



QCR REPORT: PATHWAYS MEMPHIS
MARCH 2023

Quality Charter Review Recommendation Report 2023

PATHWAYS IN EDUCATION MEMPHIS

March 2023

Evaluated By

Tennesseans for Student Success

 [tnstudentsuccess](https://www.facebook.com/tnstudentsuccess)

 [@tnstudent](https://twitter.com/tnstudent)

 www.tnsuccess.org

Tennesseans for Student Success

P.O. Box 680231
Franklin, TN 37068

For more information about the content of this document, please contact:

info@tnsuccess.org

Visit our website at: www.tnsuccess.org

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

Pathways Management Group

Proposed School Name

Pathways in Education - Memphis

Proposed Location

Whitehaven
Memphis, Tennessee

Enrollment Projections

Grade Level	Year 1 2024-25	Year 2 2025-26	Year 3 2026-27	Year 4 2027-28	Year 5 2028-29	At Capacity 2028-29
9	35	40	45	45	55	55
10	50	60	85	85	105	105
11	75	80	95	95	100	100
12	65	70	75	75	90	90
Totals	225	250	300	300	350	350

Board Members

DeAndre D. Brown, Sr.
Summer Owens
William Fredrick

Proposed School Leader

Valerie Brennan, Principal

Mission and Vision

Mission: Pathways In Education-Memphis equips our students with the academic and personal skills necessary to graduate with a high school diploma prepared for postsecondary education in a 21st century workforce.

Vision: Pathways In Education is the best non-traditional public school, empowering under-served students by unlocking their passions and dreams, moving them daily toward graduation, and creating lifelong learners.

Anticipated Student Demographics

Enrollment Demographics:

95% African American
2% Hispanic
2% White
1% Other

Special Population Projections:

96% Econ. Disadvantaged
10% Students w/ Disabilities
2% English Lang. Learners

Educational Model/Instructional Design

Alternative High School



RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE

Application Strengths Summary

- Extensive support from community members, parents, and alumni
- School facility has been identified
- Creative transportation strategy - bus passes provided to all students
- CMO successfully operates 8 charter schools across 4 states
- Early post-secondary opportunities available including AP, dual enrollment, and industry certifications
- Competitive teacher salaries with \$100,000 in anticipated performance bonuses
- Substantial start-up funding outlined

Application Improvements Summary

- Transportation plan for SPED students should be re-evaluated for compliance for students with severe disabilities
- Physical Education staff not indicated in budget worksheet or narrative
- Clarification is warranted for structure of proposed \$100,000 in performance bonuses
- The applicant will benefit from clarifying how the school will improve academic performance since closing a similar school in Achievement School District
- Clarification is warranted for board committee structure and principal evaluation framework

ACADEMIC PLAN DESIGN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

Pathways in Education Memphis is designed to serve 350 students, at capacity, in grades 9-12 in Whitehaven, Memphis, Tennessee. The applicant has secured a storefront in a small shopping center at 4710 Elvis Presley Blvd., Memphis, TN 38116. The applicant proposes to meet the statutory purpose of charter schools in the state of Tennessee by, "focus[ing] on educating underserved and at-risk students who need an option to help them meet the goal of high school graduation" (pg. 10). One key priority of the school is to offer "opportunities in an innovative, flexible environment that considers each student's specific lifestyle, culture, or other needs that often cannot be satisfied in a traditional school" (pg. 10).

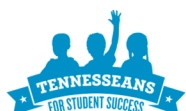
The alternative education framework of the school focuses on credit recovery as well as individualized learning and college preparatory plans with options for Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, and industry certifications. The applicant has conducted extensive community engagement and demonstrates understanding of the needs of the target student population. Letters of support include numerous parents, non-profit organizations, and community members.

Key features of the proposed school include:

- Alternative high-school focused on recapturing under-enrolled and drop out risk students
- Blended learning including Small Group Instruction and Guided Independent Study
- Year-round instruction
- Students will graduate with high school diploma not GED
- Proprietary curriculum designed to align with Tennessee Academic Standards
- RenSTAR 360 utilized for skills growth measurement

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 with moderate to severe disabilities.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates evidence that the school will provide innovative skills-based curriculum and personalized instruction exceptionally well. Curriculum and assessment plans align with state academic standards and district strategic goals exceptionally well.



OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

School leadership is defined as a principal hired in Year 0. The school will utilize End of Course Exams (EOCs) and RenSTAR 360 for progress monitoring. Substantial support services are outlined including staffing allocations for a Social-Emotional Learning Specialist, Small Group Instruction teachers for Math, ELA, and Science, and a math tutor in Year 1.

Members of the board of directors will utilize a charter management organization (CMO) to ensure educational and operational success in serving the target student population. The applicant plans to create a school advisory council to provide parent representation (pg. 73). The board will utilize the Tennessee Charter School Center for required board training and resources for board duties.

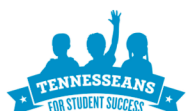
Additional clarification is needed in the follow areas:

- Board committee structure (i.e., finance, fundraising, parent engagement, enrollment, and facilities)
- Justification for delayed student recruitment timeline, starting in Summer 2024 (pg. 67)
- ADA compliance for taxi/Uber services for students with moderate to severe disabilities
- Principal evaluation framework/ frequency

Evaluation of teaching staff will follow the TEAM model. The school principal “will be evaluated on a continual basis...during Board meetings” (pg. 74).

The applicant has secured a lease for a storefront location that is easily accessible by public transportation options. Transportation plans include bus passes for all students. The applicant anticipates contracting food services with MSCS. A contingency should be considered if MSCS cannot assume service contract.

Overall, the applicant brings exceptional start-up, operational, and management expertise. The applicant outlines innovative student support with robust community engagement and staffing frameworks giving creditability to their plans to start and operate a new school.



FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

Financial policies and procedures will be finalized by the board of directors in consultation with the CMO, Pathways Management Group (PMG). PMG will offer back-office services for the school including:

- Accounting and Budget Management
- Vendor Management and Procurement
- Facilities Management and Maintenance
- Human Resources management
- Payroll

Additional clarification is needed outlining how frequently the board will evaluate school finances. The school will contract with a CPA firm for auditing starting in the first quarter of Year 1.

The board in consultation with PMG will launch staff recruitment in March 2024 with the intention to start staff training by July 2024. Additional staffing details:

- TCRS state retirement system will be utilized
- 1:45 independent study teachers to student ratio in Year 1
- 1:38 SPED teacher to student ratio in Year 1
- No EL teacher indicated on budget worksheet
- 3 small group instruction teachers (Math, ELA, and Science) in Year 1
- 1:225 school counselor to student ratio in Year 1
- 1 math tutor in Year 1
- 1 part-time Social-Emotional Learning Specialist in Year 1 (not indicated on budget worksheet)

The applicant anticipates one primary funding source, the CSP grant, indicated in Year 0. The applicant assumes TISA funding towards revenue in the first quarter of Year 1. The CMO does not utilize fundraising or grant awards for operational costs of any of its schools. The main start-up funding source indicated is a loan from the CMO for \$1,000,000.

Overall, the CMO and the board possess substantial school start-up and management expertise. The applicant financial plan and proposed budget are sound.

