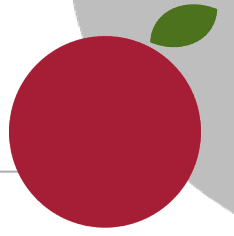
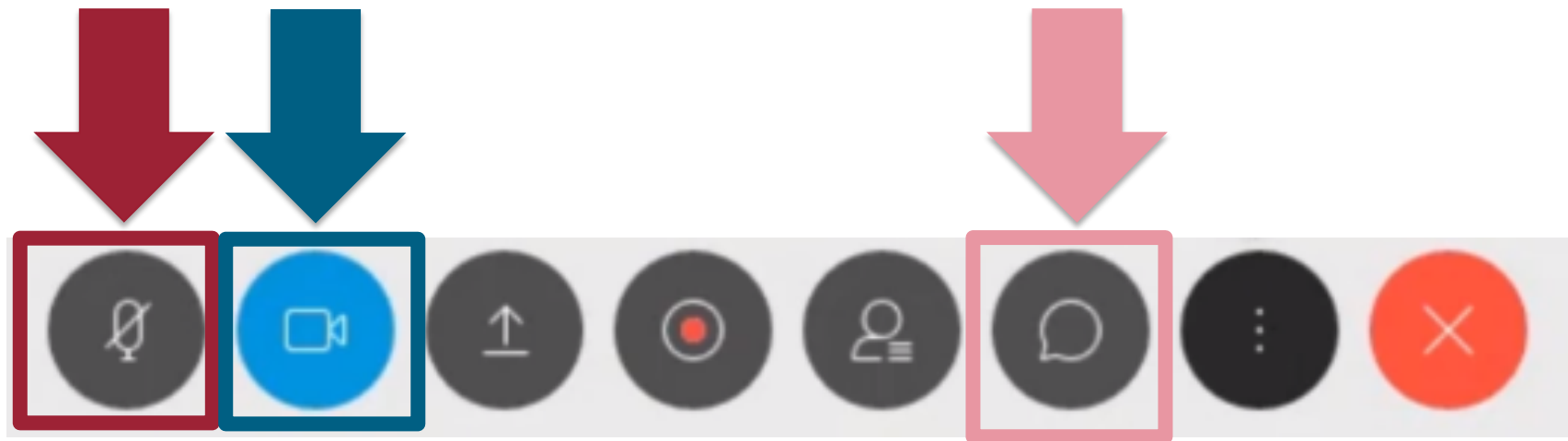


HELLO AND WELCOME!



1. Mute yourself to eliminate background noise.
2. Please turn on your video, if you're able to.
3. Chat to everyone your name, role, and organization.





nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

BEST PRACTICES IN QUALITY AUTHORIZING

**A VIRTUAL TRAINING FOR THE
STATE CHARTER SCHOOL
COMMISSION OF TENNESSEE**

APRIL 22, 2020



Welcome (10 min)

The Charter School Lifecycle: The Commissioner's Role (20 min)

Quality Decision-Making (30 min)

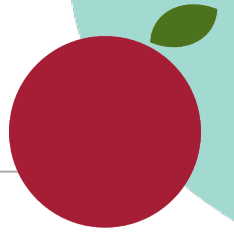
Break (5 min)

Quality Practices (60 min)

- Applications on Appeal (30 min)
- Performance Contracting and Ongoing Evaluation (15 min)
- Renewal/Revocation and Renewal/Revocation on Appeal (15 min)

Wrap up (5 min)

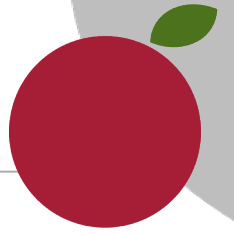
WHAT DOES NACSA BELIEVE?



Our nation needs to provide better schools to more children by:

- ✓ Improving families' access to quality schools
- ✓ Providing educators the autonomy they need for schools to excel
- ✓ Holding schools accountable for their performance

HELLO AND WELCOME

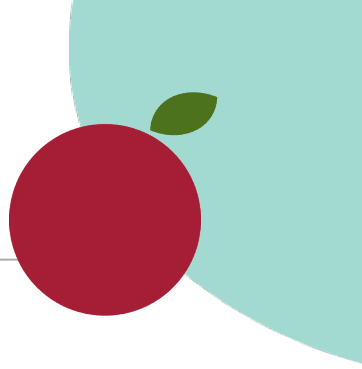


Dr. Karega Rausch
Interim CEO and Vice
President of
Research and
Evaluation



Erin Marwah
Associate Director
Authorizer
Engagement and
Advancement

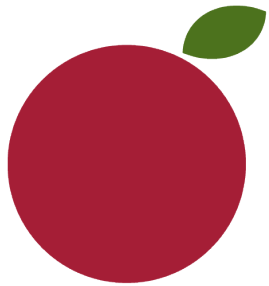
INTRODUCTIONS



Name

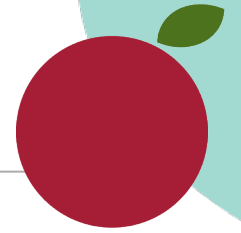
Role/Org

Share a bit of
good news
(personal or
professional)



THE CHARTER SCHOOL LIFECYCLE: THE COMMISSIONER'S ROLE

THE COMMISSION'S DUAL ROLES



State Charter School
Commission of Tennessee

Starting SY 2020-2021

Authorizer on Appeal

Hears appeals for:

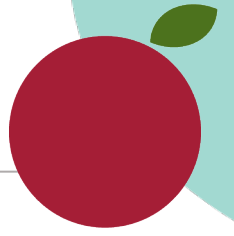
- New starts
- Renewals
- Revocations
- (Charter Amendments *still currently with SBOE)

Authorizer

Monitors and oversees schools on appeal:

- Openings
- Performance and data
- Renewals
- School closures/revocations

THE COMMISSION AS “AUTHORIZER”



RESPONSIBILITIES

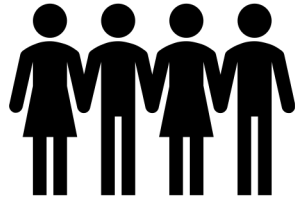
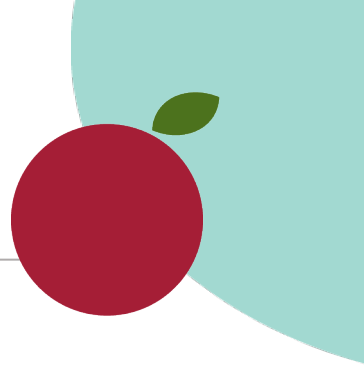
Authorizers are charged with the responsibility for:

- setting expectations and oversee school performance; and,
- determining which schools should continue to serve students (or not).

While always:

- *maintaining high standards for charter schools;*
- *upholding school autonomy; and,*
- *protecting student and public interests.*

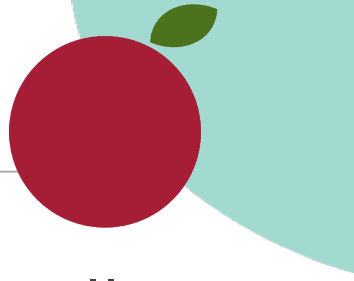
TENNESSEE QUALITY AUTHORIZING PRACTICES



Commission role vs. Staff role



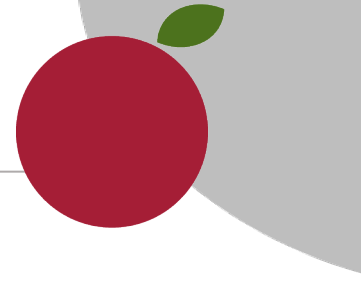
QUICK POLL – TYPE IN THE CHAT BOX



“What are the general responsibilities of commissioners? Select all that apply”

- A. High stakes decision-making
- B. Receive consolidated information and recommendations from staff to aid in decision-making
- C. Manage day-to-day activities
- D. Interact with schools
- E. Collect, manage, and monitor school performance information
- F. Generate recommendations for decision-making

