



## **AGENDA**

METROPOLITAN BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION  
2601 Bransford Avenue, Nashville, TN 37204  
Special Called Meeting – July 25, 2022 – 12:30 p.m.  
**Christiane Buggs, Chair**

### I. CONVENE and ACTION

- A. Call to Order
- B. Establish Quorum
- C. Pledge of Allegiance
- D. Adoption of Agenda

### II. GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- A. Actions
  - 1. Knowledge Academies, Inc.
  - 2. Amended Charter School Application
  - 3. A Resolution in Support of Public School Teachers

### III. ADJOURNMENT

GOVERNANCE ISSUES

A. ACTIONS

1. CONSENT

a. AWARDING OF PURCHASES AND CONTRACTS

(11) VENDOR: Knowledge Academies, Inc.

SERVICE/GOODS (SOW): Amendment #1 updates the purpose of the contract summary to reflect Charter School (Grades 5-12), updates Section 2.1 around student enrollment, and changes the contract number from 2-837481-03 to 10444. This contract serves as the Charter School Agreement.

SOURCING METHOD: State Commission Approved Charter Application

TERM: July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2026

FOR WHOM: Knowledge Academy students and staff

COMPENSATION: Compensation to the school shall be based on state/local revenue per pupil allocation set by the Tennessee Department of Education. Ten (10) payments will be made from approximately August through June of each year.

OVERSIGHT: Charter Schools

EVALUATION: At least annually, MNPS will monitor and periodically report on the charter school's progress in relation to the indicators, measures, metrics, and targets set out in the Performance Frameworks. Such reporting shall become part of the charter school's annual report to MNPS and the state commissioner of education.

MBPE CONTRACT NUMBER: 10444 (previously 2-837481-03)

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Operating Budget



METRO  
NASHVILLE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS

Charter School Amended Application Findings Report

Tennessee Nature Academy

Office of Charter Schools:

Shereka Roby-Grant, Director, Office of Charter Schools, MNPS

Denise Brown, Coordinator, Office of Charter Schools, MNPS

Gwendolyn Shanks, Accountant, Office of Charter Schools, MNPS

Belinda Hardrick, Administrative Assistant, MNPS

This Report Finding Summary reflects the consensus of the Charter Review Team to include the

following MNPS Divisions and External Reviewer:

Academics

Special Populations

Facilities Planning

Strategic Investments

Operations

Teaching and Learning

Division of Schools

## Original Application Report Findings

**Academic Program Design and Capacity:** Partially Meets Standard

**Operations Plan and Capacity:** Partially Meets Standard

**Financial Plan and Capacity:** Does Not Meet Standard

**Past Performance:** Category 1 Applicant- Section Not Reviewed

## Amended Application Report Findings

### I. Amended Application Academic Program Design and Capacity

**Rating:** Partially Meets Standard

**Analysis:** The review team found Tennessee Nature Academy (TNA) would encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, through a nature-based learning model. The vision for Tennessee Nature Academy indicated that TNA is a nature based public charter school for students in grades 5-12.

The amended application added information that described their RTI time using independent reading but failed to offer information on how they will be innovative with their intervention practices. The review team did not find evidence to support how intensive intervention support will be delivered to students in need.

The amended application clarified that TNA would have one EL teacher and one EE teacher upon opening. With the expected ratios, it is unlikely that one of each will suffice and remain in compliance with state standards. The student teacher ratio proposed in the amended application is 27, which is above the state standard average of 25 students per teacher, T.C.A. § 49-1-104.

The applicant indicated that they desire to be diverse by design and improve academic achievement for EL learners. However, they do not include an EL teacher in their pre-opening or year one budget, whereas the teacher was included in the revision summary for the application. The application did indicate that TNA plans to communicate with EL families through secure apps that allow for multilingual communication between the school and families.

The applicant is still proposing to have a middle school with the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade structure despite MNPS moving 5<sup>th</sup> grade back to the elementary tier.

Additionally, the information detailed in 1.11 Recruitment/Enrollment and 1.12 Parent /Community Engagement and Support is focused on recruiting families to TNA, not on partnering with them. There is a heavy emphasis placed on community partners, but there was no money budgeted for transportation. The review team has questions around how students get to the many parks and other community organizations.

