

MARCH 2024




Quality Charter Review Recommendation Report 2024

Evaluated By

Tennesseans for Student Success

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

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

 www.tnsuccess.org

Tennesseans for Student Success

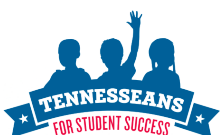
P.O. Box 680231
Franklin, TN 37068

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.



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 for 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 lack 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

LEAD Public Schools

Proposed School Name

LEAD Cameron Elementary

Proposed Location

Glenciff & Antioch Clusters, LEAD
Cameron Community
Nashville, TN

Enrollment Projections

Grade Level	Year 1 2025-26	Year2 2026-27	Year 3 2027-28	Year4 2028-29	Year 5 2029-30	At Capacity
K	60	60	60	60	60	60
1	35	60	60	60	60	60
2	35	35	60	60	60	60
3		35	35	60	60	60
4			35	35	60	60
5				35	35	60
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
Totals	130	190	250	310	335	360

Board Members

Mike Honious, Dr Annette Little, Rob Keller, Dr. Early Lattimore, Carter Paine, Dwayne Tucker, Jonathan Dyke, Dr. Bryan Fisher, Valerie Hayes, Jerome Oglesby, Linda Pannock, Alex Ryerson, Jim Vesterman

Anticipated Student Demographics

Enrollment Demographics: 50% Hispanic, 7% White, 26% Black

Proposed School Leader

Stephanie Jarrett-Thorpe

Special Population Projections:

50% FRL, 15% SWD, 60% ELL

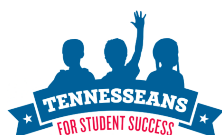
Mission and Vision

Mission: To equip every student with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in both college and life.

Vision: Lay a solid foundation for all students, irrespective of their family's income or zip code, enabling them to confront challenges and embrace opportunities in post-secondary school life.

Educational Model/Instructional Design

Ethos-based education



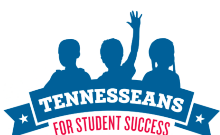
RECOMMENDATION: Approve

Application Strengths Summary

- The proposed school would establish a feeder pattern for LEAD Cameron Middle and LEAD Academy High School and offer a unique pathway for families to have continuity in their education experience from K-12.
- The school will benefit from being part of an existing network with established practices and network administration.
- The elementary programming has a focus on building a strong literacy foundation using research-based curricula including TN Foundational Skills Curriculum (TNFSC) and Amplify's Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum.
- The educational model includes a strong assessment and data analysis plan, including regular subgroup analyses to inform instructional decisions and targeted interventions.
- The model includes dynamic and adaptive educational approaches and actively engage stakeholders in decision-making.
- The school will emphasize fostering positive relationships, PBIS, family engagement, trauma-informed practices, mindfulness, restorative practices, and tiered interventions.
- Family and communities will have opportunities to engage in the school through surveys, workshops, and events. The school will have a dedicated Family and Community Engagement Coordinator and a Family Leadership Team.
- Wrap around services and resources such as Serve Others Stations will provide families with household essentials, food, and other necessities.
- There is a robust recruitment, development, and ongoing professional development plan in place for staff.
- The school start-up plan was informed by the successful opening of 6 other Nashville charter schools.

Application Improvements Summary

- The application lacks a clear explanation for how enrollment projections were determined based on community need. Letters of support were from community partners but it is not evident if interest letters were obtained by existing or new families in the community with age eligible students.
- The application did not address waivers the school would seek, if any.
- The applicant did not specifically address challenges that may arise from opening the networks first two elementary schools in the same year, should both be approved.



ACADEMIC PLAN DESIGN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Summary

LEAD Cameron Elementary School (K-5) plans to serve 360 students at capacity and create a K-12 pipeline in conjunction with LEAD Cameron Middle School and LEAD Academy High School in the Glenclyff and Antioch cluster zones in Nashville, TN. The school will add capacity to an area of the city that is experiencing population growth and has waitlists at other elementary charter options nearby. The school will offer a holistic approach to closing disproportionalities in academic achievement by focusing on engaging learning activities, social-emotional learning, and a positive environment with supportive teachers. The application emphasizes a belief that every child can excel given the right opportunities and support through LEAD's All Means All initiative.

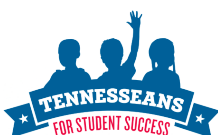
The school will focus on establishing a strong academic foundation by prioritizing early literacy skills. The chosen curricula honors and reflects diverse identities so that students can see themselves in the work they are doing, are exposed to multiple perspectives, and have opportunities to learn new material in the context of familiar experiences. Key features of the proposed academic plan include:

- Research-based curriculum selections
- 120-150 minutes daily of Literacy instruction
- 80 minutes daily of math instruction
- 45 min intervention period daily
- Social-emotional learning emphasizing the values of commitment, courage, discipline, self-reliance, and service to others
- Individual Growth Goals to celebrate and recognize each student's academic growth
- Focus on college and career readiness
- Wrap around services and active parent involvement
- Summer programming to address learning loss and provide targeted interventions

The application contains a robust academic assessment plan that includes summative and formative assessments, national normed assessments, network and school developed assessments, and screening assessments. Assessment data is analyzed on a regular basis and used to identify gaps and trends, including targeted reteaching strategies, scaffolding, and interventions. The network uses the Locker Studio tool to support analysis and examine correlations and trends across multiple assessments which are used to guide decision-making processes at the network and school level.