COMMISSIONER VS. STAFF GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

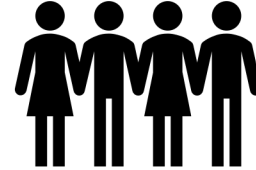


Commissioner



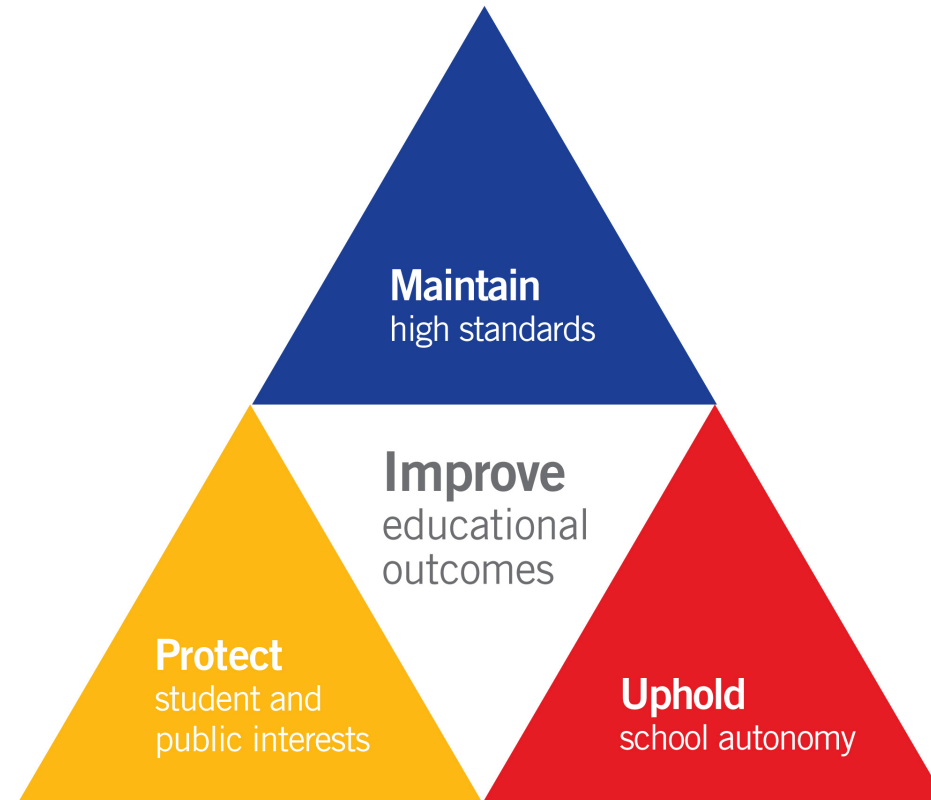
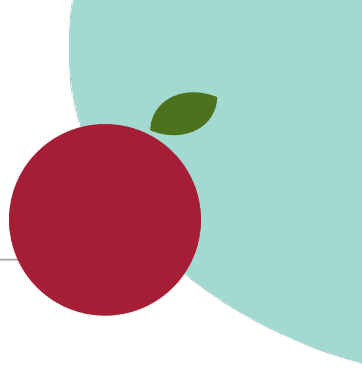
- High stakes decision-making
- Receive consolidated information and recommendations from staff to aid in decision-making

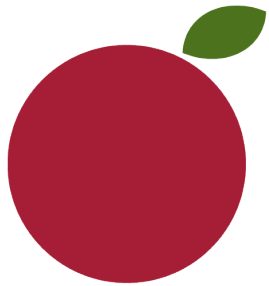
Staff



- Manage day-to-day activities
- Interact with schools
- Collect, manage, and monitor school performance information
- Generate recommendations for decision-making

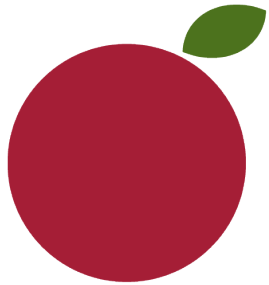
THE “WHY” OF AUTHORIZING WORK



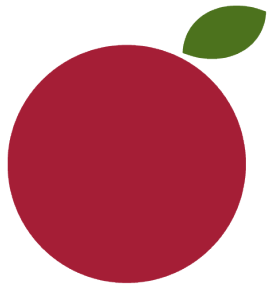


Charter schools are both more nimble and more accountable than traditional models, built on the premise that it is a privilege to educate America's children.

This privilege must be earned, not granted into perpetuity.

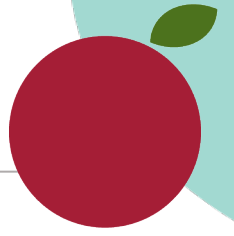


WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?

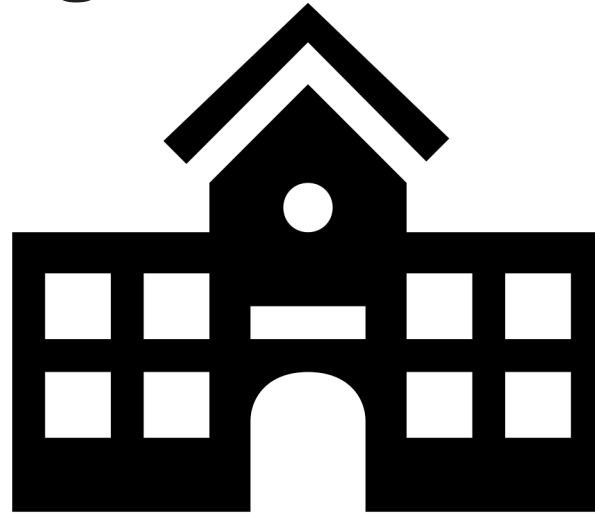


QUALITY DECISION-MAKING

DECISION-MAKING BASED ON QUALITY

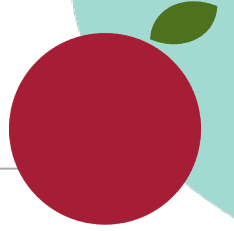


“Charter schools are *not just educational institutions*; they have the responsibility to manage all operations, including ensuring a balanced budget.”



Cannata, Thomas and Thombre

STANDARDS OF REVIEW – AUTHORIZER ON APPEAL



New Start Applications

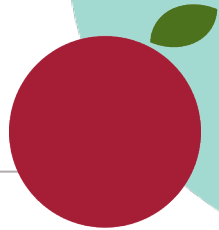
- Does the application **meet or exceed metrics** in TNDOE’s application scoring rubric?
- Is the application in the **best interests** of students, LEA, community?
- Does the school have a **negative fiscal impact** on the LEA contrary to best interests of students, LEA, community?

Renewal

- Is the application in the **best interests** of students, LEA, community?

Revocation

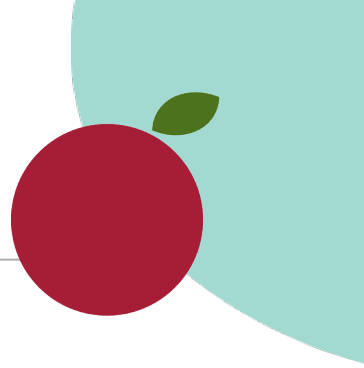
- Is the decision **contrary** to T.C.A. § 49-13-122?



COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION



WHICH OF THESE ELEMENTS ARE YOU MOST WORRIED ABOUT GETTING RIGHT?



Evidence-based



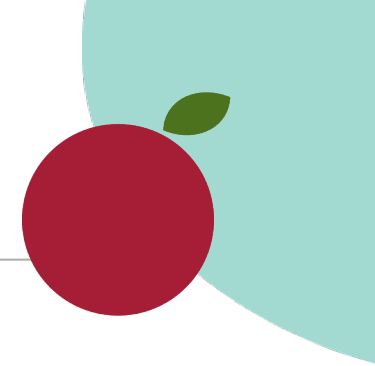
Transparent



Fair



Quality Decision

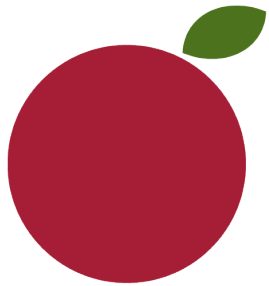


Closing a failing charter school is difficult. ***It should be difficult.***

Yet that difficulty must not stop us from making the tough decisions in the best interests of children.

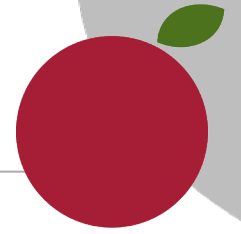
Far too many children in America, especially low-income children and children of color, are ***attending schools that are failing them***—both charter schools and traditional district schools.

As Commissioners of an authorizing agency, you are entrusted by the public with unique and extraordinary powers to approve new good charter schools and to close those that fail.



