



Tennessee Charter
School Center

The background of the report cover features a photograph of two young children sitting at a desk and writing. The image is split diagonally from the top right to the bottom left. The upper-left portion of the image is overlaid with an orange tint, showing a boy with glasses writing. The lower-right portion is overlaid with a blue tint, showing a girl with curly hair writing. The overall composition is clean and modern, emphasizing education and student achievement.

20 | IMPACT 22 | REPORT



About Public Charter Schools

Public charter schools are public schools that are free to attend and open to all students, but operate under an independent contract, or, “charter,” with an authorizing agency – in Tennessee, most commonly a local education agency (school district), though some are authorized by the Achievement School District (ASD) or the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, following an appeal or transfer from the ASD. Tennessee state law requires all public charter schools to be not-for-profit, and prohibits for-profit charter school operators. Public charter schools in Tennessee are required to meet the same academic standards and administer the same assessments as any other public school in Tennessee. Their business operations are subject to annual independent audits, as well as the oversight of their authorizers. If a public charter school fails to meet academic or operational standards, they can be closed.

About the Tennessee Charter School Center

The Tennessee Charter School Center (TCSC) is the state’s primary charter school support organization, or CSO. A non-profit organization, TCSC engages in policy, advocacy, and school support work to ensure that Tennessee’s public charter schools have an equitable environment to operate in and have the resources they need to ensure they are offering a high quality public education to all of their students.

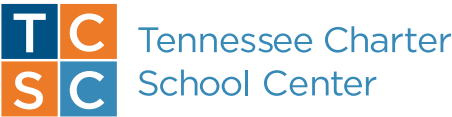


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Introduction from our CEO, Dr. Maya Bugg



2022 was not without its challenges, but as I reflect on the hard work our team has done, and the exceptional work we’ve seen at public charter schools across the state, I am thrilled at how much we have to celebrate. The work of each part of our team stayed focused as ever on helping public charter schools thrive as a part of the public school landscape in Tennessee. You’ll find stories and details of the fruits of this labor throughout this report.

I’m so proud of the work the TCSC team has done this year to help ensure public charter schools across the state are equipped to meet their goals and help students achieve success. Our policy team worked tirelessly with policy makers and partners to ensure public charter school students would be equitably considered as our state launched a new school funding formula focused on the needs of students, a huge step forward for Tennessee. The policy team also continued our streak of defeating 100% of anti-charter school legislation, while ensuring an unprecedented investment in facilities funding for public charter schools. Our programs team built a strategy to welcome schools as members of our organization, creating an even stronger foundation for partnership and advocacy.

In 2022, our External Relations team sought to find new ways to honor the success of students and educators in overcoming obstacles of the pandemic, and created a new program for recognition of academic proficiency in the form of the Changemaker Charter School List, which you can read more about in this report. In addition to this list, our team once again presented the Charter Champion Awards, which recognize the people and schools making a difference across our state, and we are excited to have so many opportunities to celebrate public charter schools, their students, and staff. Our advocacy teams convened school leaders and worked collaboratively with schools and community advocates to champion growth and push back against limitations on charter schools at the local level, pushing back against restrictions on athletic participation for public charter school students, and the national level, joining partners from across the country to rally in support of the Charter Schools Program and advocate with members of Congress in Washington DC.

Whether our team members are helping policy makers understand the role public charter schools can play in a thriving public education environment, supporting school leaders as they navigate the complexities of finding the right facility and financing to meet student needs, or consistently keeping public charter schools up-to-date on policy changes, trainings, and good news, they’re dedicated to supporting the students and educators of Tennessee. I hope you’ll enjoy learning more about the work of Tennessee’s public charter schools and our team here at the Tennessee Charter School Center through this report.

Dr. Maya M. Bugg
President & Chief Executive Officer, Tennessee Charter School Center

Who We Are

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Our vision is that every student in the state of Tennessee will receive and have access to a high-quality public education that equitably allocates opportunity, is aligned with their best needs and prepares them to thrive and experience post-secondary success.

Our work to lead the charge for effective policy, excellent schools, quality operators and informed communities is driven by:



Collaboration

To achieve the vision of all students accessing and realizing a high-quality education, it will be crucial that we work with, for and alongside myriad partners, stakeholders and communities.



Diversity

Diversity at all levels (professional background, race, gender, etc.) is paramount to our ability to demonstrate empathy for others, build diversity of experience and think critically about our personal beliefs and biases.



Equity

Academic and opportunity gaps are real in our public education system. With this in mind, it is essential that public education advocates work to create an equitable environment for families; our actions must be rooted in social justice. From equitable funding across schools, fair distribution of quality teachers and legitimate access to a variety of meaningful experiences that foster growth and opportunity, an equitable public education system will be key.



Integrity

Honesty, care and candor are critical to build trusting relationships with our communities. We will have the courage to have difficult conversations, admit mistakes and stand up for the right thing to do on behalf of children, even if it's not the most popular.



Quality & Excellence

All families deserve access to a high-quality public education that will provide the foundation for future success and growth. Schools, districts, authorizers, elected officials and other committed partners in this work must be held accountable for high standards of quality and excellence.

Tennessee Charter Locations in 2022-2023

Tennessee charter schools exist in the four major metro areas across the state. These schools are authorized by four traditional districts as well as the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission and the Achievement School District:



Metro Nashville Public Schools: 26 Schools

Shelby County Schools: 54 Schools

Knox County Schools: 1 School


Hamilton County Schools: 8 Schools

Tennessee Public Charter School Commission: 9 Schools


Achievement School District: 16 Schools

Tennessee Charter Schools by the Numbers¹

 **114** TOTAL CHARTER SCHOOLS

 **44,000+** STUDENTS ENROLLED

 **19 Years** OF INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

 **89%+** of Tennessee charter students are students of color – welcoming all students and providing public school options to communities of color.



Charter school graduates in Davidson and Shelby Counties enrolled in postsecondary institutions at higher rates than their district peers in 2021

55% vs. 47%
and
48% vs. 42%
respectively.*

¹Sources:
Tennessee Department of Education, Active Charter School List for 2022-2023, provided by special request.

