

## A "HOW TO" TOOLKIT:

ACHIEVING & SUSTAINING QUALITY STANDARDS FOR YOUR CHARTER SCHOOL





## ABOUT THE QUALITY STANDARDS TOOLKIT

The number of charter public schools in Tennessee continues to grow. After many years of dedication and commitment to quality education, Tennessee's charter public schools have become an important part of the State's public education system. More and more families enroll their children in charter public schools each Fall. More principals, teachers, and staff are working in charter public schools. More public officials are supporting charter public schools. This expansion is critically important to Tennessee and is the result of countless hours of work by school employees, volunteer governing board members, sponsoring institutions, and education stakeholders.

With growth comes great responsibility. When a new charter school opens, it is with a commitment to quality education for the students they will serve. Although success is never a guarantee, charter public schools accept the "autonomy for accountability" bargain recognizing that if, over time, they are not able to meet the academic needs of their students they will close, opening the educational space for new options for Tennessee's families. The charter public school sector recognizes that charter public schools do not simply provide options; they must provide better options.

The Tennessee Charter School Center (TCSC) is committed to supporting all charter public schools toward reaching levels of excellence. The highest priority is academic quality; however, there is great value in responsible leadership and governance, organizational sustainability, and engagement within the school community. All charter public schools in Tennessee are bound by the commitment to improve educational opportunities for Tennessee's children.

With that in mind, TCSC is excited to offer these Tennessee Quality Standards as a resource to continue to strengthen the charter public school sector so that future growth, expansion, and development of charter schools may always occur with an eye on what true quality means.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Commitment to Academic Achievement .....	4
Responsible Governance .....	5
Effective and Ethical Leadership .....	6
Culture, Community, and Relationship Building .....	7
Sustainable Business & Financial Practices .....	8
Safety and Risk Management .....	9

STANDARD 1:

**Commitment to Academic Achievement**

*A charter school promotes student learning through a clear mission, vision, and high-expectations for all students, teachers, and administrators.*

<p><u>Key Goal(s) &amp; Objective(s):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Set and meet clear, meaningful, and measurable academic goals and student learning objectives as stated in the charter contract with your authorizer.</li> <li>➤ Demonstrate high expectations for student achievement.</li></ul>	<p><b>A quality school:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Commits to high achievement for all its students and holds faculty and staff accountable to those ends.</li><li>● Creates appropriate, flexible, and accountable systems based on knowledge derived from valid and reliable research to promote student learning and growth.</li><li>● Creates an articulated curriculum and instructional system that is aligned with the Tennessee State Standards and graduation requirements.</li><li>● Assesses individual student achievement, analyzes the results and adjusts instruction based on those outcomes for continuous instructional improvement.</li><li>● Maintains accurate student records and student assessment data to monitor student academic growth.</li><li>● Creates a cadre of highly successful educators who review student data, adjust instruction as needed and provide intervention when necessary.</li><li>● Focuses on continuous improvement through professional staff development that addresses needs identified by the school's internal and external evaluation process.</li></ul>
---	---

## STANDARD 2:

### Responsible Governance

*Charter school leaders work to fulfill the school's mission and enable students to achieve academic growth and success.*

#### Key Goal(s) & Objective(s):

- Define the mission and purpose of the charter school that serves as a guide to all school operations
- Identify, support, and evaluate the school leader
- Ensures that policies are implemented in a fair and consistent manner

#### The Governing Authority should:

- Fully understand what academic excellence means at the school, and has systems in place to monitor student achievement, and supports the school leader to increase academic performance and effectiveness.
- Fully understand the economics of the school and ensures financial stability and regulatory compliance by establishing effective policies and procedures and by monitoring performance through consistent reporting.
- Ensure the school leader sets organization-wide performance goals aligned with the charter and evaluates the school leader's performance against the established goals annually.
- Represent a diverse set of skills and backgrounds and consistently have the capacity to effectively govern the school.
- Meet and adhere to an established annual calendar, predominantly focus on strategic issues, fully comply with open meeting laws, and members abide by conflict of interest policies.
- Advocate for and sustain the school's mission and hold themselves accountable by setting mission-driven goals for the entire board and individual members and by regularly measuring progress toward achieving established goals.
- Understand its role in fundraising, creates a realistic, multi-year fund development plan, and holds each member accountable for achieving results.