QUALITY PRACTICES: APPLICATION ON APPEAL DECISION-MAKING

COMMISSIONER KEY ROLES – APPLICATION APPEAL PROCESS



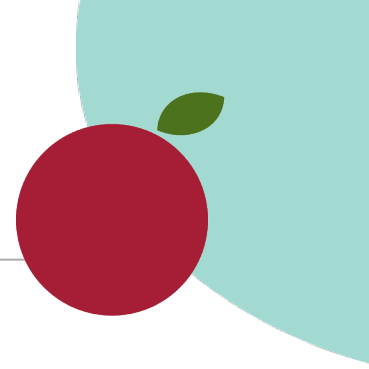
Commissioner



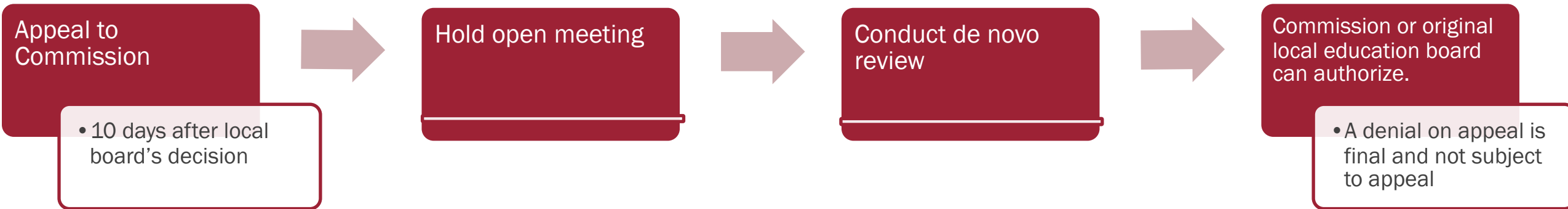
- Receives application packet, criteria, and appeal **recommendations** from staff
- Overturns appeals that meet or exceed metrics in TNDOE's application scoring rubric and is in the **best interests** of students, LEA, and the community.



THE COMMISSION AS “AUTHORIZER ON APPEAL”

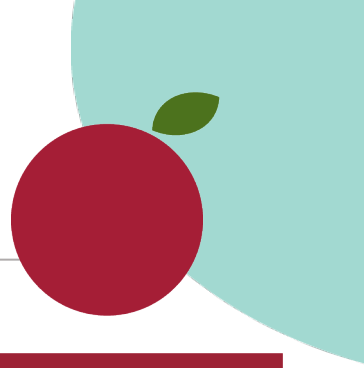


New Start Appeal Process – starting December 31, 2020



Standard of Review

- Does the application meet or exceed metrics in TNDOE’s application scoring rubric?
- Is the application in the **best interests** of students, LEA, community?



CORE ELEMENTS OF A QUALITY DE NOVO REVIEW

TNDOE Charter Application*

Internal & External Evaluators

TNDOE Application Scoring Rubric*

Due Diligence

Capacity Interviews

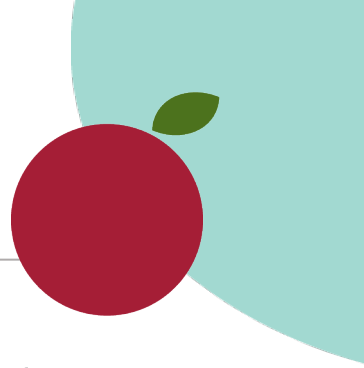
Open Meeting

Evidence-based recommendations

Authorization Decision



WHAT GOES INTO AN EDUCATION PROGRAM PLAN?

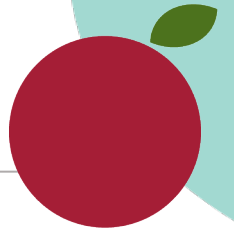


This section should provide a complete description of the school's **educational philosophy** and **methodologies**- both in **theory** and in **practice**.

It should also include information about how the school will **assess the success** of its program- and **hold itself accountable** for performance results.

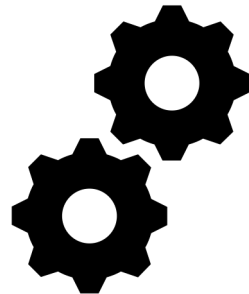
- Curriculum and Instructional Design
- Pupil Performance Standards
- Graduation Requirements (HS only)
- School Calendar/Schedule
- School Culture
- Supplemental Programming
- Special Populations and At-risk Students
- Student Recruitment/Enrollment
- Student Discipline
- Parent/Community Involvement

WHAT GOES INTO AN OPERATIONS PLAN?



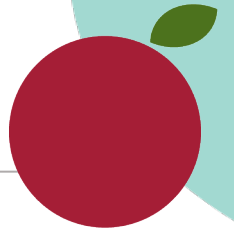
The Operations plan provides critical information about the school's **legal status** and **governance structure**.

It should also include how the school **plans to open** successfully and **maintain stability and growth** over the term of the charter.



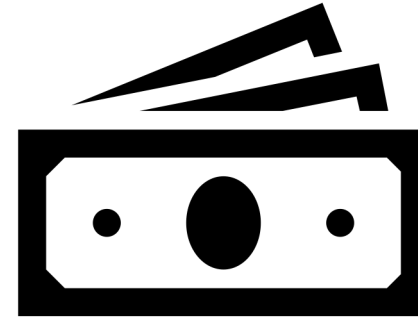
- Legal Status and Governing Documents
- Organizational Charts
- Governing Board
- Grievance Process
- Staffing Structure
- Staffing Plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation
- Professional Development
- Performance Management
- Facilities
- Start-up and Ongoing Operations

WHAT GOES INTO A FINANCIAL PLAN?



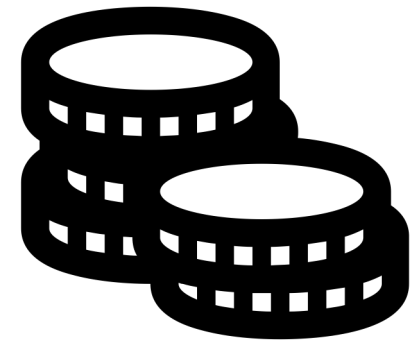
1. Financial Plan

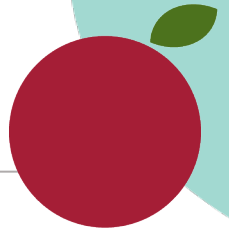
- Start-up and 5-year cash flow projections with assumptions and contingencies included
- Budget workbook
- Plans for audit
- Insurance



2. Capacity to Conduct Fiscal Oversight

- Qualifications of founding team to oversee required work
- Experience in financial management, fundraising, accounting (or plans to hire)





INTERNAL (STAFF) & EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

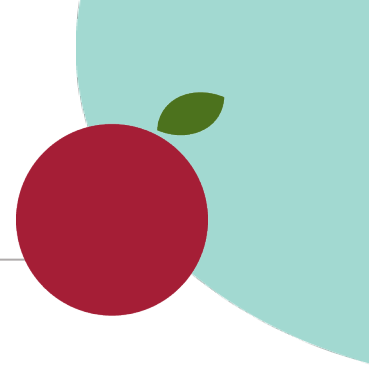



A quality authorizer...

Engages, for both written application reviews and applicant interviews, highly competent teams of internal and external evaluators with relevant educational, organizational (governance and management), financial, and legal expertise, as well as thorough understanding of the essential principles of charter school autonomy and accountability.

Reviewers should know what it takes to launch and sustain high-performing schools.

TNDOE APPLICATION SCORING RUBRIC




TENNESSEE CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION EVALUATION
RATINGS AND SAMPLE SCORING CRITERIA

Ratings and Criteria

State law requires the Tennessee Department of Education to provide "a standard application format," T.C.A. 49-13-116, and "sample scoring criteria addressing the elements of the charter school application specified in the Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act of 2002," SBE Rule 0520-14-01-.01(2).

Evaluators will use the following criteria to rate applications. Within each subsection, specific criteria define the expectations for a well thought out response that "Meets the Standard." Evaluators will rate the responses by applying the following guidance:

Rating	Characteristics
Meets or Exceeds the 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

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.

Recommendations for approval or denial will be based on the written application (narrative and attachments), independent due diligence, and, if offered by the authorizer, applicant interviews.