Tennessee Higher Education Commission, College-Going Reports, 2020-2021: <https://www.tn.gov/thec/research/college-going-reports.html>, accessed November, 2022.

*Includes charter high schools not run by ASD given their unique mission/focus

Who We Are

BOARD

The Tennessee Charter School Center Board members are committed to high-quality education for all of Tennessee’s children. Along with the Center’s chief executive officer, they lead the organization advising on policy, advocacy, programming, funding and communication.



CHAIR
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STAFF



Dr. Maya Bugg
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Maya creates the center’s vision and strategy. She leads fundraising; local, state and national partnership development; and state-level policy efforts.
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Laurie Brown
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF ADVOCACY
Laurie leads local policy and advocacy efforts on behalf of charter schools and families in Nashville. She serves as the key liaison between charter schools, Metro Nashville Public Schools and other elected bodies and community partners.



Kim Drake
OFFICE COORDINATOR AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE CEO
Kim is the Special Assistant to CEO Maya Bugg and helps coordinate meetings, office logistics and board meetings.
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Elizabeth Fiveash
POLICY CHIEF
Elizabeth is responsible for creating the organization’s policy and advocacy agendas, as well as building a roadmap for future regulatory and advocacy work on behalf of the public charter school sector in Tennessee.
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Jaques Hamilton
PROGRAMS MANAGER
Jaques supports educators seeking to start schools and aids them with governing board compliance requirements, developing community partnerships and professional training.
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Tommiea Jackson
COMMUNICATION MANAGER
Tommiea uses media to inform educators, families, community members and elected officials about the Center’s efforts to ensure high-quality education for Tennessee’s children through programming and advocacy.
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Emily Lilley
VICE PRESIDENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
Emily oversees TCSC’s internal and external communication work, advises the TCSC policy team, manages external organization relationships, and represents TCSC in East Tennessee. She also supports both the work of the TCSC board and organizational development efforts.
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Joshua Perkins
DIRECTOR OF QUALITY SCHOOLS
Joshua oversees the implementation of professional development and training for charter school teachers, leaders and board members.
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Carra Powell
MEMPHIS DIRECTOR OF POLICY & ADVOCACY
Carra leads the organization’s Memphis-based advocacy, connects stakeholders, sets TCSC’s citywide policy agenda and identifies the roadmap for future policy.
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Cameron Quick
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER
Cameron is an expert in facilities financing and real estate development. He helps bring real estate resources and support to the charter sector and assists schools in seeking and securing financing.
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Through the Years

Overview of TCSC

Tennessee policymakers and education stakeholders have demonstrated a strong commitment to education reform by advancing significant policies and programs to support Tennessee’s public education improvement and innovation. As a result, Tennessee’s public charter school movement has gained strength and generated positive outcomes for students and communities.

Today, **116** charter schools are serving more than **44,000** Tennessee students - and our numbers continue to grow each year. Not only are charter schools promoting choice and opportunity in our K-12 education system, but they are also playing a pivotal role in helping the state address several critical education issues, including literacy and workforce development.

Here’s a look at where we’ve been:



1998

The Tennessee Charter Schools Association (TCSA) was established to unite efforts and resources towards creating a local and statewide policy environment that enables the creation and growth of high-quality public charter schools.



2002

Tennessee Charter School Act passed. This act introduced charter schools as an “alternative means” within the public school system for ensuring the accomplishment of the necessary outcomes of education.



2003

First Tennessee charter schools opened in Nashville (1) and Memphis (3)



2005

Law amended to allow students zoned to “high priority” schools to attend charter schools



2009

Inspired by the success of high-quality public charter schools in other parts of the country, the **Tennessee Charter School Incubator** (TCSI) was started. TCSI focused on systematically identifying and training new charter leaders and managing school launch and early support activities. TCSI has launched nine charter schools in Tennessee, recruited and placed two high-impact Fellows into school leadership positions in the Achievement School District, and initially incubated five new public charter schools that opened in 2015.

Expansion of enrollment eligibility to “at-risk” students. Limit or “cap” on the number of charter schools raised to 90.



2011

Open Enrollment amendment passed to allow all students the option to attend a charter school, removing the “cap” on the number of charter schools. Achievement School District created.



2013

The Tennessee Charter School Incubator and the Tennessee Charter Schools Association merged to form the Tennessee Charter School Center. This new organization combines the resources and functions of both groups (charter school incubation and support and policy and advocacy) to better respond to the strong demand for high-quality public charter schools across the state. The new Center aims to provide ongoing, comprehensive support to the growing charter sector in Tennessee while also creating a unified voice among charter organizations.



2014

Legislation passed to allow the State Board of Education to act as an authorizer upon appeal for charter applicants in school districts with a priority school in their area.



2016

TCSC collaborates with TN Dept. of Ed. to secure a federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant to support the launch of new high-quality charter schools in TN



2017

Legislation is passed that modernizes and strengthens the 2002 Tennessee Charter School Act. This law clarifies rules on everything from the application process to closure. Enables local districts to charge an authorizer fee to cover the cost of charter oversight. Established fund of up to \$6 million per year for facilities.

The Memphis Charter Compact was approved. The Compact will help to Provide facility support for charters, Establish a School Performance Framework, Formalize School Closure Procedures for charters, Establish a District Shared Services Standard Operating Procedure and a more collaborative agreement for unified relations with a focus on quality schools regardless of model or operator type.

TCSC awarded a federal credit enhancement grant to support charter school facilities in TN



2018

Legislation to ensure public charter schools are included in reimbursements for high-cost special needs students was passed.



2019

The Public Charter School Commission-- an independent commission with the authority to hear charter school appeals and authorize schools following successful appeal anywhere in Tennessee-- was established. The State Board of Education was established as a formal accountability body for charter school authorizers, including the requirement for evaluation of authorizer compliance with state law and the Tennessee Quality Authorizing Standards, as well as the power to enforce compliance.



