



MARCH 2025

Quality Charter Review Recommendation Report 2025

Evaluated By

Tennesseans for Student Success

Tennesseans for Student Success

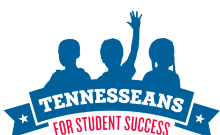
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This document was adapted from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Charter School Application Recommendation Report. NACSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of public education by improving the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

The Wildflower Foundation

Proposed School Name

Tennessee Wildflower Public School

Proposed Location

Chattanooga, Hamilton County

Board Members

Rachel Good, Sharron Shedrick,
Lindsay Brown, Rosabelle Gorman,
Tracey Hawk, Marie Nelsen, Donna
Williams

Enrollment Projections

Grade Level	Year 1 2026-27	Year2 2027-28	Year 3 2028-29	Year 4 2029-30	Year 5 2030-31	At Capacity
K	20	20	20	20	20	20
1	10	20	20	20	20	20
2	10	10	20	20	20	20
3		10	10	20	20	20
4			10	10	20	20
5				10	10	20
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
Totals	40	60	80	100	110	120

Anticipated Student Demographics

Enrollment Demographics: 75% ED, 20% SWD, 12% EL

Proposed School Leader

Gwen Howard

Mission and Vision

Mission: The mission of Tennessee Wildflower Public School is to foster a diverse and inclusive community where every child is empowered to discover their unique potential through authentic, collaborative Montessori education, cultivating a lifelong love for learning, respect for others, and high expectations for personal growth and achievement.

Vision: Not provided

Educational Model/Instructional Design

Montessori



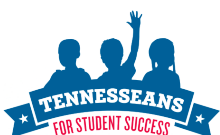
RECOMMENDATION: PENDING

Application Strengths Summary

- The application describes many of the school design elements and their alignment with Hamilton County School Priorities, including inclusion, care, collaboration, stewardship, and integrity.
- The application details the use of an evidence-based foundational literacy curriculum to provide a structured, systematic approach to phonics, reading comprehension, and writing.
- The applicant will receive support from The Wildflower Foundation and benefit from their experience in school design and a place-based community engagement plan.
- The application contains a thorough and compliant plan for serving special populations within the unique educational model.
- Teachers will engage in regular data-driven instructional decision making through Professional Learning Communities focused on student progress monitoring.

Application Improvements Summary

- While the application includes details regarding the curriculum resources for Literacy, no other subjects are included.
- The application states that tutoring, remediation, and summer school services will be provided to meet state requirements for literacy however a plan for implementation is not provided.
- It is unclear why the application based projected demographics on two selected elementary schools within the city as comparison while dozens of other schools in the city were not considered.
- The student recruitment plan places a large reliance on word of mouth and does not address how it will provide equal access to all interested families.
- The application does not include a recruitment process that ensures staff will be appropriately licensed.
- The professional development plan does not include training to address special and diverse populations.
- The application indicates that it will provide early and after-care services to provide a flexible schedule for parents and support transportation however it is unclear what time these services start or end, who will staff them, or where these resources are allocated in the budget.
- The application fails to demonstrate familiarity with state and federal requirements or regulations relating to the provision of transportation services to students with special needs.
- The budget narrative is incomplete and missing many key components required to evaluate the financial viability of the school.



ACADEMIC PLAN DESIGN AND CAPACITY

PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

Summary

Tennessee Wildflower Public School (TWPS) will serve 120 K-5 students, at capacity, in the East Side and/or West Side neighborhoods of Chattanooga. While not included in the charter, the school will also operate a PreK program with an additional 20 students. The relationship between the PreK and the charter is not described. TWPS will implement the Montessori model in a microschool environment. Key features of the proposed school include:

- Individualized instruction
- Child-centered
- Hands-on, Inquiry-based learning
- Project-based learning
- Restorative Justice
- Real-world experiences
- Multi-sensory
- Self-directed learning
- Conscious Discipline

While the school demonstrates modest community engagement and support, the applicant's rationale for the selection of the communities from which the school intends to draw students is vague and does not demonstrate sufficient rationale or demand. The projected demographics data is based off two schools in the proposed locations, but it is unclear why these were selected as comparisons in lieu of, or in addition to, many other schools nearby.

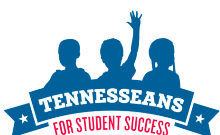
The assessment plan utilizes universal screening, benchmark, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment tools across academic and social-emotional growth, development, and attainment. Student understanding will be gauged through a combination of classroom observations integrated with academic and non-academic assessments. Data gathered from assessments will inform instructional practices and personalized learning, as well as determine areas for teacher professional development.

The application states that it will ensure alignment with Tennessee State Standards in core subjects, however proposed curricular resource are only included for Literacy and the plan for determining additional instructional resources and standards alignment is not provided. The daily schedule includes large work blocks designed to support student's independent learning in project-based, integrated studies in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Daily intervention time is also included to extend learning through remediation or accelerated personalized instruction. Tiered interventions will also occur during this time for students identified through the MTSS process. An MTSS process for behavior concerns is not included in the application.

