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| <b>Knox County Board of Education</b> |                               |                  |                          |
|                                       | Descriptor Term:              | Descriptor Code: | Issued:                  |
|                                       | <b>Public Charter Schools</b> | <b>IL</b>        | <b>9/11</b>              |
|                                       |                               | Rescinds:        | Revised:<br><b>12/12</b> |

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**EXPECTATIONS**

The Board of Education believe high quality charter schools have the potential to be a useful structure to help effectively educate Knox County students and enhance quality public education choices for all students and their families. Charter schools are meant to serve as innovative learning centers where strong teachers and experienced administrators advance each student’s achievement every day, regardless of race, color, national-origin, religion, gender, disability, proficiency in English, academic ability, social capital or family income. Every student in the Knox County Schools deserves high quality opportunities to learn, grow and achieve their full potential.

The Board’s goal is to build a system of schools that provides every student with the foundation of knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to excel in higher education, the work place and in life. All charter schools in Knox County are expected to cultivate strong school capacity to provide high quality academic instruction addressing student performance outcomes in accordance with the Knox County Schools strategic plan.

All charter schools must employ non-selective admission criteria and ensure that students will achieve predetermined goals by the second year of operation

**CHARTER SCHOOLS APPLICATIONS**

The Board shall annually solicit applications for the establishment of charter schools through a Request for Proposal Process (RFP). The RFP will be posted and maintained on the Knox County Schools website to ensure it is continuously available to prospective charter school operators.<sup>1</sup>

Applications will be entertained both for new charter schools as well as potential conversions of existing schools to charters. All applications should demonstrate substantial capacity to support the plan financially and to execute effective instruction and programs fostering teacher effectiveness.

Any founding group planning to submit a charter application must submit a Letter of Intent and evidence of public outreach to the Knox County Board of Education and to the State of Tennessee Division of Charter Schools no later than sixty (60) days prior to the deadline for the submission of the application. Applicants who fail to meet this requirement will not be eligible to submit a proposal.<sup>2</sup>

Applicants will be assessed a fee of \$500.00 when applications are submitted to offset costs incurred that are associated with the application and evaluation process.

All responsive proposals will be evaluated by a committee recommended by the Director of Schools and appointed by the Board of Education. The committee shall consist of individuals from the following KCS departments:

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- A. Finance
- B. Operations
- C. Human Resources
- D. Research and Evaluation
- E. Curriculum and Instruction

Additional members on the review team will be a community person, and a representative from the Knox County Law Department.

**TRADITIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Applications for new traditional charter schools must offer an innovative, compelling and evidence-based plan for a high quality charter school, and demonstrate that the plan was collaboratively developed by a diverse and expert design team.

Applicants in this category must complete the state-mandated application as well as adhere to Board policy and deadlines for submission.

In addition to state requirements, the Board expects proposals to include or demonstrate the following:

- A. A history of proven academic success in currently operating schools or a leadership team with a record of success in increasing student academic achievement
- B. A strong and well-organized leader committed to educational reform and possessing a record of success with the proposed educational plan and student profile.
- C. An educational plan rooted in high expectations, in line with the school’s stated mission, and providing a personalized learning environment for all students.
- D. A comprehensive and research-based curriculum and assessment program designed to hold all students to high-achievement goals, including those with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and specialized needs and abilities.
- E. Strategies to attract and retain energetic and highly effective teachers and staff who will actively engage in professional development opportunities and sharing research-based best practices.
- F. A strong understanding of the community that the proposed school will serve and demonstrated community support.
- G. Meaningful opportunities to involve parents and community along with a sustainable plan for maintaining strong parental and community participation in and support of the school.
- H. A strong, knowledgeable, diverse, stable, and committed board of governance or leadership team committed to best practices in school governance and financial management.
- I. A detailed and sustainable plan, including a coordinated five-year plan for growth and sustainable improvement.

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**CONVERSION CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Applicants interested in conversion of an existing school to a charter school, or any non-traditional charter school structure should contact the Knox County School Board Office to consult with the Charter School Review Chair before beginning the RFP process.

Proposals for conversion schools must meet all of the standards for new traditional charter school proposals. Additionally, these proposals must:

- A. clearly identify the specific school to be converted and provide detailed documentation of the need for conversion.
- B. offer clear and measurable strategies for achieving dramatic academic improvement by specifically addressing identified needs.
- C. offer evidence of community and stakeholder engagement and overwhelming stakeholder interest in converting to a charter school as delineated below.
- D. include documentation of how the interests of the Knox County Schools, the students, families, teachers, staff, school community, and broader community would be well served by a conversion to a charter school.
- E. identify the specific parameters of conversion as part of the operational and educational plan proposed.
- F. detail the transition timeline including effective communication strategies and procedures for exercising options at the family, teacher, staff, and leadership levels.