2021

The Charter School Facilities Fund is established as a recurring budget item in the Tennessee State Budget, better ensuring stable access to vital facilities funds for public charter schools in Tennessee



2022

The state’s new funding formula, the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA), was established. Among many other improvements, TISA includes a direct funding component specifically for students enrolled in charter schools. Additionally, the Charter School Facilities Fund was increased to \$38 million, with an historic \$22 million of it as a recurring budget item.



Policy & Advocacy Leadership

The Tennessee Charter School Center Policy & Advocacy team advocates for state policies that ensure innovation, collaboration and quality continue to be top priorities in education. We believe fair policies offer transparency, equity, quality, autonomy and accountability.

Tennessee Charter School Center works closely with educators, legislators, parents and other community advocates to identify key policy challenges and opportunities facing the state's charter school sector. TCSC is committed to making sure all voices are clearly heard and students always come first.

2022 Legislative Session

The 2022 Legislative Session saw a great deal of significant work from policy makers and education advocates, with historic progress made for students. Key policies from the 2022 legislative session include:

- Historic levels of funding to support public charter school facility needs in the FY 2022-23 budget including \$32 million in new dollars, for a total of \$38 million, for charter school facilities.
- The Tennessee Investment in Education Act (TISA), the state's new K-12 funding formula was established, and included a \$1 billion investment. TISA is a student-based formula that will ensure funding is more targeted to students and their needs and provide greater transparency and accountability around how education dollars are spent.
- TISA specifically includes a direct funding component for students enrolled in a charter school. This is a huge step in closing the funding gap that we know exists between public charter schools and traditional public schools.
- All legislation that would have negatively impacted Tennessee's public charter school sector, including legislation to allow for-profit charter schools to operate in Tennessee, was defeated.

Tennessee Investment in Education Act

The Tennessee Investment in Education Act (TISA), the state's new student-based K-12 funding formula was established, and included a \$1 billion investment in education funding.



\$38 million in facilities funds

Successfully advocated for a historic \$38 million investment in facilities funding, including a \$22 million recurring budget item for charter school facilities.



TCSC tracked **60+** pieces of legislation impacting charter schools and K-12 education during the 2022 legislative session.

Photo by Brad Vest for Chalkbeat



POLICY AND ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Increased Staff Numbers Meant Increased Student Gains at Believe Memphis Academy

In 2021, schools across the nation were working to identify strategies to mitigate learning losses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Believe Memphis Academy was highlighted by Chalkbeat for their ten percent student gain in math scores on mid-year tests at a time when many schools were struggling, especially in math.

The school attributes these learning gains directly to staffing increases, as well as technological investments, the school was able to establish through community fundraising.

"There's just a very intimate and very direct connection between the money that we're raising and being able to have stories like this to tell," Jason Baker, the school's director of development and marketing, told Chalkbeat.



Chalkbeat shared that Believe Memphis credits adding staff at this critical time with allowing teachers more time to teach in each lesson period, as well as more time to explore test data and create data-based individualized learning plans for students. A bigger staff also allowed more individual time between faculty and students to build connections, check on absent or distracted students, and make sure students had needed access to technology and other resources. Staff even had capacity to regularly deliver breakfast and lunch to student homes and help families sign up for free internet service. Each of these supports for students and families contributed to student learning gains during a challenging time.

To read the complete article, visit [TN.ChalkBeat.org](https://www.tn.chalkbeat.org)

Innovation, Engagement & Collaboration

TCSC strongly values innovation and collaboration as there are always opportunities to learn and grow from others. In order to achieve the vision of all students accessing and realizing a high-quality education, it is important that we work with, for and alongside a variety of partners, stakeholders and communities. The year 2021 saw relationships develop and partnerships grow as TCSC identified similarly focused leaders and organizations committed to educating Tennessee's children. Together, we focused on empowering educators, students and families with information, trainings and other resources.

• CHARTER CHAMPION AWARDS •

TCSC once again put forward the Charter Champion Awards, which allows the charter school community to nominate those in their schools and school communities for awards ranging from school of the year to advocate of the year, and even community impact project of the year. This year we received 33 nominations and presented awards to winners at schools all across the state.

• CHANGEMAKER CHARTER SCHOOL LIST •

For the first time, TCSC presented a list of schools recognizing academic success. The list acknowledged schools that demonstrated strong growth in the 2021-22 school year and also performed in the top 25% of schools in the state for improving over their pre-pandemic levels of success. The list recognized 20 schools for Math, ELA, and growth.

• COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS •

The Communications team worked in partnership with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools to design and promote a ten-week media campaign sharing facts and basic information about public charter schools in Nashville and Memphis. TCSC also released the Understanding Charters and Moments with Maya campaigns on social media. The team also designed and implemented a communications campaign around membership, which resulted in almost 50% of schools joining in year one, exceeding our goal.

• WEBSITE UPDATE •

The Comms team led work with Cobblestone Group to redesign our website, utilizing a new platform that will allow for easier and more flexible maintenance, as well as an updated look. The new site will allow for member portals for all member schools with exclusive resources and information, including data and recorded trainings.

• SPORTS ADVOCACY •

TCSC, led by SVP Advocacy for Nashville Laurie Brown, led work to create a charter middle school sports league to ensure they could play after MNPS prohibited charter middle school teams from participating in district sports. TCSC's policy, communications, and advocacy teams collaborated to coordinate an action campaign against a TSSAA proposal to move charter schools from Division 1, the public school division, to Division II, independent schools. This campaign resulted in a unanimous vote against the proposal from the TSSAA Legislative Council.

• TISA •

TCSC played a key role in advocating for TISA, a new student-based funding formula in Tennessee for public education, and offered detailed feedback to TDOE's funding framework. Our team's advocacy ensured a charter-specific weight included in the formula that will allow for a consistent budget item that charter schools can plan around. The Policy Team also participated in the TDOE's TISA/Charter School working group to provide front end feedback on the development of the rules with TDOE and the State Board.

• PARTNERSHIP WITH FAA AND FEDEX •

The Memphis advocacy team helped distribute nine full scholarships from the Federal Aviation Administration and the FedEx flight training programs for Black girls for National Flight Academy. Students from Memphis RISE, Compass Community Schools, MSCS traditional public schools and DeSoto County Schools attended the training. Our team's diligent work resulted in further partnership with the FAA and FedEx.

