether it is on track or off track for renewal through its annual reports and its cumulative performance report, the school has an opportunity within the renewal application to address any deficiencies and gaps in performance. An on-track or off-track indication does not bind the local board's decision-making authority, but it allows for an open and transparent renewal process. I have found that schools and districts that operate in a direct manner alleviate contention even when adversarial issues arise. It is impossible to know what changes, if any, Knowledge Academy at the Crossings would have instituted in its renewal application had there been more transparency around the gaps identified by its authorizer.

Additionally, MNPS testified that the statute and the state's scoring rubric provide limited flexibility to authorizers regarding which data to consider in renewal and require authorizers to evaluate a charter school's performance in all years of its charter term when determining renewal. On my review of the statute and the state's rubric, I do not come to those same conclusions. In fact, there is no statutory requirement to equate a school's performance in Years 1-3 with that in Years 7-9, for example. Therefore, an authorizer can give more credence to performance in more recent years than performance in Years 1 or 2, for example. Moreover, given the impacts of COVID-19, most in education recognize that there are pre- and post-pandemic educational environments. I believe the Tennessee General Assembly has given authorizers this flexibility in statute, and authorizers should use their best professional judgment using their defined criteria to determine renewal decisions.

I will now turn my analysis to the merits of Knowledge Academy at the Crossings's renewal application and performance record. As noted in the Review Committee's report, I believe the school could have more clearly defined its academic model, including the changes implemented throughout the charter term that led to its recent success, within its application. However, the

³ State Board of Education Policy 6.111, Standard 3, 2(d)

school identified specific, measurable goals during the public hearing that, if attained, would keep the school on the same academic growth trajectory, and both parties acknowledge that the school has demonstrated academic growth over the last two years. Additionally, I acknowledge the school has seen a TVAAS Level 5 in Growth 25, the growth of the lowest performing students, since the 2022-23 school year, and the school achieved a TVAAS Level 4 overall school composite for the 2024-25 school year. Additionally, the school has shown significant growth in math success rate in both middle and high school grade bands, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. KA Proficiency Rates by Grade Band

School or District	SY22-23	SY23-24	SY24-25
KA at the Crossings Grades 6-8	ELA: 13.4% Math: 9.7%	ELA: 11.2% Math: 14.0%	ELA: 11.8% Math: 20.9%
KA at the Crossings Grades 9-12	ELA: 20.2% Math: <5%	ELA: 27.1% Math: 5.1%	ELA: 25.3% Math: 19.2%

The performance of KA at the Crossings compared to its nearest geographic schools, both zoned and charter, consumes a significant part of the record and testimony at the public hearing. The 2024-25 school year math success rates, shown in Table 1, are higher than any zoned middle or high school in the area. In Table 2 below, there are other indicators where KA at the Crossings outperforms area-zoned schools, and others where KA at the Crossings underperforms zoned schools. For example, the school’s TVAAS levels in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years match or exceed that of four of the six zoned schools.

Table 2. Letter Grades and TVAAS Three-Year Trajectories

School	Grades Served ⁴	SY22-23 Letter Grade	SY23-24 Letter Grade	SY24-25 Letter Grade	SY22-23 TVAAS	SY23-24 TVAAS	SY24-25 TVAAS
KA at the Crossings*	5-12	D	D	C	2	3	4
Antioch Middle School	6-8	F	F	F	1	1	1
Apollo Middle School	6-8	F	C	C	1	4	5
John F. Kennedy Middle School	6-8	C	D	C	5	3	5

⁴ Grades served as of the 2024-25 school year

School	Grades Served ⁴	SY22-23 Letter Grade	SY23-24 Letter Grade	SY24-25 Letter Grade	SY22-23 TVAAS	SY23-24 TVAAS	SY24-25 TVAAS
KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle*	5-8	B	A	A	5	5	5
Tennessee Nature Academy*	5-7	n/a	D	D	n/a	1	1
Thurgood Marshall Middle School	6-8	D	C	D	2	3	2
Intrepid College Preparatory*	5-12	C	C	B	3	5	5
Nashville Collegiate Prep*	K-8	D	C	C	2	4	3
Antioch High School	9-12	F	D	C	1	2	3
Cane Ridge High School	9-12	F	F	F	1	1	1
KIPP Antioch Global High School*	9-10	n/a	A	A	n/a	5	5

*Denotes a charter school

While the school did not consistently meet academic standards on MNPS's performance framework, the school's performance in comparison to the zoned options in the area and the school's recent areas of improvement warrant the Commission's consideration of a short-term renewal. The success rate increases in math, and the TVAAS level improvements indicate some positive academic progress in the last three years. Additionally, the low performance of zoned schools, particularly at the high school level, raises significant concerns about options for students if they were not to attend KA at the Crossings. I believe that, with a five-year renewal, the Commission will acknowledge the school's success over the past few years and reward those efforts. But a five-year renewal also stresses the importance of continuing that upward trend. In fact, I hope that, if approved for a shorter term, they are incentivized to achieve their academic goals more quickly. The Commission has adopted renewal criteria that are clearly communicated: to be on track for renewal, a school must meet standard in the Commission's performance framework in the majority of the most recent five years. Therefore, for KA at the Crossings to be renewed by the Commission in five years, it must continue its academic progress to meet the Commission's academic standards; otherwise, the Commission will not renew the school's charter agreement.

