

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

Charter School Pre-Opening Checklist

Rocketship Nashville #3



Introduction

After a charter school application is approved and authorized, there are a significant number of steps to be taken before a school is ready to open its doors to students, families, teachers, and the community. This will serve as a guiding document for charter schools that have been authorized by the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (Charter Commission). Operators are expected to fulfill all of the requirements outlined in the following table to ensure that the charter school opens with the tools in place to succeed as a high-quality school.

The Charter Commission staff will work with the charter school to complete the pre-opening checklist, but it is the ultimate responsibility of the charter school to ensure it has completed all steps to be ready to open. We understand that opening a school takes a significant amount of time and energy, and the failure to complete one item does not mean that the school will not open. However, items that are in **bold text** are considered foundational items that must be completed for a school to open. If any of the **bolded items** are not completed or if a significant number of other items are not completed by the deadlines set by the Charter Commission, the school's opening may be delayed.

The Charter Commission staff will conduct a pre-opening visit to verify that the school is ready to open its doors to students. A school may not open until it has received a letter from the Charter Commission stating that it has completed the necessary items on the Pre-Opening Checklist, and the school is ready to open for students, families, and staff.

If a charter school does not complete all of the items on the Pre-Opening Checklist by December 31st of the year it opens, the school's charter will be recommended for immediate revocation.



ltem	Governance & Managemen Deliverable	Due Date	Owner	Comments	Completed
Establish the Governing Body.	Submit list of the current members of the Governing Body including contact information and positions held on the Governing Body. The TPCSC must be notified of any change to the Governing Body made after the due date within 30 days of the change.	June 1	Owner		completed
Establish and approve by-laws.	Submit copy of ratified by-laws and copy of minutes with ratification vote to the TPCSC within 5 days of meeting.	June 1			
Hire head of school/principal.	Submit name and contact information. The TPCSC must be notified of any change in school director/principal made after the due date and within 30 days of hire.	June 1			
Hire school leadership.	Submit an updated organizational chart with the names and contact information of key individuals in school leadership or administration positions.	June 1			
Name of contact for pre-opening checklist	Submit name, title, and contact information of individual overseeing the pre-opening checklist	Jan 15			
Name main contact for reporting calendar/general compliance.	Submit name, title, and contact information of reporting calendar and general compliance.	March 1			
Name main contact for federal programs compliance.	Submit name, title, and contact information of federal programs contact. If same contact at the reporting calendar/general compliance, please note it.	March 1			
Execute a management contract (if applicable).	Submit contract that is signed by management company and Governing Body and minutes from meeting approving the contract.	June 1			



Finance					
Item	Deliverable	Due Date	Owner	Comments	Completed
Submit preliminary enrollment projections	Submit preliminary enrollment and special education projections by funding option to begin the district planning and funding application processes.	February 15			
Finalize current enrollment for funding calculations.	 Submit final enrollment numbers after closing the enrollment period and lottery. (Update monthly until July) Estimated total enrollment on the first day of school Estimated number of SWD Estimated number of EL students Estimated number of directly certified students 	March 15			
Complete budget for upcoming school year and receive approval from the Governing Body.	Submit budget to the TPCSC and copy of minutes with approval vote included.	June 1			
Designate individual responsible for finance.	Submit name and contact information of the finance lead to the TPCSC. Submit W9 and ACH routing information to establish school as a vendor in Edison.	April 1			
Designate individual responsible for back- office operations/reporting	Submit evidence of employment or contract with an accountant, bookkeeper, or other person who will handle financial matters.	July 1			
Establish a payroll system.	Submit contract with a payroll company or evidence of employment of or contract with persons to handle payroll and copy of deduction policy.	July 1			
Obtain federal tax- exempt status for the	Submit copies of all applications (Form 1023) and filings regarding tax-exempt status to the TPCSC, including final Internal Revenue Service determination letter.	June 1			



