



Executive Director's Recommendation

Invictus Nashville Charter School Appeal

Pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-108, sponsors proposing to open a new charter school may appeal the denial of their amended application by a local board of education to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission ("Commission"). On August 2, 2023, the sponsor of Invictus Nashville Charter School ("sponsor") appealed the denial of its amended 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 Report, attached hereto, I believe that the decision to deny the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application was contrary to the best interests of the students, the LEA, or the community.¹ Therefore, I recommend that the Commission overturn the decision of MNPS Board of Education to deny the amended application for Invictus Nashville Charter School.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108 and Commission Policy 2.000, Commission staff and an independent review charter application review committee conducted a de novo, on the record review of the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application. In accordance with the Tennessee Department of Education's charter application scoring rubric, "[f]or an application to be deemed eligible for approval, the summary ratings for all applicable categories must be "Meets or Exceeds the Standard."² In addition, the Commission is required to hold a public hearing in the district where the proposed charter school seeks to locate.³

In order to overturn the decision of the local board of education, the Commission must find that the application meets or exceeds the metrics outlined in the department of education's application-scoring rubric and that approval of the amended charter application is in the best interests of the students, local education agency (LEA), or community.⁴ If the local board of education's decision is overturned, then the Commission can approve the application, and thereby authorize the school, or to affirm the local board's decision to deny.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

1. On December 1, 2022, the sponsor submitted a letter of intent to MNPS expressing its intention to file a charter school application.
2. The sponsor submitted its initial application for Invictus Nashville Charter School to MNPS on February 1, 2023.
3. MNPS assembled a review committee to review and score the Invictus Nashville Charter School initial application.

¹ T.C.A. § 49-13-108

² Tennessee Charter School Application Evaluation Rubric – Ratings and Scoring Criteria

³ T.C.A. § 49-13-108

⁴ *Id.*



4. On March 21, 2023, MNPS's review committee conducted a capacity interview with representatives of Invictus Nashville Charter School.
5. MNPS's review committee reviewed and scored the Invictus Nashville Charter School initial application and recommended to the MNPS Board of Education that the initial application be denied, indicating the academic, operations, and finance sections partially met standards.
6. On April 25, 2023, MNPS Board of Education voted to deny the Invictus Nashville Charter School initial application based on the review committee's recommendation.
7. The sponsor amended and resubmitted its application for Invictus Nashville Charter School to MNPS on May 26, 2023.
8. MNPS's review committee reviewed and scored the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application based on the charter application scoring rubric.
9. MNPS's review committee rated each section of Invictus Nashville Charter School's amended application, indicating the academic section partially met standards and the operations and finance sections do not meet standards and recommended denial to the local board of education.
10. On July 25, 2023, the MNPS Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of Invictus Nashville Charter School.
11. The sponsor appealed the denial of the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application in writing to the Commission on August 2, 2023, including submission of all required documents per Commission Policy 2.000.
12. The Commission's review committee independently analyzed and scored the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application using the Tennessee Department of Education's charter school application scoring rubric.
13. On September 11, 2023, the Commission staff held a public hearing at the Davy Crockett Tower in Nashville, Tennessee. At the public hearing, the Executive Director, sitting as the Commission's Designee, heard presentations from the sponsor and MNPS and took public comment regarding the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application.
14. The Commission's review committee conducted a capacity interview with key members of the Invictus Nashville Charter School leadership team on September 13, 2023 via Microsoft Teams.
15. After the capacity interview, the Commission's review committee determined a final consensus rating of the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application, which served as the basis for the Review Committee Recommendation Report, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.
16. The Commission staff conducted a full review of the record which includes the initial and amended applications submitted by the sponsor, 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.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Substantial Negative Fiscal Impact Findings and Analysis

At the July 25, 2023 board meeting, the MNPS Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of Invictus Nashville Charter School citing three (3) reasons for denial, including a finding of a substantial negative fiscal impact to Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS). When a local school district has denied a charter school application on the basis of substantial negative fiscal impact, Commission Rule 1185-01-01-.01(4) states that, on appeal, the burden is on the district to establish that substantial negative fiscal impact exists such that approval of the charter school would be contrary to the best interests of the students, the LEA, or the community. The Commission staff analyzed previous evaluations conducted by the Office of the State Treasurer and the State Board of Education and used the same general methodology to determine if substantial negative fiscal impact exists in this case. In keeping with the analyses done by other entities, the key questions are what historical enrollment fluctuations the school district has dealt with, and how does the enrollment decline that would result from the opening of the proposed charter school compare to these fluctuations.

The following findings are based on information collected by Commission staff regarding the substantial negative fiscal impact of Invictus Nashville Charter School:

1. Invictus Nashville Charter School's amended application states that in the 2024-25 school year, the school's first anticipated year of operation, it will enroll a maximum of 144 students.⁵
2. Commission staff requested from MNPS historical trends of projected Average Daily Membership (ADM) versus actual ADM for the current and three (3) preceding school years. The table includes actual ADM by year, the percentage growth from the previous year, the district's projected student growth for that year, and actual student growth seen.

Table 1. Historical Average Daily Membership (ADM) and System Growth⁶

	Actual ADM	% Growth From Previous Year	Projected Student Growth	Actual Student Growth
SY24-25 (Projected)	76,339	-0.83%	-639	N/A
SY 23-24 (Projected)	76,978	-0.23%	-213	-178
SY 22-23	77,191	0.40%	-3,079	309
SY 21-22	76,847	-1.56%	-1,352	-1,218
SY 20-21	78,065	-4.01%	512	-3,263

3. MNPS estimated that the total fiscal impact during Year 1 of Invictus Nashville Charter School's operations would be \$1,137,600. This amount is based on the number of projected students multiplied by the difference between the estimated charter school per pupil amount allocation and the average MNPS school-based budget per pupil amount and is reflective of a per pupil rate of \$7,900. The rationale for MNPS using a per pupil rate that is below the total state and local allocation is due to the district utilizing a budget model that

⁵ Amended Application, pg. 41

⁶ All data provided by Metro Nashville Public Schools in response to the Commission's August 2, 2023 request for information.

allocates more than half of their district’s operating budget directly to the school level, with the remainder being used for district-wide services such as transportation, security, maintenance, and utilities.⁷ For the purpose of estimating substantial negative fiscal impact, the district only accounted for the district-wide or fixed cost portion of state funding.

