



Executive Director’s Findings and Recommendation
Charter School Application for Libertas School of Memphis

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-1-614, if, at any time, an Achievement School District (ASD)-authorized charter school meets the priority exit criteria set forth in the state’s accountability model, then the school may apply to the LEA or the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) for a new charter agreement with a term not to exceed the term of the initial ASD charter agreement. On November 15, 2021, having earned priority exit status on the state’s accountability system, the Governing Board of Libertas School of Memphis (“Libertas”) applied to the Commission for continued authorization under the Commission.

Based on the procedural history, findings of fact, analysis, and Review Committee Report, attached hereto, I believe that approval of the Libertas application is in the best interests of the students, local education agency (LEA), or community. Therefore, I recommend that the Commission approve the application for Libertas.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-614(k)(4) and Commission Rule 1185-01-03, Commission staff and an independent charter application committee conducted a review of Libertas’s application. The Commission’s charter application scoring rubric “[r]equires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a demonstration of community support, a solvent and sustainable budget and contingency financial plans, a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of the model for the target student population, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities in all phases of the school’s development, and clear evidence of the applicant’s capacity to execute its plan successfully.”¹ In addition, the Commission is required to hold a public hearing in the district where the proposed charter school seeks to locate.²

The Commission has the ability to approve the application, with authorization to continue under the Commission, or deny the application.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. On October 15, 2021, the Governing Board of Libertas submitted a letter of intent to the Commission expressing its intention to file a charter school application.
2. The Governing Board submitted a charter application in writing to the Commission on November 15, 2021, including submission of all required documents per Commission Rule 1185-01-03.

¹ Charter Application Rubric for Use by Achievement School District Charter Schools applying to Tennessee Public Charter School Commission p. 1.

² Commission Rule 1185-01-03.

3. The Commission’s review committee independently analyzed and scored the Libertas application using the Commission’s charter application scoring rubric.
4. On December 14, 2021, the Commission staff held a public hearing at Libertas in Memphis, Tennessee. At the public hearing, the Executive Director, sitting as the Commission’s Designee, heard presentations from the school and Shelby County Schools as well as took public comment regarding the Libertas application.
5. The Commission’s review committee conducted a capacity interview with key members of the Libertas leadership team on January 10, 2022 via Microsoft Teams.
6. After the capacity interview, the Commission’s review committee determined a final consensus rating of the Libertas application, which served as the basis for the Review Committee Recommendation Report, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.

Commission’s Review Committee’s Evaluation of the Application

Commission staff assembled a diverse review committee of internal and external experts to independently evaluate and score the Libertas application. This review committee consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Maggie Lund	Review Committee Member, Deputy Director of Authorizing, Commission
Lawrence Walker	Review Committee Member, Coordinator of Data and Operations, Commission
Sarah Prosser	Review Committee Member, External Reviewer
Chad Fletcher	Review Committee Member, External Reviewer
Nancy Dinunzio	Review Committee Member, External Reviewer

The review committee conducted an initial review and scoring of the Libertas application, a capacity interview with the Libertas leadership team, and a final evaluation and scoring of the application resulting in a consensus rating for each major section. The review committee’s consensus rating of the Libertas application was as follows:

Sections	Ratings
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Meets Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Meets Standard
Performance Record	Meets Standard

For additional information regarding the review committee’s evaluation of the Libertas application, please see **Exhibit A** for the complete Review Committee Recommendation Report, which is fully incorporated herein by reference.

Public Hearing

Pursuant Commission Rule 1185-01-03 and Commission policy 2.000, a public hearing chaired by the Executive Director was held on December 14, 2021. Bob Nardo, Executive Director of Libertas



School of Memphis, shared an opening statement highlighting the history of the Frayser neighborhood and the impact Libertas has had on the community. Mr. Nardo indicated that Libertas serves as a staple within the community, has earned Level 5 TVAAS scores for two years in a row, and is the highest achieving elementary charter school in the city of Memphis. Mr. Nardo stated that Libertas is committed to working toward meeting the rigorous performance standards set forth by the Commission, despite the challenges the school faces. Libertas is committed to improving and is improving every day for kids through school improvement meetings, refining curriculum, individual road mapping to meet state standards, seminars for the transition to middle school, and through their teacher training program. Mr. Nardo stated that Libertas is committed to advocating and fighting for its students long term academic success and will continue to celebrate and recognize the growth it has made.