Proposals for conversion chart schools must offer substantial justification for the change, clear planning and intentionality to meet the needs of the students in the school, evidence of family and community engagement, and sensitivity to the impact of potential disruptions on the academic environment.

Conversion of existing schools to charters may be initiated through reorganization action taken by the Board of Education, or through consideration of charter petitions by 60% of faculty and/or 60% of families at the school to be potentially converted. While the Board of Education will consider application for conversion charter schools based upon the petition of 60% of the school’s faculty or families, preference will be given to petitions demonstrating at least 75% support of the school’s faculty or families.

**CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION REVIEW**

The deadline for submitting a charter application is April 1<sup>st</sup>, and the Board will only accept applications for a period of 15 days prior to the deadline. The review committee will review all applications and submit recommendations to the Board of Education in such a manner as to facilitate an action of the Board within ninety (90) days of the submission.<sup>3</sup>

In the event the Board denies the application, the applicant will be issued a letter outlining the specific details that led to the decision to deny the application. Should the applicant decide to remedy the deficits, the applicant will have thirty (30) calendar days to submit an amended application to the Board

1 of Education. The review committee will then have thirty (30) calendar days to review the amended  
 2 application and make a recommendation based on the amended application to the Knox County Board of  
 3 Education.<sup>4</sup>  
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5 Any new information inserted in the application, including appendices, will be reviewed by the Charter  
 6 School Review Committee and a new KCS recommendation will be made based on the complete  
 7 amended application. If the KCS Board of Education’s recommendation is “amended application  
 8 denied”, the applicant will have ten (10) calendar days to appeal to the State Board of Education.<sup>5</sup>  
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- 10 A. The initial review will include an individual review of the application by appropriate KCS staff  
 11 and community members from demographic, academic, operational, legal, and fiscal  
 12 perspectives.  
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14 Once this review has occurred and individual review committee members have assigned scores  
 15 based on the state rubric, the review committee will meet to determine if the application has  
 16 addressed thoroughly all required areas to advance to the next KCS Charter Application review  
 17 phase. This includes evidence that demonstrates the following:  
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- 19 1. The ability to operate a school in an educationally effective and fiscally sound manner  
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- 21 2. The proposal is likely to improve student learning, academic growth and achievement  
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- 23 3. Increased learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded  
 24 learning experiences for students who are at risk of academic failure  
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- 26 4. The use of innovative and effective teaching methods  
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- 28 5. Appropriate knowledge of educational pedagogy for the grades proposed by the schools  
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- 30 6. The creation of new professional learning, leadership, and collaboration opportunities for  
 31 teachers, school leaders, and other school personnel  
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- 33 7. Parents and students are provided with expanded choices in the types of educational  
 34 opportunities that are available within the Knox County Schools  
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- 36 8. Clear, measurable student achievement criteria with built-in accountability criteria  
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- 38 9. A culture of continuous learning, improvement, and excellence that will reinforce student  
 39 learning, increase student academic success, and close unacceptable achievement gaps  
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- 41 10. Meets all criteria outlined in state law and stated requirements of the Knox County  
 42 Schools  
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- 46 B. The second phase of the review process includes the following:  
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- 48 1. For proposals considered high quality and meeting all state, legal and local requirements,  
 49 an interview will be scheduled with members of the proposed school’s founding group,  
 50 which should include the applicants, proposed governing board representatives, and other

members who speak knowledgeably about the proposed academic program, organizational capacity, budget and governance structure.

2. Proposals of sufficient quality and completeness may undergo a Request for Amendment process in an attempt to resolve review committee concerns and assure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Although the scoring rubric is from the State of Tennessee, the review committee will consider evidence of the following general criteria:

- A. A viable plan to meet the needs of special populations: students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged students.
- B. Increasing high school graduation rates for students at risk of not graduating
- C. A focus on middle school students’ academic achievement and the transition to high school
- D. Use of high quality assessments designed to measure the learning of the critical concepts and are aligned with Tennessee State Standards and Common Core Standards
- E. Management and leadership capability to overcome initial start-up challenges and establish a fiscally viable school
- F. Increasing the acquisition, adoption and use of professional development systems that provide teachers and school leaders with the information and resources they need to inform and improve instructional practices, decision-making and overall effectiveness
- G. Use of data to make instructional decisions with an established system of communication between administration, school director and teachers
- H. Partnering with schools located in the area in which the school will locate to share best practices and innovations
- I. A well-developed plan to build and extend relationships with community partners, stakeholders, parents and the school district personnel
- J. Adherence to the Board’s stated charter school priorities

In cases where the proposed school would partner with a non-profit Charter School Management Organization (CMO) or a business, community or educational partner organization, the review committee will conduct a due diligence process with the organization to ascertain the organization’s structure, staffing, finances, plans for the future and the academic performance of other schools it serves that enroll similar populations of students.