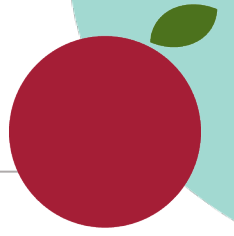
Applications that do not meet or exceed the standard in all sections (academic plan, operations plan, financial plan, and, if applicable, past performance), as evidenced by the summary review ratings, and applications that do not meet or exceed any additional LEA requirements will be deemed not ready for approval. Tennessee law states, "The approval by the chartering authority of a public charter school application shall be in the form of a written agreement signed by the sponsor and the chartering authority, which shall be binding upon the governing body of the public charter school. The charter agreement . . .

Tennessee Charter School Application – Ratings and Scoring Criteria 1

The Commission may overturn an appeal if:

1. It finds that the application **meets or exceeds the metrics** outlined in the application scoring rubric, and
2. The approval of the application is in the **best interests** of the students, LEA, or community.

WHAT ARE STAFF/EVALUATORS LOOKING FOR?



Internal alignment

- Cohesion of elements
- Mission/vision connected

External validation

- Evidence based
- Demonstrated track record

Sufficient detail

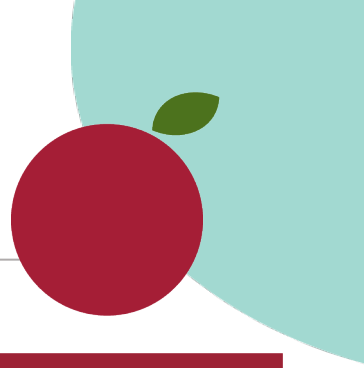
- Practicality
- Capacity



DUE DILIGENCE

Staff may **verify information** provided by charter applicants and **collect and evaluate additional information** to determine the applicant group's capacity to run a quality school in the district of application.





CORE ELEMENTS OF A QUALITY DE NOVO REVIEW

TNDOE Charter Application*

Internal & External Evaluators

TNDOE Application Scoring Rubric*

Due Diligence

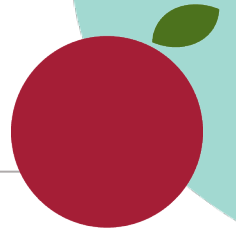
Capacity Interviews

Open Meeting

Evidence-based recommendations

Authorization Decision





PURPOSE OF THE CAPACITY INTERVIEW

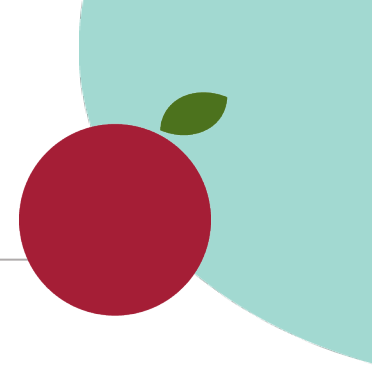
Staff will conduct applicant interviews to determine the following:

1. Is the proposed educational program sound?
2. Are plans sufficiently comprehensive and cohesive?
3. Even if the above two standards are met, are these the right people to implement the proposed program successfully?



BEST PRACTICES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR OPEN MEETINGS

T.C.A. § 49-13-108(B)(i)



- Standard of Review**
- Does the application meet or exceed metrics in TNDOE's application scoring rubric?
 - Is the application in the best interests of students, LEA, community?



EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STAFF



Consider ALL Information

- Full application and attachments
- Capacity Interviews
- Due Diligence
- Public Hearing Commentary

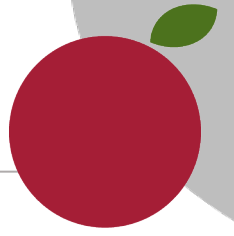
Internally Aligned

- Cohesion of elements
- Mission/vision connected

Externally Validated

- Evidence based
- Demonstrated track record

AUTHORIZATION DECISIONS



What the appeal recommendation report contains:

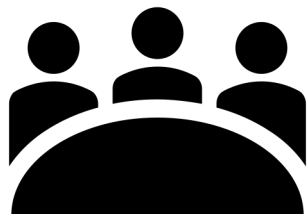
- Recommendation to the Commission to approve or reject appeal
- Analysis of strengths/concerns

What the appeal recommendation report **does not** contain:

- A decision

Standard of Review

- Does the application **meet or exceed metrics** in TNDOE's application scoring rubric?
- Is the application in the **best interests** of students, LEA, community?
- Does the school have a **negative fiscal impact** on the LEA contrary to best interests of students, LEA, community?



NACSA's Analysis:

Reasons for 1st year closures



Low enrollment & Failure
to Pay Obligations

2/3 of all closures



Unapproved &
Unsuitable Facility

Facilities differ from
application-stated facilities
Not meeting health and safety
requirements



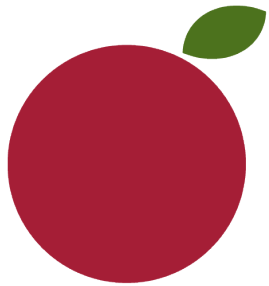
Ineffective Relationships
with Management
Organizations

Management company
financial collapse
Financial dependence on
mgmt company



Improper Policy &
Operational Decision-
Making

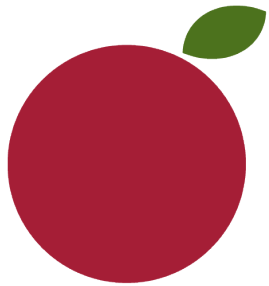
Not conducting criminal
background checks
Not identifying ELLs



WHAT QUESTIONS CAN WE ANSWER?



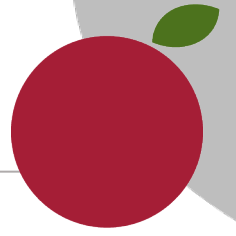
5 MIN BREAK



PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING AND ONGOING EVALUATION

Measure what you value (or you'll only value what you measure)

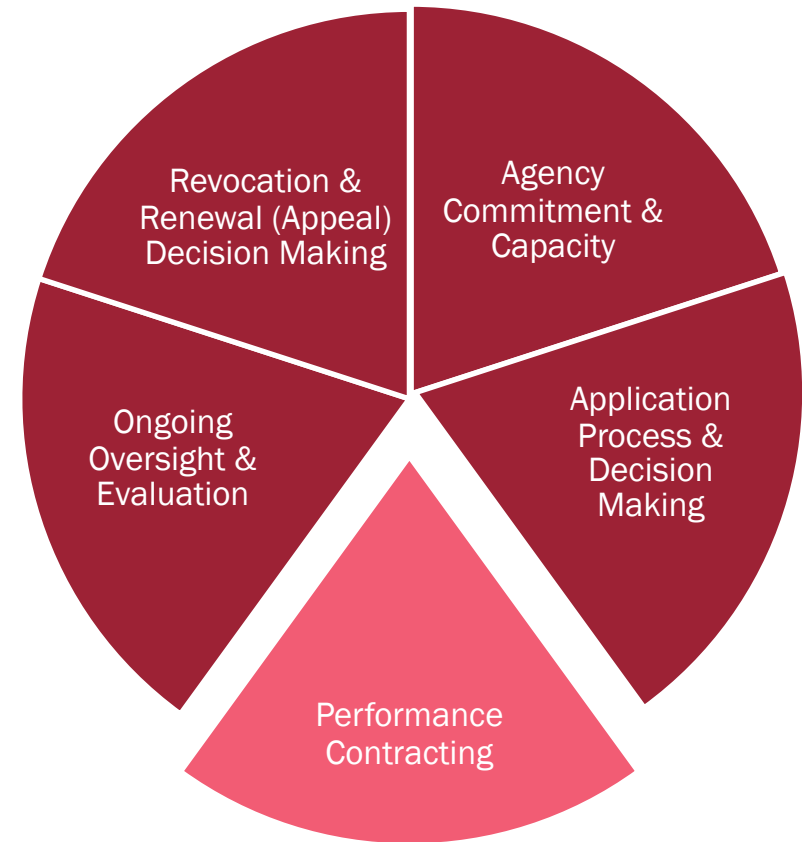
COMMISSIONER KEY ROLES – PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING



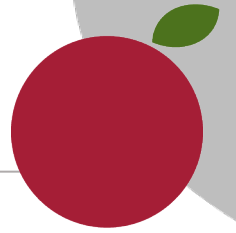
Commissioner



- **Executes a charter contract** with a legally incorporated governing board independent of the authorizer.
- **Ensures mutual understanding** and acceptance of the terms and performance expectations of the charter contract by the school's governing board.