Brittany Monda, Assistant Superintendent of Charter Schools for Shelby County Schools, made a statement on behalf of Shelby County Schools stating that Shelby County is here as a partner to charter schools. Ms. Monda commended the work of Libertas, stating that they have been an important part of the community and show immense passion for their work. Shelby County aims to be a transformational district providing opportunities for all students within the county.

In response to the questions from the Executive Director of the Commission, Libertas highlighted that the school was founded on community partnerships, and the school works to ensure the Libertas voice is brought directly to families. Through these partnerships and deep relationships with the community, Libertas will ensure it can meet the enrollment goals both within the Frayser community and within the surrounding areas. Libertas mentioned that they have been consistently enrolled throughout their tenure in the ASD with a robust waitlist, and they will continue to enroll and register families early in the application process. When addressing the gap in achievement scores in comparison to the Commission's performance framework, Libertas indicated that each year, they continue to move the bar forward for each child, despite Tennessee having one of the most rigorous achievement tests. Libertas noted that while they have a grateful spirit of how far they have come, they also have an honest conversation about how far they have to go. Libertas meets each student where they are with individualized learning plans to drive toward growth and success. Finally, Libertas described themselves as "cost evangelists", saving money wherever they can to ensure appropriate funding for their special education services which total over \$750,000 annually. Libertas is excited to work with the Commission to continue passing every dollar possible to classrooms and resources for students. There were 20 public comments made including families of students, teachers, and community members. All were in support of Libertas being authorized by the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission.

Finally, in closing, Libertas noted that the voice of their community is the most important voice in demonstrating the success and importance of Libertas. Mr. Nardo mentioned the energy and gratitude in the room were clear and were demonstrated by the many stories of positive impact shared by community members. Libertas thanked the Commission for the opportunity and looks forward to the Commission's decision. Eight written comments were received all sharing praise for Libertas.



ANALYSIS

Under T.C.A. § 49-1-614, the Commission is charged with determining if a charter school currently operating under the Achievement School District will continue its authorization under the Commission or remain within the Achievement School District. Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the Commission adopted the State Board of Education's quality public charter schools authorizing standards and utilizes these standards to review all charter applications received. In making my recommendation to the Commission, I have considered the Review Committee's Recommendation Report, the presentations at the public hearing, and the public comments received by Commission staff and conclude as follows:

In consideration of the Review Committee's report and recommendation, I find that they have cited specific examples in the application and referenced information gained at the capacity interview in support of its findings. For the reasons delineated in the report, I agree that the Libertas application has met all requirements for approval as outlined in the scoring rubric for the academic, operational, financial, and past performance sections of the application. The academic plan presented by the applicant includes a clear mission and vision for the school and employs a Montessori program as an overarching methodology for schoolwide instruction. This program's philosophy includes individualized student work plans, independent work cycles programming, and specific seminars aimed at improving student proficiency in math and ELA.

Furthermore, the operations plan met standard as the school has demonstrated strong community support within the Frayser neighborhood and possesses a unique teacher training program including Montessori certification. Libertas acknowledges that, if authorized by the Commission, they would become an open-enrollment school, but the school demonstrated clear plans to meet their enrollment targets in a new regulatory environment. Libertas intends to stay within its current facility upon expiration of the charter agreement and plans to work with Shelby County to acquire the building. Similarly, the financial plan met standards as Libertas presented adequate budgets and three-year financial projections, while demonstrating a positive cash flow. Their overall net position is strong, and their budgeting process is conservative, yet flexible to meet all base-level expenses and support their staff, students, and community as necessary.