In alignment with current LEAD schools, LEAD Cameron Elementary will offer a full continuum of services to support students with disabilities, implement language proficiency services based on student's individual language proficiency, and implement a multi-tiered system of support to identify at-risk students and address Robust recruitment and marketing plan that includes sibling outreach, door to door outreach, community involvement, and multilingual materials to target specific priority zones.

The application contains measurable goals in all areas of academic achievement, growth, chronic absenteeism, school culture, subgroup performance, English Language Proficiency, tiered intervention, individual growth goals, and family engagement to monitor the implementation and success of the educational program.



OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Summary

The LEAD Network currently serve 2,400 students within 6 schools in Nashville, TN. LEAD schools meet or exceed the standards of traditional schools. There is an established LEAD Board of Directors comprised of 14 individuals, including a family representative who bring expertise in major areas of school operations including academics, finance, fundraising, marketing, information technology, human resources, and facilities management. While there is only one current parent serving on the board of directors, each school will have their own Family Leadership Team which provides advisory support and feedback to the school leadership team.

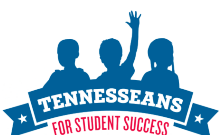
The Board regularly reviews academic, culture, operational and financial data in addition to staff, student, and family survey data to evaluate the effectiveness of the schools, the network, and the CEO.

The Start-up plan based on successful opening of 6 schools in Davidson County and includes a realistic assessment of anticipated challenges in the process including time, facilities, talent, enrollment, and expanding the model to elementary school. To mitigate the challenges, the team has begun working with a facilities broker and consultants to identify potential school sites and dedicated network staff to support enrollment and family engagement. LEAD's teacher recruitment strategy is based on strong retention practices such as performance compensation programs, robust trainings, and leadership pipelines. To support the development of the elementary programming, LEAD has hired several experienced elementary school leaders. While the network team has opened many schools previously, the application did not address how the network will have capacity to open their first two elementary schools in the same year if both are approved for authorization.

LEAD has experience in both facility acquisition and facilities management. The Director of School Operations is tasked with managing all vendors and ensuring the safety of school buildings. While purchasing and renovating a facility is the preference, the team has a contingency plan to lease a facility for the first 1-2 years of operating prior to purchasing a permanent facility. The team is also open to pushing back the opening of the school to Fall 2026 should facilities not be secured by the Winter of 2024.

The network utilizes an internal talent development process from existing LEAD schools as well as external candidate search processes. A core value of the network is that students from diverse backgrounds are taught by diverse educators and this is a central priority of the recruitment process. The process utilizes year-round candidate searches, Teacher Pathways Programs, and partnerships with Relay, Nashville Teacher Residency, Lipscomb University, Tennessee State University, Man Up, and Blueprint Math Fellows. To support the ongoing development and retention of staff, each school will have a dedicated instructional manager (coach) for each teacher, a performance compensation plan and benefits package, and a comprehensive leadership development program.

Overall, the network team and board demonstrate strong governance, start-up, and operations experience.



FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

The Network will contribute \$500,000 from its network reserves to the school during its first three years of operation. In the pre-opening year, \$250,000 of those funds will allow for the staffing of a school leader, Director of School Operations, and Family Engagement Coordinator.

The budget does assume \$200,000 of start-up funding through the award of the CSP grant in Years 1 and 2. LEAD has a track record of success in applying for, securing and successfully managing the CSP grant.

Budget assumptions are based on the experience and expenses of other LEAD schools and are in line with inflation and current market costs however the Year 1 cash flow assumes an equal per month cost for many items that will need to be purchased upfront at the beginning of the school year, including textbooks and instructional supplies, software, library books, and student and staff laptops which may not be realistic. The application indicates that if cash flow is a concern, the school will be able to access network reserves.

Performance pay is a key feature of the school's staff retention plan however budgeted amounts do not increase as the number of staff increase from Year 1 to Year 5 indicating that there may not be enough funding to support this initiative at full staffing build out without additional funding.

The network has received an unqualified/clean opinion from outside auditors each year of its existence and has had multiple years of budget surpluses resulting in a strong cash position. The network budget for philanthropic contributions is \$1.5 million per year and is based on actuals over the past five years and is secured through annual fundraisers. The school budget is reliant on \$200,000 in philanthropy through a New Elementary Startup Campaign.

Fifteen percent of revenue in the school's Year 1 budget from unsecured funds. The application indicates that should CSP funding not be awarded, the network will utilize additional philanthropy to compensate and if fundraising campaigns are not adequate, the network will utilize cash reserves. These additional funding streams could also be used to cover any shortfall should enrollment targets not be met.

While the school budget contains unsecured funding sources, the network has sufficient expertise in the network finance team including a Chief Financial Officer, Senior Accountant, and Finance Analyst. The network has also demonstrated success in budget and fiscal management, as well as fundraising, and has access to cash reserves and a line of credit to make up for revenue short falls that the school may experience due to lower than anticipated enrollment or lack of start-up grant funding.