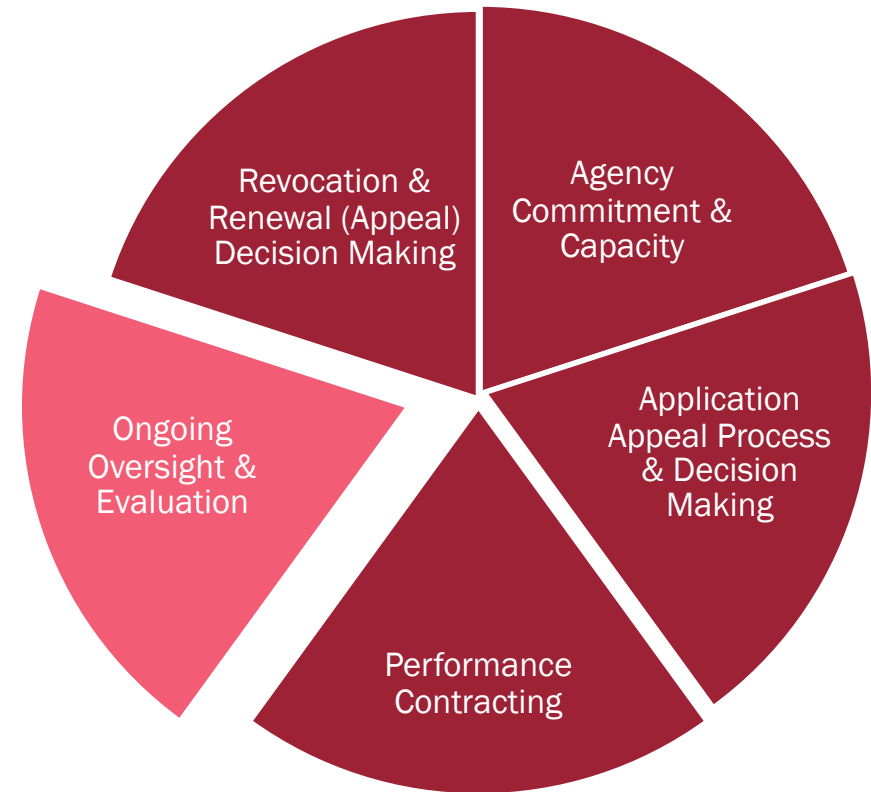
COMMISSIONER KEY ROLES – ONGOING EVALUATION & OVERSIGHT

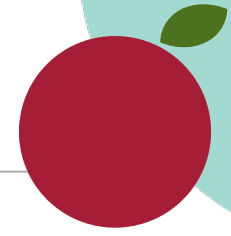


Commissioner

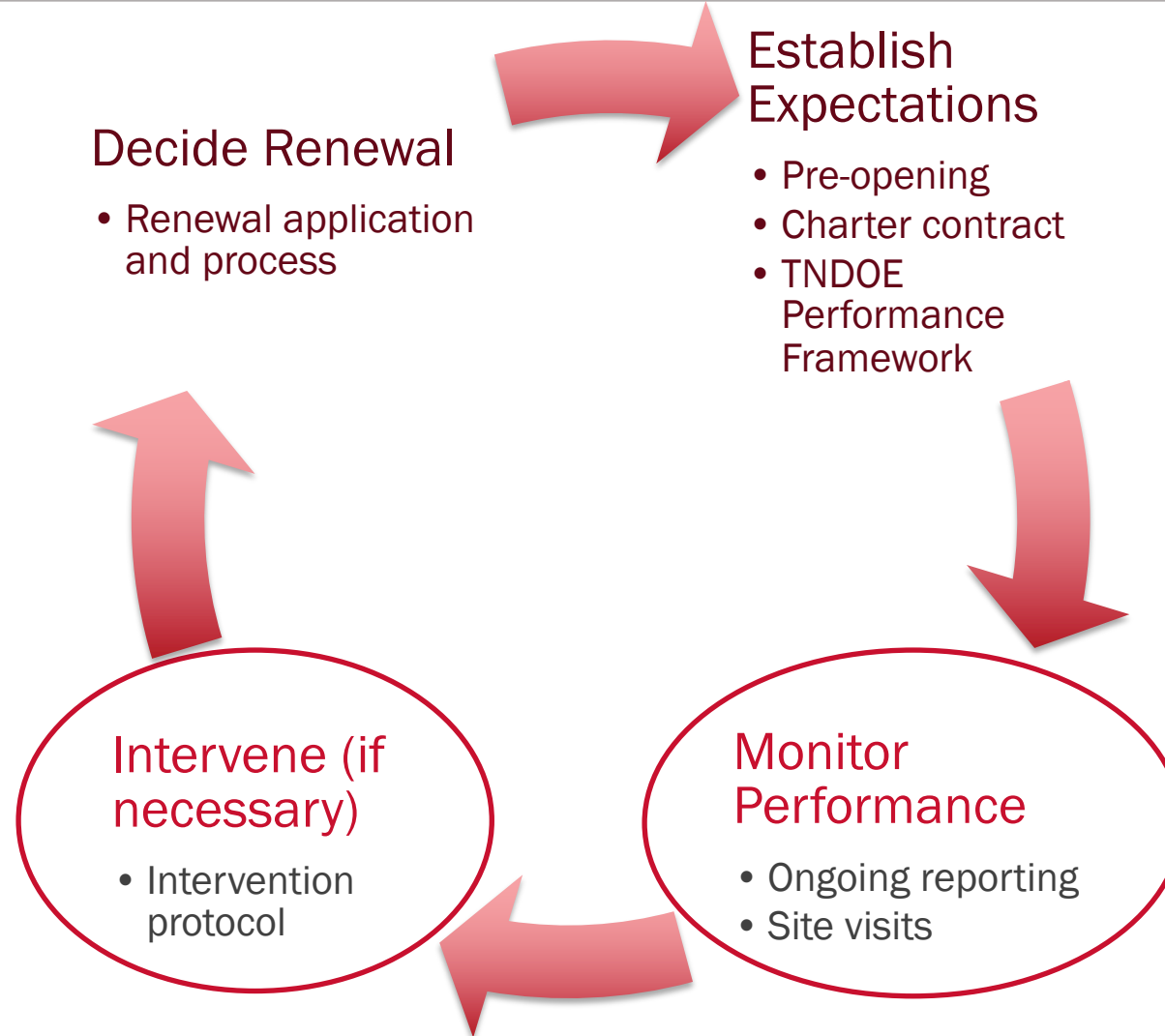


- Reviews **annual school performance reports** and any intervention actions (as relevant)
- **Articulates and enforces stated consequences** for failing to meet performance expectations or compliance requirements.





STAFF MONITOR SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



TNDOE/SBOE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK HELPS STAFF TO ANSWER 3 QUESTIONS:



Academic Performance

- Is the educational program a success?

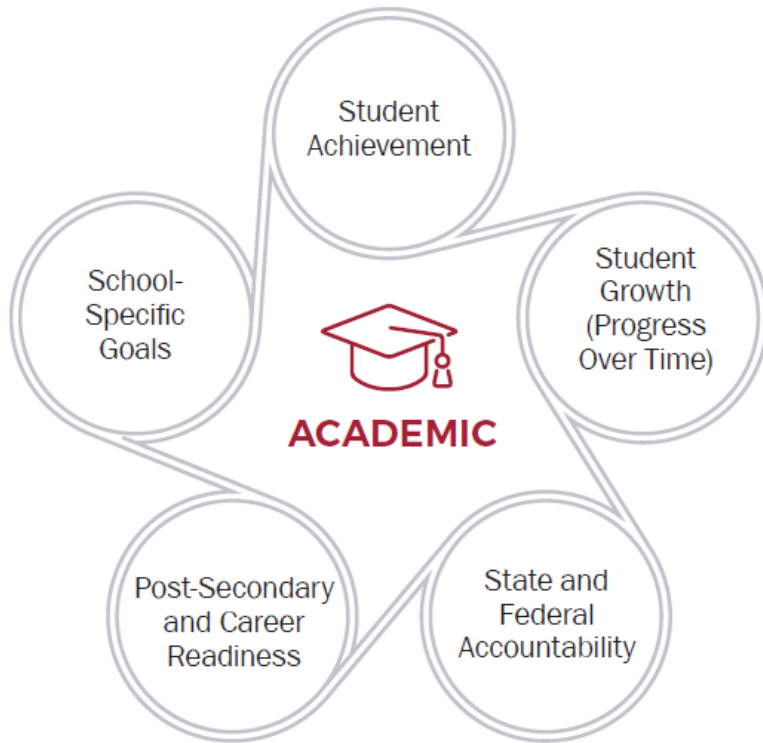
Financial Performance

- Is the school financially viable?