The review committee and/or the KCS Director of Schools may also interview representatives of the proposed management or partner organization to discuss the responses to the questionnaire.

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**APPROVED CHARTER SCHOOLS**

A charter school shall be operated in accordance with the Charter Agreement approved by the Board of Education. Should adjustments or amendments to the Charter Agreement be needed, the governing body may apply to the Board for any amendment to or deviation from the Charter Agreement. Material deviations from the Charter Agreement may result in the revocation of the Charter Agreement by the Board.<sup>6</sup> Examples of substantial deviations may include, but are not limited to, changes to transportation or special education services, changes to the governing board, or alteration of the opening date of school, the location of the school, the targeted student population, etc. Should the Charter School substantially deviate from the charter without prior approval from the Board, the Board may revoke the Charter.

- A. **Training** - The governing body of an approved charter school is to conduct at least one annual board training course and provide documentation of such training to the Board of Education. The training course must be certified by the Tennessee Charter Schools Association.
  
- B. **Reporting Requirements** - The Governing Body of an approved charter school shall make a written report to the Board annually between August 1 and September 1.<sup>7</sup> This reporting requirement shall begin in the year after the year in which the charter school begins operation. This annual report shall include: a report on the progress of the school in achieving its goals, objectives, student performance standards, contents standards, and all other terms of the Charter Agreement; the same information required in the reports prepared by local boards of education pursuant to state laws, rules and regulations; and financial records of the school, including revenues and expenditures. This report shall provide a detailed accounting, including the amounts and sources, of funds other than those funds received under T.C.A. § 49-13-112(a). These funds shall include, but not be limited to, any funds received from sources under T.C.A. § 49-13-112(e).<sup>8</sup>
  
- C. **Renewals** - Not later than October 1<sup>st</sup> of the year prior to the year in which the charter agreement expires, the governing body of a public charter school may submit a renewal application to the Board.<sup>9</sup> The Board shall make its renewal decision based on the Governing Body's annual report. The Board may revoke or deny renewal of a public charter school agreement for:
  - 1. a material violation of the conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the Charter;
  - 2. failure to meet the state’s accountability system for two (2) consecutive years]; or
  - 3. failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.<sup>10</sup>
  
- D. **Waiver of Requirements** - Waivers granted by the Commissioner of Education must be presented in writing. The Director of Schools may grant waivers with regard to the Knox County Schools rules, procedures, requirements or any other administrative regulation that applies to the Charter School. Any application for waiver that conflicts with the Charter Agreement will be denied.
  - 1. All waiver requests shall be submitted in writing no later than sixty (60) days prior to the Charter School’s intention to implement the waiver, if granted.
  - 2. All waiver requests shall include a listing of the specific administrative regulation

requested to be waived.

3. All waiver requests shall include detailed documentation of the grounds for requesting the waiver and specific evidence showing how the administrative regulation currently inhibits or hinders the proposed charter school’s ability to meet its goals or comply with its mission statement.

4. All waiver requests filed with the administration shall contain information on any other waiver requests filed with the Commissioner of Education, including the status of those waiver requests.

E. The Board will withhold 1% of a charter school’s funds (up to \$20,000) per year for the first four years of operations if the charter school is contracting with the Knox County Schools for services. After four years, if there are no issues, the Board will return these dollars including interest. This allowance will prevent a substantial loss if the Knox County Schools provides services, such as food service, transportation or other contracted student services, and a charter closes prior to paying for such services or obligations.

Legal References:

- 1 See, generally, T.C.A. § 101, et seq., and specifically, T.C.A. § 49-13-107 (b).
- 2 T.C.A. § 49-13-107(a)
- 3 T.C.A. § 49-13-108; Tennessee Pub. Ch. 1097, eff. July 1, 2012
- 4 T.C.A. § 49-13-108; Tennessee Pub. Chs. 1021 & 1097, eff. July 1, 2012
- 5 T.C.A. § 49-13-108
- 6 T.C.A. § 49-13-122
- 7 T.C.A. § 49-13-120
- 8 T.C.A. § 49-13-120
- 9 T.C.A. § 49-13-121
- 10 T.C.A. § 49-13-122