



Authorized Charter School Student Handbook Requirements SY 2026-2027

This document outlines minimum requirements, in no particular order, for student handbooks issued by the Commission's authorized charter schools. At the beginning of each school year, authorized charter schools are required to submit their student handbooks to the district via the reporting calendar. Commission staff will review the handbook to ensure that it contains the minimum requirements outlined in this document.¹

Student handbooks shall transcribe the full text, when noted, included in [Commission LEA Policies](#) or law. Pages 20 through 34 of this document contain the student handbook addendum. The information contained in these pages should be included in all Commission authorized charter school student handbooks.

This document contains the following:

- I. Student Handbook Minimum Requirements
 - Additional Information on Parent Notifications required by ESEA
- II. Student Handbook Addendum
 - Commission LEA Policy 1200²
 - Grievance/Complaint Resolution Guidance Chart
 - Commission LEA Procedure 1036
 - Notice of Right to Request Translations of District Information
- III. Student Handbook Assurances

¹ This document is separate from the Commission's required policies, procedures, and plans document. While policies and procedures may be contained within a student handbook, this document is meant to cover only information that is required in a student handbook that is sent home to students and parents.

² All of the [Commission's LEA Policies and Procedures](#) are available on the [Commission website](#).

I. Student Handbook Minimum Requirements

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1. Charter Commission Student Handbook Addendum | Full text | Beginning on Pg. 20 of this document |
| 2. School complaint/grievance policy(ies) | Full text | Commission LEA Policy 1200, 5104, 6304 |
| 3. Notification of parent's right to request information on teacher/paraprofessional qualifications | Full text | 20 U.S.C. § 6312 (ESSA, § 1112(e)(1)(A)) |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| <p>4. Notification of parent's rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)</p> | <p>Full text</p> <p>Notice should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information the school designates as directory information; • The right to opt out of the release of their child's directory information; • The right to provide consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent; • The criteria for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest; • The right to inspect and review the child's education records and to seek to amend the records; and • The right to file a complaint regarding an alleged failure to comply with FERPA. <p>This is an example FERPA notification.</p> | <p>FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232(g)</p> |
| <p>5. Notification to parents of right to opt out of release of student information to military recruiters or institutions of higher education</p> | <p>Full text</p> <p>Under ESSA, notice to parents must be provided that the school releases the names, addresses, and phone numbers of secondary students to military recruiters and institutions of higher education unless parents opt out.</p> <p>This notice can be given along with the notice of parent's rights under FERPA.</p> | <p>ESSA, 20 U.S.C. § 7908</p> |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
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| <p>6. Notification of parent's rights under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)</p> | <p>Full text</p> <p>Notice should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent's rights regarding the conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. <p>This is an example PPRA notification.</p> | <p>PPRA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232(h)</p> |
| <p>7. Notification of free and reduced price meals and/or free milk</p> | <p>Suppose a school participates in the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, or the Special Milk Program. In that case, they must provide both parents and the public with information about free and reduced price meals and/or free milk near the beginning of each school year.</p> <p>Schools also must provide parents with an application form.</p> <p>Schools may not disclose children's free and reduced eligibility status, unless the requestor of such information falls into one of the categories specified in the National School Lunch Act.</p> <p>Tennessee forms can be found on the Department's website.</p> | <p>7 C.F.R. § 245.5 42 U.S.C. § 1758(b)(6)(A)(i)-(v)</p> |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
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| 8. School, parent, and family engagement policy | <p>Full text</p> <p>Each school served under Title I must also develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written school-level parent and family engagement policy that should be included in the student handbook.</p> | ESSA, 20 U.S.C. §6318(b); (c) |
| 9. Notification to parents of all state mandated tests and tests mandated by the district that shall be administered in the upcoming school year | <p>Full text</p> <p>In addition to the notification of district/state mandated tests, parents of children selected to participate in any NAEP assessment must be informed before the assessment is administered that their child may be excused from participation for any reason, is not required to finish any assessment, and is not required to answer any test question.</p> <p>This notification can be included in the student handbook list of all state and district mandated tests.</p> <p>See T.C.A. and LEA policy for specific requirements.</p> | T.C.A. § 49-6-6007 Commission LEA Policy 4603 |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
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| 10. Student code of conduct and/or discipline policy, Zero Tolerance policy, and policy on Disciplinary Hearing Authorities | Summary with link to full text or full text ³ | Commission LEA Policy 6300, 6313, 6309, 6317 |
| 11. Notice to students that they are subject to drug testing, grounds for testing, procedures, penalties, and right to refuse. | Summary with link to full text or full text | Commission LEA Policy 6307 |

³ If the student handbook serves as the school’s policy handbook, then the full text must be included. If the school maintains school policies separate from the student handbook (i.e. in a separate policy handbook or on the school’s website) then a summary of the policy may be placed in the student handbook along with a link to the text of the full policy, unless full text is required.