Organizational Performance

- Is the organization effective and well run?

MONITORING PERFORMANCE – WHAT DO STAFF MEASURE?



FINANCIAL

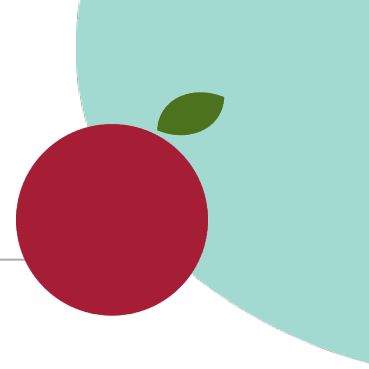
Near Term Measures

- Current Ratio
- Unrestricted days cash on hand
- Enrollment variance
- Default

Sustainability Measures

- Total Margin
- Debt to asset ratio
- Cash flow
- Debt service coverage ratio

MONITORING PERFORMANCE: STAFF'S TOOLKIT



PRE-
OPENING
CHECKLIST/
PROTOCOL



REPORTING
TIMELINE



DESK AUDITS



SITE VISITS



ANNUAL
REPORTS

WHAT PERFORMANCE INFORMATION WILL COMMISSIONERS RECEIVE FROM STAFF?

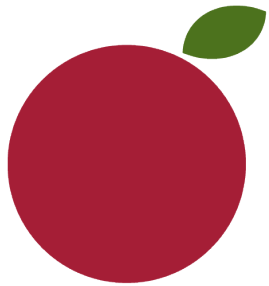


Notices of Concern

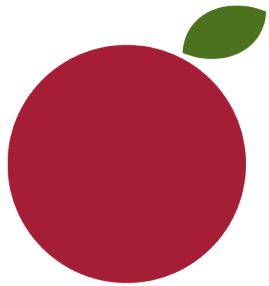
- When a school is not meeting the terms of its charter contract.

Annual performance reports

- Written summary/public presentation of school performance based on the standards within the performance framework.

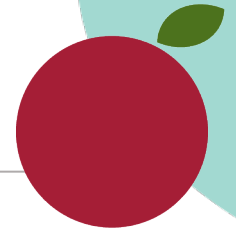


CAN WE ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS?



RENEWAL AND REVOCATION (AND APPEAL) DECISION-MAKING

THE COMMISSION'S DUAL ROLES



State Charter School
Commission of Tennessee

Starting SY 2020-2021

Authorizer on Appeal

Hears appeals for:

--New starts

--Renewals

--Revocations

--(Charter Amendments *still currently with SBOE)

Authorizer

Monitors and oversees appealed school:

--Openings

--Performance and data

--Renewals

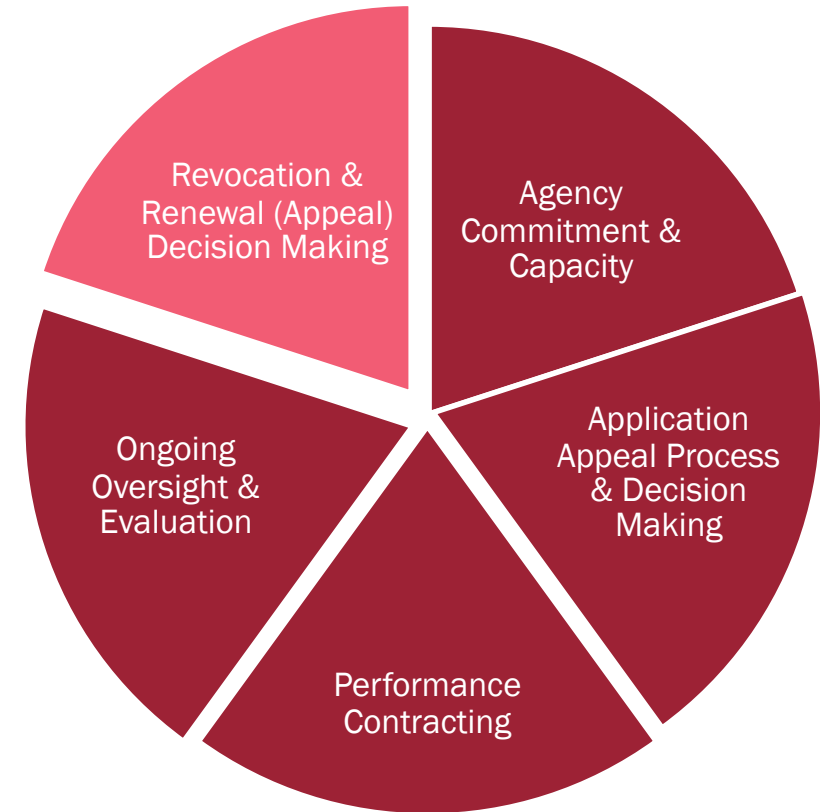
--Revocations/School closures

COMMISSIONER KEY ROLES – REVOCATION & RENEWAL (AND APPEAL) DECISION-MAKING

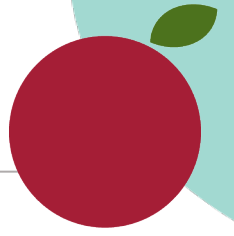
Commissioner



- Receives **recommendations and appeal recommendations** from staff.
- **Revokes a charter** during the charter term if evidence of extreme underperformance or violation of law. *(TN Quality Authorizing Standards)*
- **Grants renewal** only to schools that have achieved the targets stated in the charter agreement. *(TN Quality Authorizing Standards)*



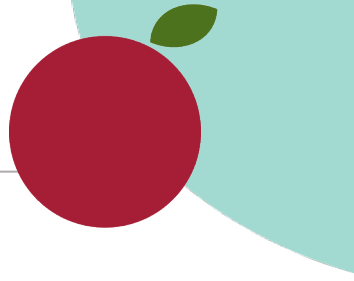
RENEWAL DECISION-MAKING



“A quality authorizer grants renewal only to schools that have achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter agreement, are organizationally and fiscally viable, and have been faithful to the terms of the contract and applicable law.

-Tennessee Quality Authorizing Standards

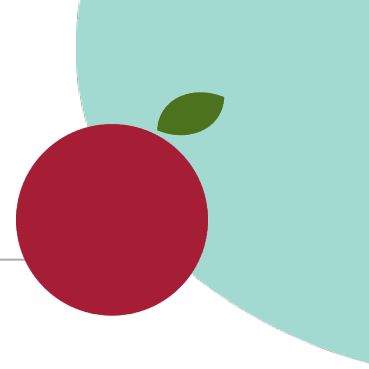
RENEWAL BEST PRACTICES



Staff should:

- Use the TNDOE's Charter School Renewal Application as part of a fair and transparent process.
- Provide each school **a public, cumulative performance report** prior to the school's renewal application, which states the authorizer's summative findings concerning the school's performance and its prospects for renewal.

TN DOE CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION



Charter School Renewal Application

Purpose

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-121, every Tennessee public charter school agreement is for a term of 10 years, beginning on the first day of instruction. In order for a charter school to renew a charter agreement for another 10 year term, the school must submit a renewal application to the chartering authority **no later than April 1 of the year prior to the year** in which the charter agreement expires. Renewal applications should allow chartering authorities to answer the following questions:

- Has the school met its academic goals?
- Has been faithful to its mission and charter design?
- Has the school been effectively governed?
- Is the school fiscally sound?
- Are parents and students satisfied?
- Has the school satisfactorily met its legal obligations?
- If the school's charter is renewed, are its goals for the next charter term likely to be achieved?

Authorizers may review the school's annual reports, interim reviews, performance reports, as well as the renewal application when making final renewal determinations.

The department of education has developed the following guidelines for use during the charter renewal application process.

Renewal Timeline and Submission Instructions

The renewal application is due by **April 1¹** of the year prior to the year in which the current charter contract expires.

On or before the following **February 1**, the chartering authority shall rule by resolution to approve or deny the renewal application. If the chartering authority denies the renewal application, the charter school governing body **may appeal to the state board of education within ten (10) days** of the decision to deny.