- The Commission staff reviewed the district’s past audits and gathered the fund balance committed for education since 2019-20.

Table 2. Fund Balance Committed for Education⁸

	Fund Balance Committed for Education	% Growth From Previous Year
SY 21-22	\$244.5 Million	115%
SY 20-21	\$113.8 Million	311%
SY 19-20	\$27.7 Million	N/A

- The Commission staff pulled the total per pupil allocation (PPA) for Metro Nashville Public Schools based on the historical PPA received for Commission authorized charter schools located in MNPS.

Table 3. Total Per Pupil Allocation⁹

	Total State and Local BEP Revenue
SY 22-23*	\$14,416
SY 21-22	\$14,953
SY 20-21	\$13,050

*Awaiting final true up for PPA

ANALYSIS

After an in-depth analysis of the data and information provided by MNPS in support of its argument, I cannot conclude that MNPS has carried its burden of proving that the approval of Invictus Nashville Charter School’s application will present a substantial negative fiscal impact on the district.

The crux of the MNPS argument rests on the fact that state law requires districts to transfer 100% of the per-pupil revenue to a charter school, and the opening and operations of Invictus Nashville Charter School in Year 1 would result in a loss of \$1.14 million in revenue that goes towards fixed costs that the district could not handle operationally and financially.¹⁰ MNPS calculated the fiscal impact by utilizing the number of projected students enrolled in Invictus Nashville Charter School multiplied by the difference between the estimated charter school per pupil amount allocation and the average school-based budget per pupil amount. The district’s argument rests on the premise that the district cannot remain financially stable with the reduction of \$1.14 million to support the district’s fixed costs. However, based on the data provided by MNPS, there is clear evidence that the district has enrollment fluctuations

⁷ Ibid
⁸ Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for 2022, p. 158; 2021, pg. 146; 2020 p. 144
⁹ Tennessee Department of Education payments to the Charter Commission
¹⁰ Metro Nashville Public Schools Board Presentation, July 25, 2023

annually and annual growth in state and local revenue amounts. The district states that, despite the reduction in students enrolling in MNPS schools as a result of the opening of charter, fixed costs do not change, and the district does not have the ability to adjust expenses on a system-wide basis. However, the district has historically managed enrollment fluctuations greater than what they would see if Invictus Nashville Charter School opened, and despite these fluctuations, the district’s financial position has continued to increase over the past few years, with fund balances exceeding the State requirement of 3%.

Over the last few years, that district has seen enrollment fluctuations that, on average, represent approximately 1.4% of ADM. MNPS saw a 4% drop in enrollment directly tied to the pandemic, but then saw a slight enrollment increase in the 2022-23 school year when compared to the previous year. In all of the enrollment data presented, the district has seen both enrollment growth and enrollment decline within the enrollment amounts projected by Invictus Nashville Charter School. Therefore, the district regularly manages to sustain its operations and financial sustainability despite enrollment fluctuations above and beyond the impact of opening the proposed charter school.

Moreover, the information contained within the past three (3) years of audits reinforces the fact that MNPS’ financial position has continued to increase, despite fluctuations in enrollment. This is demonstrated by the General Purpose School Fund having a healthy fund balance committed to education that has grown annually based on its annual audits for the past three (3) years (Table 2). This signals the likelihood of continued financial health and a strong financial position for the district. This is further affirmed by the increased per pupil allocation amount year over year (Table 3), and the proposed transfer amount from MNPS to Invictus Nashville Charter School in Year 1 is less than 1% (0.10%) of the projected revenue for the district in the 2023-24 school year ¹¹.

In totality, there is a lack of evidence provided by MNPS to meet the burden of proving that the approval of Invictus Nashville Charter School will constitute a substantial negative fiscal impact on the district. In order to meet the bar of being considered substantially negative, the fiscal impact of opening a charter school must be above and beyond the district’s normal enrollment and budgetary fluctuation. In the case of Invictus Nashville Charter School, the data demonstrates that despite enrollment fluctuations, the district’s financial position continues to improve and therefore is not above and beyond the district’s normal enrollment and budgetary fluctuation.

Based on these findings of fact and analysis, I find that the evidence provided by MNPS does not meet the burden of proving that the approval of Invictus Nashville Charter School will constitute a substantial negative fiscal impact on the district such that approval of the school would be contrary to the best interests of the students, the LEA, or the community.

District Denial of Initial Application

The review committee assembled by MNPS to review and score the Invictus Nashville Charter School initial application consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Gay Burden	External Reviewer
Krista Davis	Research Assessment and Evaluation
Molly Hegwood	English Learners
Ryan Latimer	Boundary Planning and Enrollment Forecasting

¹¹ Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County FY 23-24 Budget Book p. 735



Name	Title
Debra McAdams	Exceptional Education
Casey Megow	Planning and Construction
Elisa Norris	Strategy Performance Management
Ken Stark	Business and Facility Services
David Williams	Teaching and Learning
Joshua Wright	Strategic Investments

The Invictus Nashville Charter School initial application received the following ratings from the MNPS review committee:

Sections	Ratings
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Partially Meets Standard

After the MNPS review committee completed its review and scoring of the initial application, its recommendation was presented to the MNPS Board of Education on April 25, 2023. Based on the review committee’s recommendation, the MNPS Board of Education voted to deny the initial application of Invictus Nashville Charter School.