Lastly, Libertas has a track record of growing students toward proficiency for both ELA and math, earning a score of five (5) on the TVAAS for two consecutive years and earned priority exit status based on the state's accountability system. Additionally, 24% of Libertas's students qualify as special populations, and these students showed tremendous growth in some instances, more than their typical peers. Libertas, while acknowledging the growth of their students and success of their academic model, admits that they still have gains to make in proficiency for their students to meet the standards within the Commission's School Performance Framework. Libertas has continuously made improvements to their plans, based on formative student data and benchmarks, to drive students toward academic proficiency in math and ELA.

Libertas has demonstrated clear, strong, and sustained academic growth while operating in the turnaround setting of the Achievement School District. While the school acknowledges that they



still have work to do in order to meet the state’s accountability expectations and the Commission’s performance standards, I have determined that the school has met the academic and operational standards to earn an exit from the Achievement School District and to continue the remainder of its charter agreement under the Commission. The Commission holds high expectations for its schools, and this will not change for schools entering this Commission portfolio from the Achievement School District. The Commission will need to monitor and provide regular oversight, support, and feedback for any school to be successful, and this will be even more important for a school moving from a turnaround school district. Nevertheless, I have determined that based on the performance record of the school and the application materials, it is in the best interest to allow Libertas to continue its authorization under the Commission.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, and for the reasons stated in the Review Committee Report attached hereto as Exhibit A, I believe that the decision to approve the application for Libertas is in the best interests of the students, the LEA, or community. Therefore, I recommend that the Commission approve the application for Libertas.

Tess Stovall

Tess Stovall, Executive Director

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

1/28/22

Date

EXHIBIT A

Charter Application Review Committee Recommendation Report

January 28, 2022

School Name: Libertas School of Memphis

Location of School: Memphis, Tennessee

Evaluation Team:

Nancy Dickson
Chad Fletcher
Maggie Lund
Sarah Prosser
Lawrence Walker

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.) § 49-1-614, if, at any time, an Achievement School District (ASD)-authorized charter school meets the priority exit criteria set forth in the state's accountability model, then the school may apply to the LEA or the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission ("Commission") for a new charter agreement with a term not to exceed the term of the initial ASD charter agreement. On November 15, 2021, having earned priority exit status on the state's accountability system, the Governing Board of Libertas School of Memphis ("Libertas") applied to the Commission for continued authorization under the Commission. As laid out in Charter Commission Policy 3.000 – Core Authorizing Principles, the Charter 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.

The Charter Commission's charter application review process is outlined in Commission Rule 1185-01-03, Charter Commission Policy 2.000 – Charter School Appeals, and Charter Commission Policy 2.100 – Application Review. The Charter 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 Charter Commission provided training to all review committee members to ensure consistent standards and fair treatment of all applications.

Overview of the Evaluation Process

The Tennessee Public Charter School 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 application, attachments, and budget submitted by the school. 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 Plan Design, Operations Plan, Financial Plan, and Past Performance.
2. Capacity Interview: Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the review committee conducted a 90-minute interview with the members of the governing board and school leadership 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 academic, operations, and financial plans.
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 four 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; and community involvement and parent engagement.
 - b. Operations Plan and Capacity: governance; facilities; personnel/human capital; professional development; insurance; transportation (if applicable); food service; additional operations (if applicable); and waivers.
 - c. Financial Plan and Capacity: budget narrative; budgets; and network financial plan.
 - d. Past Performance: an overview of growth and proficiency data for the last three years.

The Charter Commission’s charter application review committee utilized the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission’s Charter Application Rubric for use by Achievement School District Charter Schools applying to the TPCSC¹, which is used by The Charter Commission when evaluating an application from the Achievement School District. The rubric “[r]equires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a demonstration of community support, a solvent and sustainable budget and contingency financial plans, a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of the model for the target student population, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities in all phases of the school’s development, and clear evidence of the applicant’s capacity to execute its plan successfully.”

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

Rating	Characteristics
Meets or Exceeds 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.