A decision by the state board to deny the renewal of a charter agreement shall be **final**. No additional appeals may be considered.

¹ Tennessee law provides that when the deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or State observed holiday, the application materials are due to the State on the next business day.

THE COMMISSION AS “AUTHORIZER”: RENEWAL PROCESS STEPS

Staff compiles body of evidence on school performance
(3 months prior)



School submits renewal application
by April 1

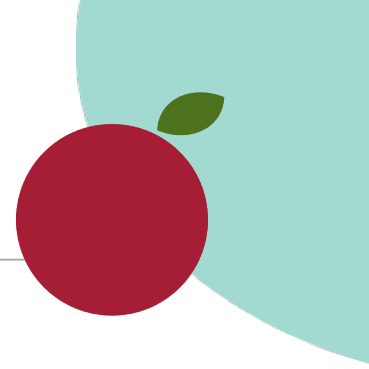


Renewal Recommendation from staff
(based on body of evidence and performance expectations in contract)

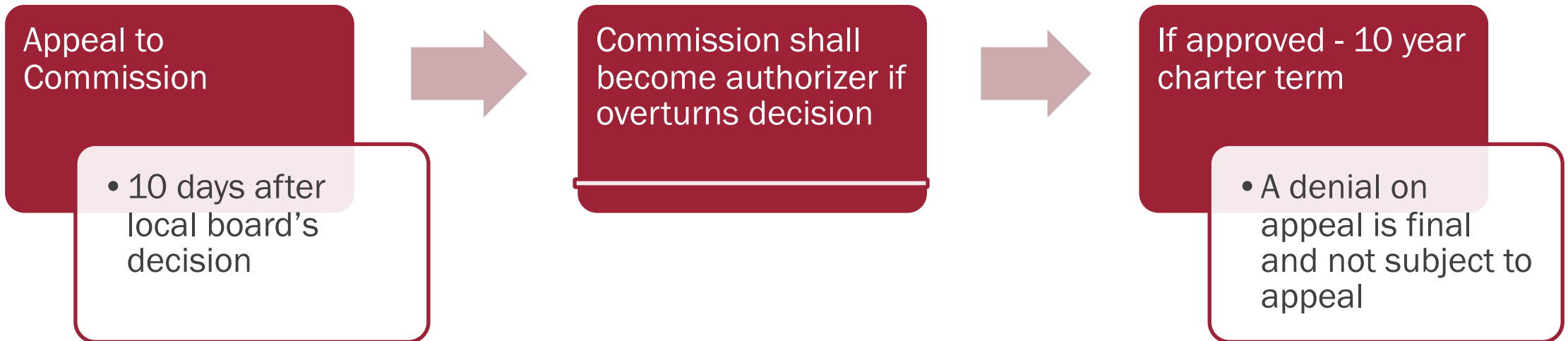


Renewal Decision
By February 1

THE COMMISSION AS “AUTHORIZER ON APPEAL”

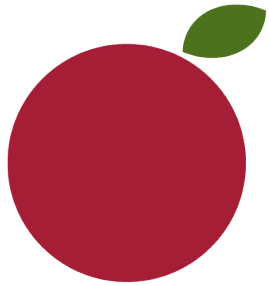


Renewal Appeal Process – starting December 31, 2020



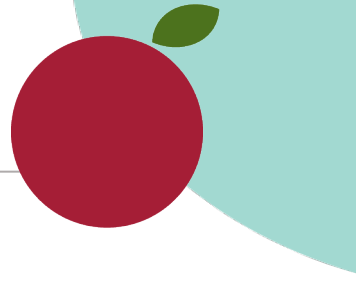
Standard of Review

- Is the application in the **best interests** of students, LEA, community?



REVOCACTION AND REVOCATION ON APPEAL

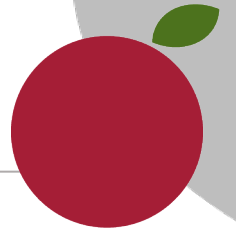
QUICK POLL – TYPE IN THE CHAT BOX



“When do most school closures occur?”

- A. During renewal
- B. Outside renewal (i.e. mid school year)