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| 12.School attendance policy | <p>Summary with link to full text or full text</p> <p>On or before the beginning of each school year, the school leader shall notify parents (or legal guardians or person having control) of students in writing that the parent/guardian has a duty to monitor the student’s school attendance and require the student to attend school.</p> <p>The notice shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language that if the student accumulates five (5) days of unexcused absences during the school year, then the student is subject to the school’s progressive truancy interventions, and • Language that continued unexcused absences may result in a referral to juvenile court. <p>See LEA policy for additional requirements re: attendance and truancy.</p> | Commission LEA Policy 6200 |
| 13.School grading policy | Full text | Commission LEA Policy 4603 |
| 14. Graduation requirements | <p>Full text</p> <p>**High schools only</p> | Commission LEA Policy 4605 |
| 15.Student harassment, hazing, intimidation, bullying and cyberbullying policy, including reporting and investigation procedures | Full text | Commission LEA Policy 6304 |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|--|---|---|
| 16. Sexual Harassment and Title IX obligations | Summary with link to full text or full text Notice should include a nondiscrimination policy, grievance procedures for complaints of sex discrimination | Commission LEA Policy 6305; 34 C.F.R. 34 §§ 106.8, 106.45 |
| 17. List of all clubs and organizations available to students | Full text | T.C.A. § 49-6-1031 |
| 18. Notifications under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act | The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) requires schools to inspect their buildings for asbestos-containing building materials, and develop, maintain, and update an asbestos management plan. Commission authorized charter schools must annually notify parents, teachers, and employee organizations in writing of the availability of the management plan and planned or in-progress inspections, reinspections, response actions, and post-response actions, including periodic re-inspection and surveillance activities. | 40 C.F.R. §§ 763.84(c), (f), 763.93(g)(2) Commission LEA Policy 3208 |
| 19. Notice to parents and students of the process for reporting school bus safety complaints | Full text | T.C.A. § 49-6-2101, et. seq. |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|--|--|---|
| 20. Notice of non-discrimination | <p>The regulations implementing Title VI, Title IX, Section 504, the Age Discrimination Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Nondiscrimination on the basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Assistance, require school districts to notify students, parents, and others that they do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, disability, or age, and that they prohibit sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX, including in admission and employment.</p> | <p>Title VI, 34 C.F.R. § 100.6(d)</p> <p>Title IX, 34 C.F.R. § 106.8</p> <p>Section 504, 34 C.F.R. § 104.8</p> <p>Age Discrimination Act, 34 C.F.R. § 110.25</p> <p>Title II, 28 C.F.R. § 35.106</p> <p>34 C.F.R. § 106.8</p> |
| 21. Notice of Commission LEA policy 6303 Reporting of Crimes, Interrogations and Searches, and any school policy or procedures on the subject. | Summary with link to full text or full text. | Commission LEA Policy 6303 |
| 22. Information about influenza and meningococcal disease and the effectiveness of vaccination. | <p>Full text.</p> <p>Charter schools shall provide notice to parents at the beginning of every school year.</p> <p>The notice can be included in the Student Handbook or sent as a separate notice.</p> | <p>Commission LEA Policy 6203</p> <p>T.C.A. § 49-6-5005</p> |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|--|---|--|
| 23. Notice to parents of the process for participation in a survey, analysis, or evaluation. | Summary with link to full text or full text | T.C.A. § 49-2-211 Commission Policy 4502 |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|---|---|---|
| <p>24. Notice of Confidentiality for Students with Disabilities</p> | <p>Authorized charter schools shall give notice that is adequate to fully inform parents about confidentiality of personally identifiable information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A description of the extent to which the notice is given in the native languages of the various population groups in the school; b. A description of the children on whom personally identifiable information is maintained, the types of information sought, the methods the school intends to use in gathering the information (including the sources from whom information is gathered), and the uses to be made of the information; c. A summary of the policies and procedures that participating agencies (i.e., related service providers) must follow regarding storage, disclosure to third parties, retention, and destruction of personally identifiable information; and d. A description of the rights of parents and children regarding this information, including the rights under FERPA and its implementing regulations in 34.C.F.R. Part 99. | <p>Commission Procedure 1033 C.F.R. § 300.612</p> |

| Requirement | Notes | References |
|--|--|---|
| 25. Notice of Fundamental Rights of Parents | <p>Summary with link to full text or full text</p> <p>Notice should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language that requires verbal or written consent before providing nonemergency medical treatment or counseling • Language that requires consent before making a video or voice recording of the child | T.C.A. § 36-8-103 |
| 26. Notice of Parental Right to Review Instructional Materials | <p>Summary with link to full text or full text</p> <p>Charter schools should provide notice to parents at the beginning of every school year.</p> <p>Charter school should provide notice to parents at least thirty (30) days prior to instruction contemplated as Family Life Curriculum</p> <p>The notice can be included in the Student Handbook or can be a separate notice.</p> <p>Notice should include language process of excusing student from participation</p> | <p>T.C.A. § 49-6-1019</p> <p>T.C.A. § 49-6-1305</p> <p>Commission LEA Policy 4400</p> |

Additional Information on Parent Notifications required by ESEA, as amended by ESSA

Note: Not all of these notifications need to be included in the Student Handbook, unless noted above. However, this document is provided for additional reference regarding required parent notifications under federal law.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) makes it clear that Congress expects Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and schools receiving federal funds to ensure that parents are actively involved and knowledgeable about their schools and their children’s education. The law requires schools to give parents many different kinds of information and notices in a uniform and understandable format and, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parents can

understand. Listed below are some of these required notices that must be made to parents by school districts or individual public schools.

