



TENNESSEE

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

FEBRUARY 27, 2023

KEY TERMS TO KNOW

- Charter School: A public school that is independently-operated by a non-profit entity under a contract (“charter agreement”) with a charter school authorizer.
- Charter School Authorizer: The entity that is allowed to approve and oversee charter schools. In Tennessee, authorizers are either school districts, the Achievement School District, or the Charter Commission.
- Charter Agreement: The ten-year contract between the charter school and the authorizer that defines the roles and responsibilities of each party and the accountability expectations for the charter school.
- Authorizer Fee: A percentage of the per-pupil state/local revenue that an authorizer receives from its charter schools to support its oversight duties.



CHARTER SCHOOLS REQUIREMENTS

- In accordance with Tennessee state law, charter schools:
 - Are open to all students
 - Cannot be converted from private schools or be virtual
 - Must participate in all state assessments
 - Must have licensed teachers
 - Are under the LEA of their authorizer (e.g. their school district)
 - Are subjected to the same performance accountability standards as traditional public schools
 - Can receive waivers from certain laws, State Board rules, and State Board policies



WHY CHARTER SCHOOLS?

- Improve learning for all students and close the achievement gap between high and low students;
- Provide options for parents to meet educational needs of students;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, and provide greater decision-making authority to schools and teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance;
- Measure performance of pupils and faculty, and ensure that children have the opportunity to reach proficiency on state academic assessments;
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers; and
- Afford parents substantial meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.



CHARTER SCHOOL HISTORY IN TENNESSEE

- In 2002, the law allowing charter schools to open in Tennessee was passed. The only students allowed to attend charter schools were students from schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress.
- In 2003, the first charter schools opened in Tennessee.
- In 2005, the charter law was amended to expand the students who could attend charter schools.
- In 2009, the cap on the number of charter schools allowed in the state was increased to 90, and the characteristics of the students that could attend charter schools was further expanded.
- In 2011, the charter law was amended to open charter schools up to all students and removed the cap on the number of charter schools that could operate in the state.
- In 2014, the charter law was amended to allow the State Board of Education to be an appellate authorizer of charter schools.
- In 2019, the charter law was amended to create the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission.



CHARTER SCHOOL CURRENT LANDSCAPE

- Number of open and operating charter schools in 2022-23
 - Shelby County: 54
 - Metro Nashville Public Schools: 26
 - Achievement School District: 16
 - Hamilton County: 8
 - Knox County: 1
 - Commission: 9
- Total: 114 schools



ABOUT THE CHARTER COMMISSION

- The Tennessee Public Charter School Commission was created by Public Chapter 219 of the 111th General Assembly, and the Commission assumed appeal responsibilities from the State Board of Education on January 1, 2021 and authorization responsibilities on July 1, 2021.
- The Commission is made up of 9 appointed members, three from each Grand Division. The Commission then hires an Executive Director, and it currently has 14 employees.
- The Commission is an independent state agency that creates its own policies and rules to oversee its work, and its work is separate from the State Board of Education and the Tennessee Department of Education.

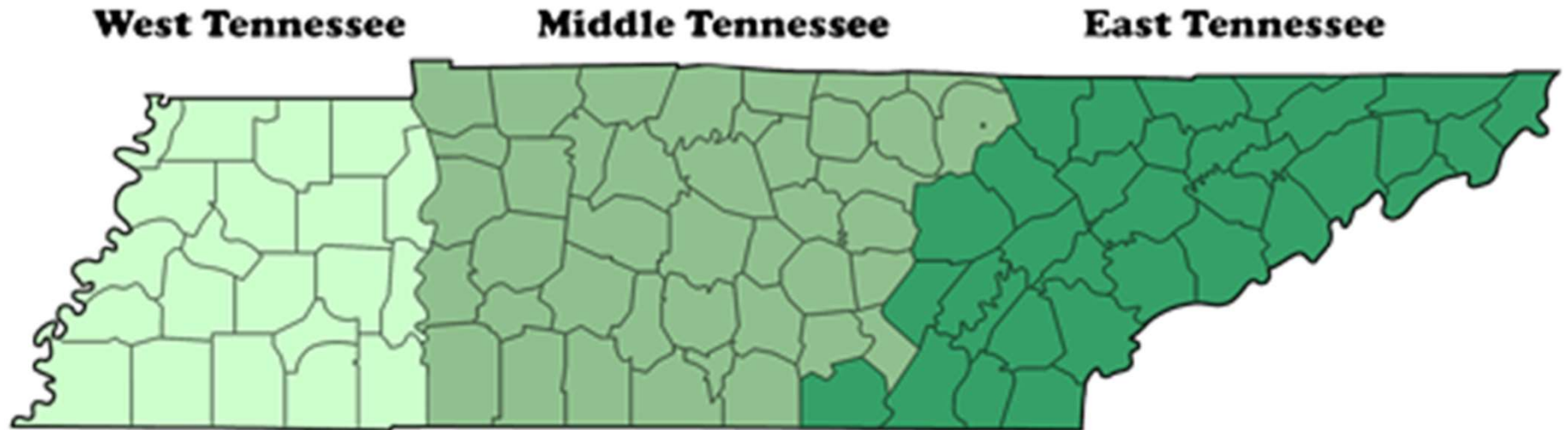


COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

- As a body, the Charter Commission has three key responsibilities:
 - Hears new start, revocation, renewal, and amendment charter school appeals from across the state
 - Receives applications from schools petitioning to exit the Achievement School District
 - Serves as the LEA and authorizer to any charter schools that it approves



COMMISSION COMPOSITION



- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| ■ Chris Richards | ■ Wendy Tucker | ■ Tom Griscom (Chair) |
| ■ Chris Tutor | ■ Michael Carter | ■ Alan Levine |
| ■ Terence Patterson | ■ Jamie Woodson | ■ Eddie Smith |



WHY THIS COMMISSION?

- National best practice to have a stand-alone independent entity to focus on charter schools
- Having an appellate body in the state for charter school is a national best practice and serves to ensure fairness and equity in decisions around schools
- Allows for due process in decisions about charter schools



CONTACT INFORMATION

We are happy to answer questions about the Charter Commission either via phone or email.

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**THANK
YOU!**