STANDARD 3:

Effective & Ethical Leadership

*Charter school leaders work to fulfill the school's mission and enable students to achieve academic growth and success.*

<p><u>Key Goal(s) &amp; Objective(s):</u></p> <p>➤ Understands and complies with the laws, policies, and state and federal requirements that govern charter schools</p>	<p><b>A strong school leader:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regularly monitors and evaluates the success of the school's program and hold themselves accountable for results.</li><li>• Engages in regular professional development and reflective practice.</li><li>• Abstains from any decision involving a potential or actual conflict of interest.</li><li>• Makes management decisions with the goal of optimizing successful teaching and learning experiences.</li><li>• Is aware of and complies with all local, state and federal laws and regulations, including those pertaining to Special Education.</li><li>• Actively engages in reflective self-assessment and school-wide assessment to identify areas in need of improvement.</li><li>• Implements practices, policies and procedures that promote school sustainability, operational integrity, and a focus on student achievement and learning results</li></ul>
---	---

STANDARD 4:

**Culture, Community, & Relationship Building**

*A charter school recognizes that families and communities are assets and develops engagement opportunities for them to impact and inform educational decisions.*

<p><u>Key Goal(s) &amp; Objective(s):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Engage parents and community stakeholders in the vision and mission of the school</li><li>➤ Seek input from relevant, critical, impacted stakeholders</li></ul>	<p><b>An engaged school:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Promotes and supports the school in the community.</li><li>● Effectively communicates and engages stakeholders in the mission, vision, and values of the school outlined in its charter.</li><li>● Generates and sustains school culture conducive to the student learning and staff professional growth.</li><li>● Develops a systematic plan to ensure the establishment of shared accountability for student achievement.</li><li>● Employs strategies to communicate timely and meaningful information to all stakeholders.</li></ul>
---	--

STANDARD 5:

**Sustainable Business & Financial Practices**

*A charter school fulfills its fiduciary responsibility for public funds, maintains accessible fiscal records, and conducts an annual financial audit.*

<p><u>Key Goal(s) &amp; Objective(s):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Establish clear fiscal policies that use public funds appropriately</li><li>➤ Ensure financial resources are directly related to the school’s purpose – student achievement and learning</li></ul>	<p><b>A sustainable school:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Regularly plans for and monitors their financial and human resources to help ensure that expenditures of school funds are closely aligned with the academic goals of the school, as outlined in their charter contracts.</li><li>● Aligns business and financial practices with their charter contracts, state and federal laws and regulations and standard business practices.</li><li>● Establishes strong internal financial controls that help to ensure its operational integrity.</li><li>● Manages in a manner that is financially sustainable and that enables them to carry out their mission.</li><li>● Regularly reports financial results to its Governing Board.</li><li>● Submits annual financial audits to the required agencies in a timely manner, monitors changes to audit requirements, and utilizes the audit findings and recommendations as tools to improve business and financial practices.</li><li>● Employs the necessary safeguards to help ensure that the schools’ student and business records are adequately protected.</li><li>● Has appropriate financial expertise for relevant positions.</li><li>● Has developed procurement policies and procedures.</li></ul>
--	---

STANDARD 6:

**Safety & Risk Management**

*A charter school recognizes that families and communities are assets and develops engagement opportunities for them to impact and inform educational decisions.*

<p><u>Key Goal(s) &amp; Objective(s):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Engage parents and community stakeholders in the vision and mission of the school</li><li>➤ Seek input from relevant, critical, impacted stakeholders</li></ul>	<p><b>A safe school:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Maintains adequate insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations.</li><li>● Employs criminal background checks on board members, staff members, contractors, and volunteers, or chaperones working directly with the students.</li><li>● Utilizes a safety committee or review process to oversee the report safety concerns to the administration.</li><li>● Maintains sites, facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, orderly, and healthy environment.</li><li>● Establishes and implements written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for all stakeholders.</li><li>● Implements and enforces the policies that reduce hazards and risks to the school.</li><li>● Has a comprehensive student discipline policy that maximizes safety and learning time.</li></ul>
---	---



Tennessee Charter School Center  
1033 Demonbreun St., Suite 300  
Nashville, TN 37203

[www.tnchartercenter.org](http://www.tnchartercenter.org)

 @tncharters

 facebook.com/tncharters  @tncharters