District Denial of Amended Application

The review committee assembled by MNPS to review and score the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application mirrored that of the committee that reviewed the initial application. Upon resubmission, the MNPS review committee conducted a review of the amended application, and the amended application received the following ratings from the MNPS review committee:

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

After the MNPS review committee completed its review and scoring of the amended application, its recommendation was presented to the MNPS Board of Education on July 25, 2023. At the July 25, 2023 board meeting, the MNPS Board of Education voted to deny the amended application of Invictus Nashville Charter School.

Commission Review Committee’s Evaluation of the Application

Following the denial of the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended 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 Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application. This review committee consisted of the following individuals:

Name	Title
Scott Campbell	External Reviewer
Nancy DiNunzio	External Reviewer
Kelly Kroneman	Commission Staff



Name	Title
Rebecca Ledebuhr	Commission Staff
Maggie Lund	Commission Staff
Grant Monda	External Reviewer

The review committee conducted an initial review and scoring of the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application, a capacity interview with the sponsor, and a final evaluation and scoring of the amended application resulting in a consensus rating for each major section. The review committee's consensus rating of the Invictus Nashville Charter School application was as follows:

Sections	Ratings
Academic Plan Design and Capacity	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Operations Plan and Capacity	Meets or Exceeds Standard
Financial Plan and Capacity	Meets or Exceeds Standard

The review committee recommends the approval of the amended application for Invictus Nashville Charter School because the applicant provided a sound academic plan with Montessori and Project-Based Learning (PBL) instructional models, there is clear community support and demand demonstrated within the application, the applicant has a diverse and strong proposed governing board, and the applicant has already identified and has a letter of intent for a potential facility within the targeted neighborhood. Additionally, the applicant has already begun securing start-up funding, including grants and multi-year projections demonstrate a strong financial position for the school.

The academic plan presented by the applicant outlines a proposed Montessori model that is aligned to Tennessee Academic Standards and incorporates all required components of the school day including service of special populations of students. The model demonstrates clear alignment with the mission and vision of the school, and as students matriculate to middle school, the instructional model will shift to project-based learning which will help with the impending transition to high school. The applicant created the proposal for the school in response to community feedback and need and has demonstrated community support throughout the application. The applicant has already secured 67 intents to enroll for the school, which is on-target given their start-up plan, and the applicant also outlined contingency plans should enrollment not materialize in Year 1 as anticipated. Finally, the applicant demonstrated capacity and experience in service of special populations through the outlined plan. The proposed instructional model lends itself well to differentiation of instruction in response to student data gathered through their robust internal assessment plan, and a clear plan for RTI².

The applicant's operations plan is sound, including robust start-up plans and a strong proposed governing board, professional development and staffing plan, and facility plan. The applicant's governing board is representative of the area the school intends to locate and demonstrated diverse expertise and knowledge of the proposed school's plan. The staff recruitment and professional development plan outlines a clear pipeline for teacher growth and recruitment through the school's partnership with Arete Memphis for Montessori certification. Additionally, the school has partnered with LevelField and has a letter of intent on a facility that is in line with the outlined budget. The applicant aims to sign a five (5)-year lease and ultimately expand within the facility to accommodate the school long term.

The financial plan includes multiple sources of start-up funding through grants and private fundraising that not only support the facility acquisition and other start-up funding, but also the curriculum and materials needed to

support the Montessori model. The applicant has already secured grant funding including a Build, Excel, Sustain (BES) grant and New Schools Venture Fund and has identified additional funding through City Fund to cover gaps in timelines while the school applies for other outlined grant options such as the Charter School Growth Fund and the Charter Schools Program grant. The board also demonstrated financial expertise within the capacity interview when discussing the budget and contingency planning. The budget was designed to be conservative and can be adjusted as necessary to accommodate additional pay for staff or if expenses are higher than anticipated.

For the aforementioned reasons, the review committee found that the sponsor did 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 Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application, please see **Exhibit A** for the complete Review Committee Recommendation Report, which is fully incorporated herein by reference.

Public Hearing

Pursuant to statute¹² and Commission Policy 2.000, a public hearing chaired by the Executive Director was held on September 11, 2023. MNPS's presentation at the public hearing focused on the review process for both the submitted initial and amended applications, deficiencies noted within the application, how the board considers the findings of the review committee in their decision, and how the applicant was notified of the denial. Representatives from MNPS indicated that Invictus Nashville Charter School's amended application was denied based on not meeting the standards of the scoring rubric, not meeting the standards set forth by the charter school office, and substantial negative fiscal impact.

In the sponsor's opening statement, the proposed founder and school leader spoke to the journey taken to begin planning for Invictus Nashville Charter School including engaging with the community to identify needs and desires, examining oversaturation and academic need, and hosting focus groups to develop a school and model that is responsive to the community. The school leader explained that before the application was ever written, she had received 523 survey responses, 951 people attended events for the proposed school, 213 people joined the mailing list, and 300 petitions of support for the school and proposed model were collected. Initially, Invictus Nashville Charter School was to be a 6-12 grade model, though the community demonstrated that they actually preferred a K-8 Montessori option, which is the proposed structure and model for the school. The school leader spoke about the mission of the school, its unique model that includes one-on-one mentoring and holistic support, and the experience of the governing board to effectively develop and execute a start-up plan for the school. While there is another Montessori option within the proposed community, the school leader is confident that enrollment targets will be reached with 65 families already intending to enroll at this point, and the intentionality behind starting small with enrolling only 144 students in Year 1. Finally, a representative from LevelField partners, who the school has contracted with to aid in facility acquisition, mentioned that Invictus Nashville Charter School currently has a letter of intent on a facility that is customized to the unique proposed model of the school, and upon authorization they are prepared to move forward with negotiations and a lease structure.