¹ Charter Application Rubric for Use by Achievement School District Charter Schools applying to Tennessee Public Charter School Commission p. 1

Summary of the Application

School Name: Libertas School of Memphis

Location of School: Memphis, Tennessee

Mission:² The mission of Libertas School is to be a school for human flourishing: cultivating the minds, hands, and hearts of children in Memphis for lives of wonder, work, and love. We envision our role - a private school quality education as a free public school - as contributing to the restoration of historic Frayser as a thriving destination neighborhood for families in Memphis.

Number of Schools Currently in Operation by Governing Board:

The sponsor has one (1) operating charter school.

Proposed Enrollment:³

Grade Level	2022-23	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026 - beyond
K	89	98	96	100
1	72	81	88	90
2	67	61	66	75
3	58	57	50	60
4	49	49	47	50
5	50	42	40	50
Total K-5	385	388	388	425

Brief Description of the Application:

Libertas is a charter school in Shelby County, Tennessee and serves students in the Frayser neighborhood grades kindergarten through fifth grade. Libertas has served this neighborhood for the last seven years and is a staple organization within the neighborhood. The school intends to continue operating within the Brookmeade and Frayser “priority” school zones serving students with a unique Montessori model. This academic model features a Montessori overarching methodology with adjustments to align to Tennessee State Standards and testing. Libertas focuses on math and reading/writing instruction along with a robust RTI model. To ensure licensure for all staff in their unique Montessori-focused model, Libertas created a licensure program for both public school licensure and Montessori credentials which is approved by the State Board of Education. Libertas has demonstrated high levels of family engagement and shows strong commitment to the neighborhood and community at large.

The Libertas governing board is long-standing, offers diverse skillsets, and has effectively overseen the school for the last seven years. Libertas intends to remain in their current facility upon the completion of their charter agreement as the facility is unique to their academic model and has begun discussions with Shelby

² Libertas application, pg. 6.

³ Libertas application, pg. 11.



County Schools to acquire the facility when the lease ends in 2025. Libertas is operating in a strong financial position with a projected net income of \$796,839 for the 2021/2022 school year and a projected net income of \$364,746 for the 2022/2023 school year.⁴ They have demonstrated conservative budgeting practices that allow the school to effectively use its funds to maintain its mission and vision, particularly in regard to special populations.

⁴ Libertas Budget – Attachment K

Summary of the Evaluation

The review committee recommends approval of the application for Libertas School of Memphis because the applicant meets or exceeds the standards in the academic, operational, financial, and past performance sections of the rubric.

The academic plan presented by the applicant includes a clear mission and vision for the school and robust explanation of the Montessori model. The applicant addressed the challenges in meeting achievement goals within the application, and how they were proactively addressing these challenges. Additionally, the school explained the different supports that were implemented to ensure that Libertas students were achieving according to Tennessee State Standards and TNReady such as math and ELA seminars for 4th and 5th grade students. Libertas serves a high population of students with special needs through individualized learning plans, self-contained classrooms, and additional support. Libertas has significant community support within the Frayser area and is considered a pillar within the community.

The applicant’s operations plan features a strong staffing plan including specific training for teachers provided by Libertas within the Montessori curriculum along with pathways for Tennessee State Licensure. Libertas has a governing board with varied experience that has effectively overseen the organization for the last seven years with minimal turnover. Libertas has time remaining on its facility contract until 2025, and the school has started conversations with Shelby County regarding acquiring the facility upon the completion of the charter agreement.

The financial plan for Libertas also met standard as it encompassed documentation of an overall strong financial position and a flexible, yet conservative budgeting process. Libertas prioritizes teachers and special populations within their budget and aims to advocate for additional funding as necessary to fulfill their mission. Within Libertas’s planning for facility acquisition, Libertas is confident that they can cover the cost of the facility given the preliminary terms set forth by Shelby County.

