



QCR REPORT: EMPOWER MEMPHIS
MARCH 2023

Quality Charter Review Recommendation Report 2023

EMPOWER MEMPHIS CAREER AND COLLEGE PREP

March 2023

Evaluated By

Tennesseans for Student Success

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This document was adapted from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Charter School Application Recommendation Report. NACSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of public education by improving the performance of charter school organizations. NACSA provides training, consulting, and policy guidance to authorizers and education leaders interested in increasing the number of high quality schools and improving student outcomes. For more information, visit <http://qualitycharters.org>.

Contents

This recommendation report includes the following:

Overview	Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.
Recommendation	A fact-based assessment determining if the application meets the criteria for authorization by the local school district including an outline of strengths and needed improvements. A recommendation of approval requires a score of Meets or Exceeds Standard in all three primary application sections.
Evaluation	<p>Analysis of the application is informed by the published Tennessee Department of Education Charter Application Scoring Rubric across the three primary application sections:</p> <p>Academic Plan Design and Capacity: School mission and vision, enrollment summary, academic focus and plan, academic performance standards, high school graduation and postsecondary readiness, assessments, school calendar and schedule, special populations, school culture and discipline, recruitment and enrollment, parent and community engagement and support.</p> <p>Operations Plan and Capacity: Governance, start-up plan, facilities, personnel/human capital, professional development, insurance, transportation, food service, additional operations, and waivers.</p> <p>Financial Plan and Capacity: Planning and budget worksheet, and budget narrative.</p>
Rating Characteristics	<p>The following definitions guide evaluator ratings:</p> <p>Meets or Exceeds Standard: Responses address the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the application's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.</p> <p>Partially Meets Standard: Responses meet the criteria in some respects, but lacks detail and/or require additional information in one or more areas.</p> <p>Does Not Meet Standard: Responses are undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrate lack of preparation; is unsuited to the mission of the authorizer or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.</p>



OVERVIEW

Sponsor Name

Empower Career and College Prep Schools

Proposed School Name

Empower Memphis Career and College Prep Charter School

Proposed Location

Orange Mound and South Memphis Memphis, Tennessee

Board Members

Muna Olaniyi, CEO
 Dr. Eric Bailey, Member
 Brian Burnett, Treasurer
 Susan Hipner, Secretary
 Dr. Marian Kelley, Vice Chair
 Tim Rollins, Member
 Meagan Tate, Chair

Proposed School Leader

Lead Founder/CEO, anticipated June 2023
 Lower Head of Schools, anticipated Fall 2023
 Director of Operations and Culture, anticipated Fall 2023

Mission and Vision

Mission: In partnership with families, Empower Memphis Career and College Prep is a K-8 charter school, with an unwavering obligation to accelerate academic achievement, foster individuality, and cultivate career mindsets, of all students, as early as Kindergarten. Through differentiated instruction, interest-based studies, leadership development, financial planning and career simulations and internships, students develop future-ready skills for success in the global market.

Vision: The vision of Empower Memphis Career and College Prep Charter School is to explore uncharted paths of learning, identity, and careers. We dream of a world of limitless opportunities – where students confidently pursue future career paths of their choice that will improve academic, social, and economic outcomes in the communities of Memphis and beyond.

Educational Model/Instructional Design

Career Exploration/Career Technical Education

Enrollment Projections

Grade	Enrollment Projections								
Year	24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	31-32	32-33
Level	K-2	K-3	K-4	K-5	K-6	K-7	K-8	K-8	K-8
K	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
1	25	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
2	25	25	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
3		25	25	50	50	50	50	50	50
4			25	25	50	50	50	50	50
5				25	25	50	50	50	50
6					25	25	50	50	50
7						25	25	50	50
8							25	25	50
Total	100	150	200	250	300	350	400	425	450

Anticipated Student Demographics

Enrollment Demographics: 80-85% African American
 15-20% Other

Special Population Projections: 80-85% Econ. Disadvantaged
 10-15% Students w/ Disabilities
 2% English Lang. Learners



RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE

Application Strengths Summary

- Applicant provides deep understanding of the demographics for the targeted zip codes
- Several possible locations have been identified, including contingency locations
- Applicant demonstrates established relationship with community stakeholders
- Career Technical Education (CTE) model with clusters and collaborators among local community business members identified
- Transportation (contract service) to be provided
- Teacher salaries and benefits are competitive
- Leadership team has extensive experience in school operations and special populations

Application Improvements Summary

- Applicant should consider partnerships with area non-profits to offer after-school programming, given the high percentage of economically disadvantaged students
- Additional clarification is needed for the onboarding of the SPED/Special Operations Director position in Year 2
- Additional clarification is needed to ensure adequate amount of physical education is offered to meet state requirements of 130 minutes per week

ACADEMIC PLAN DESIGN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

Empower Memphis Career and College Prep Charter School is designed to serve 450 students at capacity, in grades K-8 in the South Memphis/Orange Mound area. The applicant provides several properties as occupancy options including vacant MSCS buildings, co-location with another school, and possible incubator sites. The applicant proposes to meet the statutory purpose of charter school in the state of Tennessee by offering, "a high-quality K-8 learning experience accessible to all Orange Mound and South Memphis students" (pg. 10). One key priority of the school is, "Recognizing the diversity and interests of students [to] help students make deeper connections to what they're learning" (pg. 9).