I do agree with the Review Committee that the operational stability and financial health of Knowledge Academy at the Crossings meets the standard for renewal. The Knowledge Academy governing board is diverse and driven by student success in its decision-making. Most notably, the governing board's decision to contract with NEI demonstrates a willingness to make difficult yet often necessary decisions in their students' best interests. The school leadership has demonstrated a commitment to the school and to the success of teachers and students. The principal has been employed by the school for several years and articulated a clear vision for teachers and students during the capacity interview.

I also agree with the Review Committee's assessment of the financial health of Knowledge Academy at the Crossings. The financial concerns that existed during the early years of the original charter term were resolved when the governing board contracted with NEI, and the network implemented a strong financial strategy to support the school. I believe the school now benefits from strong financial oversight and stability. These positives are expected to continue should the governing board be granted a new charter term. Finally, the school has a financially sustainable facility with 350 students, meaning it does not need to recruit a large number of new students to remain viable.

My recommendation for a five-year short-term renewal, with a maximum of 700 students, aligns with the student enrollment projections in the renewal application. The school lays out a plan to increase enrollment year over year, aiming to reach 700 students in Year 5 of a new term. While the school's geographic area is a growing part of Nashville, it is also home to several other charter schools. The school's enrollment plan appears to rest largely on the fact that it is in a growing area of Nashville. However, this has been true for many years, and the school's enrollment has declined. Based on current trends, the school has an uphill battle to reach the enrollment targets outlined in its renewal application, given its enrollment trends. If renewed for five years, it is only reasonable that the maximum enrollment under a charter agreement be set based on the years for the charter term. If the school meets renewal criteria in five years and demonstrates the ability to recruit and retain 700 students, the Commission can consider increasing the maximum enrollment at that time.

If renewed, beyond sustaining recent academic progress, the school must reduce its student attrition rate of approximately 36%, which is significantly higher than that of surrounding charter schools. When pressed on this issue, the school could not identify why its attrition rates outpaced those of nearby charter schools. These reasons must be identified and addressed for the school to demonstrate academic results. The school must decrease its chronic absenteeism rates, which were also higher than those of all area charter and zoned schools, except for the two large comprehensive high schools. While I appreciate the strategies discussed during the capacity interview to address chronic absenteeism, they have not resulted in a

decrease in chronic absenteeism. The school has to implement strategies that move the needle on chronic absenteeism.

Finally, if granted a short-term renewal by the Commission, the school will be held to the Commission's clear performance standards, to which all Commission-authorized charter schools are held accountable. In accordance with Commission Policy 3.400, the Commission will intervene prior to the end of the five years if these are not met. These include:

- Achieving the enrollment plan for grades 5-12 outlined in the renewal application, up to a maximum of 700 students; and
- Meeting academic, organizational, and financial standards according to the Commission's School Performance Framework for the majority of the five years to be renewed, as required under Commission Policy 3.600.

The Review Committee Report states that the school needs to develop clear goals under a new charter term that support continued academic improvements and enrollment growth. This need was also acknowledged by the school in the capacity interview. I fully agree with this recommendation, and the goals must be focused on the school achieving the metrics defined by the Commission. If approved for renewal, it is paramount that these plans be implemented immediately to ensure the school can continue to operate in the future.

I want to acknowledge the complexity of this appeal decision. The original charter term of Knowledge Academy at the Crossings has been unconventional and not without significant challenges and changes. The State Board of Education and the Commission have heard multiple appeals related to this school over the years, but those decisions are in the past. For Knowledge Academy at the Crossings to be successful in the future, the governing board and the school leadership must be focused on academic success, as demonstrated by the Commission's performance framework. I am encouraged by the Knowledge Academy at the Crossings governing board's dedication to the school's success, the impact on the community, and ultimately the achievements of its students. While I cannot recommend a renewal term of ten years based on the record, the Commission is authorized to grant a short-term renewal of five years to give Knowledge Academy at the Crossings the opportunity to continue serving the Davidson County community and building on the progress of the last three years. A five-year charter term will quickly show whether the upward trajectory is unique or the established record of success for the school.

In totality, I believe that the decision to deny a ten-year renewal for the KA at the Crossings renewal application was in the best interest of the students, LEA, or community. However, given the flexibility the Commission has to grant a charter renewal term upon appeal of between five and ten years, I believe a five-year renewal is in the best interests of the



students, the LEA, or the community. Therefore, I recommend that the Commission approve a five-year renewal term for KA at the Crossings up to a maximum of 700 students.