Within the application, Libertas outlines a plan of how it intends to work toward meeting the standards within the Commission’s School Performance Framework. This plan includes continued support for growth in ELA and math toward proficiency, in addition to plans to address the chronic absenteeism rate. While not currently meeting the academic standards within the Commission’s School Performance Framework in terms of proficiency, Libertas meets the standard for the charter application scoring rubric as they have demonstrated tremendous growth over time and a concrete plan of action to work toward meeting the Commission’s performance standards.

Summary of Section Ratings

In accordance with the Charter Commission’s charter application scoring rubric, applications that do not meet or exceed the standard in all sections will be deemed not ready for approval. The review committee’s consensus ratings for each section of the application are as follows:

Sections	Rating
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Meets Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Meets Standard



TENNESSEE
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Sections	Rating
Past Performance	Meets Standard

Analysis of the Academic Plan Design

Rating: Meets Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Academic Plan Design meets or exceeds the standard because the applicant presented a compelling description of how the school actively works to fulfill its mission and vision while serving the Frayser neighborhood of Memphis, Tennessee. Libertas's academic plan has demonstrated success in terms of growing and supporting all students, earning a Level 5 on TVAAS growth for two consecutive years and earning priority exit status on the state's accountability system.

The applicant employs a Montessori program as an overarching methodology for schoolwide instruction. This program's philosophy includes students working independently at their own, individualized pace, to ensure growth and success through work-cycle programming. To address gaps seen for students, particularly in writing and math, Libertas enacted seminars aimed at preparing students for TN standards-aligned grade level content and the TNReady assessment. Libertas monitors data and growth in students through six-week data cycles of formal formative assessments coupled with teacher observations of students' progress in their individualized work plans. Teachers are given more than typical planning time within their days to create individualized work plans for each student in their classes along with analyzing formative data to ensure each student is growing and their needs are met.

Students with disabilities make up about 20% of Libertas's population. Within the application, there is clear evidence of robust support given to students including a large and varied team of teachers, counselors, behavior specialists, and paraprofessionals. Special education students, depending on the legal requirements of their IEPs, either participate in the three self-contained classrooms on campus or participate within the typical student work-cycles depending on the stipulations within their IEPs. Primarily these students are engaging in individual or small group lessons, so they benefit from similar experiences to typical students, but they are also getting the specialized services they need.

One of the strongest assets to Libertas is the community they serve. The parent engagement and community support at Libertas is strong. Libertas is intentional about this connection through their use of the "attachment village" where students, the organization, and families are connected. At the public hearing, many families shared how Libertas has impacted their students in a positive way, and many community members shared the importance of this organization within the community through both public and written comments. The applicant also included numerous letters of support from various organizations within the community. While the applicant's enrollment structure will change to an open-enrollment school if authorized by the Commission, Libertas has a comprehensive strategy to continue to engage the community and stay true to the Frayser neighborhood including sending mailers, door knocking, billboards, Facebook ads, and actively engaging their long list of community partners. During the capacity interview, the Executive Director noted the appeal that a free Montessori education has in Memphis, and it is their intent and mission to continue serving the Frayser neighborhood. Libertas does not anticipate any major changes or shifts to its enrollment procedures, and they will continue to maintain a waitlist, as necessary.

Analysis of the Operations Plan

Rating: Meets Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Operation Plan meets or exceeds the standard because it includes a model track-record of staffing, a robust governing board with varied experience in education, operations, and finance and a clear plan for continuation of its facilities.

The governing board of Libertas has effectively governed the organization for the last seven years with minimal shifts and turnover. The governing board is engaged in accomplishing the school's mission and during the capacity interview was very engaged and knowledgeable about the day-to-day details of the school. The board members are comprised of individuals from varied backgrounds including legal, academics, and finance.

Libertas has a strong staffing plan including providing specialized certification training programs to teachers to ensure both licensure in the state of Tennessee and certification in the Montessori curriculum. Libertas has a high rate of teacher retention indicating substantial buy-in from staff on the rigorous academic model and a commitment to the community, despite having experienced some slight attrition due to the pandemic. Libertas has shown high retention amongst staff, retaining 90% of teachers between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school year. Despite being labor-intensive, the teacher schedule provides additional planning time to allow teachers to create individualized learning plans for each student. Each classroom also has two teachers leading engagement and instruction.

