



## Commission Visioning Process

July 2024 Vision Statement Draft

*"We improve the quality of Tennessee education through authorizing and supporting excellent public schools which provide educational options and prepare students for a thriving life."*

After the July 2024 meeting, Commission staff collected feedback on the draft vision statement from stakeholders. The following document reflects themes and feedback from Commission staff, school operators, external stakeholders, legislators, and other Tennessee state agencies regarding the current drafted vision statement. This feedback was used to create the updated drafts below:

Updated Vision Statement Options for Consideration:

1. **"By authorizing and supporting excellent public school choices, we positively impact the quality of a Tennessee education, enabling every student to achieve their full potential and to prepare for a successful life experience."**
2. **"By authorizing and supporting excellent public charter schools, we positively impact the quality of a Tennessee education, enabling every student to achieve their full potential and to prepare for a successful life experience."**

### Summary of Feedback of July 2024 Draft Vision

#### Perspective and Purpose

- The Commission's perspective as an authorizer is crucial in shaping the vision statement and should remain a central focus.
- The vision statement is factual, but the wording should be stronger because the Commission is critical for continued educational opportunities in our state.

#### Defining Excellence

- The Commission should consider how it will define and measure excellence in schools and consider its inclusion in the vision statement.
- Excellence varies for different stakeholders and manifests uniquely in each school, as reflected in the SPF and the mission-specific goal. This should be reflected.
- Does the Commission have systems in place to measure excellence?
- Charter schools face criticism for allegedly serving only specific demographics, often due to their better performance on state tests compared to district schools. This perception can stem from the belief that charter schools must achieve higher test scores to remain open, leading to a bias toward enrolling students who can produce those scores. Therefore, caution is advised when using the term "excellent" to describe schools. Using a term like "effective" could provide more context, allowing schools to demonstrate their ability to meet students' needs without the pressure of achieving "excellent" scores. This approach encourages operators to work in underserved areas without fear of negative perceptions regarding their results.

- Use "exemplary" instead of "excellent" to avoid implying perfection.

#### Concept of "Thriving"

- Keeping the term
  - The term "thrive" is important as it captures diverse definitions of success for children and families across various educational models, especially considering the Commission's portfolio.
  - Success may shift and evolve within our portfolio, and "thrive" gives the Commission flexibility.
- Changing the term
  - Consider revising the mission statement to emphasize that the goal is to help students reach their potential.
  - Consider changing "thriving" to "successful" instead.
  - What does "thrive" encompass? Consider thinking about how this will be measured in the strategic plan.
  - "Thriving" is a subjective term and is different for every student. However, assuming the intent is that schools are equipping students to be well-rounded or have character or have skills needed to thrive in the student's specific context or to have an improved life trajectory, I like the idea that the commission cares about the quality of life a student may enjoy having attended a specific school and not just "test scores" that are defined as "excellent."

#### Clarifying Roles

- Distinction between authorizing and supporting, particularly in the LEA context, needs clarity.
- The term "support" is appreciated as it conveys a desire for schools to succeed. However, it's important to clarify what "support" means. In the author's experience with other authorizers, support could lead into the form of a large, bureaucratic organization that may not meet schools' specific needs. If support leads to increased bureaucracy, unnecessary professional development, and financial burdens on schools, it might be better to focus solely on authorizing schools without the added complexity of "support."
- Understanding what "excellence" means in terms of rigorous authorization is essential.

#### Language and Clarity

- Overuse of "and" instead of "to" should be addressed.
- The distinction between "high-quality" and "excellence" should be consistently reflected. The Commission frequently uses "high-quality" and it is not reflected in the vision statement.
- The combined "and" statement should be rewritten or rearranged to ensure the primary focus of the statement is student success.

#### Consistent Terminology

- Ensure consistent terminology: "charter schools" versus "public charter schools" to accurately represent our charge from the legislature and our name as an agency.

#### Suggested Vision Statements

- "We enhance the quality of Tennessee education by authorizing and supporting excellent public schools. These schools provide an educational option while preparing students for a successful life. "