• MEMPHIS ADVOCACY •

The TCSC team participated in over 25 school based, family and staff centered events to provide education about our work and allow interested people to sign on as "advocates" through our new advocacy building platform Phone 2 Action. We have collected over 750+ advocates through this new piece of our advocacy work July - December 2022.

• MEMBERSHIP •

The Programs team was responsible for launching a Membership program for TCSC, with the goal of at least 25% of schools joining in the first year, and have surpassed that goal. In fact, nearly 50% of schools have become members at this point.

• PROGRAM INSIGHT •

TCSC offered trainings throughout the year open to all schools regarding facilities financing and debt service. In addition to hosting 25 PD sessions focusing on ELA, MATH, and School Operations with over 250 participants with 65% school participation.

HIGHLIGHTS

Nashville Classical Fourth Graders Study Social Studies by Answering Four Questions

While many schools have invested less in or eliminated social studies, Nashville Classical is taking very noticeable steps to ensure its students get the lesson. Forbes Magazine highlighted the school in its Feb. 2022 article, "Want Kids to Learn History? Ask These Four Questions."

Nashville Classical Director of Knowledge and Curriculum Emma Colonna began researching different ways to teach research-based history to elementary and middle school students a few years ago. She became interested in the Four Question Method as created and documented by two Boston-area high school history teachers, Jonathan Bassett and Gary Shiffman. After participating in one of their trainings, Colonna inquired about using those lessons for elementary students. For three years, the trio worked together to build a foundation that would be accessible to fourth graders and lead them successfully grasping history lessons. Not only are students learning from textbooks, educators are identifying ways for students to think critically so that they are able to apply those lessons to their present circumstances.

"We believed it was really important for kids to have a lot of context and knowledge," Colonna said. "Without context to understand what is being discussed, they can never have the full meaning of what they are learning."

In order to fully appreciate the lessons on the Renaissance Period from the 14th through 17th century, students are using the four question method and asking, What happened? What were they thinking? Why then and there? And What do we think about that?

The classes have been going well. "It's been great! The first couple of classes were really different. Students are able to engage with history in a way that they haven't previously done. They are not learning this because it will be on a test later. They are learning this because they want to learn so that they are informed citizens and make better choices going forward."



Charter Champion Awards

The Tennessee Charter School Center, along with Hyde Family Foundation, facilitated its Virtual Charter School Awards. Our team announced the results for each of our annual awards Nov. 15-17, 2022. Read below to learn more about the finalists and winners.

Although ongoing caution regarding public health made it impossible to gather in person for the awards, this process allowed us to connect with schools, school leaders, and teachers in a particularly special way. We have enjoyed watching school leaders, teachers and advocates celebrate each other. For a complete listing of Charter Champion Award winners, visit www.tnchartercenter.org/charter-award-winners/



CHARTER CHAMPION
Teacher of the Year
Eddie Walsh
Memphis Grizzlies Prepary Charter School (Memphis)

Relationships and rigor are the hallmarks of Eddie Walsh’s educating style. Students in his class are engaged in active and spirited discussion. During the 2021-22 school year alone Walsh saw his students’ achievement percentile increase 16 points. This resulted in Walsh being placed in the 96th percentile of educators in the state. In addition to teaching swim and lifeguarding electives, Walsh started and coaches swim teams at Grizzlies Prep and Crosstown High School.

Finalists: Megan Cohen, Emerald Academy, Shelbi Stanbridge-Monroe, Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy

TCSC’S 2022 Charter Champions were:



CHARTER CHAMPION
Advocate of the Year
Nicole Lattimore *(pictured above on left)*
Emerald Academy (Knoxville)

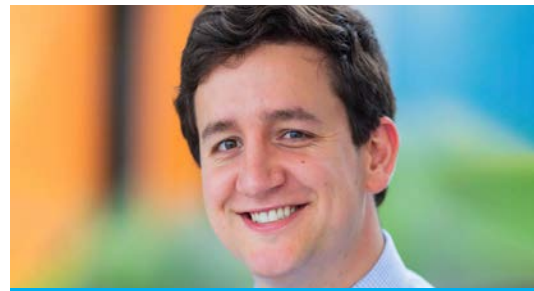
Nicole Lattimore is a very active parent at Knoxville’s Emerald Academy. She leads the schools Parent Teacher Student Association, established an annual uniform swap to help families save money and launched an exciting Fall Festival for Families. Lattimore regularly supports the school’s faculty and staff and also serves as a member of the Emerald Charter Schools Board of Directors.

Finalist: Ted and Kelly Alling, Chattanooga Preparatory School



CHARTER CHAMPION
Statewide Policy Champion
Sen. John Stevens *(Huntington)*

Sen. Stevens has been a steadfast supporter of charter schools and public school options during his tenure in the Tennessee general assembly. Stevens deeply understands the value of charter schoos and the desires of families and students to have access to more high-quality public school options. As vice chair of the senate finance ways and means committee, Sen. Stevens has supported efforts like charter school facilities funding and creation of the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission. He has led legislative efforts aimed at improving the charter school approval pocess to provide more families what the charter school option.



CHARTER CHAMPION
Administrator of the Year
Jamie Gutter
Valor Flagship (Nashville)

Jamie Gutter is an exceptional leader who is incredible with creating systems, developing people and leading academic programs. His strong leadership has consistently placed Valor amongst the top 5% of Tennessee’s charter schools in Tennessee. Valor’s suspension data is the lowestt in the school district. Theirr data for exiting EL Scholars is highest in the school district. It is rare for a school to excel in any of these areas and truly remarkable to excel across several.

Finalists: Kristi Baird, Compass Community Schools, Anthony Anderson, Memphis Business Academy



CHARTER CHAMPION
Local Policy Champion
John Little *(Nashville)*

John Little is a long time community advocate and champion of children across Nashville and the state of Tennessee. He has been dedicated to improved educational outcomes for children, especially those who are most marginalized.