Written complaint procedures

Charter schools disseminate free of charge to parents of students, and to appropriate private school officials or representatives, adequate information about the State Educational Agency's (SEA) written complaint procedures for resolving issues of violation(s) of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to Title I, Part A programs. *[34 CFR § 200.11(d)]*

Teacher qualifications

At the beginning of each school year, a district that receives Title I funds must notify parents that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their children's classroom teachers. If a parent requests the information, it must include at least:

- whether the teacher has met state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas taught;
- whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status;
- the baccalaureate degree major of the teacher; and
- any other graduate certification or degree held by the teacher and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.

The information must also disclose whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals, and if so, their qualifications. *[20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(6)]*

Title III requires that each eligible entity receiving a subgrant under § 3114 shall include in its plan a certification that all teachers in any language instruction educational program for limited English proficient children that is, or will be, funded under this part are fluent in English and any other language used for instruction, including having written and oral communication skills.

[ESEA Title III, Part A, § 3116(c)]

Non-highly qualified teachers

A Title I school shall provide each individual parent timely notice that the parent's child has been assigned, or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks, by a teacher who is not highly qualified. *[20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(6)(B)] [ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1111(h)(6)(A) and (h)(6)(B)(ii)]*

Student privacy

Charter schools must give parents annual notice at the beginning of the school year of the specific or approximate dates during the school year when the following activities are scheduled or expected to be scheduled:

- activities involving the collection, disclosure or use of personal student information for the purpose of marketing or selling that information;
- administration of surveys containing request for certain types of sensitive information;
- any non-emergency, invasive physical examination that is required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school, scheduled in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of student.

A charter school must develop and adopt policies regarding the rights of parents to inspect:

- third party surveys before they are administered or distributed to students;
- measures to protect student privacy when surveys ask for certain sensitive information;
- parental right to inspect any instructional materials;
- administration of physical examinations or screening of students;
- collection, disclosure or use of personal information from students for the purpose of marketing or selling that information; and
- the parental right to inspect any instrument used to collect personal information before it is distributed to students.

Charter school must give parents annual notice of an adoption or continued use of such policies and within a reasonable period of time after any substantive change in such policies. *[20 U.S.C. § 1232h(c)(2)] [ESEA Title II, Part F, § 1061(c)]*

Public release of student directory information

Under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), an LEA and charter schools must provide notice to parents of the types of student information that it releases publicly. This type of student information, commonly referred to as “directory information,” includes such items as names, addresses and telephone numbers and is information generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. The notice must include an explanation of a parent’s right to request that the information not be disclosed without prior written consent.

Additionally, § 9528 requires that parents be notified that the school routinely discloses names, addresses and telephone numbers to military recruiters upon request, subject to a parent’s request not to disclose such information without written consent.

A single notice provided through a mailing, student handbook or other method that is reasonably calculated to inform parents of the above information is sufficient to satisfy the parental notification requirements of both FERPA and § 9528. The notification must advise the parent of how to opt out of the public, nonconsensual disclosure of directory information and the method and timeline within which to do so. *[ESEA § 9528]*

Military recruiter access to student information

Charter schools receiving federal education funds must notify parents of secondary school students that they have a right to request their child's name, address and telephone number not be released to a military recruiter without their prior written consent. Districts and charter schools must comply with any such requests. [20 U.S.C. § 7908(a)(2)] [ESEA § 9528]

Parental involvement

A district receiving Title I funds and each school served under Title I must develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents of children participating in Title I programs, a written parental involvement policy. If a school or district has a parental involvement policy that applies to all parents, it may amend the policy to meet the requirements under the ESEA. [ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1118(a)(2)] [20 U.S.C. § 6318(b); (c)]

Parents shall be notified of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language the parents can understand. Such policy shall be made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school. [ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1118(b)(1)]

- Schools must hold at least one annual meeting for Title I parents;
- offer a flexible number of meetings;
- involve parents in an ongoing manner in the planning, review and improvement of Title I programs;
- provide Title I parents with timely information about the programs, a description and explanation of the curriculum, forms of academic assessment and expected levels of student proficiency;
- if requested, provide opportunities for regular meetings to discuss decisions related to the education of their children; and
- develop a school-parent compact that outlines the responsibilities of each party for improved student academic achievement. [ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1118(c)]

Title III requires that each eligible entity receiving a subgrant under §3114 submit a plan to the SEA that describes how the eligible entity will promote parental and community participation in programs for limited English proficient children. [ESEA Title III, Part A, § 3116(b)(4)]

Title III-funded LEAs are required to implement an effective means of outreach to parents of limited English proficient children to inform such parents of how they can be involved in the education of their children and be active participants in assisting their children to learn English, achieve at high levels in core academic subjects and meet the same State content and



achievement standards all children are expected to meet.

[ESEA Title III § 3302(e)]

Report cards on statewide academic assessment

Each school district that receives Title I, Part A funds must prepare and disseminate an annual report card. Generally, the state or district must include on its report card information about public schools related to student achievement, accountability, teacher qualifications and other required information, as well as any other information that the state or district deems relevant.