Libertas occupies the former Brookmeade School and is contracted to do so until 2025. The applicant has made improvements to the facility over time to make it conducive to their instructional model and to make it habitable as it is an older building. The facility is unique to the Montessori model including many outdoor spaces, gardens, and large classrooms. During the capacity interview, the Executive Director explained that Libertas has begun the process of working with Shelby County to formally acquire the facility. While nothing has been finalized, school leadership and the governing board feel confident in their initial agreement and believe that they can acquire the facility in a way that is cost-effective for the school and does not significantly impact their budget.

Analysis of the Financial Plan

Rating: Meets Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

The applicant's Financial Plan meets or exceeds the standard because they are currently in a strong financial position and operate on a conservative, yet flexible budget. Libertas submitted complete budgets and projections and suggests that they operate with an overall surplus. Three-year forecasting was provided showing positive cash flow, realistic budget projections for future years, and a growing net position.

During the capacity interview, a governing board member described that Libertas takes great care to plan for different budget scenarios to ensure that they are able to accommodate different funding models which may shift and change if authorized by the Commission. The school also works diligently to ensure that they operate in a lean and economical manner in order to devote the majority of their resources toward instruction. This statement is supported by the school's most recent audit which reflects over 85% of its annual expenses were utilized for instructional and student services. Libertas mentioned within the application that they spend over \$750,000 annually to support special populations, given that they have over 20% of their population qualifying as students with disabilities, which demonstrates a budgetary focus and the available resources to serve this population of students. When asked about contingency planning regarding this level of spending during the capacity interview, the Executive Director responded that they are deeply committed to providing the best education for the most vulnerable student and that they hope to continue their advocacy work at state, local, and national levels to acquire a better funding process for supporting students with disabilities. They have also worked to economize other expenses in order to ensure there were no issues covering these costs as they are critical to their mission, and they will continue to work to ensure that they are able to best serve their community.

Libertas acknowledges that they have upcoming facility needs that will result in additional costs for the organization. During the capacity interview, the Executive Director noted that the purchase of their current property would be in the range of \$2-3 million based on recent discussions with Shelby County Schools. This is in addition to the nearly \$1 million in capital improvements Libertas has made to the facility. The Libertas board and Executive Director are scenario-planning to ensure these costs are thoroughly considered within the three-year projections, and they mentioned they are in a strong financial position due to an operating surplus over the past years of operation.

Analysis of Past Performance

Rating: Meets Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee:

Libertas acknowledges and is familiar with the differences in standards within the performance framework if authorized by the Commission and has developed a robust plan to ensure that they continuously improve to meet standards. Libertas has worked diligently to transform a low performing school in Memphis into a high performing charter school both academic and culturally. Libertas has earned a Level 5 TVAAS score for two consecutive years and has earned priority exit status as defined by the Tennessee Department of Education's school accountability framework. Libertas also serves one of the largest population of students with disabilities in the Achievement School District (24%) and is growing these students, in some instances, faster than their typical peers. Despite not currently meeting the standards within the Commission's performance framework in terms of academic achievement, Libertas provided a detailed plan to continuously improve. Therefore, the applicant meets or exceeds the standard of past performance on the rubric.

Libertas addressed their chronic absenteeism rate (roughly 20%) both within the application and in the capacity interview. Libertas has a robust plan to address this chronic absenteeism rate primarily through family engagement and community support. Libertas utilizes their Family Engagement Counselor to lead over 150 individual family interventions, including arranging transportation, if needed, to school. Libertas also has a detailed data dashboard that monitors attendance data. Every family receives an individualized call after a student is absent for two consecutive days. Libertas acknowledges that the pandemic has hurt their chronic absenteeism rate, but they are committed to consistently engage with the families to ensure appropriate attendance.