TNA used outdated and no longer relevant data to suggest there is an overcrowding problem in the southeast part of the county, there is not. With the district’s transition to a K-5 and 6-8 model, all MNPS middle schools have capacity for growth. In addition to MNPS schools, Aventura will open in 2022 and will grow to a K-8 school and the state-approved Nashville Collegiate Prep opened this year and will grow to a K-8 school and Rocketship 3 will also open in 2022 as a K-5 school.

MNPS is adding an addition to Cane Ridge HS and the state approved KIPP HS will open in 2023. Like most large urban school districts enrollment has declined significantly during Covid, the chart below shows enrollment trends and the projected capacity for MNPS, Charter, ASD and SBE schools for 2022-23.

School Tier/Type	Oct. 19/20	Oct. 20/21	Oct. 21/22	Proj. 22/23	Projected Capacity Utilization	
MNPS Elementary	32,664	29,551	30,527	32,514	40,611	80.1 %
MNPS Middle	17,842	16,912	15,492	13,737	20,504	67.0 %
MNPS High	19,253	18,964	19,062	19,227	23,413	82.1 %
MNPS Specialty	2,040	1,456	1,833	2,012	3,232	62.3 %
MNPS Charter	12,852	13,422	12,926	12,921	16,723	77.3 %
ASD/SBE Charter	1,282	1,512	2,168	2,805	4,053	69.2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>85,933</b>	<b>81,817</b>	<b>82,008</b>	<b>83,216</b>	<b>108,536</b>	<b>75.6 %</b>

The applicant is proposing to enroll 81 students per grade level, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, with the budget indicating 6 teachers in year one. With this information, the state class size average requirement of 25 students per teacher for middle school will be exceeded.

The applicant provided a description of the CTE pathways outlined in this amended application. The review team understands PBL (Project Based Learning) and the approach to teaching, CTE teachers are highly skilled in this area and there was no mention of that in this section.

The amended application indicates that the school plans to offer music which is a requirement under Tennessee. The review team still had concerns around the curriculum choices for arts, world languages and electives. Another concern was the availability for Algebra I in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, which was not an option for students. Additionally, there were concerns if there would be any additional mathematics courses offered other than precalculus, such as statistics or applied mathematical concepts, which would be better aligned to the mission and vision of the school.

The review team acknowledges the desire of the applicant to reduce the achievement gap to zero but does not think that they have articulated a realistic timeframe or plan to eliminate achievement gaps.

The review team found that the concerns around the shortened schedule every Wednesday will impact stockpile professional development days and it wasn't addressed in the amended application.

The amended application did include examples of co-planning and co-teaching. The applicant plans to have a 1:10 ratio for students with IEPs.

TNA plans to have a gifted teacher, as well as a social worker.

The applicant has provided information to show that there was an increase in engagement with families interested in the school. It is concerning that with enrollment hopes of 684 students TNA has only 149 families on their mailing list and 218 followers on social media.

In conclusion, the review team does acknowledge the effort placed in the amended application but did not find enough evidence to change the rating from partially meets standard.

**Summary as Presented in the Amended Application:** Tennessee Nature Academy features a model that is innovative and unique and aligns with the mission and vision of the school.

1. Nature-Based Learning
2. A Career and Technical Education Aimed at Real-World Challenges
3. A Connected Diverse-by-Design Community
4. A Research-Based School with Professionals who Build on the Research

As a public charter school, TNA is open to any students in grades 5-12 who reside in the Metropolitan Nashville Public School district. TNA's campus will be in Southeast Nashville's Cane Ridge community and will focus recruitment efforts toward families living in the Cane Ridge, Antioch, and Overton clusters. As a diverse-by design school, TNA aspires to serve students from a range of backgrounds and experiences. We expect that TNA's enrollment will mirror that of Southeast Nashville overall.

The applicant's nature-based, project-based curriculum, instructional strategies, regular assessments, and intervention systems assist in closing achievement gaps and introduce students to diverse learning experiences both within and beyond the traditional classroom setting.

The applicant's use of data helps teachers personalize instruction and support students by closing achievement gaps when they emerge.