These report cards must be concise and presented in an understandable and uniform format accessible to persons with disabilities and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language that parents can understand. In Tennessee, these requirements are met through our State's report card. *[ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1111(h)(1) and (h)(2)]*

Individual achievement on state assessment

A school that receives Title I funds must provide each parent information on the achievement level of their child on each of the state academic assessments as soon as is practicably possible after the test is taken. *[20 U.S.C. § 6312(c)(1)(N)] [ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1111(h)(6)(B)(i)]*

All schools must provide to parents, teachers and principals the individual student interpretive, descriptive and diagnostic reports, which allow specific academic needs to be understood and addressed, and include information on the student's achievement on academic assessments aligned with State academic achievement standards. *[ESEA § 1111(b)(3)(C)(xii)]*

National Assessment of Education Progress

Districts, schools and students may voluntarily participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Parents of children selected to participate in any NAEP assessment must be informed before the assessment is administered that their child may be excused from participation for any reason, is not required to finish any assessment and is not required to answer any test question. A district must make reasonable efforts to inform parents and the public about their right to access all assessment data (except personally identifiable information), questions and current assessment instruments. *[ESEA Title VI, Part C, § 411(c)(1); (d)(1)–(2)]*

School-wide programs

A district must inform eligible schools and parents of school-wide program authority under which such schools may consolidate funds from federal, state and local sources to upgrade the entire educational program of the school. The school must serve an eligible attendance area in

which at least 40% of the children in the area or enrolled in the school are from low-income families. [20 U.S.C. § 6312(c)(1)(A)] [ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1114]

Progress review

Each LEA shall publicize the results of the annual progress review to parents, teachers, principals, schools and the community so that the teachers, principals, other staff and schools can continually refine, in an instructionally useful manner, the program of instruction to help all children served under Title I to meet the challenging State student academic achievement standards. [ESEA § 1116(a)(1)(C)]

Safe and drug-free school programs

A district receiving safe and drug-free school program funds must inform and involve parents in violence and drug prevention efforts. The district must make reasonable efforts to inform parents of the content of safe and drug-free school programs and activities other than classroom instruction. If a parent objects in writing, the district must withdraw the student from the program or activity. [20 U.S.C. § 7116(b); 20 U.S.C. § 7163]

Limited English proficiency programs

A school district that uses federal funds to provide a language instruction education program for children with limited English proficiency must no later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year inform the parents of each child identified for participation or participating in such a program:

- the reasons for the identification of the child as limited English proficient;
- the child's level of English proficiency;
- how that level was determined and the status of the child's academic achievement;
- methods of instruction used in the program in which their child is participating and methods of instruction used in other available programs;
- how the program will meet the educational strengths and needs of their child;
- how the program will specifically help their child learn English and meet age-appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation;
- the specific exit requirements for the program;
- in the case of a child with a disability, how the program meets the child's IEP objectives; and
- information about parental rights detailing the right of parents to have their child immediately removed from such program upon their request and the options that parents have to decline to enroll their child in such program or to choose another available program or method of instruction.



For a child not identified as limited English proficient prior to the beginning of the school year, the district must notify parents within the first two weeks of the child being placed in such a program. [20 U.S.C. § 6312(g); § 7012(a)-(d)] [ESEA Title I, Part A, § 1112(g)(1)-(4)]

Each eligible entity using Title III funds to provide a language instruction education program, and that has failed to make progress on the annual measurable achievement objectives shall separately inform the parents of children identified for participation in such program, or participating in such program, of such failure not later than 30 days after such failure occurs. All required information shall be provided in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parent can understand. [ESEA, Title III, Part C, § 3302(b)(c)]

Homeless children

To be eligible for funds, the school must provide written notice, at the time any child seeks enrollment in such school, and at least twice annually while the child is enrolled in such school, to the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth that, shall be signed by the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth; that sets forth the general rights provided; and specifically states:

- the choice of schools homeless children are eligible to attend;
- that no homeless child is required to attend a separate school for homeless children;
- that homeless children shall be provided comparable services, including transportation services, educational services, and meals; and
- that homeless children should not be stigmatized by school personnel.

The school must also:

- provide contact information for the local liaison for homeless children and the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youths;
- provide assistance to the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth to exercise the right to attend their choice of schools as provided for in subsection (g)(3)(A); and
- if applicable, coordinate with the local education agency with jurisdiction for the school selected, to provide transportation and other necessary services. [42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(C),(E)] [ESEA Title X, Part C, § 722(e)(3)(C)(i)-(iv)]

If the district sends a homeless child to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, the district must provide the parents a written explanation for, including notice of the right to appeal, the decision. The information must also be provided whenever a dispute arises over school selection. [ESEA Title X, Part C, § 722(g)(3)(B)]



Each LEA liaison for homeless children and youth shall ensure the parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children. *[ESEA Title X, Part C, § 722(g)(6)(A)(iv)]*

Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated where such children and youths receive services under this Act, such as schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. *[ESEA Title X, Part C, § 722(g)(6)(A)(v)]*

21st Century Community Learning Centers

A program or activity funded as part of a 21st Century Community Learning Center providing before and after school activities to advance student academic achievement must undergo periodic evaluation to assess its progress toward achieving its goal of providing high quality opportunities for academic enrichment. The results of evaluations shall be made available to the public upon request, with public notice of such availability provided. *[ESEA § 4205(b)(2)]*



II. Student Handbook Addendum⁴

Note: The Student Handbook Addendum included below contains information that shall be provided in all Commission authorized charter school's student handbooks.

This school is a charter school authorized by the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, which serves as the overseeing school district. This document provides important contact information for the school district as well as a link to school district resources and information for parents and students.