school's education					
corporation.					
Retain an independent certified public accountant for	Submit contract with independent certified public accountant.	July 1			
auditing requirements.					
	Personnel/Staffing				
ltem	Deliverable	Due Date	Owner	Comments	Completed
Designate a human resources lead.	Submit name and contact information of human resources lead to the TPCSC. This individual should be able to provide staffing and licensure information to the TPCSC	March 1			
Sign up for employee	Opt-in or opt-out of the State of Tennessee's Health, Dental, and Vision Plans.	March 1			
benefits.	Complete and submit required participation paperwork.	April 1			
Select a teacher evaluation system.	In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-1-302, T.C.A. § 49-5-108, and State Board Rule 0520-02-04, the school must select a teacher evaluation system and notify the Tennessee Department of Education of the system. If the school chooses to adopt an alternative observation model, it must be approved by the State Board in accordance with State Board Policy 5.201.	May 1			
Sign up eligible employees for TCRS.	Enroll eligible employees into the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) and begin monthly reporting by the first payroll in which an eligible employee is paid.	March 1			
Establish a process for background screening	Obtain an ORI number from the TBI.	February 1			



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for all employees and	Conduct TBI background checks for each new	July 1			
collect documentation	employee, contractor, or volunteer.				
of background checks,					
including employees in	Submit information to TPCSC for DCS checks on any				
transportation, food	new employee, contract, or volunteer as they are hired.				
service, custodial, and	Maintain background checks in a secure location in	July 1			
security.	accordance with state and federal law. Files should be				
	available for inspection at any time.				
Have an adequate	On a monthly basis, submit an employee list that	March 1			
number of teachers	specifies the following: role/assignment, teacher license	April 1			
that matches the	number (if required for role), and status of TBI	May 1			
staffing plan	background check.	June 1			
established in the		July 1			
charter application.		August 1			
Establish human	Identify Human Resource Information System to collect	July 1			
resource system for	and maintain employee information required under	_			
maintaining	Personnel Information Reporting System (PIRS).				
information.					
	Submit approved copy of employee handbook and	June 1			
Establish and approve	minutes with Governing Body approval vote.				
an employee handbook	Provide documentation that the employee handbook	July 15			
and distribute	has been distributed to all staff.	July 15			
handbook to all staff.					
	Serving Special Populations				
Item	Deliverable	Due Date	Owner	Comments	Completed
Hire and designate	Submit list of names and contact information of school-	March 1			
leads for special	level and/or network-level leads. If the contact changes,				
education, student	the school will provide updates to the TPCSC on				
discipline, testing	contacts within a week of the change.				
coordinator, SIS/Data	Ğ				
Manager, Homeless					
Services, Foster Care,					



Migrant, 504, and ESL Services.			
Adopt and implement a plan to deliver required services to students with disabilities.	Submit written documentation that the school has hired appropriate staff or contracted with other vendors for special education teacher(s), school psychologist, speech and language therapists, and occupational and physical therapists, or other services or equipment, if required by student IEPs. Submit written documentation of anticipated students and their anticipated needs to TPCSC and how the	August 1	
	school plans to meet the needs of the students. A final plan will be submitted as part of the August reporting calendar (deadline is September 5 th).		
Adopt and implement a plan for identifying and assessing English proficiency for	Create and submit a Home Language Survey (HLS) to use with all enrolled students who do not already have a HLS in their cumulative folder. Home Language Survey must be in compliance with State Board Policy 3.207.	March 1 (or two weeks before the beginning of the enrollmen t period)	
students classified as Non-English Language Background (NELB) through a Home Language Survey.	Submit written documentation of the school's plan to administer the WIDA screener to eligible students, and how the school plans to meet the anticipated needs of the EL students in accordance with federal and state law. A final service plan will be submitted as part of the	August 1	



School Operations						
Item	Deliverable	Due Date	Owner	Comments	Completed	
Complete E-Rate Filing.	If necessary, complete E-Rate filing via the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).	March 1				
Submit student application form	Submit the application form the school plans to use for review and approval	February 1 (or two weeks before the application form is used)				
Submit student enrollment form	Submit the enrollment form that the school plans to use for review and approval. The enrollment form must have: Occupational Survey (migrant identification), Home Language Survey (EL identification, for new arrivals), Residency Questionnaire (McKinney Vento identification).	March 1 (or two weeks before the application form is used)				
Draft and submit all plans/procedures/polic ies required to the pre- opening process and designate policy point of contact.	See attached sheet for required plans/procedures/policies. Submit main point of contact for policy audit to TPCSC.	June 1				
Complete initial requirements for	Create and submit in e-Plan a draft of the School Improvement Plan	June 1				
federal funding compliance.	Create and submit school/parent/student compacts forms to the TPCSC and plans to host annual Title I meeting by October 1.	July 1				



