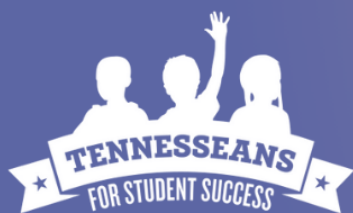


MARCH 2024



Quality Charter Review Recommendation Report 2024

Evaluated By

Tennesseans for Student Success

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 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

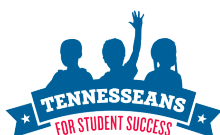
This document was adapted from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Charter School Application Recommendation Report. NACSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of public education by improving the performance of charter school organizations. NACSA 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

Read Foundation

Proposed School Name

Nashville School of Excellence

Proposed Location

Nolensville Road,
Nashville, TN

Board Members

Dr. Cem Akkus, Patty Farmer,
Dr. Richard E. Potts, Dr. Ismail
Fidan, Veda V.T. Cherry, Dr.
David C. Akdemir,

Proposed School Leader

TBD

Mission and Vision

Mission: Each student is empowered to succeed in college and their career by:

- *Mastering a rigorous, STEM-focused curriculum,*
- *Experiencing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment*
- *Receiving individual academic social, and emotional support, and*
- *Working alongside families and community partners*

Vision: Our students choose ambitious paths, persist and thrive in their choices, and strengthen their local and global communities.

Educational Model/Instructional Design

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

Enrollment Projections

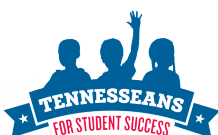
Grade Level	Year 1 2025-26	Year2 2026-27	Year 3 2027-28	Year4 2028-29	Year 5 2029-30	At Capacity
K						
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6	120	120	120	120	120	
7	90	120	120	120	120	
8	60	90	120	120	120	
9	60	60	90	120	120	
10		60	60	90	120	
11			60	60	90	
12				60	60	
Totals	330	450	570	690	750	810

Anticipated Student Demographics

Enrollment Demographics: 52.3% White, 21% Hispanic, 16.7% Black, 6% Asian, 3.5% Two or more races (community demographics, not specific to school)

Special Population Projections:

34% FRL, 10% SWD, 52% ELL



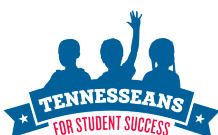
RECOMMENDATION: Deny

Application Strengths Summary

- The school will implement curricula that are aligned to the Tennessee State Standards for grades 6-12.
- The application contains measurable goals to evaluate program effectiveness in the areas of academic achievement and growth, English Proficiency, STEM Programming, Graduation and Career Readiness, School Climate, and Finance. These align with the TN Public Charter School Commission's Performance Framework.
- The application outlines a strong RTI process that includes universal screening, Early Warning System processes, data analysis, data-based decisions, and prescribed interventions.
- Assessments will be used to pinpoint student, teacher, and school needs throughout the school year.
- Teachers will receive robust professional development and coaching support to implement data driven instruction by analyzing, interpreting, and using performance data throughout the year.
- Students can participate in 4-6 two-week long project-based learning experiences per year and will have the opportunity to present their work to the community.
- The application describes how daily double blocks of ELA and math in 6-9th grades will allow for differentiated instruction and support.
- Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment will be offered through partnerships with local colleges and universities.
- All board members and school leaders will undergo an orientation program and development activities throughout the year in partnership with BoardOnTrack.
- The network maintains a 97%+ graduation and college acceptance rate.
- Three out of four of the network schools in Memphis earned a TVAAS Composite Rating of 4 or 5 in 2022 and 2023.

Application Improvements Summary

- It is unclear if there is sufficient community demand for the proposed Nashville location based on evidence presented in the application.
- The application does not describe the acknowledged differences in student demographics and community factors between the existing Memphis schools and the proposed Nashville location.
- While there are adequate network supports for special populations, the school-based staffing plan for special education and English Language Learners does not appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of the projected student demographics.
- The plan for special education lacked detail and did not describe how a full continuum of services for special education would be implemented. The application indicates that staffing and services would be adjusted, if needed
- A research-based curriculum for intervention and English Language development were not identified.
- The application did not identify a contingency plan, should the applicant's facility plans fall through.



ACADEMIC PLAN DESIGN AND CAPACITY

PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

Summary

The Nashville School of Excellence (NSE) plans to serve 810 students in grades 6-12, at full capacity, in the Nolensville Road area of Nashville, TN. The school will be part of the Read Foundation network that currently operates 4 schools that span grades K-12 in Memphis, TN. While the application indicates there are clear differences in demographics of the communities they currently serve and the proposed school, those differences are not explicitly identified. It is unclear how the school will address those demographic differences. The existing schools do serve a significant population of English language learners, which is similar to the proposed Nashville school community.

The school will offer a STEM education and seek the TDOE STEM Designation status. The school will use curriculum that is engaging and rigorous, standards-based, inquiry-based, and aligned to TN State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Key-features of the proposed school include:

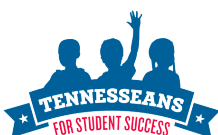
- Use of EL Education Language Arts programming
- Use of iReady, Ready Math, Reveal Math, Accelerated Math, IXL for Math
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Savvas Science Programs
- Technology integration
- Standardized and authentic assessments for data-driven instruction
- Individual and small-group instruction
- STEM class alignment to an Industry Certification or career and technical education (CTE) track
- Dual enrollment opportunities

While the application narrative indicates that school culture will be shaped by Restorative Practices (RP) to build and repair relationships, prioritize student agency, and reduce punitive actions, in conjunction with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), the code of conduct and student handbook do not reflect RP or PBIS. Additionally, the network includes 3 support staff to oversee services and programming for special populations, however the school-based staffing plan does not appear to be sufficient to meet the needs of all special education and English learner students based on projected enrollment.