As aforementioned in the "Academic Performance" section, Libertas has continuously improved their academic model to drive toward academic proficiency primarily in writing and math. Fourth and fifth grade students take part in a math and writing seminar that aids in moving students toward overall proficiency as defined by Tennessee State Standards and TNReady testing. The Libertas team will continue with these efforts to ensure that they continue in their growth pattern and ultimately lead students to achieving the standards within the Commission's performance framework. While success should be celebrated, the Libertas team acknowledges that they still have more growth to make.



Evaluation Team

Nancy Dickson - Nancy DiNunzio Dickson is currently the Program Director for the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, a Fulbright exchange program for educational leaders from around the globe at Vanderbilt's Peabody College. Nancy also teaches in the college's Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations (LPO). She has also served as the director of the Abu Dhabi Leadership Induction Program as well as the program manager for the Tennessee/Shanghai Leadership Collaborative at Peabody. Prior to working at Vanderbilt, she was the Director of Operations and a founding team member of LEAD Academy, a public charter school in Nashville. While teaching 4th grade in Washington, D.C. public schools, Nancy collaborated with National Geographic, Meridian International, and George Washington University to provide citywide professional development and teacher preparation programming. As an active member in the community, Nancy has served as the board chair of Nashville International Center of Empowerment (NICE) and All About Women as well as the co-chair for Alignment Nashville's Parent Engagement Team. She holds a Doctorate of Educational Leadership and a Master of Public Policy degree from Vanderbilt University, and a Bachelor of Art degree in Elementary Education from Penn State University.

Chad Fletcher - Chad J. Fletcher is the Federal Programs Director for Bedford County Schools. Additionally, he serves as the Safe Schools and District Testing Coordinator. Fletcher began his career as a High School teacher in the Metro-Nashville/Davidson County School System before serving as an Elementary and Middle School Administrator in Murfreesboro City, Knox County, and Manchester City Schools. Additionally, Fletcher currently serves as a member of the DOE's Community of Practitioners for Federal Programs and was a member of the Tennessee Department of Education's Personalized Learning Task Force from 2015-16.

Maggie Lund - Maggie Lund is currently the Deputy Director of Authorizing at the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. Additionally, she serves as an adjunct professor in the Lipscomb College of Education Master's Program, teaching Planning, Instruction, and Assessment. Prior to her role at the Charter Commission, Maggie served as the Director of Family Engagement at STEM Prep Academy where she led all community engagement efforts for two schools along with enrollment, school culture, and operations pieces. Maggie holds a BA in Business Administration and Marketing from Loyola University New Orleans, a Doctor of Education degree, and a Master of Education degree with a specialization in English Language Learning from Lipscomb University. Her dissertation research focused on Restorative Justice Practices and school culture. Most recently, her research article, *Mindsets Matter for Equitable Discipline* was published in the Middle School Journal. Maggie is a teacher at heart and has a passion for ensuring the most vulnerable populations in Nashville receive a high-quality education.

Sarah Prosser - Sarah Prosser worked as an attorney for FedEx Express for 32 years, retiring May 2019. Her main focus area was regulatory both domestic U.S. and international. She traveled extensively for FedEx including international locations. Sarah served on several industry association boards and committees during her tenure at FedEx and spoke frequently at conferences. Sarah has also served as a Board member for the Wolf River Conservancy, is an Elder at Idlewild Presbyterian Church and is a consultant for Give Back Memphis. She is married to Niel Prosser, an attorney in Memphis, and has 2 grown children, Jennifer Karnes a veterinarian in Memphis and Nathan Prosser who lives in New Orleans and works in commercial real estate.



Lawrence Walker - Lawrence Walker serves as the Coordinator of Data and Operations for the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. He holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Alcorn State University (Lorman, MS) and an MBA from Union University (Germantown, TN). In addition to a professional background in insurance and financial services, Lawrence is a former High School Instructor and School-based Operations Leader who specialized in daily operations, assessments, data, and student information system management. As a proud native of Memphis, TN and successful product of Memphis City Schools, he takes pride in working with the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, both as a Staff Member and as a Review Committee Member. It is his goal to provide outstanding educational experiences to students in Tennessee.