If transportation will	Submit contract and insurance information of	June 1
be provided, select	transportation provider and provide school contact for	
transportation service	handling transportation.	
provider. Service must		
meet specifications		
outlined in the Charter		
Contract.		
Establish school	Submit calendar, start and end times, class	April 15
calendar for year, start	schedules, and documentation of parental	
and end times, and	notification.	
class schedules, and		
circulate this		
information to staff,		
parents, and students.		
	Determine lead for food services and submit name and contact information.	July 1
	Contact the State Department of Education to set up a National School Lunch and Breakfast Program.	January 31
Establish processes for food service.	Complete registration and submit required forms to the State Department of Education to finalize operation of a National School Lunch and Breakfast Program.	July 31
	If contracting with a third-party vendor, submit written documentation of contract.	July 1
	Submit plan to process free and reduced lunch applications and required reporting to State of Tennessee.	July 1
Hire or contract with a nursing services provider and create a plan and procedures	Submit documentation of the school's relationship with a registered nurse and/or physician.	July 15
Pieri and procedures		



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for the administration	Submit written documentation of anticipated students	August 1	
of prescription and	and their anticipated health needs to TPCSC and how		
non-prescription	the school plans to meet the needs of the students in		
medications to	accordance with required services.		
students and for			
provision of required			
health services.			
Establish process for	Submit documentation of record process and written	July 15	
collecting	assurance that students who do not have such records		
immunization records	will be barred from school (except where allowances		
or proper exemption	are permitted), in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-5001.		
forms.			
Submit lottery	In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-13-113 (b)(8), submit to the TDOE a certification by an independent accounting firm or by a law firm of the lottery process used for enrollment purposes OR request that the TDOE review and approve the lottery process at least 10 business days prior to the lottery taking place. Submit written documentation to the TPCSC	March 1	
procedures and student record request plans	Submit written assurances from school that records have been requested and/or received, are or will be in locked storage, and locked storage is present at the time of inspection. NOTE: TPCSC strongly recommends schools begin requesting records as early as May to have the files in time for the beginning of the school year. Submit copy of FERPA procedures for storage/handling of student files in school. Locked storage of student files will be inspected during pre-opening visit.	July 30	
Develop student/family	Submit copy of Student and Family Handbook	June 1	
handbook.	containing the required policies/procedures. The		



	handbook must have all required notices including student discipline, complaints/grievances, FERPA, etc.				
Acquire required insurance.	Submit certificate of insurance that meets the minimum levels as required by TCA § 49-13-107 and the Charter Agreement.	July 1			
Develop written safety plans for life safety procedures such as fire drills and emergency evacuation, including school safety plans in accordance with Project SAVE. These plans are in the student and employee handbooks, and the school hires appropriate security personnel.	Submit copy of SAVE plan and Emergency Operations Plan in Navigate Prepared.	August 1			
Meet with local law enforcement to establish partnership and complete safety walkthrough.	Submit written assurance of walkthrough, including any safety recommendations; made by law enforcement.	August 1			
	Student Data				
Item Ensure school has appropriate management and oversight of student information in place.	Deliverable Identify student information system (SIS) manager within the school and notify the TPCSC staff of name and contact information.	Due Date April 1	Owner	Comments	Completed
Ensure school has appropriate	Secure access to the TPCSC's SIS.	June 1			



management and oversight of student information in place. Ensure Student Information System (SIS) and Education Information System (EIS) has all of the required information from the school.	Work with TPCSC to submit State School Approval Form.	March 1			
Ensure Student	Submit school calendar to TPCSC.	April 15			
Information System (SIS) and Education Information System	Submit a request for all personnel who will need SSO, EIS, EASYIEP, and WIDA AMS usernames.	June 1			
(EIS) has all of the required information from the school.	Enroll all students and complete staff profiles in student information system.	July 31			
	Complete all student profiles in student information system, working with TPCSC to resolve all errors and ensuring all students appear in EIS.	August 31			
	Facilities				
ltem	Deliverable	Due Date	Owner	Comments	Completed
Secure a facility for the	Submit final lease or purchase agreement and	April 1			
school and complete	minutes with Governing Body approval.				
necessary renovations.					
Secure a facility for the	Submit renovation calendar and written assurances that	May 1			
school and complete necessary renovations.	facility will be ready for instruction at the beginning of the school year.				