During questioning by the Commission, representatives of MNPS explained that the review team members only examine sections of the application to which they are experts and then all feedback is compiled into a consensus rubric. When questioned about how ratings decreased from partially meets to does not meet in certain sections between the initial and amended reviews of the application, it was explained that review committee members took

¹² T.C.A. § 49-13-108

the amended application and rubric and analyzed against each criterion, so if an application failed to address deficiencies, then the rating was moved to does not meet standard. MNPS then clarified one of the listed reasons for denial of “not meeting standards set forth by the charter office,” stating that the MNPS charter office does not have a separate set of standards or review process, but rather this was the stated motion outlined by the board at the meeting.

The Commission then questioned MNPS regarding their calculation of substantial negative fiscal impact, and representatives explained that the MNPS finance team calculates fiscal impact numbers based on the number of students projected within the amended application against the average student-based budget, assuming students from MNPS would be lost to the proposed charter school. MNPS then further explained when questioned about examination of sufficient demand for a school that more letters of support from prospective families would be necessary to demonstrate community demand as the letters of support included within the application did not represent interest from school-aged families. Regarding the facility concerns outlined within the board report, MNPS stated that the applicant did not increase their budget for tenant improvements as a response to the review team’s comments between the initial and amended review of the application, which determined that the amount allocated would not be sufficient to build the required storm shelter enforceable by building code. Finally, when asked about concerns regarding waivers included within the application, the representative from the district explained that the MNPS Charter Office is taking a more active role in reviewing waivers for both new applications and existing charter school operators.

The Commission then questioned the sponsor. Concerning enrollment and determination of sufficient demand, the sponsor outlined the many community partnerships in existence, including daycares, that have provided feedback and intents to enroll for the school. Additionally, with the increase in homes being built in the area, the demand for high-quality school seats will continue to grow within the McGavock cluster where the school intends to locate. While the goal for enrollment in Year 1 is 144 students, the sponsor explained that the school could realistically open and operate with 96 students if needed. The sponsor stated that they are confident with their facility plan and budget given the outlined improvements needed, and they did not feel they needed to raise their budget for tenant improvements given the MNPS review committee’s feedback as the desired space does not necessarily require it. The school intends to stay in the facility long term and will sign a five (5)-year lease as the facility offers space for expansion as the school grows. The applicant then provided start-up funding updates including securing a BES grant and New Schools Venture Fund. They intend to continue to apply for grants through October and have reached out to City Fund to aid in additional funding should they need it. When questioned about the fundraising listed within the budget in the application, the school leader explained the board’s robust fundraising plan and mentioned that upon authorization, they have 6 investors who will provide funding for Montessori supplies and materials. Finally, given the unique staffing plan for the school, including Montessori certified teachers, the school leader explained that they currently have 13 resumes from interested teachers, so they do not believe that hiring teachers in Year 1 will be an issue. She also clarified that they have established seats in the Arete teacher training program in Memphis and have budgeted to provide additional certification opportunities for teachers.

The public hearing concluded with closing statements by both parties and the receipt of 15 in-person comments, with 8 speaking in support of MNPS and 7 speaking in support of Invictus Nashville Charter School. The Commission also accepted written comments, and the Commission received 153 written comments, with 16 writing in support of MNPS and 137 writing in support of Invictus Nashville Charter School.

ANALYSIS

State law requires the Commission to review the decision of the local board of education and determine if the application “meets or exceeds the metrics outlined in the department of education’s application-scoring rubric and¹³,” whether “approval of the application is in the best interests of the students, LEA, or community¹⁴.” In addition, pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the Commission adopted the State Board of Education’s quality public charter schools authorizing standards set forth in State Board Policy 6.111 and utilizes these standards to review charter applications received upon appeal. In making my recommendation to the Commission, I have considered the Review Committee’s Recommendation Report, the documentation submitted by both the sponsor 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 application and referencing information gained in the capacity interview in support of its findings. For the reasons explicated in the report, I agree that the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application did rise to the level of meeting or exceeding the standards required for approval. The sponsor has presented a clear and concise mission and vision, and an academic plan that is aligned to the named mission and vision. The sponsor proposes a unique academic model with use of the Montessori curriculum and a planned transition to a Project-Based Learning in the middle grades. The application is supported by significant evidence of research and success measurement with the use of the selected model. The sponsor clearly indicated the intention of academic achievement and proficiency on state assessments in alignment with the proposed academic model. The sponsor has taken the steps to build connection and receive support from another operator in Tennessee currently using the model to gain additional knowledge and tools to success with the model as the chosen academic plan.

The sponsor presented throughout the application the intentionality of all of the choices for the proposed charter school. The leader devoted a year developing a co-design team that spent time researching the location for the school and the academic plan that would best serve the identified area of Davidson County. Through the work of the co-design team, the sponsor’s amended application evidences a change from middle and high school grades to the currently proposed K-8 model because this is what was desired within the community. The sponsor indicated during the public hearing that the specific location of the facility was intentional so as to not appear as “competing” with another district school offering a similar academic model. The sponsor’s intention is admirable as the ultimate goal of all Tennessee schools is to provide the best quality education to students. The sponsor provided a detailed enrollment plan, the current intents to enroll, and the contingency should the enrollment targets not be met. The sponsor indicated that, as of the capacity interview, the proposed charter school had 67 students set to enroll upon approval. The sponsor’s named contingency plan includes changes in cohorts and classroom sizes and a shift in staffing as necessary.

The public hearing showed both desire for the academic model proposed in this application and for this proposed public charter school specifically. I believe this sponsor has taken the necessary time and engaged in the necessary work to support an academic model for families who wish to enroll their students. The sponsor also selected an area that would be well served by the quality seats of this proposed public charter school. While the amended application has a strong academic plan and clear intentions of supporting students, the sponsor will have work to implement the academic model with fidelity.