CONCLUSION

I recommend that the Commission approve a five-year renewal term for KA at the Crossings, with a maximum enrollment of 700 students.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tess Stovall". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Tess Stovall, Executive Director
Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

January 23, 2026

Date



EXHIBIT A:

Charter Renewal Appeal Review Committee Recommendation Report

January 23, 2026

School Name: Knowledge Academy at the Crossings

Charter Management Organization: Noble Education Initiative

Operator: Knowledge Academies, Inc.

Location of School: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Evaluation Team:

- Erin Conley
- Beth Figueroa
- Sophie Binenfeld Gilmore



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



© 2014 National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)

This document carries a Creative Commons license, which permits noncommercial re-use of content when proper attribution is provided. This means you are free to copy, display and distribute this work, or include content from the application in derivative works, under the following conditions:

Attribution You must clearly attribute the work to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, and provide a link back to the publication at <http://www.qualitycharters.org/>.

Noncommercial You may not use this work for commercial purposes, including but not limited to any type of work for hire, without explicit prior permission from NACSA.

Share Alike If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a license identical to this one.

For the full legal code of this Creative Commons license, please visit www.creativecommons.org. If you have any questions about citing or reusing NACSA content, please contact us.

Introduction

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (“T.C.A.”) § 49-13-121(f), the governing board of a public charter school may appeal a decision by the local board of education to deny a renewal application to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”). In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-121, the Commission shall conduct a review of the local board of education’s renewal decision, and the Commission has adopted national and state quality authorizing standards to guide its work. As laid out in Commission Policy 3.000 – Core Authorizing Principles,¹ the Commission is committed to implementing these authorizing standards that are aligned with the core principles of charter school authorizing, including setting high standards for the approval of charter schools in its portfolio.

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-121, the Commission adopted Commission Policy 2.200 – Charter School Renewal Appeals. The Commission has outlined the charter school appeal process to ensure the well-being and interests of students are the fundamental value informing all Commission actions and decisions. The Commission publishes clear timelines and expectations for applicants, engages highly competent teams of internal and external evaluators to review all applications, and maintains rigorous criteria for renewal of a charter school. In addition, the Commission evaluates its work annually to ensure its alignment to national and state standards for quality authorizing and implements improvement when necessary.

The Commission’s charter school renewal appeal process is outlined in Commission Policy 2.200 – Charter School Renewal Appeals and aligned to the criteria set forth in T.C.A. § 49-13-121. The Commission assembled a charter application review committee comprised of highly qualified internal and external evaluators with relevant and diverse expertise to evaluate each application. The Commission provided training to all committee members to ensure consistent standards and fair treatment of all applications.

Overview of the Evaluation Process

The Commission’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 charter school’s renewal application, the charter school’s annual reports, the local board of education’s performance reports for the charter school, the local board of education’s annual reports, and any grievances submitted by the charter school regarding the site visit

¹ All [Commission rules and policies](#) may be found on the [Commission's website](#).

report's findings, and correspondence from the local school board to the governing body regarding the status of the school during the term of the charter. After an independent review, the Review Committee collectively identified the main strengths, concerns, and weaknesses as well as developed specific questions for the applicant in the four sections of the application: Academic Success, Operational Stability, Financial Health, and Future Plans and Projections.

2. **Capacity Interview:** Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the Review Committee conducted a ninety-minute interview with the operator, members of the governing board, and the school leaders to address the weaknesses and questions identified in the record, and to assess if the school's academic outcomes, operational condition, financial condition, and goals for the next charter term merit renewal.
3. **Consensus Judgment:** At the conclusion of the record review and the capacity interview, the Review 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 charter school including its plans for future goals and achievement in a new charter term.
2. **Summary of the Recommendation:** A brief summary of the overall recommendation for the renewal record.
3. **Analysis of each section of the application:** An analysis of the four sections of the renewal application.
 - a. **Academic Success:** school mission and academic program design; progress toward academic goals; academic achievement and growth results; performance on the local board's annual performance evaluation; use of data to inform academic practice; progress toward closing achievement gaps for all students; demonstrating successful outcomes for diverse learners; and any notices of concern or other interventions from the local board of education.
 - b. **Operational Stability:** progress toward operational goals; performance on the local board's annual performance evaluation; capacity and student attrition; parent and student satisfaction and community support; capacity of governing board and school leadership; facility; addressing social, emotional and health needs of students; teacher retention, professional development and personnel stability; and any notices of concern or other interventions from the local board of education.

- c. **Financial Health:** school fiscal health; financial audits; performance on the local board’s annual performance evaluation; alignment between expenditures and mission; fiscal challenges; and any notices of concern or other interventions from the local board of education.
- d. **Future Plans and Projections:** future goals and plans for achievement; growth plans; alignment to current standings; and any address of deficits.

