



JANUARY 2025

# Quality Charter Review Recommendation Report 2025

Evaluated By

**Tennesseans for Student Success**

## Tennesseans for Student Success

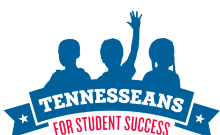
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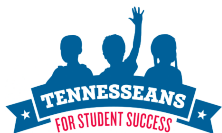
This document was adapted from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Charter School Application Recommendation Report. NACSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of public education by improving the performance of charter school organizations. NACSA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



# 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. <b>A recommendation for approval requires a score of Meets or Exceeds Standard in all three primary application sections.</b>
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><b>Meets or Exceeds Standard:</b> 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><b>Partially Meets Standard:</b> Responses meet the criteria in some respects but lack detail and/or require additional information in one or more areas.</p> <p><b>Does Not Meet Standard:</b> 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

Humanitarian Outreach Development Group, Inc

### Proposed School Name

Still I Rise Academy

### Proposed Location

Memphis-Shelby County

### Board Members

Monique Wade, Dr. Daalon Echoles, Dr. Kendrick Boyce, Isaac Scott, Annie Miller, Christopher Dailey, Senteria Johnson, Corelatta Cromer, Alysse Adams

### Enrollment Projections

Grade Level	Year 1 2026-27	Year2 2027-28	Year 3 2028-29	Year4 2029-30	Year 5 2030-31	At Capacity
K						
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6	31	42	57	77	100	130
7	27	36	49	66	90	125
8	24	32	43	59	80	115
9	21	28	38	51	70	110
10	18	24	32	44	60	100
11	16	22	30	40	55	100
12	13	18	24	33	45	100
Totals	150	202	273	370	500	770

### Anticipated Student Demographics

Enrollment Demographics: Not provided

### Proposed School Leader

Gerald Kiner

### Special Population Projections:

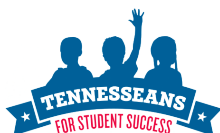
100% ED, 20% SWD, 10% EL

### Mission and Vision

**Mission:** Still I Rise Academy is committed to empowering Tennessee's most vulnerable youth by providing a supportive, student-centered learning environment that fosters academic success, personal growth, and resilience. While accepting all eligible students, our focus will be on serving those who have previously dropped out, been retained twice, are chronically absent are pregnant or parenting, or have experienced abuse and neglect. We aim to equip them with the academic, social-emotional, and career-readiness skills necessary for lifelong success.

**Vision:** None

### Educational Model/Instructional Design



## RECOMMENDATION: DENY

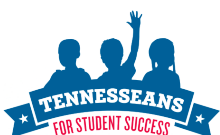
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### Application Strengths Summary

- The application contains a detailed assessment plan that will provide data for evaluation of the academic program and align with state standards and the unique educational model.
- The school will offer extended day and extended year learning opportunities to support the target student population and allow for support services, enrichment, and extracurricular activities.
- Mentorship and advisory time will allow teachers and staff to provide personalized academic and social emotional support.
- The application contains several agreements confirming community partnerships that will support the school in implementing wrap around supports, dual enrollment, and parent education.
- The school culture, focused on growth mindsets, trauma informed care, Always Aware Disciplined Student Culture (AADSC), and celebrations of success, align and support the mission of re-engaging their target students.
- The application contains a strong professional development plan for Board Members including orientation, regular training, and evaluations.

### Application Improvements Summary

- The application does not include letters of support from prospective families in order to evaluate community demand and verify reasonability of enrollment projections.
- The special populations section of the application lacks details to determine if the plan to identify, serve, and monitor students with disabilities and at-risk youth is viable. The application indicates that innovative staffing will be used however number of staff and credentials are not provided.
- There is a lack of clarity on staffing with inconsistencies throughout the application. Additionally, it is unclear who will provide the ongoing support for teachers and if sufficient time is allocated for PD and data analysis during the year.
- The budget workbook is incomplete and does not include information about projected state and local funds or a budget for any Year 0 expenses.
- Budgets for operational Years 1-5 end with a \$0 balance indicating the school is not financially able to build a reserve in the event of unforeseen costs, lower than expected revenue, or increased expenses.



# ACADEMIC PLAN DESIGN AND CAPACITY

## PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

### Summary

Still I Rise Academy will serve 770 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade students, at capacity, in Memphis. While open to all students, the school will target zip codes with high dropout rates, retention rates, and academic disengagement. The school will align with the Opportunity Public Charter School Accountability Framework and implement a data-driven academic program tailored to close achievement gaps, improve student growth, and provide alternative pathways to postsecondary success. The school will utilize a trauma-informed, competency-based learning model targeted students who have previously dropped out, been retained twice, are chronically absent, are pregnant or parenting, or have experienced abuse and neglect.

### Key Features of the Proposed School:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexible learning pathways</li><li>• College and Career Readiness</li><li>• Wraparound support services</li><li>• Alternative graduation pathways</li><li>• Focus Then Refocus Plan</li><li>• Blended learning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community integration and partnership</li><li>• Comprehensive professional development for staff</li><li>• Project-Based and Experiential Learning</li><li>• Social-Emotional learning and Trauma-Informed practices</li></ul>
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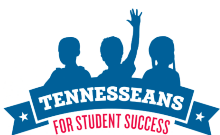
The school plans to maintain relationships with social service organizations, juvenile justice programs, and alternative education providers however only 3 letters of support from organizations the school will partner with are provided. Testimonial letters from families interested in the school were not included in the appendix making it challenging to determine if enrollment projections are realistic

In order to create an engaging and supportive school culture, the school will implement, Empower Hour, a structured daily school-wide presentation designed to motivate, encourage, and support students. Culture will be established and reinforced through a Student Commitment Pledge, Teacher and Staff Training on AADSC, and parent engagement sessions. Restorative practices encourage peer accountability and reflection. Additionally, the school will use early identification and intervention approaches to addressing chronic absenteeism.