The applicant is proposing to locate in an area of Nashville that is experiencing population growth however a compelling community demand for the school was not clear. While there was a survey of community members with over 100 responses, 72% indicating interest in a STEM education and 79% interested in learning more about the school, the application contains no evidence that letters of intent to enroll have been collected to demonstrate community demand from age-eligible students and their families.

The application's student recruitment plan will involve partnering with community agencies, canvassing, mail and email campaigns, advertisements, and Open Houses/Tours/Meet and Greets, however it is unclear if this will garner sufficient enrollment demand given the lack of documentation supporting demand contained in the application. The vast majority of letters of support contained in the application were from vendors who provide contracted services (back-office support, legal, student information systems, etc.) to the existing Memphis schools or agencies not specific to Nashville or the proposed community. A sufficient demand for the Nashville location from Nashville residents without a financial partnership to existing schools was not evident.

Overall, the plan for curriculum and assessment is strong however it is unclear if the plan will support the needs of the proposed community.



OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

The Read Foundation network is led by Executive Director Dr. Samuel Beyhan. He has 20 years of experience in education including as a school founder, assistant principal, and special programs coordinator in which he oversaw special education, English learner programming, and gifted and talented programming. He holds a Master of Education in Educational Administration and a Master of Science in Mathematics. Additionally, the network leadership includes an Assistant Executive Director, Director of Instruction, Director of Special Programs, Business Manager, Operations Manager, Director of Culture and Discipline, Human Resources Manager, and Director of College Counseling and Engagement. School leadership will include a Principal, Dean of Academics, Dean of Students, and Head Counselor.

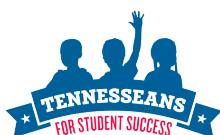
The application demonstrates a clear understanding of governance roles and responsibilities and has representation from a variety of fields of expertise. The network board is composed of 6 members and recruitment for a Nashville resident to join the board has already begun. There is a parent board member from the Memphis schools and the board will add a parent representative from the Nashville school within 6 months of opening. There are currently two active committees that oversee academics and finances at each school. Additionally, each school will have an advisory council of no fewer than 5 members representing each school in the network.

The Executive Director will be held accountable for the success of the network on academic, financial, and operational frameworks. The evaluation will contain quantitative, qualitative, and narrative components to set network goals, build a strong working relationship, and support the ED in their professional development.

The startup plan identifies key tasks, timeline, and individuals responsible for completing items. The network is working with an experienced real-estate firm, Southwest Venture and five potential properties in the proposed area are included in the application. The network leadership team has demonstrated success in purchasing and financing facilities in Memphis.

The application identifies potential challenges including opening a school in a different region, maintaining compliance for two authorizers, and staff recruitment, hiring, developing, and retention. To mitigate these challenges, the network staff will conduct regular visits to the Nashville school, collaborate with their authorizers, and staff several key positions, including the principal, with internal hires from the existing Memphis schools. To encourage relocation, the network will provide a moving stipend. Additionally, the recruitment process will leverage partnerships with local universities and Teach for America, in addition to building its own teaching pipeline with organizations like Relay Teacher Certification Assistance program and iTech Certification program. Teachers will be offered competitive salaries and benefits, in addition to ongoing observation and feedback cycles, opportunities for incentives and rewards, and leadership pathways.

Overall, the network has demonstrated operational success with four campuses with 1,600+ students and the capacity to open an additional school in Nashville, TN.



FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Summary

The proposed school has secured \$1,000,000 in startup funding from the Read Foundation which will allow the school to staff a fulltime school leader and part time Dean of Academics and Dean of Students during the pre-opening year. The preopening budget also includes appropriate expenses for staff recruitment, student and community engagement, and professional development. The school will apply for The CSP Grant however has not included it in the budget. Budgets for Years 1-5 do not include any additional fundraising or philanthropy.

The board implements best practices in budgeting procedures including, maintaining positive operating income each year, developing a financial model that is sustainable on public revenues, and maintaining a healthy fund balance with 49-95 days of cash on hand.

The operating budgets for the proposed school represent conservative revenue sources with zero growth year over year and assumptions for revenue and expenses are described thoroughly in the Budget Narrative. Additionally, the cashflow documents demonstrate an understanding of upfront costs vs those that are distributed throughout the school year for operations, supplies, and materials.

The staffing plan to support special education and English learners does not align with projected enrollment and demographics and would result in a 1:33 caseload for special education and 1:172 for English learners. The application does indicate that should needs surpass support, the school will evaluate options such as additional staffing or contracted services.

The finance team is composed of the Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, school-based leadership team, and the finance committee of the board of directors. The application does a thorough job of describing the roles and responsibilities of each person in managing the compliance with federal and state accounting and reporting requirements, as well as fiscal checks and balances.

The Read Foundation network maintains a healthy cash reserve of approximately \$8 million that can be used to mitigate short-term revenue shortfalls for its schools. In the event of a TISA funding decrease or lower enrollment than expected, the network could support in the short term and then make structural adjustments in costs, such as staffing reducing for non-core teaching positions, professional services, materials, etc. The network may also leverage established relationships with philanthropic funders to bridge any financial gaps in the early years of operation.

Overall, the applicant financial management plan and budget are sound with the support of an established network of schools.