The applicant aims to leverage their nature-based, project-based academic program, purposeful instructional strategies, data from regular assessments, and comprehensive intervention systems to eliminate achievement gaps between student subgroups and support all students in outperforming local and statewide comparison groups on key outcome measures, including measures of proficiency in Math and English.

In accordance with the Tennessee Public Charter School Act, TNA strives to provide an educational environment which leverages innovative teaching and learning practices, supports students to achieve proficiency on state assessments, and closes achievement gaps between student subgroups.

TNA emphasizes character development and social-emotional learning (SEL) throughout the school day.

The applicant has hired a Community Coordinator who will be the primary point person for Family recruitment.

## **II. Amended Application Operational Plan and Capacity**

**Rating:** Partially Meets Standard

**Analysis:** While TNA is proposing a new structure, the review team is still not confident that the operator can support the model that they are proposing and rates the operation plan as partially meets standards. Student to teacher ratio continues to be out of compliance at 27 exceeding the class size average of 25 maximum required by state law T.C.A. § 49-1-104. TNA's unique structure raises challenges related to accessibility for students with disabilities

Several concerns drive the rating of partially meets standards. Although the applicant provided administrative leadership team experience, it was noted the limited experience in operating a school. The applicant provided updated information around the founding team member's leadership experience. Although the leadership has a combined 15 years of experience in founding or start up for charter schools, this experience was either at the teaching or assistant principal level and not at the administrative level for managing the duties of a startup school.

In addition, there was no evidence provided to the review team that this outdoor model closes the achievement gaps for students. The unique structure also raises challenges related to accessibility. The plan leaves a lot of details unanswered. It appears that their fundamental plan is to rent temporary space while constructing a larger, permanent space. It is difficult to determine what facilities will be present for the temporary space, how they will function, and how they will ensure accessibility for all students to all programming. Supply chain issues will impact their timeline for required instructional space and furniture needs.

The applicant referenced touring other facilities and using lessons from those visits as ways to ensure accessibility.

In conclusion, while this is a start to amend this application, the applicant did not go further in detail to identify next steps. Accordingly, the review team cannot conclusively determine that TNA has addressed the accessibility concerns and the rating remains as partially meets standard.

**Summary as Presented in the Amended Application:** TNA will be governed by a non-profit Board of Directors in accordance with its adopted corporate by laws, which shall be consistent with the terms of this charter. The Board shall consist of a minimum of three and a maximum of fifteen community members with a broad range of background and areas of expertise. The amended application provided updated leadership information for the founding team.

The timeline was updated with additional information around improvements required for building code and life safety compliance and design improvements that are needed. The updates also included the hiring of a community engagement coordinator to begin in June 2022.

Amendments were made to TNA's Action Plan. TNA's Executive Director is in preliminary conversations with a local developer with land that he would like to set aside for a school site and

TNA's real estate consultants (Level Field) are running a feasibility assessment to determine development and phasing strategy for building the permanent facility. An architect has also been engaged (Moody Nolan) to begin designing the school facility (indoor and outdoor components) which will be done in line with all public-school building code and life safety codes and requirements.

TNA's founders have visited seven nature-oriented campuses to research the various ways schools have students learn outside and ways in which nature-oriented campuses can be accessible to all students and will plan to implement those in its facility planning.

Activities that would typically have a dedicated room- like the science room, visual or performing arts spaces, or gymnasium- will be held in a variety of accessible, outdoor or open-air spaces. The school will also prioritize outdoor spaces as an outdoor space for physical education, manifesting in play fields, a school garden and a natural wooded area for nature play, all of which will be adapted to be accessible for all.

The applicant has amended the facilities timeline to consider the steps needed to ensure ADA compliance.

TNA designs and uses professional development to support effective professional learning among teachers and staff. In alignment with recommendations from experts in this field. TNA's professional development sessions develop teachers' capacity and beliefs, focus on improving students' results, and promote a positive, relationship-based environment.

TNA will use regular equity audits to examine the impacts of the organization's policies, programs, and practices on student outcomes. Student groups should experience equitable outcomes (which are not predictable by race, ethnicity, gender etc.) related to academics, discipline, attendance, and well-being; discrepancies in these areas suggest the presence of achievement gaps the must be addressed to ensure equitable outcomes among learners.