General Contact Information:

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

500 James Robertson Parkway, 8th Floor

Nashville, TN 37243

Main Phone: (615) 532-6245

Email: Charter.Commission@tn.gov

[Charter Commission Website \(tn.gov/tn-public-charter-school-commission\)](http://tn.gov/tn-public-charter-school-commission)

The Tennessee Public Charter School Commission has school district policies and procedures that apply to all of its schools. These policies and procedures, along with additional information about the school district and its schools are located on its website.

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission District Staff:

Executive Director: Tess Stovall (Tess.Stovall@tn.gov)

General Counsel: Ashley Thomas (Ashley.Thomas2@tn.gov)

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Director of School Programs and Supports: Maggie Stampley (Maggie.Stampley@tn.gov)

School Programs Coordinator: Claire Seguin (Claire.Seguin@tn.gov)

Exceptional Education Coordinator: Katie Bridges (Katie.Bridges@tn.gov)

District Migrant, Homeless, Foster Care Liaison: Ariana Cahoon (Ariana.Cahoon@tn.gov)

⁴ A translated version of the Student Handbook Addendum is available from the Charter Commission and will be provided to schools as a separate document.



English Learner Program Coordinator: John Bowyer (John.Bowyer@tn.gov)



1200 – Grievances and Complaints

ADOPTED: February 5, 2021

REVISED: July 24, 2026

MONITORING: Annually

Each authorized charter school shall adopt a policy and/or procedure for receiving and addressing complaints or grievances from employees, parents/guardians, or students. The governing board of each charter school shall be the first avenue for response in any complaints or grievances filed against the charter school, its employees, or its volunteers, and the policy and procedures shall be included in the student handbook and made available to students, parents/guardians, employees, and any other person who requests it.

The grievance and complaint policy for each authorized charter school shall include the procedure for submission of a grievance or complaint against the charter school, its employees, or its volunteers. Also, the grievance and complaint policy shall include the escalation process from the school level, then to the charter management organization/network level (if applicable), and then to the governing board of each charter school. The steps for grievance/complaint submission shall include, but are not limited to:

- The point of contact for submitting the grievance or complaint at each level;
- The method(s) by which a grievance or complaint can be received at each level; and,
- The timeline for a determination decision at each level.

If grievances persist following the actions of the governing board of the charter school, or if the complaints are with regard to alleged violations of law, the charter agreement, the improper discipline of a special education student (including violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) or applicable state or federal law or regulation), or any other topic listed below, the Commission may investigate.

Complaints and Grievances Handled by the School

The following are examples of complaints or grievances that are at the discretion of the school and areas in which the Commission cannot mandate decisions:

- Employment issues;
- Transportation issues (except with regard to students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities, or students in foster care);
- Disagreement with a teacher or a student;



- Bullying issues (excluding bullying that rises to the level of a civil rights issue under Title IX or VI, or bullying on the basis of a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)); and
- Disagreement over a discipline decision (excluding the discipline of students with disabilities, including students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans).

The school shall follow its adopted policies and procedures for handling complaints and grievances.

Complaints and Grievances Handled by the Commission

In some instances, Commission may investigate complaints or grievances regarding an authorized school. A formal complaint or grievance to the Commission may include, but is not limited to allegations regarding the following:

- Violations of the law;
- Violations of the charter agreement;
- Violations of special education rights, including discipline;
- Child abuse;
- Serious health, safety, and legal issues;
- Suggestions that a student transfer or enroll at a different school; and
- Title VI and Title IX (civil rights) claims and ADA/Section 504 claims.

A formal complaint to the Commission must:

1. Identify the school(s) involved in the issue;
2. Clearly describe the grievance or complaint and provide any corresponding documentation supporting the issue;
3. Provide details of how the individual attempted to resolve the issue with the school or governing board, if applicable; and
4. Be filed within 180 days of the alleged violation, unless the Commission determines that special circumstances exist to allow the filing of the complaint or grievance.

Parties may use the complaint form accessible on the [Commission's website](#) for submission, or via email at charter.commission@tn.gov.

Within seven business days, the Director of Schools or his/her designee will determine whether the grievance or complaint is properly before the Commission or if it needs to be resolved with the school, and the Director of Schools or his/her designee will notify the complainant of this decision in writing. If it is determined that the complaint or grievance is properly before the



Commission, the Commission will address the complaint or grievance within thirty calendar days, unless special circumstances exist. If special circumstances exist, all parties will be notified.

If a school is found to have committed a violation, it may trigger interventions by the Commission in accordance with Commission Policy 3.400.⁵

Filing a complaint under this policy shall not serve as a prerequisite to any legal or other administrative action that the complainant may choose to pursue, including, but not limited to any complaint under Policy 1801 - Special Education/Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 1802 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504, and 6304 - Bullying, Cyberbullying, Discrimination, Harassment, and Hazing.

Legal References:

⁵ Commission Policy 3.400

Cross References:

LEA Policy 1801 Special Education/Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

LEA Policy 1802 Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504

LEA Policy 6200 Attendance

LEA Policy 6304 Bullying, Cyber-bullying, Discrimination, Harassment and Hazing 6304

LEA Policy 6317 Required Remands and Student Disciplinary Hearing Authority

LEA Procedures 1009 Complaint/Grievance Procedures

Grievance/Complaint Resolution Guidance Chart

Note: The purpose of this chart is to provide guidance to parents who have a concern or problem related to their child's schooling. The chart describes whom a parent should reach out to depending on the category of their problem and what steps they should take to begin addressing the problem.

