



TENNESSEE

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

**NEW START APPEALS
OVERVIEW**

JULY 25, 2025

A QUALITY AUTHORIZER

- Grants charters to applicants that have demonstrated competence and capacity to succeed in all aspects of their model, consistent with the state's scoring rubric criteria.
- Rigorously evaluates each application through **thorough review of the written proposal**, a substantive **in-person interview** with each qualified applicant, and all **appropriate due diligence** to examine the applicant's experience and capacity, conducted by knowledgeable and competent evaluators.
- 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**.

State Board Policy 6.111



ACTIVE APPLICATIONS

Name of School	LEA	Type of Application
Tennessee Wildflower Public School	Hamilton County Schools	New Start
Jackson Museum School	Jackson-Madison County Schools	New Start
Dream Catchers Charter School	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	New Start
Hillcrest High School	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	Exit ASD
KIPP Memphis Creative and Performing Arts Elementary School	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	New Start
Kirby Middle School	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	Exit ASD
Still I Rise Academy	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	Opportunity
Novus SMART Academy (K-8)	Rutherford County Schools	New Start
Rocketship Rutherford Elementary	Rutherford County Schools	New Start



As of 7/17/25

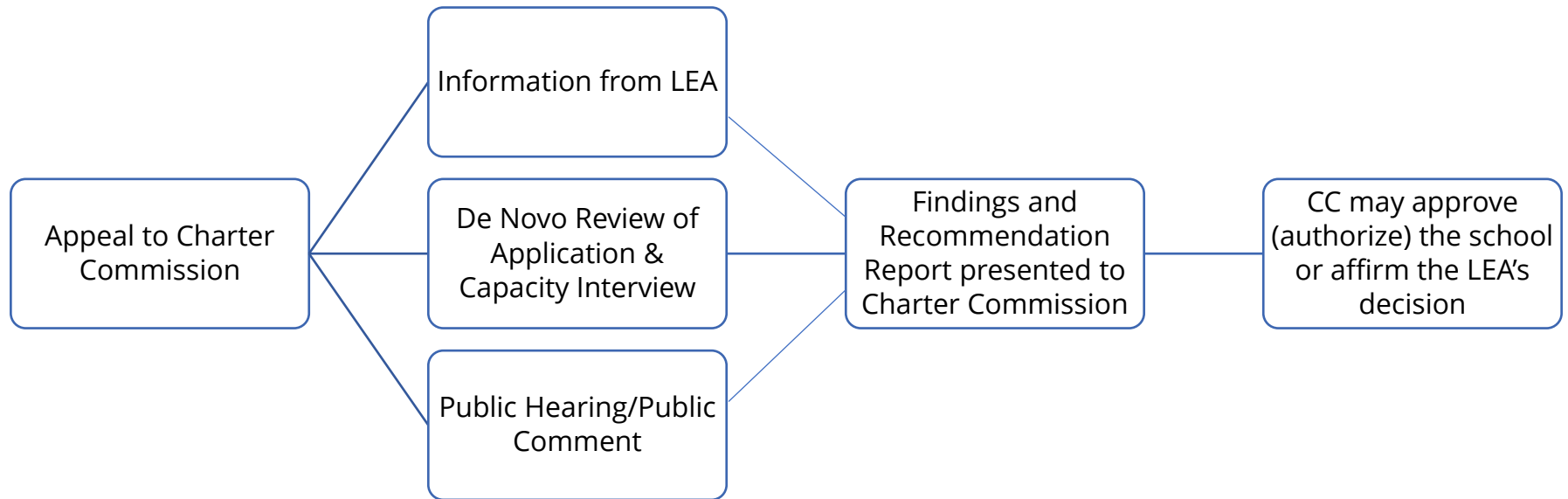
ACTIVE APPEALS

Name of School	LEA	Type of Application
Rocketship TN 5	Metro Nashville Public Schools	New Start
The Forge School	Metro Nashville Public Schools	New Start
The Rock Academy	Metro Nashville Public Schools	Opportunity



As of 7/17/25

APPEALS PROCESS FLOWCHART



A maximum of 75 calendar days



REVIEW COMMITTEE

- Preliminary review committees, composed of internal and external experts, have been trained and established.
- Committees have also been formed for all active and potential appeals.
- Following the initial review, a 90-minute capacity interview assesses the applicant and addresses clarifying questions.
- A comprehensive review committee report, summarizing consensus ratings, is then compiled.
- This report is submitted to the Executive Director for consideration in their recommendation.
- Applications must meet standards across all categories to receive an approval recommendation from the committee.



PUBLIC HEARING

- Public hearings for proposed schools will occur within their respective districts.
- During hearings, the school sponsor and local board of education will present their appeal.
- The Executive Director will pose questions to both parties, based on staff's initial record review.
- Public comments will allow applicants and communities to voice support or opposition.
- Hearing dates and times will be shared with Commissioners interested in attending.
- MNPS appeals are scheduled for August 8, 2025.
- All other hearing dates, times, and attendance details are available on the Commission's website once confirmed.



