



TENNESSEE

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

**KA @ THE CROSSINGS
AMENDMENT APPEAL**

JUNE 28, 2022

KNOWLEDGE ACADEMIES

- Knowledge Academies ("KA") has three (3) separate charter agreements with Metro Nashville Public Schools ("MNPS") to operate Knowledge Academy Middle, KA @ The Crossings, and Knowledge Academy High School.
- All three (3) schools operate on a **single campus** located in the Antioch area of Nashville.
- There are no material differences between Knowledge Academy Middle and KA @ The Crossings Middle School.
- The schools split positions across them and essentially act as one 5-12 school:
 - Administrative Staff: Principal, Assistant Principal, Deans, Directors
 - Instructional Staff: Elective Teachers
 - Non-Instructional Staff: Clerical, Operations, Social Workers, and Counselors



KNOWLEDGE ACADEMIES

School	First School Year	Charter Expiration	Grades Served	Current Maximum Enrollment
Knowledge Academy Middle	2012-13	June 30, 2022	5-8	272
KA High	2015-16	June 30, 2025	9-12	440
KA @ The Crossings	2016-17	June 30, 2026	5-8	400
Total				1,112



OPERATIONAL HISTORY

- MNPS removed all schools under KA from probationary status in December 2020.
- On April 1, 2021, KA submitted its renewal application for Knowledge Academy Middle. However, prior to this application submission, MNPS did not provide a renewal performance report to the governing board for the school, which is required by statute.
- In November 2021, KA was notified by the MNPS Office of Charter Schools that its recommendation to the Board of Education was to not renew the charter agreement for Knowledge Academy Middle.
- In December 2021, KA presented MNPS with a letter requesting consideration of a consolidation plan. However, it did not receive a response from MNPS.
- The MNPS Board of Education voted not to renew the agreement for Knowledge Academy Middle on January 11, 2022.



OPERATIONAL HISTORY

- On March 15, 2022, the governing board of KA submitted an emergency amendment petition to MNPS to consolidate all three (3) schools under the agreement of KA @ The Crossings, which expires in 2026.
- On March 28, 2022, KA officially withdrew its appeal of the denial of its renewal application citing the governing board submitted an emergency amendment petition to MNPS Board of Education requesting to consolidate the three (3) charter agreements into one (1) school.
- On April 26, 2022, MNPS Board of Education voted to deny the emergency amendment petition of KA @ The Crossings. This decision was subsequently appealed by the governing board to the Commission.



CONSOLIDATION PLAN

- The proposal for consolidation includes the following:
 - Consolidate under KA @ The Crossings, whose term expires in 2025-26
 - Propose grades 5-12 with an enrollment cap of 1,112
 - Knowledge Academy Middle and High School charter agreements surrendered
- According to KA, the consolidation plan allows for academic and operational efficiencies at the schools and allows for robust enrollment growth to serve the growing Antioch region.



MNPS DENIAL

Reason 1: Ineligible to use an emergency petition.

However, the Commission found:

- After the fall window, the only option for an operator to change grades or enrollment is through an emergency amendment petition.
- MNPS stated that the operator should have anticipated the denial of the renewal, and, therefore, used the fall amendment petition window to submit this amendment petition. However, MNPS failed to provide a renewal performance report to the governing board (which was due by December 31, 2020).
- The governing board only received notice of the recommendation to non-renew the agreement of Knowledge Academy Middle in November 2021. The deadline to submit an amendment petition in the fall is October 1.



MNPS DENIAL

Reason 2: Lack of attention to the population of Non-English Language background families and students served at Knowledge Academy.

However, the Commission found:

- During the public hearing, MNPS stated that the district did not consider academic results and the denial was based on the lack of defense of it qualifying as an emergency and not based on academic performance.
- The Operator has earned a TVAAS 3 level for Knowledge Academy Middle and KA @ The Crossings and TVAAS 2 for KA High School, which is higher than all surrounding public schools.
- The proficiency rates for Knowledge Academy Middle and KA @ The Crossings also meet or exceed the MNPS zoned middle schools in Antioch and Cane Ridge.
- The consolidation creates efficiencies in the delivery of academic programming and puts KA in the best posture to continue achieving its goals for academic growth.



MNPS DENIAL

Reason 3: An increase in enrollment seating is not needed.

However, the Commission found:

- The proposed enrollment maximum of 1,112 is the combined total of all three existing agreements.
- KA has 520 confirmed enrollments for the 2022-23 school year. This is within 5% of the 550 students proposed in the amendment petition.
- KA has an active leads list of 118 students.
- KA's recent under-enrollment stems from the 2019 revocation proceedings and appeal process.



RECOMMENDATION

The recommendation is that the Commission overturn the decision of MNPS and remand the decision back to MNPS to approve the amendment petition of KA @ The Crossings with a maximum enrollment of 1,112.

- The evidence in this appeal highlights the importance of regular and clear communication between an authorizer and operator and ensuring alignment to statute.
- A timely renewal performance report provided by MNPS would have eliminated the need for an emergency amendment petition.
- If the parties engaged in a meaningful conversation regarding the consolidation proposal offered in December 2021, a mutually agreeable solution could have been reached and an appeal avoided.
- The KA network has been a viable choice in Southeast Nashville since 2012-2013, and I strongly urge both parties to engage in a productive dialogue and working relationship focused on what is best for students.