1. WHICH TYPE OF PROBLEM AM I HAVING?

| Type of Issue | Examples of Issue Type |
|---------------------------------|--|
| General Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagreement with a teacher or another student. • Disagreement over a discipline decision (not including expulsion or if the decision involves a special education student or student with a disability). • Bullying issues (not including bullying that would rise to the level of a civil rights issue under Title IX or VI or bullying on the basis of a disability). • General transportation issues (bus is late, bus driver issue, bus stop location). *Not including issues related to transportation of students with disabilities, homeless or foster care students. |
| Enrollment Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion about enrollment such as the lottery or application process, and documents required. • School said we should transfer or school said my child isn't a good fit. |
| Special Education Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My child is not receiving the special education services required by his/her IEP or 504 plan. • I disagree with a decision made by the IEP team. • I have concerns about the way my special education student was disciplined. • The school is not complying with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regarding accessibility, accommodations, etc. |

| Type of Issue | Examples of Issue Type |
|------------------------|--|
| Critical Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My child has been expelled, or other serious discipline issues. • Serious health, legal or safety issues. • Title VI (race, color, national origin), Title IX (sex) civil rights, or ADA/Section 504 discrimination issues. • The school is not communicating with me or my child in a language that we understand. |

2. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WORKING WITH ME TO FIND A SOLUTION?

| Type of Issue | Responsible Party for Issue Type |
|---------------------------------|---|
| General Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These issues are the responsibility of the school and/or governing board. The Commission cannot mandate decisions in this area. |
| Enrollment Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of these issues can be resolved by the school. If the school cannot address the issues, then reach out to the Charter Commission. |
| Special Education Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While most of these issues can be resolved by the school, reach out to the Charter Commission if the issue is not resolved after meeting with the school. |
| Critical Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Charter Commission will work with you and the school to ensure that these issues are resolved. |

3. WHAT IS THE FIRST THING I SHOULD DO TO ADDRESS MY PROBLEM?

| Type of Issue | Initial Actions Steps by Issue Type |
|---------------------------------|---|
| General Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to resolve the issue with the school by contacting the principal or assistant principal. • If you wish to make a formal complaint, review the school's policy on complaints and grievances which should be contained in the student handbook. • For discipline issues, consult the student handbook for the school's discipline policy and any appeal process established by the school. • For bullying issues, consult the school's bullying policy which should set forth a complaint and investigation process for bullying issues. The school's bullying policy should be contained in the student handbook. Also, consult the Commission's bullying policy. |
| Enrollment Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact school office personnel, the school counselor, or the principal. • Review student enrollment policies and procedures which should be contained in the student handbook or the school's website. Also, consult the Commission's enrollment procedures.⁶ |
| Special Education Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the school's Director of Special Education/Student Support, the Principal, or the Executive Director/CEO of the Charter School. • The school must give you 10-day advance notice for any concerns resulting in an IEP meeting or if you request an IEP meeting. • For students with an IEP, consult the Procedural Safeguards document provided by the Tennessee Department of Education regarding your rights. |

⁶ Commission LEA Procedure 1006; All of the [Commission's LEA Policies and Procedures](#) are available on the [Commission website](#).

| Type of Issue | Initial Actions Steps by Issue Type |
|------------------------|--|
| Critical Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Charter Commission at (615) 532-6245 or Charter.Commission@tn.gov to describe your concern and previous requests for help from the school. • A Commission staff member will work with you and the school to come to a solution. • If your student has been expelled: To request an appeal of a zero-tolerance expulsion, see the school’s policy on Disciplinary Hearing Authorities (“DHA”), which should be contained in the student handbook. Also consult the Commission DHA policy (LEA Policy 6317) and DHA procedures (LEA Procedure 1002). If you have remaining questions after following the school’s policy, contact the Charter Commission at (615) 532-6245 or Charter.Commission@tn.gov. |

4. WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM STILL UNABLE TO RESOLVE MY PROBLEM?

| Type of Issue | Action Steps if Unresolved by Issue Type |
|-----------------------|--|
| General Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are unable to resolve your problem by working with the school principal or if the school principal does not respond, you may reach out to the operator’s CEO/ Executive Director or to the governing board of the charter school. • To request an appeal of a suspension/remand to alternative school of more than 10 days, see the school’s policy on Disciplinary Hearing Authorities, which should be contained in the student handbook. Also consult the Commission DHA policy (LEA Policy 6317) and DHA procedures (LEA Procedure 1002). If you have remaining questions after following the school’s policy, contact the Charter Commission at (615) 532-6245 or Charter.Commission@tn.gov. |

| Type of Issue | Action Steps if Unresolved by Issue Type |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Enrollment Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you cannot resolve the issue by speaking with the school principal, you may reach out to the operator’s CEO/Executive Director. • If the issue is still not resolved, and you feel that your child is unlawfully being denied enrollment please contact the Commission at Charter.Commission@tn.gov or (615) 532-6245. |
| Special Education Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Commission’s Director of School Programs and Supports or Executive Director at (615) 532-6245. They will work with you and the school to attempt to reach a resolution. • You may file a formal complaint with the Commission. Consult the Commission’s complaint policy (LEA Policy 1200). • You may contact the Tennessee Department of Education to make a complaint regarding special education at (615) 741-2921. • Consult the Commission’s special education/ IDEA policy (LEA Policy 1801) for additional information on IDEA Grievances or the Commission’s ADA and Section 504 policy (LEA Policy 1802) for additional options. |
| Critical Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may file a formal complaint with the Commission. Consult the Commission’s complaint policy (LEA Policy 1200). |

1036 - School Year 2026-27 District and Family Engagement Plan

In support of strengthening student academic achievement, the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission (“Commission”) receives Title I, Part A funds and therefore must jointly develop with, agree on, and distribute to parents and family members of participating children a written parent and family engagement plan that contains information required by Section 1116(a)(2) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The plan establishes the district’s expectations and objectives for meaningful parent and family engagement and describes what families can expect from the district and their school.