CHARTER CHAMPION
Administrator of the Year
Michelle Lyons
Cornerstone Prep - Denver (Memphis)

Michelle Lyons is known as both a servant and transformational leader. During her time at Cornerstone Prep - Denver, Lyons launched Saturday School, the Read While Waiting program and supported almost a dozen staff members in seeking and achieving an administrative license. Lyons, with her infectious and exciting personality has led the school from Priority Status and TVAAS Level 1 to becoming a Tennessee Reward School and one of TCSC’s 2022 Changemaker Schools.



CHARTER CHAMPION
Community Impact Project of the Year
Dr. Patrick Washington
Promise Academy and Man Up! (Memphis)

Dr. Patrick Washington’s Man Up Teacher Fellowship recruits, develops and places male teachers of color in area schools. Since 2018, the program has placed more than 100 male teachers of color in Memphis classrooms (preK-12). By giving students of color access to high quality teachers of color, Man Up looks to disrupt the “school to prison pipeline”and reduce the amount of high school dropouts.

Finalists: Compass Community Schools - Clean Memphis, Mid South Food Bank, Lichterman Nature Center Jessica Talbot - Explore! - Helping Hands and Hope for Our Neighbors Without Homes



CHARTER CHAMPION
School of the Year
Purpose Preparatory Academy Charter School *(Nashville)*

Purpose Prep’s mission requires an impeccable academic foundation, most intensively within literacy, measurable at each grade level, and we devote the majority of our financial, temporal, and curricular resources towards that goal. Purpose Prep is in the 91st percentile for increasing the percentage of students who are proficient in ELA since the last pre-pandemic assessment in 2019, among the top 25% in the state for this rate of increase. Purpose Preparatory Academy has been named to the Changemaker Charter School List (K-8) for OVERALL recognition, as well as ELA and Math recognition. Purpose Preparatory Academy is the only public charter school in the state recognized in all categories. Purpose Prep is also a 2022 Reward School as designated by the State of Tennessee, an honor the school has received multiple times.

Finalists: Cornerstone Prep - Denver (Memphis) and Chattanooga Preparatory School (Chattanooga)

The Pivot

Charter school's nimble model creates changemakers for children

Despite a worldwide health pandemic that interrupted traditional learning for two years, some 18 public charter schools in Tennessee saw meaningful academic growth in 2021 over 2019. That is significant as many schools across the country spent the last year battling the “COVID slide” where students saw critical learning loss.

The Tennessee Charter School Center decided to recognize these accomplishments with its inaugural 2022 Changemaker Charter Schools List for grades K-8. Each school landed in the top 25 percent of all public schools in ELA and/or Math.

“The hard work of the educators and students at each of the schools has put them among the highest performing schools in the state in terms of making great strides in student proficiency,” says Dr. Maya M. Bugg, CEO and President of the Tennessee Charter School Center. “This would be significant any year, but we know that navigating the challenges of a pandemic learning environment and achieving at this level have required unique dedication and creativity. Our team is proud to commend these public charter schools.”

Promise Academy Spring Hill Principal Kimbra McBride entered the school auditorium with other educators for a special assembly, but this was no typical gathering.

“Dr. Washington came and interrupted the assembly. He put a message on the screen that said we were a level five school! I can’t describe how my heart swells when I see the results.”

The school’s success wasn’t a total shock to McBride and her team. Regular assessments throughout and since the COVID pandemic had informed school leaders that their teaching efforts needed a pivot. Those quick changes, a nimbleness typical of the state’s public charter schools, allow schools to meet the immediate needs of students. The result is consistent growth throughout the year.

For Promise Academy Spring Hill, that started by offering a version of in-person learning to what grew to about 50 percent of the school’s students. “While many schools across the country had virtual learning, we actually had kids in the building,” McBride said. “As instruction began, parents saw how hard it was for their kids to focus online and even get online. They started asking us if they could bring their children into the building. I opened a virtual classroom where I had two monitors. Students were still in the building, but they were monitored on their computers.”

Promise Academy’s charter states that it can have longer school days, 7:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. When all students returned to the campus in 2021, leaders found that students lacked the stamina for the long day and testing. They were having problems focusing later in the school day. The pivot: “We pushed all of our instruction to before noon. We had to be really flexible. **Because we were a charter school, we could make those adjustments on the fly.**”



The school hired teachers specifically for intervention and focused on the needs of each student. Regular assessments showed growth, parents and teachers kept putting in the work, and it all paid off.

“I can’t describe how my heart swells when I see the results of our hard work.”



In addition to COVID interrupting traditional student learning, Purpose Preparatory students and educators also dealt with another natural disaster. A tornado tore through the community weeks before the health pandemic caused students worldwide to begin lessons at home. “Our school was alright, but we had scholars,” said Shauna Russel, the school’s director of academics. “We’d been raising funds to help students and checking in with students.” There was spring break, and then school closures followed. “Teachers sprung to action to build virtual models that reflected our values,” Russell said. They focused on literacy, a two-teacher model and data-driven instruction. Those strategies continued until students returned to the physical building.

The Purpose Prep team found that there had been a learning loss before students returned to the school building. They’d seen data that showed student ELA and Math scores were the lowest they’d been. School leaders made specific efforts “not to remediate, but to accelerate.” For example, educators knew third graders would have a decline in fluency and reading when they returned. Third and fourth-grade teachers worked together so that they’d be prepared to move students forward with comprehension. Students that needed further assistance got extra support through intervention.

“We used PPP funds for professional development so that teachers would know how to intervene and not reduce rigor,” said Russell. “Today, having a student below grade level is rare.” “We are so data-driven, the results are never a surprise, but we are overwhelmingly proud of our teachers, scholars and parents. We knew they’d reach that high bar.”

The “joy factor” has been a big part in creating the success Emerald students have seen in recent years, according to Carlissa Martin, school director at Emerald Academy in Knoxville. “We want scholars to want to be here and want to enjoy learning,” said Martin. “Even adults, the staff, we have to step out of their comfort zone to make things fun.” Emerald Academy is not about fun alone. The energizing cheers and chants are like daily parties with a purpose. The motivation keeps the students focused on lessons and learning, which were especially necessary after COVID interrupted traditional school.