¹³ T.C.A. § 49-13-108(5)(D)

¹⁴ *Id.*



I remained impressed throughout the appellate process by the sponsor's proposed governing board. The sponsor has selected a board that has varied and diverse experience that is committed to the mission and vision of the proposed public charter school. The proposed board demonstrated an understanding of their charge, and, while committed to the proposed school leader's success, the board made clear that their oversight included making hard decisions and proposing changes in the best interests of the students if necessary. I am confident in the sponsor's proposed start-up plan, as there is an identified facility with contingencies on improvements, if necessary. The Montessori program is a challenging and complex model that requires the right staff, professional development, and resources to execute well. The school leader and governing board will need to maintain a close eye on implementation to ensure fidelity with the model. However, the school leadership has surrounded itself with individuals and programs that do this work well and with intentionality, and this will continue to be important as the school opens and operates.

The sponsor's financial plan, as outlined in the amended application, is very conservative. Many of the questions that were outstanding when reviewing the application, were addressed during the capacity interview. The sponsor evidenced additional funding sources (e.g., grants, etc.) as well as community partnerships that are pending application approval to provide financial support for the school. While opening a new-start, independent charter school is challenging from a resource angle, I believe that the sponsor's indicated financial plan is comparable to other successful new public charter schools throughout the State. The amended application included a sound contingency plan should funding materialize in an unanticipated amount, while also considering how to scale staffing the implementation of the academic model without compromising its integrity.

Once again, I would reiterate that the community spoke to the satisfaction of the academic model in comments in support of the application and in support of denial of the application. It is clear that individuals in the community like the Montessori academic model. Since the current district school utilizing this model can only be accessed through a lottery and has a waitlist, it appears there is a community need for additional quality seats offering this program. I am confident that the sponsor has put forth an application to meet that need. Overall, I believe the sponsor submitted an amended application that meets or exceeds the standards of the Department of Education's scoring rubric, and it would be in the best interest of the students, the LEA, or the community to approve this application.

Any authorized public charter school is entrusted with the great responsibility of educating students and a significant amount of public funds. For these reasons, the Commission expects that only those schools that have demonstrated a high likelihood of success and meet or exceed the required criteria in all areas will be authorized.

For the reasons expounded on in this report, I recommend that the Commission approve the Invictus Nashville Charter School amended application.



CONCLUSION

For these reasons, and for the reasons stated in the Review Committee Report attached hereto as **Exhibit A**, I do believe that the decision to deny the amended application for Invictus Nashville Charter School was contrary to the best interests of the students, the LEA, or the community. Therefore, I recommend that the Commission approve the amended application for Invictus Nashville Charter School.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tess Stovall". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tess Stovall, Executive Director
Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

10/2/23

Date



TENNESSEE
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

EXHIBIT A

Charter Application Review Committee Recommendation Report

October 6, 2023

School Name: Invictus Nashville Charter School

Sponsor: Invictus Nashville Charter School, Inc.

Proposed Location of School: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Evaluation Team:

- Scott Campbell
- Nancy Dickson
- Kelly Kroneman
- Rebecca Ledebuhr
- Maggie Lund
- Grant Monda

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



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Introduction

Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-108 allows the sponsor of a public charter school to appeal the denial of an application by the local board of education to the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Charter Commission”). In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the Charter Commission shall conduct a de novo, on the record review of the proposed charter school’s application, and Charter Commission has adopted national and state quality authorizing standards to guide its work. 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.

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-108, the Charter Commission adopted Charter Commission Policy 2.000 – Charter School Appeals. The Charter Commission has outlined the charter school appeal process to ensure the well-being and interests of students are the fundamental value informing all Charter Commission actions and decisions. The Charter 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 approval of a charter school. In addition, the Charter Commission plans to evaluate its work annually to ensure its alignment to national and state standards for quality authorizing and implements improvement when necessary.

The Charter Commission’s charter application review process is outlined in T.C.A. § 49-13-108, 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 amended charter application, attachments, and budget submitted by the sponsor. After an independent review, the review committee collectively identified the main strengths, concerns, and weaknesses as well as developed specific questions for the applicant in the three sections of the application: Academic Plan Design and Capacity, Operations Plan and Capacity, and Financial Plan and Capacity.
2. **Capacity Interview:** Based on the independent and collective review of the application, the review committee conducted a 90-minute interview with the sponsor, members of the governing board, and identified school leader to address the concerns, weaknesses, and questions identified in the application, and to assess the capacity to execute the application’s overall plan.
3. **Consensus Judgment:** At the conclusion of the review of the application and the capacity interview, the committee submitted a final rubric and developed a consensus regarding a rating for each section of the application.

This recommendation report includes the following information:



1. Summary of the application: A brief description of the applicant’s proposed academic, 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 three sections of the application and the capacity of the team to execute the plan as described in the application.
 - a. Academic Plan Design and Capacity: school mission and goals; enrollment summary; school development; academic focus and plan; academic performance standards; assessments; school schedule; special populations and at-risk students; school culture and discipline; marketing, recruitment, and enrollment; community involvement and parent engagement; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - b. Operations Plan and Capacity: governance; start-up plan; facilities; personnel/human capital; professional development; insurance; transportation; food service; additional operations; waivers; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.
 - c. Financial Plan and Capacity: budget narrative; budgets; cash flow projections; related assumptions; financial policies and procedures; and the capacity to implement the proposed plan.

The Charter Commission’s charter application review committee utilized the Tennessee Department of Education’s Charter School Application Evaluation Ratings and Sample Scoring Criteria (“the rubric”), which is used by all local boards of education when evaluating an application. The rubric states:

An application that merits a recommendation for approval should present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; be detailed in how this school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant’s capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic and operational plans. In addition to meeting the criteria that are specific to that section, each part of the proposal should align with the overall mission, budget, and goals of the application.