As a non-geographic district comprised entirely of charter schools, parent and family engagement fundamentally varies compared to a traditional school district.

The Commission recognizes the importance and value of meaningful parent and family involvement. In collaboration with its schools, the Commission seeks to establish effective strategies and plans to engage parents and families in the design, review, and implementation of the education program. The Commission works with its authorized charter schools on the local education agency (LEA) district plan to establish expectations and objectives for the district and its schools, including parent and family engagement, and at least one parent representative, whose child is currently enrolled in a school in the LEA, is part of the planning team. Each school must adopt a policy to address the engagement of parents and families that is jointly developed with parents and outlines how parents, students, and school staff will share the responsibility for high student achievement.

The Commission agrees to implement the following requirements as outlined by Section 1116

- The Commission will ensure policies and procedures for the engagement of parents and family members are in all of its schools with Title I, Part A programs. School-level programs, activities, and procedures will be planned and operated with meaningful consultation with parents and family members of participating children;
- Consistent with Section 1116, the Commission will work with its schools to ensure that the required school-level parent and family engagement policies meet the requirements of Section 1116(b) of the ESSA; and
- In carrying out the Title I, Part A parent and family engagement requirements to the extent practicable, the Commission will ensure its schools provide full opportunities for the participation of families with limited English proficiency, limited literacy, disabilities, of migratory children, who are economically disadvantaged, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background, including providing information and school reports required under Section 1111 of the ESSA in an understandable and uniform format including



alternative formats upon request and, to the extent practicable, in a language families understand.

The Commission will be governed by the following definition of family engagement and expects that its Title I schools will carry out programs, activities, and procedures in accordance with this definition in Section 8101 of the ESSA.

Family engagement means the participation of families in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication, in a language families understand, involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

- Families play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning;
- Families are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school;
- Families are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and
- Other activities are carried out, such as those described in Section 1116 of the ESEA.

Jointly Developed

The Commission will take the following actions to involve parents and family members in jointly developing its LEA plan under Section 1112, and the development of support and improvement plans under paragraphs (1) and (2) of Section 1111(d) of the ESEA:

- Invitation to participate in LEA Parent and Family Engagement Planning Committee;
- Draft policies available on website for public review and commentary;
- Finalize district parent and family engagement policy posted to district website;
- Invitation to participate in the LEA improvement planning and review committees;
- Opportunities to provide written or in-person comments at Commission Meetings; and
- Invitation to participate in annual Title I and quarterly School Improvement Planning meetings.

Technical Assistance

The Commission will provide the following coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build the capacity of all Title I, Part A schools in planning and implementing effective parent and family engagement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance:



- Annual review and feedback of schools' School-Parent Compact and checklist;
- Annual review and feedback of schools' Parent Engagement Policy and checklist;
- Annual review and feedback of schools' Student Handbook;
- Training on School Improvement Plans and collaboration on completion of plans; and
- Training on Title I and School Improvement Planning Meeting components and requirements.

Annual Evaluation

The Commission will conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of this parent and family engagement plan in improving the academic quality of its Title I, Part A schools. The Federal Programs Coordinator will share an evaluation tool with schools such that it can be provided to families for their meaningful participation and will share the findings of the evaluation with schools, where appropriate, to encourage their development of evidence-based strategies for more effective family engagement, and to revise, if necessary, parent and family engagement policies.

Reservation Of Funds

Since the Commission receives at least \$500,000 in Title I funding, the Commission is required to set aside money from the Title I grant award for parent involvement. Therefore, schools receive additional Title I funds to use for parent involvement. Schools are expected to meet all Title I requirements for parent involvement regardless of the set-aside amount. The Commission passes down all funds set aside for parent and family engagement to its authorized charter schools. Schools are responsible for budgeting the parent and family engagement set-aside according to their own school plan. The Commission's Federal Programs Coordinator will review annual Title I meeting documentation to ensure schools involve the parents and family members of children served in Title I, Part A schools in decisions about how these funds are spent.

Coordination of Services

The Commission requests schools' coordination and integration of parent and family engagement strategies, to the extent feasible and appropriate, with other relevant federal, state, and local laws, programs, and partnerships.

Building Capacity of Parents and Family Members

The Commission will assist its Title I schools, as requested, with building families' capacity for strong family engagement by providing materials and resources on such topics as literacy



training and using technology to help families work with their children to improve their children's academic achievement. The Commission will support schools to provide assistance, if requested, in understanding the following topics:

- Tennessee academic standards;
- The state and local academic assessments, including alternate assessments;
- The requirements of Title I, Part A;
- How to monitor their child's progress; and
- How to work with educators.