The Commission’s charter renewal application Review Committee utilized the State’s Charter Renewal Application Rubric (“rubric”), which is used by the Charter Commission when evaluating an application for renewal. The rubric states that authorizers should adopt the State Board of Education’s (“SBE”) Quality Authorizing Standards, which establishes rigorous decision-making criteria. Specifically, SBE Policy 6.111 states the authorizer “[b]ases the renewal process and renewal decisions on thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of objective evidence defined by the performance framework in the charter agreement” and “[g]rants renewal only to schools that have achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter agreement, are organizationally and fiscally viable, and have been faithful to the terms of the contract and applicable law.”²

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

Rating	Characteristics
Meets or Exceeds Standard	The record includes specific and accurate evidence that the school generally demonstrated success in meeting and upholding the terms of the charter agreement.
Partially Meets Standard	The record meets the criteria in some aspects but lacks sufficient evidence that the charter school is meeting the terms of the charter agreement in one or more areas.
Does Not Meet Standard	The record provides evidence that the charter school committed a violation of its charter agreement, failed to meet or make sufficient academic progress, and/or failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.

² Tennessee State Board of Education Policy 6.111

Summary of the Application

School Name: Knowledge Academy at the Crossings

Charter Management Organization: Noble Education Initiative

Operator: Knowledge Academies, Inc.

Charter Authorizer: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Year Charter Awarded: 2016

Year Charter Expires: 2026

Mission: To prepare students to make the best academic and social choices, leading to a successful life that is connected to college, community, creativity, and culture.³

Number of Schools Currently in Operation: The operator has one charter school authorized by Metro Nashville Public Schools.

Enrollment Summary⁴:

Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
Year 10 (SY25-26)	5-12	339
Year 9 (SY24-25)	5-12	402
Year 8 (SY23-24)	5-12	545
Year 7 (SY22-23)	5-12	537
Year 6 (SY21-22)	5-12	420
Year 5 (SY20-21)	5-12	383

Proposed Enrollment:

Year Following Renewal	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
Year 1 (SY26-27)	5-12	500
Year 2 (SY27-28)	5-12	550
Year 3 (SY28-29)	5-12	600

³ Knowledge Academy at the Crossings Renewal Application, pg. 7

⁴ Years 5 and 6 reflect total enrollment of Knowledge Academy Middle School, Knowledge Academy High School, and Knowledge Academy at the Crossings. Schools consolidated beginning in Year 7.

Year Following Renewal	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
Year 4 (SY29-30)	5-12	650
Year 5 (SY30-31)	5-12	700
Year 6 (SY31-32)	5-12	750
Year 7 (SY32-33)	5-12	800
Year 8 (SY33-34)	5-12	900
Year 9 (SY34-35)	5-12	1,112
Year 10 (SY35-36)	5-12	1,112

Brief Description of the Application

Knowledge Academy at the Crossings (“KA at the Crossings”) is a charter school in Nashville, Tennessee and serves students in the Antioch region of Nashville. KA at the Crossings is a college preparatory school serving grades 5-12. The school intends to continue operating in this neighborhood. The school’s educational model focuses on academic achievement, whole-student development, and college and career readiness.

Knowledge Academy at the Crossings is governed by Knowledge Academies, Inc., and the governing board contracts with Noble Education Initiative to serve as the Charter Management Organization (“CMO”). KA at the Crossings intends to remain in its current facility for its next charter term. KA at the Crossings is operating in a strong financial position with a net position of \$8.8 million as of the June 2024 audit.

Summary of the Evaluation

The Review Committee recommends the denial of the renewal application for Knowledge Academy at the Crossings. While the applicant met or exceeded standards in the areas of Operational Stability and Financial Health, it failed to provide sufficient evidence in the Academic Success and Future Plans and Projections sections to demonstrate that the school's performance and vision merit a new charter term.

The Academic Success section partially meets standard because although the school has shown growth over the last two school years, the school has shown inconsistent achievement throughout the entirety of its charter term. The Review Committee found there was a lack of clear evidence that the school would therefore be able to maintain recent academic growth. While KA at the Crossings has demonstrated growth and achievement gains in the last few years, it has still maintained a performance level below that of the resident district, Metro Nashville Public Schools ("MNPS"). Additionally, KA at the Crossings has maintained a high rate of chronic absenteeism, and strategies named in the application have not yet proven effective.

The Operational Stability section meets or exceeds standard due to Knowledge Academy at the Crossings's stable governance structure and demonstrated ability to manage operational systems at the school and network level. The governing board was able to effectively govern the school as it went through several organizational shifts, such as a transition to a new CMO and a consolidation of three school programs into one school. Systems at the school and network level include structured, consistent, and data-driven professional development and a strong rate of teacher retention. While there are remaining concerns regarding attrition and enrollment projections, the school demonstrated it has the capacity to remain operationally viable even at lower enrollment numbers.