“We are facing a generation that, after COVID, is very easy to skip school to find reasons not to be in school. Bringing the joy factor really is key.” Bringing that joy, especially in the critical areas of reading and comprehension, takes a lot of work and planning. When schools began shutting down in the spring of 2020, Martin said they had one week to prepare teachers to teach virtually. Fortunately, Emerald was ahead of the curve and had electronic devices to distribute quickly to families. Educators and parents worked closely to ensure students did not miss the rigor of the classroom. Once school doors opened again, Emerald’s board supported leaders in hiring intervention, enrichment and virtual teachers.

All of the planning and hard work paid off. Emerald Academy achievement levels have exceeded pre-pandemic proficiency. “We believe all children can achieve at a high level, and I, along with the rest of the teachers in the building, come to work every day to help make that a reality,” said Megan Cohan, a sixth-grade teacher whose scholars achieved some of the highest results in school history and outperformed the district average. These results show that we are closing the achievement gap and are on the right trajectory to grow these results even further.

“We are very proud of the success our scholars achieved,” said Carlissa Martin, school director of Emerald Academy. “This is a testament not only to their hard work but also to parents, faculty and staff who are working to prepare them for college and community leadership. These significant gains are critical as we continue to scaffold and build toward our goal of becoming a Reward School.”

Additionally, Emerald Academy was named a Changemaker Charter School by the Tennessee Charter School Center. This distinction is for schools that are in the top 25% of all public schools in the state for an increase in the percent of students proficient over pre-pandemic (2019) scores in English Language Arts (ELA) and or Math, along with Tennessee Value-Added System scores (academic growth) of Level 3 or above in the same areas.

Although the pandemic proved challenging, Martin said educators must continue pushing students. “While it is easy to get bogged down by challenges that scholars face, education is their way to be successful in life. Those high expectations are what drive us every day. Dropping the bar is a disservice to them.



CHANGEMAKER CHARTER SCHOOLS

Having a Strong Impact on Student Proficiency

Particularly in light of the unique challenges the pandemic presented to all schools in terms of recovering learning losses following the significantly disrupted school years in 2020 and 2021, in reviewing 2022 TNReady data, TCSC zoomed in on schools that not only helped students avoid or recover any learning losses but also found ways to help students achieve beyond even their pre-pandemic proficiency levels.

This year, TCSC announced our first ever K-8 Changemaker Charter Schools List, and will celebrate high school Changemaker Charter Schools in Spring 2023. With this K-8 list based on TNReady results, TCSC is pleased to honor public charter schools that utilized their unique nimbleness and autonomy to support student success in both proficiency and growth particularly during this unique set of school years. There are two different categories of criteria determining honors. The schools honored on this list are:

ELA AND MATH

Public charter schools that are in the top 25% of all public schools in the state for the significance of increase over 2019 in proficient students in ELA, Math, or both on the 2021-22 TNReady assessment along with level 3 or higher TVAAS growth in the same subjects

OVERALL

Public charter schools performing in the top 25% of all public schools in the state for percentage of proficient students in both ELA and Math on the 2021-22 TNReady assessment along with level 3 or higher TVAAS growth in both subjects.

ELA (Top 25% of all schools in state for proficiency growth + 3 or above subject matter TVAAS)

| SCHOOL | TVAAS (ELA) | DISTRICT | PERCENT MEETS /EXCEEDS - ELA FY19 | PERCENT MEETS /EXCEEDS - ELA FY22 | % POINT CHANGE | PERCENTILE RANK |
|---|-------------|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Memphis STEM Academy | 5 | SCS | 17.1% | 31.3% | 14.2 | 97% |
| City University School Girls Preparatory | 5 | SCS | 7.1% | 21.2% | 14.1 | 97% |
| Journey Community Schools East Academy | 3 | SCS | 11.4% | 24.3% | 12.9 | 95% |
| Promise Academy - Spring Hill | 5 | ASD | 7.2% | 19.4% | 12.2 | 95% |
| Power Center Academy Hickory Hill Elementary School | 5 | SCS | 8.4% | 19.1% | 10.7 | 92% |
| Cornerstone Prep Denver Campus | 5 | ASD | 10% | 18.7% | 8.7 | 87% |
| Purpose Preparatory Academy | 5 | MNPS | 51.6% | 58.4% | 6.8 | 79% |
| Freedom Prep Whitehaven Elementary at Millbranch | 5 | SCS | 11.7% | 18.3% | 6.6 | 78% |
| Strive Collegiate Academy | 5 | MNPS | 20.5% | 26.6% | 6.1 | 76% |
| Ivy Academy | 4 | HCDE | 33.3% | 38.9% | 5.6 | 75% |

2022 Changemaker Charter Schools (K-8)

Overall (Top 25% of all schools in state for total percentage of proficient students + 3 or above TVAAS composite)

| SCHOOL | ELA/MATH COMPOSITE TVAAS | DISTRICT | PERCENT MEETS/ EXCEEDS ELA | ELA PERCENTILE RANK | PERCENT MEETS/ EXCEEDS MATH | MATH PERCENTILE RANK |
|---|--------------------------|----------|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Valor Flagship Academy | 5 | MNPS | 59% | 92% | 62.5% | 92% |
| Valor Voyager Academy | 5 | MNPS | 54.6% | 89% | 61.3% | 91% |
| Nashville Classical Charter School | 5 | MNPS | 47.7% | 83% | 50.6% | 84% |
| Purpose Preparatory Academy | 5 | MNPS | 58.4% | 91% | 46.8% | 78% |
| KIPP Antioch College Prep Elementary School | 5 | TPCSC | 42.6% | 76% | 46.5% | 77% |