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

Rating	Characteristics
Meets or Exceeds Standard	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It clearly aligns with the mission and goals of the school. The response includes specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation.
Partially Meets Standard	The response meets the criteria in some aspects, but lacks sufficient detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
Does Not Meet Standard	The response is significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; is unsuited to the mission and vision of the district; or otherwise raises significant concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant’s ability to carry it out.



Summary of the Application

School Name: Invictus Nashville Charter School

Sponsor: Invictus Nashville Charter School, Inc.

Proposed Location of School: Metro Nashville Public Schools

Mission:¹ In partnership with families, Invictus Nashville will prepare our K-8 students to become engaged members of society by helping them identify their unique path to personal and professional success. Through a diverse culture, personalized learning that fosters high academic achievement, and community service, Invictus Nashville graduates will be equipped with the necessary habits of success and a heart for service in their communities.

Number of Schools Currently in Operation by Sponsor: There are no schools currently in operation by the sponsor.

Proposed Enrollment:²

Grade Level	Year 1: 2024-2025	Year 2: 2025-2026	Year 3: 2026-2027	Year 4: 2027-2028	Year 5: 2028-2029	At Capacity:
K	72	72	72	72	72	72
1	72	72	72	72	72	72
2	0	72	72	72	72	72
3	0	0	72	72	72	72
4	0	0	0	72	72	72
5	0	0	0	0	72	72
6	0	0	0	0	0	120
7	0	0	0	0	0	120
8	0	0	0	0	0	120
Totals	144	216	288	360	432	792

Brief Description of the Application:

The sponsor, Invictus Nashville Charter School, Inc., proposes to open a charter school in Davidson County, Tennessee and serve students in kindergarten through eighth grade when fully built out. The school, Invictus Nashville Charter School, is a new-start school and would be the first school for the sponsor. The school intends to operate in the Hermitage and Donelson communities of Nashville “to help students find their unique path to success with strong ties to the community.”³ The school proposes to offer a community co-design learning model with a Montessori elementary and project-based learning (PBL) middle school with a focus on mentoring, community and career expeditions, and community service for K-8 students. Invictus Nashville aims to provide an opportunity for students in the Hermitage and Donelson area to access additional school options.

The proposed school will be governed by a Board of Directors that will ensure active and sustainable academic, fiscal, and regulatory oversight of the school. In Year 0, Invictus Nashville Charter School has budgeted \$890,000 in revenue – comprised of \$125,000 from the Build, Excel, Sustain (BES) Fellowship grant (received), \$400,000 from the Charter School Growth Fund grant, \$215,000 from the New School Venture Fund grant (received), and

¹ Amended Application, pg. 7
² Amended Application, pg. 41
³ Amended Application, pg. 7



\$150,000 from board level fundraising and projects \$791,754 in expenses for the school. Invictus Nashville Charter School projects the school will have \$2,417,484 in revenue and \$2,397,792 in expenses in Year 1, resulting in a fund balance of \$118,438. By Year 5, the school projects to have \$6,848,417 in revenue and \$5,780,787 in expenses, resulting in a positive ending fund balance of \$2,452,538.⁴ The school anticipates that 40% of the student population will qualify as economically disadvantaged, 14% of the student population will be students with disabilities, and 18% of the student population will be English Learners.⁵

⁴ Amended Application, Attachment N

⁵ Amended Application, pg. 42



Summary of the Evaluation

The review committee recommends approval of the amended application for Invictus Nashville Charter School because the applicant provided a sound academic plan with clear community support and demand, and the applicant has identified and presented a letter of intent for a potential facility within the targeted neighborhood. Additionally, the applicant has secured start-up funding, including grants and multi-year projections demonstrating a strong financial position for the school.

The academic plan presented by the applicant outlines a proposed Montessori model that is aligned to Tennessee Academic Standards and incorporates all required components of the school day including RTI² and service of special populations of students. The model demonstrates clear alignment with the mission and vision of the school, and as students matriculate to middle school, the instructional model will shift to project-based learning which will help with the impending transition to high school. The applicant created the proposal for the school in response to community feedback and demand and has demonstrated community support throughout the application. The applicant also outlined contingency plans should enrollment not materialize in Year 1 as anticipated and has secured 67 intents to enroll. Finally, the applicant demonstrated capacity and experience in service of special populations through the outlined plan. The proposed instructional model lends itself well to differentiation of instruction in response to student data gathered through their robust internal assessment plan, and a clear plan for RTI².

The applicant's operations plan is sound, including robust start-up plans and a strong proposed governing board, professional development and staffing plan, and facility plan. The applicant's governing board is representative of the area the school intends to locate and has demonstrated diverse expertise and knowledge of the proposed school's plan. The staff recruitment and professional development plan outlines a clear pipeline for teacher growth and recruitment through the school's partnership with Arete Memphis for Montessori certification. Additionally, the school has partnered with LevelField and has a letter of intent on a facility that is in line with the budget. The applicant aims to sign a five (5)-year lease and ultimately expand within the facility to accommodate the school long term.

The financial plan includes multiple sources of start-up funding through grants and private fundraising that not only support the facility acquisition and other start-up funding, but also the curriculum and materials needed to support the Montessori model. The applicant has already secured grant funding including a BES grant and New Schools Venture Fund grant and has identified additional funding through City Fund to cover gaps while the school applies for other outlined grant options such as the Charter School Growth Fund and the Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant. The board also demonstrated financial expertise within the capacity interview when discussing the budget and contingency planning. The budget was designed to be conservative and can be adjusted as necessary to accommodate additional pay for staff or if expenses are higher than anticipated.