While the application narrative indicates that Data-Drive Instructional Cycles (DDIC) will occur weekly, monthly, and quarterly for various assessments and will inform lesson plans, differentiated instruction, RTI2 interventions, individualized student learning plans, and professional development, the daily and yearly schedules do not appear to provide sufficient time for these activities.

The school plans to be fully inclusive and the leadership team has experience with special populations and a track record of developing inclusive education models. A general plan for identification, programming, monitoring, and evaluation of students with disabilities and English learners is provided with minimal staffing or implementation details provided.

Overall, the Academic Plan provides an overview of innovative practices for academic and social-emotional supports that are aligned to the needs of the target student demographic however it does not adequately describe how the school will implement the proposed aspects of the program, including data analysis, service to special populations, and required training and support for educators.



# OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

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## PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

### Summary

Still I Rise Academy is governed by a nine member Board of Directors that bring a range of expertise to support the oversight of the school's academic, operational, financial performance. Additional recruitment for board members with legal, academic, and community expertise will be conducted however the application does not indicate how they will comply with the requirement that a parent of a current student has a seat on the board.

The board will meet on a quarterly basis and review a dashboard of metrics aligned with the Tennessee's Opportunity Public Charter School Accountability Framework, attendance rates, graduation and postsecondary readiness, and financial and operational health. Additionally, the board will complete an annual school leader performance review including student outcome data, survey data, and a 360 Evaluation Process.

To support quality oversight practices, the board will complete an annual self-evaluation as well as an independent governance audit review every 3 years. Additionally, the board will participate in orientation training, quarterly professional development, and annual training approved by the Tennessee State Board of Education.

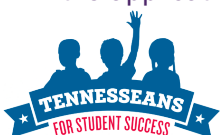
The facility plan outlines the necessary requirements to implement the educational program, including dedicated CTE spaces. Members of the board bring relevant skills in some aspects of facility acquisition, management, and renovation however it is unclear who will lead the process or if any adequate properties have been identified. The budget also does not allocate funds for contracts with real estate professionals or architects indicating that facility plans may not be viable. Additionally, there are no Year 0 funds for any facility related costs included in the budget.

The application includes a high-level Start-Up plan with some key activities however as mentioned above, there are no funds allocated for Year 0 costs, including compensation for staff. The narrative indicates Year 0 will be supported by in-kind donations from the Executive Director and volunteers from No Mistakes Allowed, LLC and William & Johnson Career College however given the minimal scope of the Start-Up plan provided, it is unclear if the applicant team has a clear understanding of the skills, time, and funds needed to open a charter school.

The staffing plan included in the application indicates that three Assistant Principals will be hired however neither the Staffing Table or Organizational Chart in the appendix include these roles, nor are they explicit in the budget. Teacher evaluations will be conducted using the TEAM Evaluation Model and include classroom observations, student growth measures, and student achievement data. The application indicates that instructional coaching, personalized growth plans, and biannual goal setting will occur however it is unclear who will provide these services for teachers. Additionally, the application includes performance bonuses for high-achieving teachers but this is not included in the budget workbook.

The application provides justification for not providing transportation however given the target student population and recruitment from several zip codes, it is unclear how this may impact enrollment, as well as attendance of students who have already demonstrated challenges with attending school on a consistent basis.

The relationship between Humanitarian Outreach Development Group, LLC and the proposed school is unclear with vague references included in portions of the Operations section. The application also does not describe the organization or their experience with charter schools or at-risk youth. Overall, the application does not demonstrate a clear understanding of school operations and requirements.



## FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

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### DOES NOT MEET STANDARD

#### Summary

As indicated in the Operations section, the financial workbook appears to be incomplete with no Year 0 budget, missing descriptions of revenue sources, and a lack of alignment with the staffing and other narrative components of the application. While the budget narrative includes generally reasonable assumptions, there are still significant gaps in the budget, especially in areas of staffing and facilities.

The narrative indicates that Years 1-5 would each end with \$0 net surplus/deficit which would not allow any room for variances in revenue should enrollment numbers not meet projections or allow the school to build a reserve in the event of unexpected costs. The contingency plan provided indicates that if enrollment falls below 150 students, then the school will reduce non-essential contracted services, scale back facility expenses, or adjust staffing ratios. It is unclear if these are realistic options given the CTE model which requires staff certified in specific occupational areas as well as facilities that allow for hands-on instruction in that content. Additionally, wrap-around services are a core component of the program and it is unclear how reducing contracted staff would impact the delivery of these services.

The application indicates that accounting and payroll management will be handled through financial software with external CPA oversight however financial services are not included in the budget workbook. Additionally, broad statements about roles and responsibilities for financial planning and oversight do not demonstrate a full understanding of required financial policies and procedures.

Overall, the application fails to demonstrate the financial expertise required to start and operate a charter school.