The Financial Health section meets or exceeds standard. Since transitioning to Noble Education Initiative ("NEI"), the school has resolved significant historical fiscal challenges, moving from a substantial deficit position in 2019 to a positive net position with a current fund balance exceeding \$3.9 million. The school has consistently received clean independent audits and maintains a collaborative budgeting process that aligns expenditures with academic priorities like Summer Boost and ACT Blitz. The governing board provides transparent and rigorous financial oversight, demonstrating a deep familiarity with long-term projections and contingency planning.

Lastly, the Future Plans and Projections section partially meets standard because the proposed goals were vague, lacked detail, and were inconsistent in critical areas. Specifically, goals referenced within the application contradicted information shared in the capacity interview, and goals for critical areas such as chronic absenteeism lacked rigor. The Review

Committee found that the school lacks a systematic, data-driven approach for determining the effectiveness of its various interventions. Furthermore, the governing board’s primary focus has been on immediate renewal rather than long-term planning, stating that a strategic plan would not be put to paper until after renewal is granted. This indicates that the necessary organizational structures to sustain and accelerate recent academic gains have not yet been established.

Summary of Section Ratings

The scoring rubric set forth specific criteria that defines the expectations for the Meets or Exceeds Standard rating regarding the school’s academic success, operational stability, financial health, and future plans and projections. The Review Committee’s consensus ratings for each section of the application are as follows:

Sections	Ratings
Academic Success	Partially Meets Standard
Operational Stability	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Financial Health	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Future Plans and Projections	Partially Meets Standard

Analysis of Academic Success

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Academic Success partially meets standard because the school's academic outcomes do not merit renewal of the charter for a ten-year term, given the school's inconsistent growth and achievement over the last ten years.

While the application and capacity interview described elements of the school's academic program, the school's academic model remained unclear, the changes that led to recent academic improvements lacked specificity, and an explanation of how the school operationalizes its mission was underdeveloped. This lack of clarity limited the committee's ability to assess the school's fidelity to its model and whether that model is likely to sustain or accelerate recent academic gains over a new charter term. Although in the capacity interview, the school leader described the school's commitment to using data to group students and monitor progress throughout the year, these descriptions did not sufficiently define the specific instructional framework or approach guiding the school's academic program. As a result, there was insufficient evidence that the academic model is coherent, research-aligned, or designed to effectively meet the needs of the student population it serves. Additionally, the application notes that 96% of incoming fifth-grade students enter at least one grade level behind on benchmark assessments; however, the applicant did not present a clear strategy for tailoring its academic model to address the significant foundational gaps of its incoming students. Without a clearly articulated academic model and evidence that the model's components directly address the school's unique student needs, the Review Committee could not determine that the academic program is sufficiently robust or aligned to achieve the level of proficiency gains required for renewal.

The applicant also showed a lack of success in meeting the academic goals established at the beginning of the current charter term. KA at the Crossings has not met standard in its current authorizer's Academic Performance Framework since 2018, due to a lack of academic growth and achievement during these years. While the school has made some gains in academic performance in the last two school years, earning an overall TVAAS composite Level 4 and a C letter grade in the 2024-25 school year, the lack of details within the academic model provides little confidence in the ability to sustain the progress. As noted in the tables below, KA at the Crossings's proficiency rates in both English language arts ("ELA") and math, at both the middle and high school level, remain below those of the resident district, Metro Nashville Public Schools.

School or District	SY22-23	SY23-24	SY24-25
KA at the Crossings Grades 6–8	ELA: 13.4% Math: 9.7%	ELA: 11.2% Math: 14.0%	ELA: 11.8% Math: 20.9%
MNPS Grades 6–8	ELA: 24.5% Math: 24.7%	ELA: 26.1% Math: 26.9%	ELA: 27.2% Math: 29.1%
KA at the Crossings Grades 9–12	ELA: 20.2% Math: <5%	ELA: 27.1% Math: 5.1%	ELA: 25.3% Math: 19.2%
MNPS Grades 9–12	ELA: 31.9% Math: 12.9%	ELA: 33.2% Math: 17.8%	ELA: 33.8% Math: 22.2%

KA at the Crossings has made gains in both letter grade and TVAAS composite scores in recent years. While TVAAS scores and letter grades have surpassed some zoned schools in the cluster, such as Antioch Middle School or Cane Ridge High School, KA at the Crossings has the same letter grades and TVAAS as two other zoned middle schools, John F. Kennedy Middle and Apollo Middle. Additionally, other charter school options in the area, such as Intrepid College Preparatory and KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle, have consistently shown stronger performance as indicated by both letter grade and TVAAS scores.