Summary of Section Ratings

In accordance with the Tennessee Department of Education's charter application scoring rubric, applications that do not meet or exceed the standard in all sections will be deemed not ready for approval⁶ and strengths in one area of the application do not negate weaknesses in other areas. Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. The review committee's consensus ratings for each section of the application are as follows:

⁶ Tennessee Charter School Application Evaluation Rubric – Ratings and Scoring Criteria



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

Analysis of the Academic Plan Design and Capacity

Rating: Meets or Exceeds Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Academic Plan Design and Capacity meets or exceeds the standard because the academic plan and instructional model align with the mission and vision of the school, there is clear community support and a response to community feedback within the application, and there is a robust plan to serve special populations of students and address academic gaps.

The mission, vision, academic plan, and instructional model all demonstrate clear alignment with a Montessori curriculum for the proposed elementary school and a project-based learning model for the proposed middle school. The applicant provided a well-researched plan that demonstrates clear alignment to Tennessee Academic Standards and testing requirements. Though the model is innovative through its use of independent daily work cycles for students, the model incorporates all required components such as RTI², service of special populations, and explicit instruction of state standards. The proposed model also includes expedition weeks. During the capacity interview, the review committee asked questions surrounding the logistics of the proposed expedition weeks, and the applicant clarified their plan to provide rich learning opportunities for students outside of the classroom. The applicant will build these weeks into their academic scope and sequences to ensure that all academic standards are appropriately taught and assessed, and students can experience career and volunteer opportunities within their community.

Another clear strength of the application for Invictus Nashville is the clear identification of a community it plans to serve and demonstration of community support for the school and the academic model. The proposed school leader, prior to writing the application, began a robust community engagement process determining what the needs of the community were and how the community wanted these needs addressed. The academic model was designed in response to community preference, and the proposed school leader spent months visiting other schools around the country who utilize the Montessori model to ensure an appropriate understanding of the scope and details needed to execute the academic plan effectively. The applicant has already received 67 intents to enroll for the school, and they will continue to engage with the community and local daycares to ensure their enrollment targets are reached. The applicant also outlined contingency plans, such as adjusting class sizes and staffing to operate with less students should enrollment not materialize in Year 1 as planned.

Finally, within the confines of the unique instructional model, the applicant outlined a robust internal assessment plan, a plan to serve special populations of students, and a plan for RTI² and student differentiation to address academic gaps. The applicant outlined many internal assessments within the application including internal benchmarks aligned with state standards and NWEA MAP assessments. The student data collected from these assessments will be utilized by teachers to inform instruction and differentiation for students. This differentiation of instruction will take place during the outlined work cycles of the student schedules where students progress through their learning at an independent pace. The proposed school leader demonstrated knowledge of how to appropriately serve special populations of students due to her experience supporting students with disabilities and English Learners. The application outlines appropriate teacher to student ratios to ensure services are rendered as needed, and the applicant demonstrates plans to serve students within their least restrictive environment, which is supported through their academic model. Within the application and capacity interview, the applicant outlined a strong student culture plan including one-on-one mentoring opportunities. Based on the totality of the evidence within the Academic Plan Design and Capacity, the review committee determined that the application meets or exceeds the standard.

Analysis of the Operations Plan and Capacity

Rating: Meets or Exceeds Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Operations Plan and Capacity meets or exceeds the standard because the applicant presented a sound leadership and governance structure, a clear staffing plan, a robust professional development plan for teachers, and a clear and realistic start-up plan.

The applicant has created a robust governing board that brings together a combination of expertise that represents a spectrum of experiences and areas of expertise to ensure a holistic approach to decision-making and oversight. With the board's strong connections to the community, the Invictus Nashville board will not only be responsive to community need but will also hold the school leadership accountable for pursuing the mission and vision of the school. Many of the board members live within the community in which the school intends to locate, and during the capacity interview, the board demonstrated heavy involvement in planning for and implementation of the proposal for the school. The board also spoke to their responsibility of ensuring that the proposed school leaders is held accountable to student and operational outcomes and demonstrated financial expertise and knowledge throughout the discussion of developing the budget for the school.

The application provides a robust professional development (PD) plan for teachers and staff. The PD framework is data-driven and uses research-based practices in alignment with the school's unique model. The applicant intends to hold PD on Friday afternoons for teachers. However, they also shared their commitment to compliance with law and State Board of Education rule regarding early release days during the capacity interview stating they can adjust their plan as needed to ensure appropriate PD time for teachers in alignment to state requirements. Additionally, the applicant outlined a detailed plan to provide teachers training and certification opportunities in the Montessori model through Arete Memphis, stating they have already made fiscal allocations within the budget to provide this certification and growth pathway for teachers. The applicant will also be able to use this certification program as a pipeline for recruitment of high-quality Montessori certified teachers. Given the unique model of the proposed school, recruitment of high-quality and appropriately certified teachers is an essential part of the operational plan. The proposed school leader shared during the capacity interview that she has received interest from potential teachers who value the school's model and stated that the school will compensate teachers based on experience. The school leader also expressed commitment to provide English Learner (EL) certified teachers an appropriate salary in line with the resident district as the review committee noted concerns of EL certified teachers being classified as assistant teachers, receiving less pay. Ultimately, the board and leadership team believe that the unique model and leadership opportunities will attract and retain teachers, though they will use contingency funds or seek additional funding to ensure that teachers are paid in accordance with their experience and certification levels.

Finally, the applicant provided multiple facility options within the application within the proposed community. During the capacity interview the applicant and their partner, LevelField, explained that the school already has a letter of intent securing a facility. This facility option is outlined within the application and is within the desired area of location for the school. The proposed lease also includes many separately budgeted items such as janitorial services, which ensures the cost to be in line with the proposed budget. The applicant intends to sign a five (5)-year lease with the option of expansion within the facility to continue the growth of the school such that the facility could be used long term. Due to the totality of evidence presented both within the application and during the capacity interview, the review committee determined that the school's Operational Plan Design and Capacity meets or exceeds the standard.