Building Capacity of School Staff

The Commission will, if requested, work with schools to educate teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, principals, and other school leaders, and other staff in the value and utility of contributions of families, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with families as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between families and schools.

Adoption

This district's parent and family engagement plan has been developed jointly and agreed on with parents and family members of children participating in Title I, Part A programs, as evidenced by opportunities for feedback and collaboration.

This plan was adopted by the Commission and will be in effect for the 2026-27 school year until its revision period in Spring 2027. A finalized copy will be provided to schools for distribution during Title I meetings in Fall 2026 and posted to the Commission website.



NOTICE: Right to Request Translation of District Information

Parents and families of students enrolled in Tennessee Public Charter School Commission authorized charter schools may request district information to be translated into their primary language (if other than English). District information may include the Charter Commission district policies, procedures, and notices made available to the public.

Parents or family members who wish to request translated district information should email their request, including the title of the document they wish to have translated to the contact information below. Please note that translation of district information may take up to several weeks and will be provided as soon as possible after a request is received.

John Bowyer

English Learner Program Coordinator

John.Bowyer@tn.gov

Ph. 629-259-4463



III. Student Handbook Assurances

Directions: Schools must ensure necessary school leaders have reviewed, understand, and will implement the requirements within this handbook. After review of the handbook, school leaders must sign and date the assurances below. Then, scan this page and upload it to the August Reporting Calendar folder on Microsoft Teams.

Assurances: The charter school hereby assures the local education agency (LEA) that the school meets each of the following conditions:

1. The Authorized Charter School Student Handbook Requirements for the current school year and has been reviewed in its entirety by required school leaders.
2. Charter school Student Handbooks will be reviewed and revised to meet the minimum requirements as outlined by federal statute, state statute, and Commission policy.
3. Authorized charter schools will submit their Student Handbooks to the district via the Reporting Calendar.
4. All Parent Notifications required by ESEA, as amended by ESSA, will be shared with parents/guardians in a uniform and understandable format and, to the extent practicable, in a language that the parents/guardians can understand.

School Leader Name

School Leader Signature

Date

School Leader Designee Name (Executive Director, etc.)

School Leader Designee Signature

Date

IV. Charter Commission Charter School Instructional Materials Assurances

The Commission recognizes the rights and freedoms of the teachers, administrators, and students inherent in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.⁷ Charter schools, irrespective of instructional materials selected or any applicable waivers, shall honor exemption or accommodation requests made on the basis of religious liberty or a deeply held belief.

Directions: All public schools are required to comply with Tennessee law regarding the review and assignment of textbooks and instructional materials. Schools must ensure that necessary school leaders have reviewed, understand, and will implement the requirements of law and policy when administering textbooks and instructional materials to the classroom. In accordance with LEA Policy 4400, each school shall also ensure that instructions on how to review selected curriculum and instructional materials are published to families, and the curriculum and instructional materials are easily accessible via the charter school’s website.

After reviewing the laws and/or policies referenced in the assurances below, as well as the charter school textbooks and instructional materials, school leaders must sign and date the assurances below. Then, upload it to the August Reporting Calendar folder on Microsoft Teams.

Assurances: The charter school hereby assures the local education agency (LEA) that the school meets each of the following conditions:

1. The Charter School has communicated to parents and students the selected curriculum, instructional materials, and textbooks at the beginning of the academic year and prior to initiating Family Life, sexual orientation, or gender identity curriculum, as required by T.C.A. §§ 49-6-1305, 1308.
2. The Charter School has made the curriculum and instructional materials available for review on the Charter School’s website.
3. The textbooks and instructional materials have been reviewed in their entirety by the Charter School Governing Board and required school leaders.
4. The textbooks and instructional materials comply with the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-6-1019, State Board of Education Rule 0520-12-04, and Commission LEA Policy 4400 relating to prohibited concepts in instruction.
5. The Charter School has posted a “Prohibited Concepts Complaint Form” on its website for the receipt and review of any grievances filed (e.g. [Prohibited Concepts Complaint Form.pdf](#)).

⁷ Island Trees/Union Free School District v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853, 102 S. Ct. 2799 (1982).



6. The Charter School communicates to staff, students, and parents the complaint process for textbooks and instructional materials.
7. The textbooks and instructional materials comply with the requirements of T.C.A. §§ 49-6-1301 et. seq. relating to Family Life Curriculum.
8. The Charter School will provide notice to parents and/or legal guardians at least 30 days prior to commencing instruction of family life curriculum.
 - a. The notice shall include instruction on how to excuse a student from participating in any or all portions of family life curriculum in writing.⁸
9. The Charter School will provide notice to parents and/or legal guardians at least 30 days prior to commencing instruction of a sexual orientation or gender identity instruction.
 - a. The notice shall include instructions on how to provide “written, informed, and voluntary” consent for the student to receive instruction of a sexual orientation or gender identity curriculum.⁹
10. The Charter School will work collaboratively with the staff, eligible student(s), and/or parents to accommodate valid exemptions and/or substantiated complaints related to the aforementioned laws and regulations.

School/Network Name

Governing Board Chair

Governing Board Chair Signature

Date

School Leader Name (e.g. Executive Director, etc.)

School Leader Signature

Date

⁸ T.C.A. § 49-6-1305(b).

⁹ T.C.A. § 49-6-1308(b)(1).