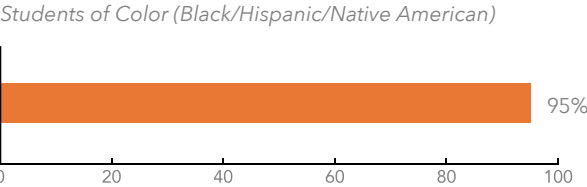
Math (Top 25% of all schools in state for proficiency growth + 3 or above subject matter TVAAS)

| SCHOOL | TVAAS (ELA) | DISTRICT | PERCENT MEETS /EXCEEDS - ELA FY19 | PERCENT MEETS /EXCEEDS - ELA FY22 | % POINT CHANGE | PERCENTILE RANK |
|-------------------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Smithson Craighead Academy | 5 | MNPS | 25.6% | 32% | 6.4 | 95% |
| Explore! Community School | 5 | MNPS | 13.6% | 17.9% | 4.3 | 91% |
| Emerald Academy | 3 | Knox | 17.4% | 21.5% | 4.1 | 91% |
| Purpose Preparatory Academy | 5 | MNPS | 45.2% | 46.8% | 1.6 | 85% |
| Promise Academy - Spring Hill | 4 | ASD | 12.7% | 14% | 1.3 | 84% |

Memphis

Home to Tennessee’s first charter schools dating back to 2003, Memphis continues to host the largest public charter school sector in the state. Overwhelming parent demand for high-quality public school options and community engagement has spurred this growth. While some schools face performance struggles, most are making a positive difference and are offering quality options to families.

SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



(Source: Shelby County Schools, 2022-2023)

88%

GRADUATION RATE

(District Schools = 78%)

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Graduation Cohort file, 2021-2022, and Ready Graduate Data file, 2021-2022)

22%

READY GRADUATE RATE

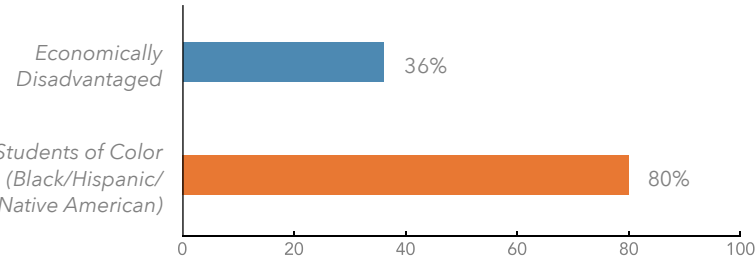
(District Schools = 24%)

*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY23 whereas high school outcomes reflect FY22.

Nashville

The city of Nashville has experienced a population boom in recent years, and a growing need for access to a high-quality public education has followed. Nashville’s public charter schools are reimagining what’s possible in public education and providing parents a new set of quality public school options to consider.

SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



(Source: MNPS Open Data Portal - <https://www.mnps.org/about/communications/opendata>)

93%

GRADUATION RATE

(District Schools = 78%)

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Graduation Cohort file, 2021-2022, and Ready Graduate Data file, 2021-2022)

41%

READY GRADUATE RATE

(District Schools = 23%)

*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY23 whereas high school outcomes reflect FY22.

54 SCS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS*

29 OPERATORS

18,931 STUDENTS ENROLLED

TVAAS

Tennessee’s public charter schools achieved high levels of student growth in the 2021-22 school year, particularly as measured by TVAAS, which Tennessee uses to measure growth by value added. In nearly every district, public charter schools saw significantly higher percentages than traditional public schools of students meeting or exceeding expectations at levels 3, 4, and 5. The levels of growth Tennessee’s public charter schools saw in this school year is particularly notable as these schools have identified strategies for success while serving many of the state’s most vulnerable students. Nearly 92% of Tennessee’s Public Charter School students are students of color, with public charter schools serving a greater percentage of economically-disadvantaged students than traditional public schools.

| TVAAS SCORE | CHARTER | DISTRICT | DISTRICT AVERAGE |
|-------------|---------|----------|------------------|
| 5 | 53% | 52% | 52% |
| 4 | 15% | 7% | 9% |
| 3 | 13% | 17% | 16% |
| 2 | 9% | 3% | 5% |
| 1 | 9% | 21% | 18% |

26 MNPS PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS*

15 OPERATORS

13,057 STUDENTS ENROLLED

TVAAS

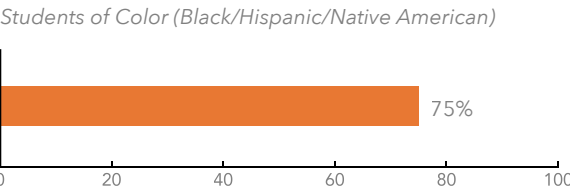
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| TVAAS SCORE | CHARTER | DISTRICT | DISTRICT AVERAGE |
|-------------|---------|----------|------------------|
| 5 | 78% | 34% | 42% |
| 4 | 0% | 7% | 6% |
| 3 | 4% | 29% | 24% |
| 2 | 7% | 11% | 11% |
| 1 | 11% | 18% | 17% |

Chattanooga

Although Chattanooga’s charter sector is small, Hamilton County continues to see a significant demand for more public school options. The sector continues to expand this innovative and effective education model in the community.

SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



(Source: Hamilton County Schools, 2022-2023)

92%

GRADUATION RATE

(District Schools = 88%)

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Graduation Cohort file, 2021-2022, and Ready Graduate Data file, 2021-2022)

76%

READY GRADUATE RATE

*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY23 whereas high school outcomes reflect FY22.

8 HAMILTON COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOLS*

4 OPERATORS

2,040 STUDENTS ENROLLED

TVAAS

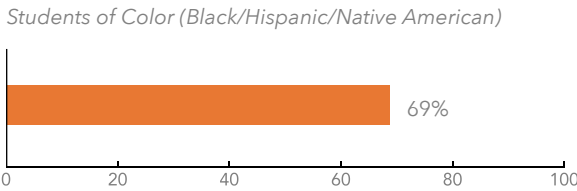
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| TVAAS SCORE | CHARTER | DISTRICT | DISTRICT AVERAGE |
|-------------|---------|----------|------------------|
| 5 | 50% | 14% | 16% |
| 4 | 17% | 15% | 15% |
| 3 | 0% | 25% | 23% |
| 2 | 17% | 10% | 10% |
| 1 | 17% | 37% | 35% |

Knoxville

Knox County Schools opened its first public charter school, Emerald Academy, in 2015 as community leaders turned to public charter schools as a way to expand education options for more families. The Emerald Youth Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting underserved youth in Knoxville, helped open the school to focus on promoting a college-going culture for students.

SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



(Source: Knox County Schools, 2022-2023)

*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY23.



1 KNOX COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOL

1 OPERATOR

450 STUDENTS ENROLLED

TVAAS

Tennessee’s public charter schools achieved high levels of student growth in the 2021-22 school year, particularly as measured by TVAAS, which Tennessee uses to measure growth by value added. In nearly every district, public charter schools saw significantly higher percentages than traditional public schools of students meeting or exceeding expectations at levels 3, 4, and 5. The levels of growth Tennessee’s public charter schools saw in this school year is particularly notable as these schools have identified strategies for success while serving many of the state’s most vulnerable students. Nearly 92% of Tennessee’s Public Charter School students are students of color, with public charter schools serving a greater percentage of economically-disadvantaged students than traditional public schools.

| TVAAS SCORE | CHARTER | DISTRICT | DISTRICT AVERAGE |
|-------------|---------|----------|------------------|
| 5 | 0% | 24% | 23% |
| 4 | 0% | 8% | 8% |
| 3 | 100% | 20% | 21% |
| 2 | 0% | 9% | 9% |
| 1 | 0% | 39% | 38% |

TN Public Charter School Commission

The Tennessee Public Charter School Commission was established to hear new start, revocation, and renewal charter school appeals from across the state and serve as an authorizer to any charter schools that it authorizes upon appeal. The Charter Commission took over charter school appeal responsibilities from the Tennessee State Board of Education on January 1, 2021. In the 2021-2022 school year, the Charter Commission began serving as the authorizer for the schools that transitioned from the State Board of Education’s authority, and moving forward, also serves as an authorizer to schools that have appealed to their authority and have been authorized and some schools that have applied to transition from the Achievement School District following their successful removal from the Priority List.

9 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
AUTHORIZED PUBLIC
CHARTER SCHOOLS*

6 OPERATORS

3,835 STUDENTS
ENROLLED

Achievement School District (ASD)

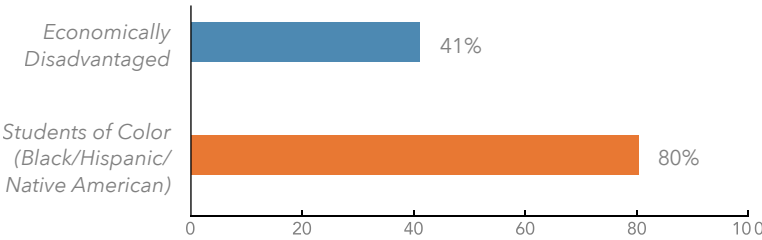
Established in 2011, the Achievement School District (ASD) is the state-run turnaround system implemented to intervene in the state’s lowest-performing schools. With the goal of providing innovative supports and improving student achievement, the ASD leverages charter operators and directly operates a select few schools to support this work. Since its beginning, the district has seen both bright spots and noted challenges in its efforts to improve the quality of these local schools, but the ASDs most recent approach focuses on collaboration and partnership with local school districts to turn around schools together.

16 ASD SCHOOLS*

6 OPERATORS

5,809 STUDENTS
ENROLLED

SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



(Source: Tennessee Public Charter School Commission, 2022-2023)

83%

GRADUATION
RATE

9%

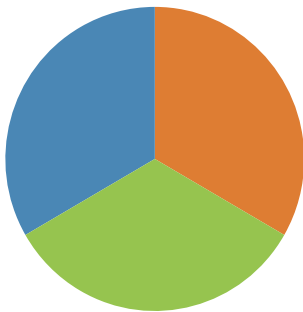
READY GRADUATE
RATE

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Graduation Cohort file, 2021-2022, and Ready Graduate Data file, 2021-2022)

*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY23 whereas high school outcomes reflect FY22.

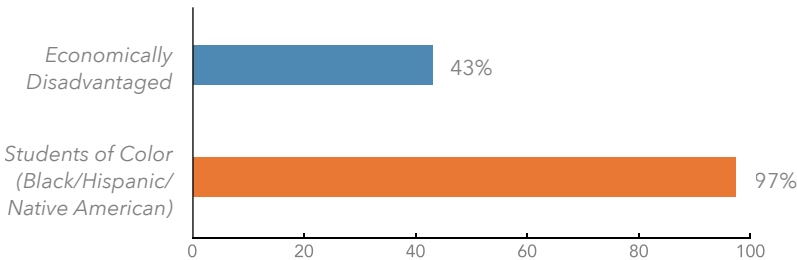
TVAAS

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33% RECEIVED A 5
33% RECEIVED A 3
33% RECEIVED A 1
IN FY22.

SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS



(Source: Achievement School District, 2022-2023)

TVAAS

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| ASD | 20% | 10% | 15% | 10% | 45% |

(Only includes ASD charter schools)

59%

GRADUATION
RATE

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education Graduation Cohort file, 2021-2022, and Ready Graduate Data file, 2021-2022)

*Analyses are based on data provided directly from districts as well as publicly available files. Schools with redacted data are excluded from these numbers. School counts and enrollment reflect FY23 whereas high school outcomes reflect FY22.

8%

READY GRADUATE
RATE

The Path Forward

Each year, the Tennessee Charter School Center team strives to ensure that every student in Tennessee has access to a high-quality, public school option. It is vital for the future of Tennessee's students to encourage innovation and student-focused practices.

The Tennessee Charter School Center's goal is that by 2026, our state will have 100,000 high-quality charter seats available or approved, and that Tennessee will be the best place in the country to launch a public charter school.



In 2023, the Tennessee Charter School Center's policy team is focused on:

- 1 Ensuring facilities funding and equitable facilities access for public charter schools
- 2 Strengthening the role of the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission to ensure high quality authorizing practices across the state
- 3 Protecting against any efforts to limit or decrease the ability for charter schools to operate across the state.
- 4 Protecting public charter school quality and transparency
- 5 Adding clarity to existing charter school law to meet best practices regarding charter school enrollment lotteries, grade band expansion in line with authorizing district bands, and allowing authorizers to provide corrective action plans when challenges arise



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Tennessee Charter
School Center

*Serving Students,
Partnering with Parents*

