



## **Academy of the Arts Charter High School**

### **Appeal Summary Letter**

**Submitted by: Mecca Jackson (Founder & Proposed School Leader)**

The mission of Academy of the Arts Charter School is to educate high school students through the performing arts while providing them with the academic and entrepreneurial skills to succeed in school and in life! Academy of the Arts is unique and in the best interest of students, the district and the Fayette County community in that it prioritizes student interests, is built on the foundation of including student and parent voice as partners in the work and will create a diverse learning environment in a community currently challenged with establishing diverse educational options. With an arts education model at the foundation of this design, Academy of the Arts would be the first of its kind within Fayette County to offer students in the public sector the opportunity to major in Music, Visual Art, Dance, Fashion Design or Film/Video/Drama while attending high school.

Studies have confirmed that arts education improves achievement for all students! Fayette County's current proficiency levels in Literacy and Math show an urgent need for an alternative instructional program to help students achieve academically. The district proficiency rate in Literacy is 20% and Fayette Ware High School proficiency in Reading is 19%. Fayette County's Math proficiency rate is 17% and Fayette Ware High Schools proficiency rate in Math is 4%. We are confident we can replicate the success school models in, which consistently has high proficiency rates and daily attendance rates. Academy of the Arts Charter High School recognizes that students learn differently and will take a different approach to the instructional implementation of core concepts to help close the achievement gap within Fayette County. This unique model will offer students an art infused educational program that addresses and teaches key Reading and Math skills through the performing arts with a hands-on approach. The instructional program is also inclusive of alternative assessments that provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of concepts through processfolios, showcases and exhibitions, portfolios and capstone projects. Academy of the Arts will also provide students with a strong entrepreneurial program to prepare them to make successful financial decisions in their future. Through an established partnership with Junior Achievement, students would engage in a dynamic program designed to provide financial literacy skills to sustain themselves as adults.



*Why Fayette county?* Presently Fayette county offers families one tuition-free educational option. Students in Fayette County currently have limited educational offerings, and a virtually nonexistent arts-inspired school option. Many students are disengaged, as the current 89% high school graduation rate within Fayette County suggests, because there are no educational options to meet their needs. AACHS will be one such option. The addition of Academy of the Arts Charter High School within the school district would address the critical need to provide educational options designed to meet the unique needs of a wide range of students, not those best suited for a traditional environment. Currently, Fayette County School District has one comprehensive high school within the entire county to serve the more than 1000 high school students. Children have no option other than to attend Fayette Ware High School after 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation within this county. The addition of Academy of the Arts would address a long needed and desired secondary school option for families within this community and allow them to select a high school aligned with their child's needs and interests. Another option within the Fayette County School District and community could increase parent satisfaction and involvement and provide options for lower income families within this county.

Academy of the Arts promotes a college going culture and also recognizes we need to prepare students for life beyond high school, regardless what post-secondary option they choose. To that end, Academy of the Arts Charter High School will provide a career and technical education pathway to students. Our goal is to complement the educational offerings of the county, empowering students and families. The presence of this option within Fayette County will expand upon the current CTE options offered at the 1 high school within the county. Academy of the Arts would be an asset to the community by strengthening students' abilities to start a career in the fine art area in which they could study while attending the school. Upon charter authorization, students at Academy of the Arts would also have the opportunity to earn their Career and Technical Education certificate in 1 of 3 fine art fields while attending the school.

From the onset, Fayette County emphatically stated that they did not want a charter school option within their county. All of their actions from that moment have aligned with these sentiments and created a process of exclusion, despite knowing that a school design like AACHS proposes will diversify the educational options of the school district and empower families to explore choices that meet the unique needs of their children.



Denying the charter application for Academy of the Arts is a denial of proven alternative learning methods for students that will help them reach proficiency. It is a denial of a diverse and inclusive school environment for students and educators to work collaboratively together. It is also a denial for families to have another tuition-free option in the county and a denial to innovatively work to close the achievement gap in Tennessee.