The school will culture aligns with the Montessori model and a Conscious Discipline approach will be implemented, alongside Restorative Justice practices, to teach and reinforce self-management and conflict resolution skills. Implementation of the culture will be evaluated regularly by through surveys and observations.

The Montessori method is highly personalized and well-suited for the inclusion of children with specialized needs and the school's leadership demonstrates strong experience working with special populations. The application clearly describes how a full continuum of services will be implemented within the specific school model. Identification, service delivery, scheduling, and monitoring procedures are thoroughly described and demonstrate a strong understanding of requirements and best practices.

Overall, the application demonstrates a dedication to implementing a personalized instructional program that will meet the needs of a variety of students however there are significant gaps related to instructional materials, curriculum, and community support in the Academic Plan.



OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

PARTIALLY MEETS STANDARD

Summary

The TWPC board is composed of 7 community members with backgrounds in education, charter start-up, student and family support, school administration, and fiscally responsible leadership. There is a lack of legal expertise in current board representation however the Director and Teacher Leaders are actively cultivating relationships with communities to identify future board members. The application does not identify a plan to recruit a parent to the board, as required by state law. The application indicates that the board will utilize a decentralized decision-making structure, however a clear description of how this will be executed is not provided.

Clear roles and responsibilities of the board are described, including hiring and evaluating the Director and Teacher Leaders, evaluating the success of the school across academics, operations, and finance, as well as evaluating the relationship with the Wildflower network. The board will engage in required training, in addition to essential nonprofit board training during Year 0.

The school will partner with The Wildflower Foundation, a national non-profit organization, that supports a decentralized network of small, teacher-led, micro-Montessori schools. The CMO provides services during charter design, start-up, Teacher leader training and recruitment, financial management support, professional networking, and includes providing shared services and software such as NWEA Map.

The facility plan describes the requirements for a viable facility that supports the implementation of the Montessori model, and three potential sites have been identified that meet criteria. TWPC Teacher Leaders have access to The Wildflower Foundation Operations Guide to support them in identifying key requirements of a school setting. The facilities plan does not indicate a timeline for identifying, financing, renovating, or ensuring code compliance and no contingency plan was provided.

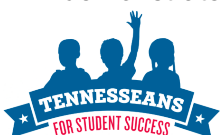
The start-up plan is informed by the experience and recommendations of other Wildflower charter school leaders who have successfully opened schools in several different states, however the application does not speak to how the school would mitigate any potential challenges that may arise during the planning year.

Throughout the year, Project Coach will be used to support teacher reflection as part of the school evaluation and accountability measures. Additionally, the board will work closely with Teacher Leaders and the Director to review, report, and evaluate goals to complete a formal, annual Leadership Growth and Accountability Cycle. It is unclear if this evaluation process measures the progress or individual staff or the entire school, or both.

Professional development will be individualized, and days are allocated throughout the school year for teachers to focus on a range of topics. The Wildflower Foundation will support in providing these opportunities for school staff.

While the application indicates that food service will be provided in accordance with USDA, Child Nutrition Program, and Tennessee code, a vague plan for adhering to state and federal regulations and guidelines is provided. One potential vendor is identified however selection criteria or considerations are not described. A draft service agreement or estimated costs are not included to determine the feasibility of providing services, nor are funds allocated in the school's operating budget.

While the partnership with the CMO brings significant organizational capacity, the application did not demonstrate a thorough understanding of charter school operations and requirements.



FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

DOES NOT MEET STANDARD

Summary

TWPS will receive a start-up grant from The Wildflower Foundation dispersed over Years 0-2. These funds, as well as a loan from TWF/Sunlight, will support the planning year and provide for partial year salaries for the Director and Teacher Leaders as well as advertising, materials and supplies, facility lease, building improvements, furniture, technology, and staff development.

Several contracted services including food services, nursing, and special education transportation are not included in the budget. While budget contingency plans include reducing non-essential expenses and building a cash reserve that will cover 60 days of operating expenses by year three of operation, it is unclear if the budget accurately includes all required expenses and is an accurate depiction of revenue and costs. The narrative indicates that Voluntary Pre-K Subsidy (VPK) is assumed however the relationship between the PreK and the charter is not defined in the application, and it is unclear from which revenue streams multi-age classrooms (PreK & K) teachers will be paid. VPK, or the school's eligibility, is not addressed in any sections of the application.

The Operating Budget Narrative is incomplete. It does not outline assumptions upon which the budget expenses or revenues are built deeming it challenging to evaluate the reasonableness of estimates. Additionally, financial procedures, policies, systems, and processes for accounting, payroll, and audits are absent, as is a process and criteria for selecting contractors for administrative services. While the application indicates that TWF will provide financial services, the roles, responsibilities, and decision-making are not clearly defined, and it is unclear if employees at TWFS have necessary financial expertise.

Overall, the application fails to meet standards, is missing many required components of the application and fails to demonstrate necessary financial capacity to oversee charter school financial operations.