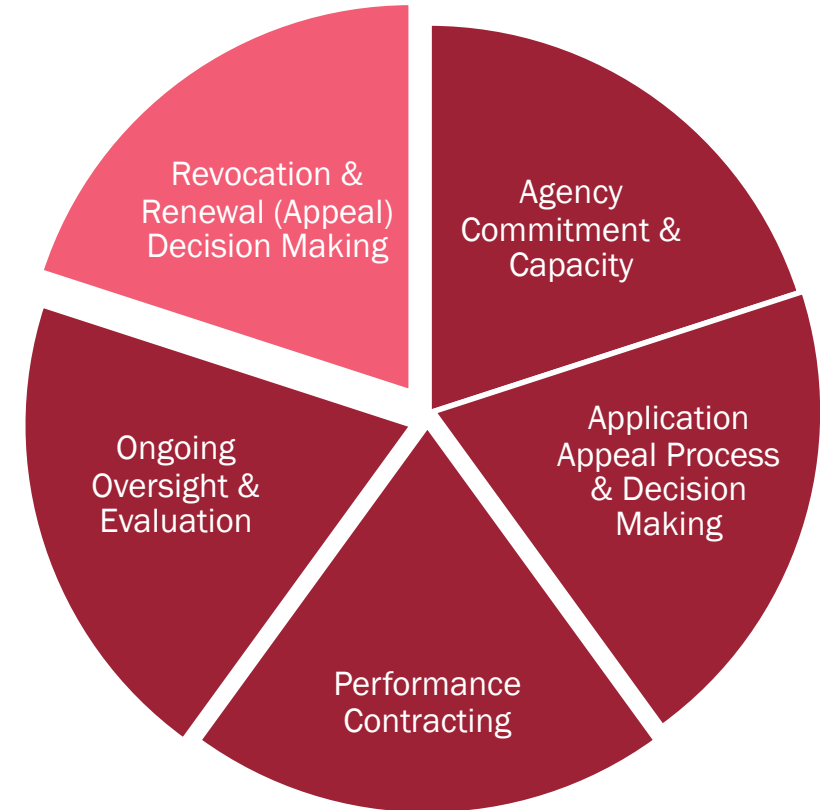
COMMISSIONER KEY ROLES – REVOCATION & RENEWAL (APPEAL) DECISION-MAKING



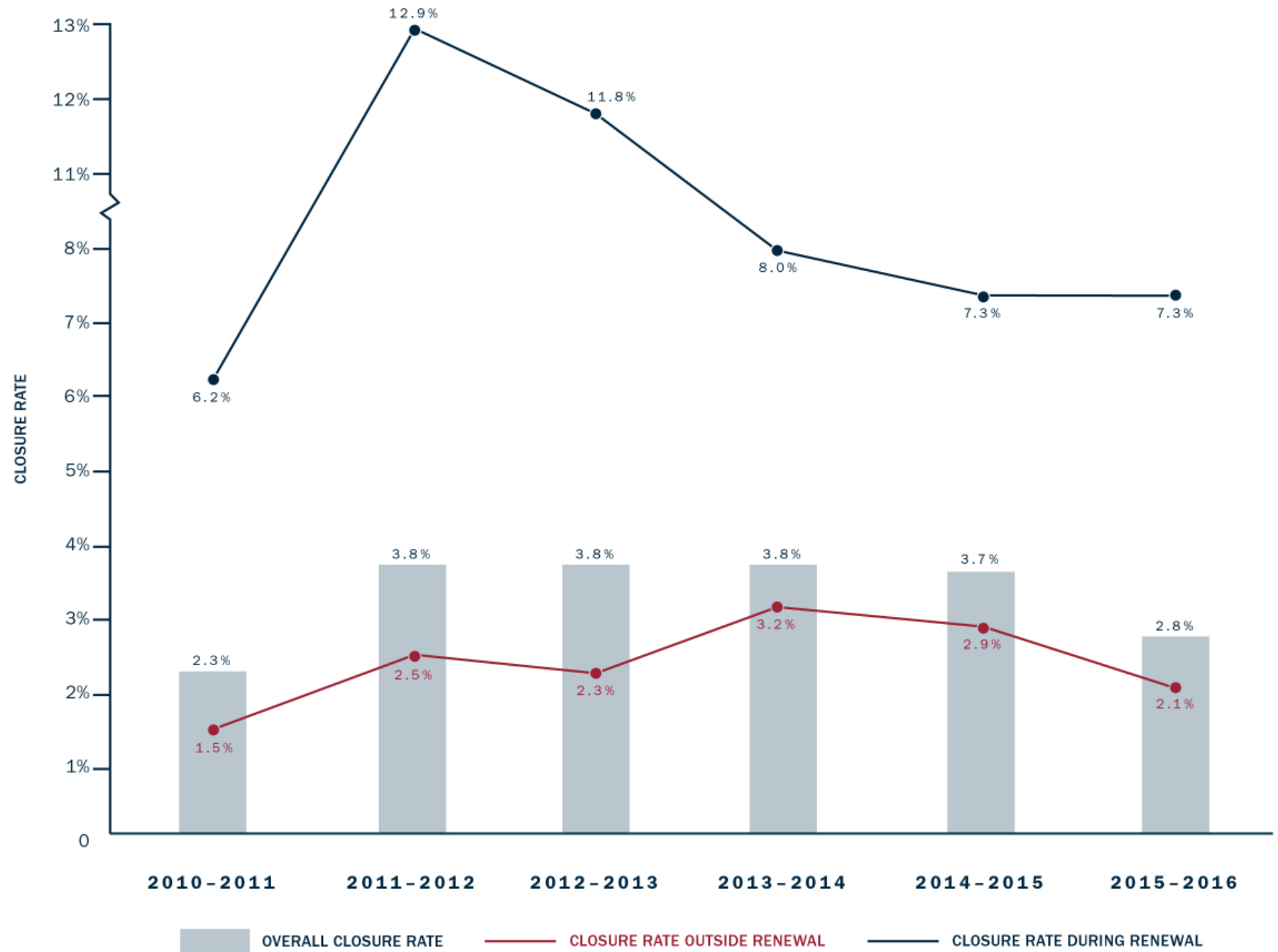
Commissioner

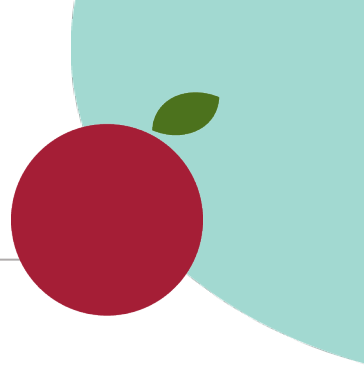


- Receives **recommendations** and appeal recommendations from staff.
- **Revokes** a charter during the charter term if evidence of extreme underperformance or violation of law. *(TN Quality Authorizing Standards)*
- **Grants renewal** only to schools that have achieved the targets stated in the charter agreement. *(TN Quality Authorizing Standards)*



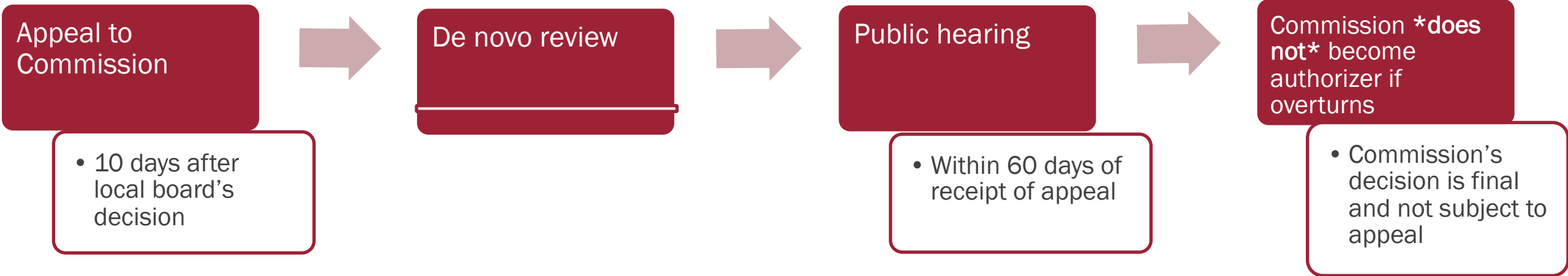
MOST SCHOOL CLOSURES OCCUR DURING RENEWAL





THE COMMISSION AS “AUTHORIZER ON APPEAL”

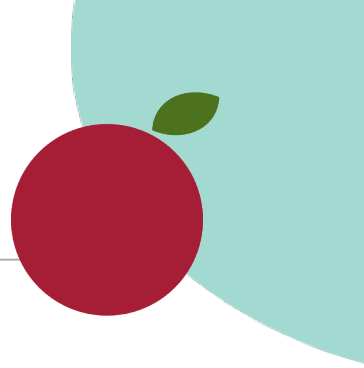
Revocation Appeal Process – starting December 31, 2020



Standard of Review

- Is the decision contrary to T.C.A. § 49-13-122?

THE COMMISSION AS “AUTHORIZER”: REVOCATION CRITERIA

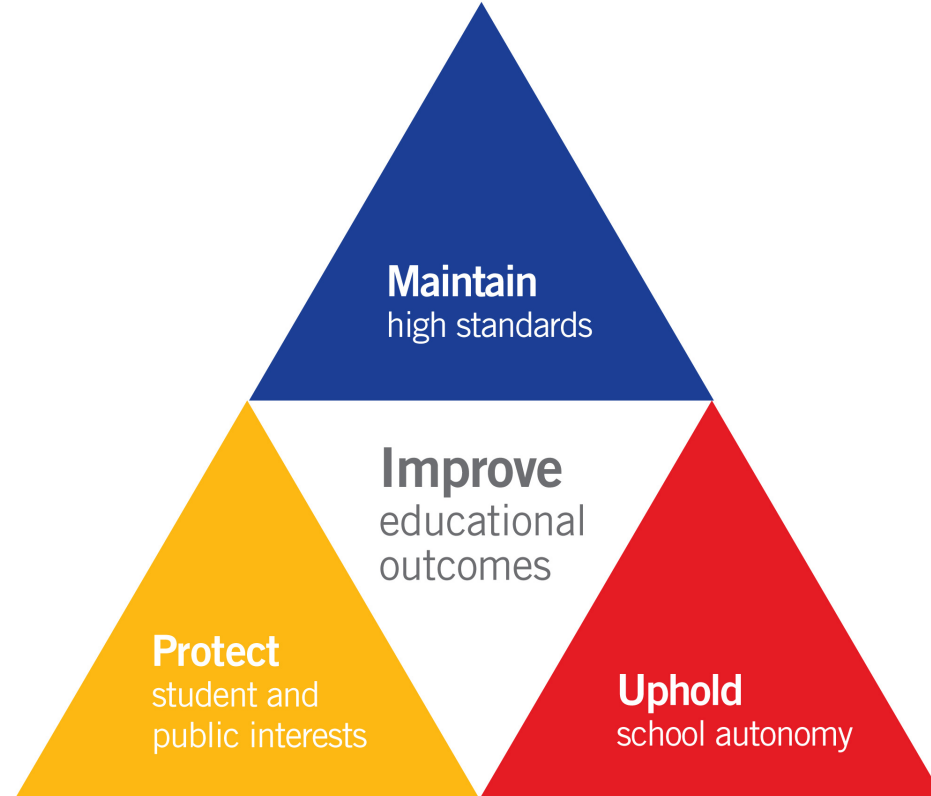
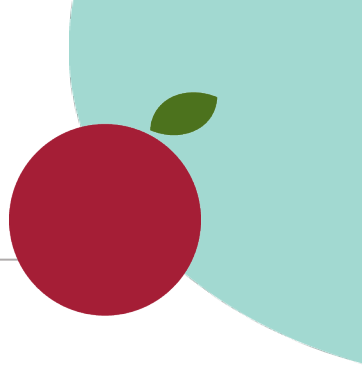


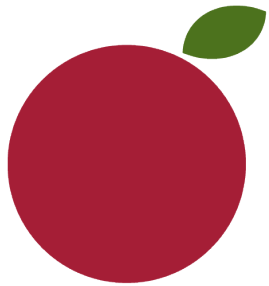
Committed a material violation of any conditions, standards, or procedures in charter agreement

Failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward the performance expectations set forth in the charter agreement

Failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management

THE “WHY” OF AUTHORIZING WORK





THANK YOU!
WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR
FEEDBACK ON OUR SURVEY