School	Grades Served ⁵	SY22-23 Letter Grade	SY23-24 Letter Grade	SY24-25 Letter Grade	SY22-23 TVAAS	SY23-24 TVAAS	SY24-25 TVAAS
KA at the Crossings*	5–12	D	D	C	2	3	4
Antioch Middle School	6–8	F	F	F	1	1	1
Apollo Middle School	6–8	F	C	C	1	4	5
John F. Kennedy Middle School	6–8	C	D	C	5	3	5
KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle*	5–8	B	A	A	5	5	5
Tennessee Nature Academy*	5–7	n/a	D	D	n/a	1	1

⁵ Grades served as of the 2024-25 school year

School	Grades Served ⁵	SY22-23 Letter Grade	SY23-24 Letter Grade	SY24-25 Letter Grade	SY22-23 TVAAS	SY23-24 TVAAS	SY24-25 TVAAS
Thurgood Marshall Middle School	6-8	D	C	D	2	3	2
Intrepid College Preparatory*	5-12	C	C	B	3	5	5
Nashville Collegiate Prep*	K-8	D	C	C	2	4	3
Antioch High School	9-12	F	D	C	1	2	3
Cane Ridge High School	9-12	F	F	F	1	1	1
KIPP Antioch Global High School*	9-10	n/a	A	A	n/a	5	5

*Denotes a charter school

Additionally, KA at the Crossings has maintained a chronic absenteeism rate of around 40% in the last three school years, with the rate for the 2024-25 school year at 38.6%. This is well above the chronic absenteeism rate of almost every other school in the cluster, except for Antioch High School and Cane Ridge High School, both with rates just above 40%, as referenced in the table below. The rates have not declined despite the school's stated efforts, as noted in the capacity interview, such as parental outreach and the addition of bus routes.

School	Grades Served ⁶	SY22-23 CA Rate	SY23-24 CA Rate	SY24-25 CA Rate
KA at the Crossings*	5-12	40.1%	37.9%	38.6%
Antioch Middle School	6-8	23.5%	24.9%	26.7%
Apollo Middle School	6-8	24.0%	22.4%	19.6%
John F. Kennedy Middle School	6-8	22.6%	22.9%	23.3%
KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle*	6-8	10.3%	8.7%	<5%
Tennessee Nature Academy*	5-7	n/a	18.6%	15.5%
Thurgood Marshall Middle School	6-8	17.5%	16.3%	13.1%
Intrepid College Preparatory*	5-12	16.6%	15.8%	25.5%

⁶ Grades served as of the 2024-25 school year

School	Grades Served ⁶	SY22-23 CA Rate	SY23-24 CA Rate	SY24-25 CA Rate
Nashville Collegiate Prep*	K – 8	22.3%	20.3%	27.2%
Antioch High School	9 – 12	44.4%	37.7%	45.5%
Cane Ridge High School	9 – 12	42.6%	39.6%	41.1%
KIPP Antioch Global High School*	9 – 10	n/a	7.8%	<5%

*Denotes a charter school

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The school described using data to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic program, inform instructional practice, evaluate teacher effectiveness, and implement professional development. Strategies named within the capacity interview included constant data monitoring including walkthroughs and observations conducted by the instructional leader and coaches, professional development and teacher professional learning communities led weekly, as well as a two-week intensive professional development over the summer before the beginning of each school year.

The school has demonstrated academic growth in the last two school years. TVAAS composite scores, as referenced in the chart above, have increased from a Level 2, below expected growth, in the 2022-23 school year to a Level 4, above expected growth, in the 2024-2025 school year. The internal data within the application also shows consistent growth on benchmark assessments from i-Ready in the middle grades and from Northwest Evaluation Association in the high school grades. Further, the school has maintained a TVAAS Level 5 for growth in the bottom 25% of learners in the last three school years, indicating high levels of growth for students who are most in need of improvement.

Analysis of Operational Stability

Rating: Meets or Exceeds Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Operational Stability section meets or exceeds standard because it has established a stable governance structure and leadership team that remains faithful to the school's mission and vision while ensuring strict compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Additionally, the school's operational systems, including governance, leadership, staffing stability, safety protocols, and organizational processes, demonstrate the capacity to effectively govern the school and maintain compliance with the charter agreement.

A core component of operational stability is the effectiveness and capacity of a school's governing board and leadership team. Over the current charter term, the school has successfully navigated several significant organizational shifts, including a transition to a new CMO, NEI, and the consolidation of three separate school programs into a single campus serving fifth through twelfth grade. Both the renewal application and the capacity interview demonstrated that these changes were implemented with a sustained focus on improving instructional quality, strengthening operational systems, and stabilizing the school's long-term organizational health.

The governing board is composed of individuals with diverse professional backgrounds, including education, finance, law, and community leadership. As evidenced during the capacity interview, board members are actively engaged in monitoring the school's goals, reviewing student outcomes, and maintaining transparent, productive relationships with the CMO. Board members regularly evaluate the CMO's performance and monitor adherence to the management contract. While there is a need for clearer long-term organizational goals and a more fully articulated strategic plan should the school receive a new charter term, the governing board has nonetheless demonstrated commitment and progress in building the operational stability required under the charter agreement.

