



TENNESSEE
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

Empower Memphis Career and College Prep Update

October 9, 2026

Corrective Action Update

- Background
- Overview of school's progress since Notice of Concern
- Review of remaining concerns
- Staff recommendation regarding intervention status
- Proposed path forward

Background and Key Milestones

2023

- Empower Memphis Career and College Prep is authorized by the Commission.

2024-2025

- School delayed opening by one academic year due to facility-related challenges.

2025-2026

- School opened and began serving students in South Memphis.
- Enrollment was substantially below original charter application projections.
- Commission staff met with the Empower Governing Board three times (10/29/25, 2/26/26, 4/15/26).

May-June
2026

- School requested approval to accelerate expansion from grades K-3 to grades K-5.
- Commission denied the amendment request, finding that the school's priority should be stabilizing enrollment, operations, compliance, and financial sustainability before pursuing additional growth.

July 2026

- Commission staff issued a Notice of Concern related to enrollment, financial reporting, special populations compliance, teacher licensure, and material terms.

Summer/Fall
2026

- Ongoing monitoring, site visits, board meeting observations, and corrective action review.
- Commission staff and Commission Chair met with the Empower Governing Board on 9/23/26.

Why Staff Issued a Notice of Concern

- SY25-26 Severe Under Enrollment (ADM of 21)
- SY25-26 Organizational Framework Indicators (did not meet standard)
 - Financial reporting
 - Teacher licensure
 - English learner compliance
 - Special education compliance
 - Material terms
- The Commission discussed these concerns throughout the amendment process.



Plan of Correction – Areas of Deficiency

Area of Deficiency	Status as of 10/2	Framework/Agreement Alignment
Teacher Licensure	Unresolved	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26
Financial Reporting	In Process	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26
English Learners	In Process	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26
Students with Disabilities	In Process	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26



Plan of Correction – Areas of Deficiency

Area of Deficiency	Status	Framework/Agreement Alignment
Enrollment	Unresolved	School at 75 students is significantly below enrollment outlined in the charter agreement.
Financial Sustainability & Enrollment Projections	Unresolved	Revised budget relies on CSP grant to remain solvent which expires on June 30, 2027. School must demonstrate financial viability through reasonable enrollment assumptions and realistic budget projections for Year 3 and 4.
Material Terms	Unresolved	Due to size, in SY25-26, the school did not meet material terms of the agreement. School also did not meet the mission-specific goal. School must meet the material terms of the charter agreement including mission and instructional model.



Enrollment Variance & Financial Sustainability Risk

- The school has provided a revised and balanced budget reflecting 75 students (a 50% reduction from the original 150 SY26-27 projection).
 - The school states that 65 students is the operational floor for the school.
- Current budget solvency depends on CSP grant funding, which expires June 30, 2027.
- Days Cash on Hand remains below the Commission benchmark, indicating near-term operational and financial vulnerability.
- Reduced enrollment makes the school highly susceptible to student attrition, enrollment fluctuations, and unanticipated cost pressures.
- Continued monitoring is necessary to ensure operational progress translates into long-term financial sustainability.

Intervention Review – Policy 3.400

Level	Actions	Decision
1 – Notice of Concern	Letter to the school's governing board detailing areas of concern.	Staff
2 – Notice of Deficiency	Letter to the school's governing board detailing areas of deficiency with a requirement that a Plan of Correction be developed and implemented.	Staff
3 – Notice of Probationary Status	Letter to school's governing board to serve as notice of probationary status and outlining terms of probation which includes the creation of a Plan of Correction in consultation with Commission staff.	Commission
4 – Charter Review	- Recommendation to revoke the charter contract or to impose lesser sanctions including but not limited to a requirement to adopt an interim reconstitution plan. - Decision by the Commission to commence revocation proceedings.	Commission
5 – Charter Revocation	- Letter stating reasons for proposed revocation to governing board. - Charter closure timeline goes into effect immediately.	Commission

Timeline for Probationary Status

- December 4, 2026 – Initial Deadline
 - Update at January 2027 Commission meeting
- May 2027 – End of Academic Year Deadline
 - Update at July 2027 Commission meeting
- October 2027
 - Evaluate holistically the progress on level 3 probationary status at October 2027 Commission meeting
- **Note:** If any items are severely off-track, the Commission reserves the right to set a special-called meeting to discuss the school's status



Plan of Correction – Areas of Deficiency

Area of Deficiency	Status	Framework/Agreement Alignment	Target – By December 4
Teacher Licensure	Unresolved	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26	100% teacher licensure compliance
Financial Reporting	In Process	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26	All grant deadlines met by required dates
English Learners	In Process	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26	School remains in compliance with all requirements
Students with Disabilities	In Process	Organizational – Did not meet standard for SY25-26	School remains in compliance with all requirements



Plan of Correction – Areas of Deficiency

Area of Deficiency	Status	Framework/Agreement Alignment	Target – By December 4
Enrollment	Unresolved	School at 75 students is significantly below enrollment outlined in the charter agreement.	Maintain enrollment of at least 75 students and implement recruitment and retention strategies.
Financial Sustainability & Enrollment Projections	Unresolved	School must demonstrate financial viability through reasonable enrollment assumptions and realistic budget projections for Years 3 and 4.	Submit sustainable multi-year financial projections based on reasonable enrollment assumptions (approximately 100 students in Year 3 and 125 students in Year 4 unless supported by alternative evidence).
Material Terms	Unresolved	School must meet the material terms of the charter agreement including mission and instructional model.	Demonstrate implementation of the academic model and mission through site visit observations, student performance data, and completion of mission-specific goal.



Financial Sustainability Review Process

- Enrollment projections must be supported by historical enrollment trends, current recruitment data, and documented assumptions.
- Commission staff will work collaboratively with the school to evaluate enrollment and budget assumptions.
- Staff may request additional information or revised projections when assumptions are not supported by available evidence.
- Financial sustainability will be evaluated based on the school's ability to maintain operations under projected enrollment scenarios.
- School will provide a board-approved sustainability plan, reflected in Years 3 and 4 projections, that identifies enrollment, fiscal, and operational strategies to support long-term viability.
- The school must continue meeting all operational, financial, and compliance requirements while implementing its sustainability plan.



Material Terms - Academics

- "The school implemented the material terms of the education program in all material respects and the education program in operation reflects the material terms as defined in the charter agreement."
 - Mission-Specific Goal: Empower will accelerate academic achievement for all students by at least 1.0 years in reading and math by making meaningful improvements to the quality of instruction and intervention in response to student data.
 - For SY25-26, Empower did not administer NWEA MAP during SY25-26. As a result, student growth could not be fully evaluated against the mission-specific goal.
 - Components of key design elements aligned to mission:
 - Accelerate Academic Achievement: Rigorous instruction in literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies
 - Foster Individuality: PBIS curriculum and interest-based Empower 360 Blocks
 - Cultivate Career Mindsets: Participation in Career Exploration Course and job simulations

Level 3 Probationary Status Next Steps

- Upon placement on intervention, Commission staff will schedule a meeting with operator to begin development of plan of correction addressing areas of deficiency.
- Commission staff will meet biweekly for updates in alignment with the plan of correction.
- Commission staff will attend the annual site visit on October 22.
- Implementation of the Plan of Correction, enrollment stability, financial sustainability, and compliance progress will be evaluated on December 4, and staff will provide an update to the Commission in January 2027.



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