### **III. Amended Application Financial Plan and Capacity**

**Rating:** Does Not Meet Standard

**Analysis:** The review team found that the start-up budget did not include any rental costs for facilities. There is sufficient time in the temporary space that will be required to set up the school before it starts. Additionally, rental fees would be required in the start-up budget. The student teacher ratio continues to be out of compliance at 27:1. The amended application indicated that the pre-opening budget includes no funds for tenant improvements. Instead, these funds are in the year 1 budget. This essentially means no improvements would be made until after the first year of school, thus making it impossible while students are utilizing the facility. Additionally, funds for tenant improvements were allocated monthly in the cash flow report, further supporting the fact that no improvements will be made before the school opens. The year 2 and beyond budget continues to allocate yearly tenant improvements. The applicant included only one \$20,000 classroom in their budget. TNA indicates in their written application that they will have many outdoor classrooms, so many that all their classes will be held outdoors in them. However, they

indicated \$20,000 covers one such space. Their 8-year budget includes only one \$20,000 allocation for a single outdoor classroom. The budget is all together not adequate. The review team found that the financial allocations for teachers' salaries were insufficient and not competitive for the area. This will further compound the applicant's student ratio compliance problems which currently sits at 27:1.

In conclusion, the review team did not find evidence to change the rating of the application from does not meet standard.

**Summary as Presented in Application:** The applicant amended their application to include and additional \$20k for additional nature-based classrooms in Years 1, 3, and 5, which includes accommodations to ensure compliance with any ADA and building code requirements.

The school has also added a school budget of \$200 per meeting for Parent and Staff meetings assuming 10 meetings per year. This includes translation services to engage with families that speak a language TNA families cannot translate internally.

As of May 31, 2022, Roy Jay Renfro has successfully managed Tennessee Nature Academy through its first year of operation as the Executive Director.

**Amended Application Past Performance:** Category 1 Applicant Section Not Reviewed

## A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Education is responsible for managing all public schools established or that may be established under its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, a key component to the success of the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools is the hard-working and dedicated teaching faculty in our schools; and

WHEREAS, teachers in both our district and our state complete rigorous training and testing in order to become certified; and

WHEREAS, teachers continue their own education and hone their skills through ongoing professional development that is tied to their daily work; and

WHEREAS, when coupled with a high-quality core instructional program and parent, student, educator, and community voices, teachers are a vehicle for both individual and school transformation that can help close the persistent and destructive opportunity gaps in our schools and reverse the growing inequality in our society; and

WHEREAS, teachers in public schools deserve the respect and admiration of the students, parents, and the community as a whole for the unceasing work they do to make our communities better for all; and

WHEREAS, Governor Bill Lee has been working with Dr. Larry Arnn, president of Hillsdale College, to open up to 100 publicly funded private charter schools in our state; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Larry Arnn has recently made public remarks disparaging both the training and intelligence of teachers in traditional public schools; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Arnn has referred to public education as both “enslavement,” and “...like the plague,” and that it “...destroys generations of people;” and

WHEREAS, these statements and similar inflammatory language promotes untruths about educators and creates division within our communities; and

WHEREAS, Governor Lee refuses to condemn these remarks and continues to work with Dr. Arnn in his plans to undermine the work of educators across our state.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education recognizes the tremendous impact of teachers in our schools and the community at-large.

FURTHERMORE, the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education denounces the remarks made by Dr. Arnn that are critical of teachers and their profession and calls upon Governor Bill Lee to do the same.

FURTHERMORE, the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education calls upon Governor Lee to sever ties with Dr. Arnn, Hillsdale College, and any associated or similar programs that attempt to discredit teachers and propagate untruths about our public schools.

FURTHERMORE, the Metropolitan Nashville Board of Public Education promises to work diligently for public school teachers and fight against both people and forces that work to demean and undermine them and their important work.

ADOPTED BY THE ELECTED METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION, meeting in special called session on the **25th of July, 2022**, with this Resolution to take immediate effect, the public welfare requiring it.