The Review Committee also considered other critical operational functions, including facilities, safety, professional development, teacher retention, and the school's systems to support the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of students. The school has a stable leadership team and has implemented a comprehensive teacher evaluation and professional development system aligned with state requirements. As described in both the application and the capacity interview, professional development at Knowledge Academy at the Crossings is structured, consistent, and data driven. Teachers participate in regular professional learning

communities focused on instructional planning and data analysis, receive frequent walkthroughs and receive actionable feedback from school and network level coaches. These systems are complemented by regular coaching cycles, differentiated professional development based on walkthrough and assessment data, and support provided by NEI's academic team. The application also reflects a 93% teacher retention rate, and the capacity interview confirmed the strong commitment of the principal and instructional staff to continue serving at KA at the Crossings, contributing to both academic consistency and operational stability. The school maintains a safe and secure facility, with all required inspections and funds full-time staff that are dedicated to monitoring the campus so that students and staff feel safe at school. Collectively, these systems demonstrate that Knowledge Academy at the Crossings possesses the organizational capacity to continue meeting the high expectations of its charter agreement.

While KA at the Crossings meets the overall operational standard, there are ongoing concerns related to the school's enrollment strategy and rate of student attrition. The application stated a current rate of attrition of around 15%, however, from publicly available data from the authorizer, the attrition rate from the 2024-25 school year was 35.8% which was higher than most other charter schools within the resident district. Strategies cited in the application to reduce attrition included meeting with new families to ensure alignment on school-specific cultural expectations that may differ from other schools; however, these strategies have not proven to significantly decrease student attrition. Additionally, leadership from KA at the Crossings attributed a large dip in enrollment in the 2024-25 school year due to MNPS restructuring elementary schools to include fifth grade. However, the number of students who left the school in that school year exceeded the number of fifth-grade seats available.

KA at the Crossings's stated plan to retain its current students and enroll an additional 50-100 students per year, eventually reaching 1,112 students, is ambitious, and the school has not demonstrated a track record supporting its ability to meet this projected growth. Additionally, the long-term enrollment goals articulated in the renewal application were not fully aligned with the information provided during the capacity interview, creating uncertainty regarding the feasibility and coherence of the school's enrollment plan. Despite these concerns, the school was able to articulate in the capacity interview operational and financial stability with an enrollment of approximately 350 students.

Analysis of Financial Health

Rating: Meets or Exceeds Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Financial Health meets or exceeds standard because it has demonstrated that the school meets the terms of the charter agreement related to financial management and fiscal health. As described in both the renewal application and the capacity interview, the transition to the school's current CMO, NEI, was a significant factor in resolving historical fiscal challenges and establishing a strong culture of financial oversight, transparency, and long-term stability.

According to the renewal application and based on recent audits, the school now meets or exceeds key indicators of liquidity and long-term sustainability, maintaining a healthy fund balance and a current ratio above the authorizer's minimum requirements. These indicators demonstrate that KA at the Crossings possesses sufficient resources to weather unexpected operational expenses or moderate enrollment fluctuations. During the capacity interview, school leadership reinforced this point, explaining that NEI's financial management practices have enabled more sophisticated, long-term financial modeling, supporting decision-making that prevents recurrence of past financial instability.

The school has also met generally accepted standards of fiscal management, as evidenced by consecutive years of clean annual audits with no significant findings, material weaknesses, or questioned costs. The application describes a collaborative budgeting process involving the CMO, school leadership, and the governing board. This structured process ensures that expenditures are aligned with the mission, academic priorities, and student needs. In the capacity interview, the Review Committee heard several examples of this alignment, including targeted investments in academic intervention programs such as Summer Boost, ACT Blitz tutoring, and after-school academic supports. Within these conversations, leadership demonstrated thoughtful financial planning, referencing both recurring state funds and long-term grants, ensuring these high-impact programs are adequately funded. Further, the governing board exercises strong, transparent financial oversight. The board quarterly reviews financial statements, including forecasts, balance sheets and budget-to-actual reports, and holds the CMO accountable through clear performance standards. This practice was validated during the capacity interview, in which the board and the individuals directly responsible for the financial performance of the school demonstrated deep familiarity with its financial



performance, long-term projections, and contingency plans based on different enrollment scenarios. The renewal application also shows strong improvement in fiscal stability over time, with the school moving from a significant deficit position in 2019 to a positive net position and currently maintaining a fund balance exceeding \$3.9 million.

The school's recent history of clean audits, a strong fund balance, rigorous budgeting practices, transparent oversight, and alignment of expenditures with mission and academic priorities confirm that Knowledge Academy at the Crossings is fiscally viable, responsibly stewarding public funds, and well-positioned for continued financial health if renewed for another charter term.

Analysis of Future Plans and Projections

Rating: Partially Meets Standard

Weaknesses Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Future Plans and Projections partially meets standard because goals and plans for continuously improving and increasing academic achievement were vague and lack detail. While the application contained references to various goals, there were limited details as to how the school would meet them. In totality, the applicant did not demonstrate the ability to meet these goals due to a lack of named systems and structures, if renewed for another term.