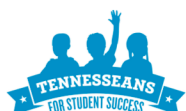
The career technical education focus of the school is tied to accelerating academic achievement, fostering individuality, and cultivating career mindsets (pg. 8). The applicant outlines robust community engagement that began in July 2022, including community festivals, tabled events, and collection of feedback surveys regarding career cluster topics (pg. 133). Letters of support from numerous community non-profits and businesses are included. The applicant also included feedback surveys collected from interested parents in the community.

Key features of the proposed school include:

- Focus on career exploration and Career Technical Education
- STEMScopes curriculum for Science curriculum
- Eureka Math for Mathematics curriculum
- Core Knowledge Language Arts for ELA curriculum
- Emphasis on Positive Behavior Intervention and Cognitive Apprenticeship Model

The applicant thoroughly explains how they plan to utilize a multi-tiered system of support to address the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities, including students enrolling with moderate to severe disabilities.

Overall, the application offers explicit evidence that the school will provide research-based curriculum, teaching, and assessment methods across all content areas. Robust parent and community engagement is demonstrated exceptionally well.



OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

School leadership is defined as a Lead Founder/CEO, a Lower Head of Schools and Director of Operations and Culture to be hired in Year 0, followed by the addition of a Director of Special Populations and Upper Head of Schools to be hired in Year 3 and Year 5, respectively. The school will utilize iReady and MAPS assessments for internal assessment and student progress monitoring. Substantial parent/community engagement opportunities are outlined.

Members of the board of directors will serve on the following committees: Governance Committee, Academic Excellence Committee, Finance Committee and Development Committee (pg.139). The board will consult with BES in addition to utilizing the Tennessee Charter School Center and BoardOnTrack for required training and resources for board duties.

The applicant has identified an excellent network of potential community partners including:

- UT Agriculture
- YMCA
- ANF Architects
- Le Bonheur Children's Hospital
- Memphis Education Fund
- Sweetgrass Counseling & Consulting, LLC

Evaluation of teaching staff will follow the TEAM model. Lead Founder/CEO performance will be evaluated using the TDOE Administrator Evaluation Rubric. The board will be evaluated annually using an evaluation tool finalized by the board with support of BES upon authorization (pg. 140).

The applicant proposes the lease of one of four potential facilities identified in its target area, starting in June 2023. The applicant plans to contract transportation services with Durham School Services.

Overall, the applicant team brings a depth of diversity and experience that illicit confidence for successful school start-up and management. Proposed partnerships will equip leadership to respond to the needs of the community. The applicant proposes an organizational plan that is strong and coherent.

FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARDS

Summary

Financial policies and procedures will be finalized by the Lead Founder/Chief Executive Officer, Director of Operations and Culture, board treasurer and a contracted back-office service provider (pg. 407).

The applicant plans to hire a qualified back-office services provider (payroll, accounting, financial reporting, budgeting) and a CPA firm for annual audits in Summer 2023.

The Lead Founder/CEO will construct an interview panel to include board members, community stakeholders, and potential student parents and guardians to interview and hire teaching staff, starting in December 2023.

Additional staffing details:

- Teacher and staff salaries are competitive including generous benefits
- TCRS state retirement system will be utilized
- 1:25 core academic teacher to student ratio in Year 1
- 1:10 SPED teacher to student ratio in Year 1
- No EL teacher indicated in Year 1
- 1:100 school counselor to student ratio in Year 1
- 1 Career Exploration teacher planned for Year 1
- 1 educational assistant projected in Year 1, 2 EAs projected starting Year 4

The applicant anticipates four main sources of funding including a Charter School Growth Fund grant (\$250,000), NSVF grant (\$100,000), Charter Schools Program Grant (\$750,000 Y1-Y3), and a BES Startup Grant (\$100,000 already approved). The applicant also indicates pursuing a contingency line of credit (>\$150,000), if necessary in Year 1.

Overall, the board has extensive expertise in finance, fundraising, and grant writing to ensure a successful startup (p. 138). The applicant could benefit from evidence of line of credit pre-approval. The applicant financial plan and proposed budget are sound.