



# TENNESSEE

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

**AUTHORIZER  
EVALUATION OVERVIEW**

**MARCH 23, 2023**

# AUTHORIZER EVALUATIONS

- In 2019, the General Assembly amended T.C.A. § 49-13-145, charging the State Board of Education with the responsibility of ensuring the effective operation of authorizers in the state and evaluating authorizer quality
- The State Board's evaluation process includes an examination of evidence that is submitted by an authorizer to demonstrate alignment to Tennessee's Quality Authorizing Standards
- Quality Authorizing Standards are defined within State Board of Education Policy 6.111, and sets forth the overarching values that authorizers should be guided by and the practices that should govern the day-to-day operation of a charter authorizer
- Official evaluations occur bi-annually, with the Commission completing its first formal evaluation in Fall 2022



# AUTHORIZER EVALUATIONS

The following are key elements of the evaluation process:

- Authorizers conduct a self-assessment during non-evaluation years
- Evaluations are facilitated by State Board staff with some external evaluators
- During the evaluation, the evaluation team considers authorizer documentation, interviews with school leaders, and in-person interviews with authorizers
- Authorizers have an opportunity to review the evaluation report for factual corrections prior to public release
- All evaluation reports are approved by the State Board of Education and posted to their website
- An authorizer's failure to remedy non-compliance may result in the reduction of the authorizer fee



# AUTHORIZER EVALUATIONS

- The authorizer evaluation rubric consists of 24 standards and includes the following categories:
  1. Agency Commitment and Capacity
  2. Application Process and Decision Making
  3. Performance Contracting
  4. Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation
  5. Revocation and Renewal Decision Making
  6. Advanced Standards
- An overall rating is calculated based on the average rating across all standards.

Score	Rating
3.5 - 4.0	Exemplary
3.0 - 3.49	Commendable
2.0 - 2.99	Satisfactory
1.0 - 1.99	Approaching Satisfactory
0 - 0.99	Unsatisfactory/Incomplete



# COMMISSION'S OVERALL RATING

Summary of Results:

- Public recognition by State Board highlighting authorizer best practices
- Submission of a self-assessment in 2023-24
- No corrective action

Standard	Rating (0-4)
Standard 1	3.6
Standard 2	4.0
Standard 3	3.3
Standard 4	3.8
Standard 5	3.75
Standard 6 (Bonus)	3.3
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>3.9</b> <b>Exemplary</b>



# BEST PRACTICES

- Conducts a rigorous, transparent, and thorough new start appeals process with added resources and supports designed by the authorizer to ensure applicants understand each stage of the process.
- Developed a comprehensive reporting calendar that's well-communicated to schools and aligned to school performance accountability.
- Maintains ongoing communication with its schools and regularly engages in feedback conversations to ensure its schools are supported and heard.
- All major functions of authorizing are defined in policy, published on its website, and communicated in advance to schools.
- Developed a strategic plan for authorizing with priorities, goals, and timelines and provides its decision-makers with quarterly progress updates.



# OTHER IDENTIFIED STRENGTHS

- Enlists expertise and competent leadership for all areas essential to charter school oversight and implements a rigorous process to select review committee members with expertise in all the key areas of authorizing.
- Has a clear, comprehensive, and detailed performance accountability and compliance monitoring system that is defined in policy, clearly communicated to schools, and provides key outcomes to inform renewal, revocation, and intervention decisions.
- Makes authorizing decisions that will result in positive student outcomes, in accordance with state law.



# AREAS OF FOCUS

- Requests for compliance, documentation, and meetings are not always streamlined and create some administrative and reporting burdens on schools.
- Although the authorizer periodically reviews compliance requirements, it is unclear how and to what extent the outcomes of these reviews are used specifically to increase school autonomy.
- Lacks transparency and clear descriptions for its use of funds to demonstrate adequate resources are allocated to supporting authorizing work.
- Documentation does not make evident how the authorizer measures progress towards its mission of providing positive academic and life outcomes for students.





# NEXT STEPS

- Staff is meeting regularly to discuss autonomy and scaling to identify workstreams and areas in which we can streamline processes and procedures for our schools.
  - Focus is on changes for SY23-24.
- Staff will update future authorizer fee reports and budgets to include greater detail surrounding the authorizer fee and clearer descriptions of the expenditure type and how they relate to authorizing responsibilities.
- Staff will seek to make evident how we measure progress towards our mission of “providing positive academic and life outcomes for Tennessee’s students.”
- Staff will begin gathering documents for subsequent evaluations and complete self-assessment in Fall 2023.
- Review and adapt policies and procedures in line with State Boards proposed changes to the evaluation process.



# FUTURE CHANGES

State Board has proposed changes to Policy 6.111 surrounding authorizer evaluation to include:

- A reorganization of standards to group together relevant authorizing responsibilities and eliminate duplicative standards
- Incorporate the advanced bonus standards into the full set of required standards
- Consolidate standards that are achieved through required use of the state's charter school application and rubric, essentially removing "free points"
- Add language to require the key authorizing responsibilities, such as application review, monitoring and oversight, renewal, and revocation be documented in board-approved policies
- Add a standard for amendment petition review and decision-making.





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