



Tennessee Public Charter School Commission
Davy Crockett, 5th Floor
500 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: Founders Classical Academy of Brentwood Appeal

To whom it may concern:

We are hereby appealing our application to the Williamson County School Board to open a Founders Classical Academy charter school in Williamson County, TN. The application for this school and an amended version of that application were both rejected by the school board.

The Del Rey Education board of directors is comprised of concerned Tennessee parents, educators, and entrepreneurs who share an interest in bringing high quality educational options to families in our state. We have selected a program built around a proven and successful curriculum, and we have identified an experienced charter management operator, Texas-based ResponsiveEd, to help ensure our classical school offering meets or exceeds the expectations of the state and our future enrolled families.

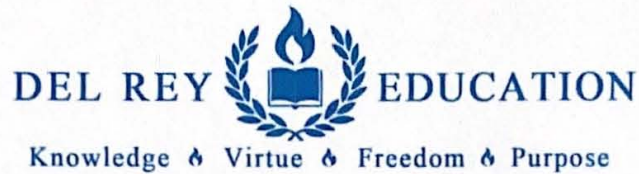
ResponsiveEd has a 23-year track record of success operating charter schools in Texas and Arkansas and has brought its Founders Classical Academy brand to 21 sites, serving 14,000 students in 2022. Founders consistently exceeds standards in even the highest performing districts. In three of the top-performing school districts in North Texas, Founders campuses are at capacity, with 1,100-1,500 students on waitlists.

We believe denial of this application was contrary to the best interest of the LEA's students, the LEA itself, and the local community for the following reasons:

- The county served by the LEA is one of the fastest growing in the state, in terms of population. Per the Boyd Center, the county expects to see 49% growth by 2040, and, according to the Williamson Chamber of Commerce, has already seen 139% growth in school-age children over the last 15 years. The addition of Founders Classical Academies to the LEA shifts some of the burden of adding facilities, recruiting, and retaining teachers, and increasing administration, to our organization.



- In the LEA's review of our charter application, they acknowledged that Del Rey's choice in curricular programs meets or exceeds the standard for academics.
- According to a recent article in The Tennessean, despite the LEA's return in 2021-22 to pre-COVID ELA scores, the LEA is still behind in Math, compared to 2019, and still has only 2/3 of its students testing at or above grade level. At a comparable Founders campus in Frisco, TX, on average, 92% of students are performing at or above grade level in ELA, and 94% in math, as measured by NWEA's MAP. Founders not only provides parents an option to improve their children's education, but provides an opportunity for the LEA, and thereby the state, to improve as well.
- There is a growing contingent of parents in the LEA who disapprove of the LEA's chosen curriculum, as evidenced by the current lawsuit filed by a Williamson parents' group, and 94.5% of respondents to an informal poll saying they desire a choice in the type of school their children attend. Of those, 45.1% felt that such an option should be tuition-free. In addition, over 75% cited moral character and American civics as education they desire for their children. Diversity in school design and choice is a hallmark of a thriving, successful school district. Founders aims to provide a much-desired alternative to the current curriculum and school designs provided by the LEA. Founders Classical Academy will fill a much-needed gap in learning that currently exists in the community. Through a competitive process Del Rey has selected Founders to provide this curriculum based on their 11 years of successful service to 14,000 current students from diverse backgrounds.
- More than 280 families have already expressed an interest in enrolling at Founders, showing the level of desire for a classical charter option within the LEA. Historically one of the largest factors in schools not succeeding is a lack of enrollment that impacts operations and finance. This is not an issue for Founders in Williamson County.
- According to the LEA's own website, they are working "To maintain and upgrade all district facilities to meet the most current standards," and "To identify and acquire property for school district growth in advance of need." For 2021-22, the district budgeted more than \$28M for renovations, repairs, and maintenance, while allowing only \$7M for new land and schools. The requirement for Founders to fund our own facilities positions Founders to help the LEA by relieving some of the LEA's capital improvement and debt load.



- Per the LEA's website, they are seeking "To identify and secure revenue sources that support the WCS strategic plan, including both traditional funding streams and nontraditional resources." All 21 of the current Founders Classical Academy schools have opened and operated continuously and without fail since their inception, and we will follow this proven model for Founders in Williamson County, TN. Founders introduces another means of securing revenue sources outside of the LEA's own resources and frees the LEA of this burden for each Founders campus within the district.
- There are three private classical schools and countless homeschoolers in the LEA. The addition of a Founders Classical Academy tuition-free classical school will draw many members of the community back to the LEA who have currently enrolled in private schools or home-school. Many homeschoolers use a classical curriculum such as Classical Conversations, and many private school families struggle to afford tuition amid Williamson's higher cost of living. 44% of respondents said they would "definitely enroll" in a classical charter school and would be willing to drive 20 minutes or more to get to it.

In light of the above information, the highly vested interest of our local board members, and the strength of our CMO, operating a total of 90 public charter schools, serving 20,000+ students, and its 20+ year history of success, we believe Founders Classical Academy is a much needed, and highly beneficial addition to Williamson County and the State of Tennessee. We appreciate this commission's thoughtful consideration of our appeal, and thorough review of our application.

Kindest regards,

Cassie Chapman
President