

MARCH 2024




Quality Charter Review Recommendation Report 2024

Evaluated By

Tennesseans for Student Success

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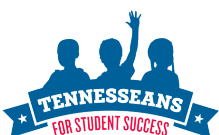
This document was adapted from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Charter School Application Recommendation Report. NACSA is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of public education by improving the performance of charter school organizations. NACSA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

Memphis Grizzlies Preparatory
Charter School, Incorporated

Proposed School Name

Memphis Grizzlies Preparatory
STEAM School for Girls

Proposed Location

Memphis, 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						
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6	200	200	200	200	200	200
7		175	175	175	175	175
8			150	150	150	150
9						
10						
11						
12						
Totals	200	375	525	525	525	525

Board Members

Ross Glotzbach, Glenda
Yarbrough, Michael Wallace,
Channin Cochran, Lou Arrindell,
Tracee Walls, Dorsey Hopson,
Avis Robinson, Elliot Perry,
Amber Garrett, Cordell Walker

Anticipated Student Demographics

Enrollment Demographics: 93% Black, >5% Hispanic, >5% White

Proposed School Leader

Not yet identified

Special Population Projections:

64% FRL, >5% ELL, 20% SWD

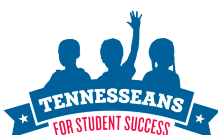
Mission and Vision

Mission: Memphis Grizzlies Preparatory STEAM School for Girls empowers young women in grades six through eight to excel academically and develop a passion for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics).

Vision: Memphis Grizzlies Preparatory STEAM School for Girls envisions an academically rigorous, achievement-driven school that is affirming, nurturing, and empowering.

Educational Model/Instructional Design

All Girls STEAM Middle School



RECOMMENDATION: Approve

Application Strengths Summary

- The application outlines research to support the major design elements of the proposed school model, including the specific benefits for disadvantaged students.
- Memphis Grizzlies Prep, the existing boys school, has strong partnerships with many downtown businesses that can be leveraged for the new school, as well.
- The application makes a compelling case for the unique educational option in Downtown Memphis that would be open to all students, regardless of academic or behavioral records.
- The school will utilize standards-aligned and research-based curriculum to implement its STEAM model.
- The applicant addresses the school's use of data and research to shift the culture and discipline model away from the no-excuses model that was implemented when the school was founded.
- The special populations section is thorough and comprehensive. Program oversight will be managed by experienced educational leaders.
- The application has an exceptionally well-defined plan for parents and family engagement, including volunteer opportunities, technology classes, and parent-to-parent classes.
- The Network's existing school earned the Reward School designation and TVAAS Composite Score of 5 in the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years.
- The Network Board will include a parent representative from each school to ensure both schools receive active and effective representation of students and families.
- The founding team and board possess the expertise necessary for start-up and school management.
- The applicant team will leverage the past-experience of the Executive Director of securing and overseeing renovation of a facility, as well as the expertise of a Real Estate Broker, Architectural firm, General Contractor, GT3 Group (financial consultants), and the Finance Committee to guide and oversee facilities acquisition.
- The network prioritizes hiring of individuals to ensure that the staff of the network and schools are reflective of the student body they serve.
- The network demonstrates an ability to reflect on past performance, identify root causes, and invest in strategies to address achievement levels and operations compliance.

Application Improvements Summary

- The applicant did not update several student and family handbook policies to reflect the female demographic of the proposed new school.
- While the application contained letters of support from several community organizations, family signatures of support that are referenced in the application were not included.
- The application names that Dr. Ware, the current school leader and Network Executive Director, will be the leader of the proposed school until a school leader is identified that can carry out the mission. It is not clear how long this would be tenable solution.
- The current school has minimal facility expenses, with lease payments of \$1 per year for each of their Jefferson Ave leases. The application does not describe how the substantial cost of facilities associated with a co-location will impact the fiscal health of the Boys school.



ACADEMIC PLAN DESIGN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

Memphis Grizzlies Preparatory STEAM School for Girls is designed to serve 525 female students 6-8th, at full build out. The school will focus on empowering and nurturing young women to excel academically and develop a passion for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics. The school aims to close the gap in underrepresentation of women of color in STEAM-related careers.

Key features of the proposed school include:

- STEAM Focus
- Project-based learning
- Standards-based, rigorous curricula
- Data-drive Instruction
- Academic & Career Exploration Supports
- Social-Emotional Supports
- Behavioral Supports

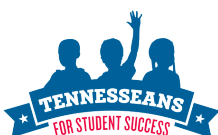
The daily schedule will allow extended blocks of learning time, with a focus on literacy across the core content areas, as well as a STEAM elective that will bring together content from across the core and introduce new skills related to STEAM. The schedule also contains a What I Need Now (WINN) block to allow for intervention, tutoring, remediation, enrichment, and specialized services during the school day. Additional tutoring is available after school.