TIMELINE FOR REVIEW – MNPS APPEALS

- **Special-Called Meeting: August 27, 2025**
 - **By August 1:** Notice of appeal and LEA documentation will be available in TNShare.
 - **Ongoing (as available):** Additional documents will be uploaded to TNShare, including:
 - Capacity interview recordings
 - Public hearing materials (recordings, presentations, public comments)
 - Any additional written public comment
 - **In advance of meeting:** Executive Director's recommendations will be provided.



TIMELINE FOR REVIEW

NON-MNPS APPEALS

- **Quarterly Meeting: October 16-17, 2025**
 - **By August 15:** Notice of appeal and LEA documentation will be available in TNShare.
 - **Ongoing (as available):** Additional documents will be uploaded to TNShare, including:
 - Capacity interview recordings
 - Public hearing materials (recordings, presentations, public comments)
 - Any additional written public comment
 - **In advance of meeting:** Executive Director's recommendations will be provided.



ADDITIONAL CONTEXT



OPPORTUNITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

- Pursuant to [T.C.A. § 49-13-104](#), opportunity public charter schools are created to serve at-risk students in grades six through twelve (6-12).
- At least seventy-five percent of the students must be at risk at the time of enrollment.
- Students are considered at-risk if they meet both income requirements and specified criteria related to academic, behavioral, or familial challenges.
- The school will be held to a modified school performance framework reflective of this context.



OPPORTUNITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

For this model, increased focus is needed on:

- **Serving High-Need Students:** Demonstrated ability to serve at-risk students with evidence-based programs, interventions, and monitoring.
- **Funding Adequacy:** A funding model that accounts for the higher costs of serving high-need students, with clear plans for managing these expenses sustainably.
- **Operator Partnership:** Operator's capacity to be a strong partner within an evolving accountability framework.
- **Community Demand & Engagement:** Clear evidence of community demand and a robust plan for engaging parents and wider community.
- **Comprehensive Special Populations Support:** A comprehensive plan for identifying and supporting special populations, ensuring academic success and appropriate diploma pathways.



ASD TRANSITION SCHOOLS

- Upon completion of a ten-year charter agreement with the ASD, schools may apply to their local board of education for a new ten-year term.
- The Commission's decision in these appeals focuses on:
 - Whether the operator or charter management organization receives a new ten-year charter to operate the school.
- The Commission's decision in these appeals does NOT determine:
 - If the school will remain open and operational.
- If an appeal is denied, the Tennessee Department of Education will facilitate the school's and students' transition back to the local district.



ASSESSMENT READINESS TO OPEN

As the Commission assesses new start applications, it's crucial to consider the following trends and lessons learned from our robust pre-opening process:

- **Enrollment Trends:** Many schools struggle to achieve full enrollment as proposed, often requiring future revisions.
- **Facility Challenges:** Despite timely openings in this round of schools, facility cost and availability remain a persistent challenge for new schools.
- **Staffing Landscape:** Finding licensed staff, especially for special populations and high school positions, continues to be difficult.
- **Financial Planning:** Robust, board-approved operating budgets and timely notification of enrollment deviations are essential.
- **Leadership & Board Capacity:** Strong leadership and active governing board engagement are paramount for navigating the opening of a school.



COMMISSIONER REVIEW OF THE RECORD



REVIEW OF THE RECORD

- Commissioners must conduct a “de novo on the record review” of the appeal.
- Information that can be considered is limited to what is officially “on the record” in the appeal.
- The Commission shall review amended applications without deference to the district’s denial.
- Commissioners should refrain from discussing the application with applicants.
- Any applicant/district that reaches out should be re-directed to Commission staff.



REVIEW OF THE RECORD

- Start with the executive director's recommendation
 - This summarizes the materials and information in the record and provides a recommendation based on the Commission's statutory charge
 - Provides an overview of the public hearing and the resources used to determine whether the application has clear community support



REVIEW OF THE RECORD

- Closely review the review committee's report and the capacity interview.
 - This evaluates the application against the state's scoring rubric.
 - Focus on:
 - Does the school have a developed, quality academic program?
 - Can the school serve all students?
 - Is the school likely to meet enrollment projections?
 - Does the school have an effective governance structure?
 - Are the proposed governing board members capable of strong oversight?
 - Can the school recruit and staff to support the program?
 - Are the revenue projections confirmed and reasonable?
 - Does the school/network's performance merit expansion?



REVIEW OF THE RECORD

- Listen/watch the recording of the public hearing
 - Provides a good summary of the sponsor's argument in support of the application and the local board of education's reasons for denial
 - Opportunity to listen to the public's views on the proposed application
 - The public hearing is also summarized in the executive director's recommendation
- Review written public comments submitted
- Consider final public comment from each party at the Commission meeting – either oral or written



REVIEW OF THE RECORD

- The Commission may approve the application if the application:
 1. meets or exceeds the metrics outlined by the department of education's application-scoring rubric **and**
 2. approval of the application is in the best interests of the students LEA or community





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