



TENNESSEE
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

New Start Appeals Overview

July 24, 2026

Principles of Quality Authorizing

- In line with State Board Policy 6.111, a quality authorizer:
 - Grants charters only to applicants demonstrating **high capacity for success**.
 - 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.
 - Compiles highly competent teams of **internal and external evaluators** with an **understanding of the essential principals of charter school autonomy and accountability** to conduct a review of the application.

Active Applications

Name of School	LEA	Type of Application
Empowerment Academy – East Tennessee	Hamilton County Schools	New Start
Empowerment Academy – West Tennessee	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	New Start
Opportunity Youth Academy	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	Opportunity
Urban Dove Team Charter School Memphis I	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	Opportunity
Urban Dove Team Charter School Memphis II	Memphis-Shelby County Schools	Opportunity
Empowerment Academy – Middle Tennessee	Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools	New Start
Music City Academy	Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools	New Start
Nashville School of Excellence	Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools	New Start
The Gate School	Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools	New Start

As of 7/17/26

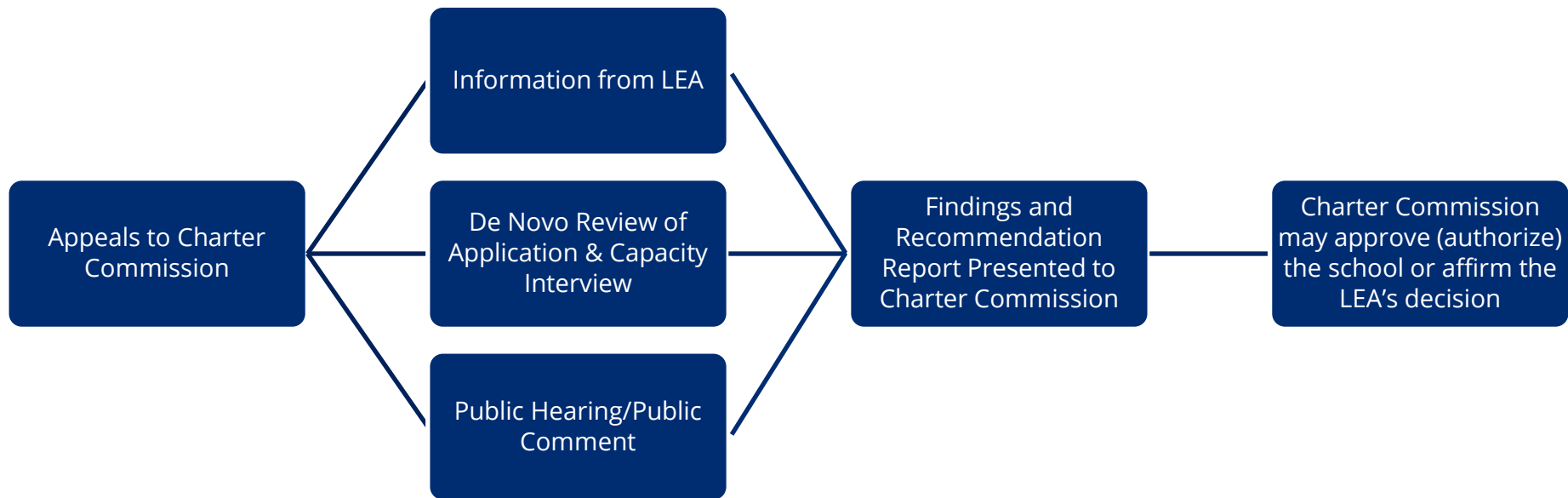


Active Appeals

Name of School	LEA	Type of Application
Trimble Academy	Dyer County Schools	New Start

As of 7/17/26

Appeals Process Flow Chart



A maximum of 75 calendar days



Review Committee

- Preliminary review committees, composed of internal and external experts, have been trained and established.
- Committees have 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.
- Hearing dates, times, and attendance details are available on the Commission's website once confirmed.



Timeline for Appeals

- Quarterly Meeting: **October 8-9, 2026**
 - **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.



Assessing Readiness to Open



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Guiding Questions During Review

- In your review, focus on:
 - A high-quality application supported by well thought out plans and evidence of success.
 - Whether the school's model, people, finances, governance, and track record demonstrate the capacity to open successfully, serve all students, and sustain long-term performance.
 - Are my concerns significant enough to undermine the school's overall readiness to open, based on major inconsistencies within the application, or align with the common root causes of charter school failure.
 - Does the school demonstrate a readiness to open?



Assessing 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:** 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.
 - **Operational Compliance:** Developing the operational capacity to comply with the charter agreement, including special populations, grant submissions, and student information systems.



Commissioner Review of the Record



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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.
 - This 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
 - 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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