Analysis of the Financial Plan and Capacity

Rating: Meets or Exceeds Standard

Strengths Identified by the Committee

The applicant's Financial Plan Design and Capacity meets or exceeds the standard because of the secured start-up funding, the financial expertise of the governing board and external partners, and the submitted conservative and flexible operating budget.

Within the application, the budget assumptions include revenue from a BES grant, the Charter School Growth Fund, the New School Venture Fund, and board level fundraising. During the capacity interview, the applicant provided updates on the start-up funding indicating that they have secured all proposed funding, with the exception of the Charter School Growth Fund, for which they are eligible to apply in October of 2023. Additionally, the applicant has a letter of support from City Fund to provide funding while applying for the Charter School Growth Fund and anticipates receiving the Charter Schools Program grant once announced. The applicant has secured commitments, pending authorization, from private funders, area businesses, and organizations to sponsor classrooms at the cost of \$25,000 per classroom to furnish the necessary supplies aligned to the academic model and spoke of other promising funding opportunities during the capacity interview. The applicant and the governing board have demonstrated capacity for cultivating relationships and pursuing funding sources to support the school.

The applicant has assembled a governing board with financial expertise and partnerships to support financial planning and management. The applicant has a partnership with EdTech, who supported the creation of the budget and will provide continuous back-office support. Additionally, the governing board has experience with start-up finances for public charter schools. Specifically, a board member previously served on the board of another public charter school in Nashville, is a Certified Public Accountant, and was able to provide robust details regarding the budget during the capacity interview. The review committee determined that this meets or exceeds the standard on the Tennessee Department of Education's scoring criteria requiring a high level of financial expertise across internal and external team members.

The budget is conservative and designed to be flexible as needed if expenses come in higher than anticipated. For example, the budget includes various facility related services that would need to be contracted; however, the applicant stated that the letter of intent for the lease they are pursuing includes these services, leaving room in the budget for additional contingency funds. The review committee had concerns about the salaries budgeted as given the requirements for teacher experience and additional certification, the expense assumptions for the budget were on the low end of the district's outlined salary structure and EL certified staff had an assistant teacher salary level. The applicant stated they will work to ensure fair salaries for all staff, adjusting the budget as needed. Additionally, the applicant believes their unique model and opportunities for growth within the organization will attract and retain teachers. Due to the reasons outlined above and the applicant's financial procedures and practices, the applicant has met or exceeded the standards of the Tennessee Department of Education's scoring criteria requirement.



Evaluation Team

Scott Campbell is the Cofounder and Executive Director of Persist and Persist Nashville. Persist has quickly become the largest college Persistence organization in Nashville serving over 3500 high school graduates over the past 4 years. Scott is a former classroom teacher and administrator. In his career he has worked at 6 different urban, rural, and suburban schools. He has led and taught at traditional public, magnet, and charter schools in 4 different states and DC. Before moving to Nashville he was a teacher and Assistant Principal at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, the nation's top rated public high school. In Nashville he has helped lead and develop the early years of RePublic High School and Valor Collegiate Academies in Nashville. Before starting Persist he served as high school principal in Nashville.

Nancy Dickson is the Director for Peabody's partnership with American University of Iraq, Baghdad (AUIB) to design and launch a new college of education focused on teacher training and development. Nancy also teaches in the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations (LPO) in Peabody College. Previously, she led Vanderbilt's Humphrey Fellowship Program, a Fulbright exchange program for educational leaders from around the globe. Before working at Vanderbilt, she was the Director of Operations and a founding team member of LEAD Academy, a charter school network in Nashville. Nancy started her career in education as a 4th grade teacher in Washington, D.C. public schools. She holds a Doctorate of Educational Leadership and a Master of Public Policy degree from Vanderbilt, and a Bachelor of Art degree in Elementary Education from Penn State University.

Kelly Kroneman most recently served as the Manager of Federal Programs and Special Populations for the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, and currently works as an independent consultant. She began her education career as an elementary teacher and has five years' experience as a district IDEA and Title III administrator working with charter schools to support compliance for special education and English learners programming. Kelly holds a Master of Public Policy degree from Vanderbilt University, as well as a Master of Arts in Teaching and Bachelor of Science degree from James Madison University. She is passionate about supporting charter networks, school leaders, and teachers to improve educational experiences and outcomes for historically underserved populations.

Rebecca Ledebuhr is the Data and Accountability Coordinator at the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. Before taking on her role at the Charter Commission, Rebecca spent fourteen years working in public schools in North Carolina and Tennessee. Most recently, she served as an instructional coach for mathematics at an MNPS public charter school. Rebecca has served on the Nashville Public Education Foundation's and Mayor's Teacher Cabinet, as a mentor teacher for the Nashville Teacher Residency, and as a Tennessee Educator Fellow for the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE). Rebecca holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Religion from James Madison University.

Maggie Lund is 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 and Building Classroom Communities. Prior to her role at the Charter Commission, Maggie served as a school administrator at a Nashville public charter school. Maggie was a Teach for America corps member and served as an 8th grade teacher in a charter school for four years. Maggie holds a B.A. 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.

Grant Monda joined the Aurora Collegiate Academy Team in 2015, currently serving as its Executive Director. Aurora is a tuition- free public charter elementary school serving students from all over Shelby County. Grant joined Aurora



after completing the prestigious Ryan Fellowship. In addition to his work at Aurora, Grant has previously taught in Memphis City Schools as a Teacher For America Corps member and served as a district level coach and evaluator with Shelby County Schools. Grant has reviewed charter applications for the state and Shelby County Schools. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rhodes College and a Master's in Education from Christian Brothers University.