Throughout the renewal application and the capacity interview, there were inconsistencies in the school's future targets. For example, the application states a cultural goal of a 15% reduction of chronically absent students each year; however, the school leadership cited a 3% reduction goal during the capacity interview. Given the school's current chronic absenteeism rate of 38.4%, which is significantly higher than that of neighboring schools in the cluster, the 3% annual reduction lacks the necessary rigor to address this urgent need. Furthermore, the school's existing efforts, such as waiting until a student has been absent for five days before family engagement occurs, have not proven effective. The current attendance incentive system is heavily dependent on the efforts of a single leader, raising concerns about the lack of codified systems and institutional sustainability of these strategies if leadership changes in the next term.

Additionally, there was a lack of clarity regarding the school's strategic vision and future enrollment projections. During the capacity interview, the governing board's focus primarily centered on the immediate renewal process rather than long-term strategic planning. While the CMO indicated plans to develop a new five-year strategic plan, this work is contingent upon renewal, leaving the committee without a clear understanding of the school's main goals for an upcoming term, a stated requirement within the rubric. This vagueness extended to enrollment targets, where conflicting information was offered regarding the school's desired size and grade configuration. For example, while the renewal application reflects an enrollment target of 1,112 students with the school scaling by 50-100 students annually, school leadership spoke frequently during the capacity interview about the benefits of remaining a small school and was unable to articulate a clear or detailed plan to recruit the additional students needed to reach these projected growth targets. This lack of established strategic goals makes it challenging to evaluate whether the proposed academic and organizational changes are reasonable given the school's current standing.

While the applicant is currently implementing a broad range of supplemental programming, including Summer Boost camp, after-school tutoring, and the ACT Blitz, the school lacks a systematic approach to evaluating the effectiveness of these interventions. During the capacity interview, leadership was unable to articulate a data-driven method for identifying which specific strategies lead to improved outcomes, making it unclear how the school will measure and adjust these efforts to meet future academic benchmarks. This absence of a robust, detailed, and strategic plan does not align with the characteristics of a strong response as required by the rubric. Furthermore, the historical record indicates that these programs have not been consistently prioritized, as evidenced by the drop in ACT proficiency during years when the ACT Blitz was omitted due to staffing and operational shifts.

Overall, while the CMO shared various academic goals moving into a new charter term, these goals appeared to be named solely by the CMO and are not yet actionable at the school level. The governing board stated during the interview that they had not yet established clear, actionable goals of their own, raising concerns about the school's long-term capacity to execute a comprehensive and realistic plan for continuous improvement, indicating that the necessary organizational structures to reach these goals have not yet been established.

Strengths Identified by the Committee

Despite these weaknesses, the Review Committee identified significant strengths in the school's current leadership and foundation for growth. The school leader maintains a consistent commitment to utilizing student data to inform instruction and has successfully fostered a professional culture of data analysis among staff, a practice supported by the Noble Education Initiative's robust data infrastructure. This partnership with the CMO provides the school with an added layer of academic and operational support that has demonstrably stabilized the school's environment following a period of merger and transition.

The Review Committee also found the governing board's stable dedication to the school's turnaround during tumultuous periods is a notable asset. Longstanding board members remain consistently engaged in school performance and have demonstrated a clear commitment to the school's continuation.



Evaluation Team

Erin Conley serves as an expert reviewer for a number of charter school authorizers across the country. Over the last fourteen years in the field of education, she has served in roles focused on survey development, data analytics and visualization, research, board development, compliance, school operations, and policy analysis. Erin has expertise in charter authorization and laws that impact charters and networks. Erin began her career teaching in the Chicago Public School district. She has a Bachelor of Arts in English and Secondary Education from Michigan State University and a master's in public policy from Vanderbilt University with a focus on K-12 education policy.

Beth Figueroa is the Director of Authorizing for the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. She is a Certified Public Accountant and has spent the last 15 years specializing in school finance and charter school oversight. Before working at the Commission, Beth worked as an administrator and charter school authorizer in California. She has also had the opportunity to serve as the Chief Business Officer of a charter school, an Executive Director of Fiscal Services for a school district with an annual budget of over \$500 Million, and an auditor of charter schools and non-profit organizations. She earned her Master of Business Administration degree from California Baptist University, where she also received her B.S. in Business Administration.

Sophie Binenfeld Gilmore is the Authorizing Coordinator for the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. She previously worked as the Student Data Analyst for the Commission. Prior to working at the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, Sophie taught elementary school at a high performing charter school in the South Bronx. More recently, Sophie completed her Master of Public Policy from Vanderbilt University where she worked as a research assistant for the Fuchs Group. Sophie also holds a Bachelor of the Arts degree from Bowdoin College and a Master of Teaching from Relay Graduate School of Education.