The school will use a data-analysis cycle that begins with collection of information from a variety of assessments, followed by analysis at the individual teacher level, grade level, and content areas. Data will then be used to determine re-teaching needs and student groupings, evaluate the quality of Tier 1 instruction, determine instructional modalities, and determine options for student choice in upcoming instructional plans.

The applicant explains how the plan to utilize a Response to Intervention program and tiered interventions to address the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities exceptionally well. Network leadership have experience and expertise supporting and overseeing special populations programming.

The application provides the research-basis for the selection of SEL Curriculum, PBIS, and Restorative Practices to support school culture that is specific to the target student population.

Overall, the applicant demonstrates evidence that the school will offer research-based curriculum and instruction within a unique educational option for Memphis. The integration of STEAM across all subjects will be rolled out gradually through Years 1-3 with full implementation by Year 4. The application clearly outlines how STEAM concepts will be integrated into core content classes using several instructional strategies and projects including STEAM Literature Analyses, STEAM Writing Projects, Design Challenges, Experiments, and examining historical perspectives on STEAM.



OPERATIONS PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

Network leadership is defined as an Executive Director, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Finance and Operations, Director of Student Affairs, Director of Culture, Director of Student Supports, and Project Manager sharing governance of both the proposed school and its existing school. The school will be led by a Principal (Year 0+), Dean of Culture (Year 1+), and Director of STEAM (Year 2+).

The Board of Directors is composed of 11 existing members and a parent representative will be appointed within six months of the school's opening. The board currently has a representative from the existing school. The board will oversee the Network Executive Director, who will in turn oversee the principals from each school.

Professional development will gradually build capacity of educators to embed interconnected STEAM instruction and learning experiences across contents. Teachers will receive some STEAM training in Years 1-3 and the intensity of training will increase in Year 4 when interconnected STEAM learning experiences will be rolled out across content areas. Teachers will receive professional development through a summer in-service and in-service and early-release days throughout the year. They will also have regular observations and feedback from an instructional coach.

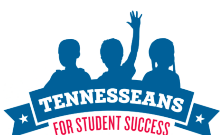
A comprehensive start-up plan was provided, as well as identified risks and challenges in addition to accompanying mitigation strategies. One key risk is facility acquisition and renovation. The founding team will pursue several facility options throughout the planning year. For Year 1, the proposed school plans to sign a short-term lease. The network will begin pursuing properties that would be suitable for multi-school campus that can house both the Boys and Girls schools and are working with an agent from Universal Commercial Real Estate. The facility plans allocate dedicated STEAM Space, including a Makerspace Media Lab, as well as a dedicated Parent Room for meetings and classes.

The staffing plan includes many shared staff and contract positions across both schools, which will work well during co-location, however the application does not address how this will be managed during Year 1 when the schools will be in separate locations.

To ensure that transportation is not a barrier to attendance, the school will contract with Cline Tours to run two bus routes that will cover all of Memphis. Budgeted amounts are based on current costs for similar routes for the existing school.

The school intends to partner with MSCS for food service, just as their existing school has for several years.

Overall, the applicant brings strong start-up, operational, and management expertise. The applicant outlines exceptional student support, community engagement, and professional development frameworks demonstrating their preparedness to start and operate an additional school.



FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

MEETS OR EXCEEDS STANDARD

Summary

The school will receive \$225,000 in startup funds from Memphis Grizzlies Preparatory (Boys) Charter School. The school will also apply for the CSP grant and assumes an awarded amount of \$500,000. The network will pursue additional philanthropic funding to ensure it can meet startup expenses, as well as build a cash reserve to ensure financial stability. The application details the extensive fundraising experience of several Network team members. In the spirit of conservative budgeting, fundraising dollars are not included in the budgets. Additionally, the budget only assumes 95% of projected enrollment and overestimates expenses, including staffing and insurance, to build a budget that can be easily adapted if needed. The application also includes several contingency plans that could be implemented, including a line of credit and reducing non-core content staff.

The Year 0 budget includes partial year funding for the Principal (6 months) and Dean of Students (3 months).

Additional staffing details include:

- Dean of Students in Year 1
- 1:25 core academic teacher to student ratio in Year 1
- 1:20 Special education teacher to student ratio in Year 1
- 1 shared EL teacher with Boys School
- Director of STEAM in Year 2
- 1 full time STEAM elective teacher planned for Year 3
- 1 shared social worker and 2 dedicated behavioral specialists in Year 1
- 2 educational assistants planned for Year 3
- 2 interventionists planned for Year 3

The proposed school will have lower network level staffing costs until the school is at full enrollment when shared staffing will be a 50% split between the Boys and Girls school.

Financial policies and procedures will be finalized by the Executive Director, Board Chair, and the Director of Finance & Operations in consultation with GT3. The firm will provide back-office services including accounting, purchasing, facilities financing, facilities project management, and payroll.

The current school has a history of strong fiscal health with ~\$840K or approximately 60 days of cash on hand according to the FY23 audit.

Overall, leadership and the board have extensive experience in finance, fundraising, and grant writing to support a successful school start up and operations. The financial plan and budget for the proposed school are sound.