Obtain an asbestos-	If constructing a new school building, obtain a	July 15
free certification under	statement from an architect, project engineer	
40 CFR 763.99	responsible for the construction of the new building, or	
	an accredited inspector that no asbestos-containing	
	building material (ACBM) was specified as a building	
	material in any construction document for the building,	
	or, to the best of his or her knowledge, no ABCM was	
	used as a building material in the building.	
	If not constructing a new school building, submit	
	assurance of proper inspection for ACBM by an	
	accredited inspector, as required by Federal laws and	
	regulations governing asbestos in schools.	
Distribute necessary	Submit documentation that age-appropriate classroom	July 1
instructional materials	furniture has been procured.	
and supplies to		
classrooms at every		
grade level.		
Obtain a Certificate of	Submit Certificate of Occupancy and any other	July 15
Occupancy and any	required permits.	
other required permits		
from local building		
department <u>before Pre-</u>		
<u>Opening Visit</u> .		
Complete Fire Marshall	Submit documentation of Fire Marshall inspection.	July 15
inspections on any		
major renovation work		
done to facility to		
ensure approval for		
occupancy as an		
educational space.		



Execute contract with a	Submit contract with custodial vendor.	June 1		
custodial service				
vendor.				



FINAL PRE-OPENING VISIT

WALKTHROUGH CHECKLIST

The following items will be inspected as part of the final pre-opening visit:

Торіс	ltem	Completion Status	Notes
	Utilities are turned on and working properly in all areas of the building.		
	Submit Asbestos Certification, Certificate of Occupancy and any other required permits from local building department		
	Space is safe and secure; entrance and egress from the school's space is adequately controlled.		
	All exterior doors close and lock properly.		
Facilities Readiness and Signage	School safety zone signage. (optional)		
	Complete Fire Marshall inspections on any major renovation work done to facility to ensure approval for occupancy as an educational space.		
	Inspection of appropriately secured medical storage.		
	Ensure that classroom space, restrooms, and special purpose space meet the requirements of the program and the number of students enrolled.		
	Distribute necessary instructional materials and supplies to classrooms at every grade level.		



Торіс	Item	Completion Status	Notes
	Public displays of signage (noted in required postings section of Charter Handbook and included below).		
	Ensure that fire extinguishers have been recently inspected.		
Emergency Operations	Ensure that there is adequate signage for the school and that the school building is appropriately numbered for emergency response purposes.		
	Make certain each room has emergency exit plans and maps that will not be covered by any materials.		
Records Storage	Medical records are separate from academic records, in locked storage, and locked storage is present at time of Pre-Opening Visit.		
	Student records have been requested and/or received, are or will be in locked storage, and locked storage is present at the time of inspection.		
Food Service and Preparation	The school has the necessary equipment to either prepare food on site or accept food service delivery and properly store food and beverage until it is consumed. Inspection will be completed at Pre-Opening Visit.		
Transportation	Inspection of school transportation plans and spaces for busses, traffic flow-thru, and student drop off/pick up.		



Required Postings

(From TPCSC Charter School Handbook)

Required Posting/Notice	Completion Status	Notes
Notice prohibiting weapons on school property		
Notice that lockers and other storage areas, containers, and packages brought into the school by students or visitors are subject to search for drugs, drug paraphernalia, dangerous weapons, or any property that is not properly in the possession of the student		
Notice visible from the school parking lot that vehicles parked on school property by students or visitors are subject to search for drugs, drug paraphernalia, or dangerous weapons		
DCS/child abuse reporting notice		
Homeless information posters		
Child Find information posters		
National Motto		

Required Policies/Procedures

Required Policies/Procedures	Source of Requirement	Required
Code of ethics and conflict of interest policy	 TPCSC LEA Policy 1106 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Grievance and complaint policy and procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 1200 TPCSC LEA Policy 1801 (policies shall include general complaints under IDEA) 	Pre- opening
ADA/Section 504 complaint policy or procedure	TPCSC LEA Policy 1802	Pre- opening
 Fiscal management procedures Expenditure of funds policy and procedures 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 2100 TPCSC LEA Policy 2800 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, p. 2 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 Policy / procedure governing the preparation and approval of budgets and budget revisions 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 2200 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 Grant management procedures, including procedures used to determine if a cost is allowable and properly allocated to an individual grant 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 2400 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Inventory and equipment policies and procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 2702 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, pp. 35-38 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening

Required Policies/Procedures	Source of Requirement	Required
Procedures which comply with federal regulations for cash management	 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Payroll/time and effort policy and procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 2802 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures pp. 39-40 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 Expenses and reimbursements policy and procedures 	TPCSC LEA Policy 2804	Pre- opening
 Travel policy and procedures, including specifics on authorizing, verifying, and reimbursing travel expenditures 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 2804 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, pp. 18-20 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 Purchasing and contracts policy and procedures, including written procurement procedures which comply with federal requirements and awarding contracts that ensures the appropriate approval. 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 2805 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, pp. 25-32 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 School safety and emergency response plan/procedures 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 3201 TPCSC Emergency Preparedness and School Safety Drill Procedures 	Pre- opening
 Transportation policy and procedures Transportation safety complaint policy and procedures Procedure governing use of cameras and video cameras on school buses 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 3400 TPCSC Transportation Procedures 	Pre- opening

Required Policies/Procedures	Source of Requirement	Required
Parent and family engagement policy	 TPCSC LEA Policy 4502 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 Promotion and retention policy (including how attendance will be used as a criteria for promotion/denial) Procedure for developing the individualized promotion plan 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 4603 TPCSC LEA Policy 6200 	Pre- opening
Equal opportunity employment policy	TPCSC LEA Policy 5104	Pre- opening
Employee-related complaints and grievance policy	TPCSC LEA Policy 5104	Pre- opening
Employee discrimination and harassment policy	• TPCSC LEA Policy 5104	Pre- opening
Human resources policies/hiring process	 TPCSC LEA Policy 5106 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures pp.42-43 TPCSC Personnel/Hiring Procedures TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 CHRI and background information security procedures School volunteer background check requirement procedures 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 5118 Personnel/Hiring Procedures 	Pre- opening
Student attendance policy and procedures	TPCSC LEA Policy 6200	Pre- opening

Required Policies/Procedures	Source of Requirement	Required
Physical examinations and immunizations policy	TPCSC LEA Policy 6203	Pre- opening
Admissions and enrollment policy	TPCSC LEA Policy 6206	Pre- opening
Student discipline policy and procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 6313 TPCSC Disciplinary Hearing Authority Procedures 	Pre- opening
Zero tolerance policy and procedures	TPCSC LEA Policy 6309	Pre- opening
 Bullying, cyber-bullying, discrimination, harassment, and hazing policy 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 6304 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Student disciplinary hearing authority (DHA) policy and procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 6317 TPCSC Disciplinary Hearing Authority Procedures 	Pre- opening
Homeless students policy and procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 6503 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Migrant students procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 6504 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Foster student policy and procedures	 TPCSC LEA Policy 6505 TPCSC Foster Care Procedures 	Pre- opening
Identification of immigrant student procedures	 TPCSC Student Enrollment Procedures TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening

Required Policies/Procedures	Source of Requirement	Required
Enrollment of Military Students policy	TPCSC Enrollment Procedures	Pre- opening
 Confidentiality of student records policy Survey of students/Collection of information policy 	 TPCSC LEA Policy 6600 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, p. 48 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Purchase card policy or procedure	 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, p. 30 	Pre- opening
Employee separation practices policy or procedure	 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, p. 42 	Pre- opening
Child find and referral procedures	TPCSC Child Find Procedures	Pre- opening
 Protection of employee personal information policy and procedures 	 TPCSC Uniform Grants Guidance Policies/Procedures, p. 45 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Title IX and sexual harassment policy and procedures	TPCSC LEA Policy TBA (August 2020)	Pre- opening

Required Plans/Processes

Required Plans/Processes	Source of Requirement	Grade Span
Differentiated pay/strategic compensation plan, or Salary Schedule	 TPCSC LEA Policy 5911 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
 Special Education Services plan Process to recruit, train, and appoint surrogate parents in the case of students who are wards of the state, unaccompanied homeless youth, or in cases where a parent cannot be located 	TPCSC LEA Policy 1801	Pre- opening
Response to Intervention (RTI ²) implementation plan	 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Professional development plan	 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening
Plan for support, supervision, and evaluation of teachers and staff	 TPCSC Federal Programs Sub- recipient Monitoring Guidebook 	Pre- opening