Introduction from our CEO, Dr. Maya Bugg

The unique challenges of 2020, from devastating tornadoes in Tennessee to a global pandemic, put the nimble nature of public charter schools to the test as educators across the state quickly identified innovative ways to keep students engaged and avoid learning losses. As the COVID-19 pandemic wears on into 2021, the Tennessee Charter School Center team continues to be heartened by the collaboration and innovation we have seen from public charter school students and educators.

At TCSC, it has been our task to parallel the urgency schools have shown this past year as we work on behalf of students and educators to ensure public charter schools have the resources and support needed to navigate these times. The TCSC team advocated to ensure millions of Federal CARES Act dollars were shared equitably with public charter schools and for additional resources to help bridge the charter school funding gap through $5 million from the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund. We partnered with a statewide coalition of organizations to make sure that families could continue to receive their share of food benefits in an equitable way. Our team worked to identify technology needs and support partners in meeting them, and to host a virtual Reopening Collaborative, which provided training and guidance for schools on everything from re-entry logistics to social and emotional support.

In this report, we are excited to share not only the impact of our team’s work over the past year, but also stories of hope and innovation from public charter schools across Tennessee. While we celebrate the triumphs of schools and students in the face of daunting difficulties, we also remain clear-eyed about the mounting obstacles pandemic-related learning and resource challenges pose for all public schools. Our team is more committed than ever to advocating for all students to ensure access to a high-quality public education is a reality for all students in Tennessee, and we are grateful for your support in this work.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
Tennessee Charter Locations

Tennessee charter schools exist in the four major metro areas across the state. Here's where they are located:

Memphis
- 56 SCS Charter Schools
- 19,015 students
- 21 ASD schools
- 7,495 students
- 1 TN state authorized school
- 556 students

Nashville
- 27 MNPS Charter Schools
- 13,511 students
- 2 ASD schools
- 825 students
- 2 TN state authorized schools
- 687 students

Knoxville
- 1 Charter School
- 440 students

Chattanooga
- 5 Charter Schools
- 1,610 students

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education)

This number reflects attendance data through March 2, 2020
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.

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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.  
maya@tnchartercenter.org

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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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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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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Elizabeth Fiveash  
**POLICY CHIEF**  
Elizabeth is responsible for creating the organization’s policy and advocacy agendas, as well as building a roadmap for the future, regulatory and advocacy work on behalf of the public charter school sector in Tennessee.  
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Carra Powell  
**MEMPHIS DIRECTOR OF POLICY & ADVOCACY**  
Carra leads the organization’s Memphis-based advocacy work, connects stakeholders and sets TCSC’s citywide policy agenda. She identifies the roadmap for future policy, regulatory and advocacy work on behalf of the public charter school sector in the city.  
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Jaques Hamilton  
**PROGRAMS COORDINATOR**  
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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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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Tommiea Jackson  
**COMMUNICATION MANAGER**  
Tommie 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 and families through programming and advocacy. She works with charter school educators and operators to promote their offerings and to share their successes and challenges.  
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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.

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 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 number of charter schools raised to ninety.

Today, 115 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.
2011
Open Enrollment amendment passed to allow all students the option to attend a charter school. Removal of the “cap” on 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 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 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 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—a new 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.
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.

Each year, the Tennessee Charter School Center identifies key policy challenges and opportunities facing the state’s charter school sector. Working closely with schools, districts, legislators, teachers, parents and other community advocates, TCSC is committed to making sure all voices are clearly heard and students always come first. In the uniquely challenging policy environment of 2020, due to the impacts of COVID-19, our team worked tirelessly to advocate for needed resources and share key information.

The TCSC Team monitored more than 200 education bills during the 2020 Legislative Session, tracked and updated schools on legislative initiatives and key guidance related to pandemic closures and relief, and advocated for equitable policies and resources during a challenging year for Tennessee schools and students.

ASD Transition

Early in 2020, the Tennessee Department of Education announced that all schools in the Achievement School District should prepare for potential transition to their original districts by 2022. TCSC worked with ASD school leaders, partners at the Department of Education, and legislative partners to highlight concerns and challenges from schools and families. As a result of this work, the TN General Assembly passed SB1247/HB1008, requiring a transition plan for ASD schools by January 2021, and requiring that all ASD schools remain in the ASD until they are authorized to return to their original district, and requiring that transitions to districts begin no sooner than the 2024-25 school year. This legislation eased the concerns of ASD school operators and families and has facilitated the development of a clear transition plan ensuring the least amount of disruption for students.

Facilities and Innovation Funding

In the months leading up to the 2020 Legislative Session, TCSC worked closely with the Lee Administration, Tennessee Department of Education, and partner organizations to emphasize the need for ongoing facilities funding support for public charter schools and funding incentivizing innovation in public education. The Lee Administration recognized these needs in the initial proposed budget, allocating $12 million for the Charter School Facilities Fund and $12 million to establish an Innovation Fund, and following TCSC’s advocacy, included the Charter School Facilities Fund as a recurring budget item moving forward. Unfortunately, the legislature had to remove many priority items from the budget as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19, and these items were among them. This serves to underscore the significance of ensuring that the Charter School Facilities Fund becomes a recurring budget item, and TCSC will continue to advocate for this.

TCSC advocacy efforts and partnership with the TN Dept. of Education resulted in passthrough of millions of dollars of Federal CARES Act funding to support public charter school students across the state. In Memphis alone, this meant $6.9 million -- 15.62% of SCS CARES Act funding -- was divided among SCS-authorized public charter schools.
Valor Collegiate Student’s Advocacy Inspires Historic Religious Headwear Rule Change

Valor Collegiate Academies student Najah Aqeel was not allowed to play in a fall 2020 volleyball match because of a TSSAA rule preventing athletes from competing in a hijab without prior permission. Thanks to Najah’s advocacy, these rules are changing. Coming on the heels of TSSAA rule change in the fall, a winter 2021 National Federation of State High School Association ruling now permits student volleyball players across the country to freely compete while wearing religious headwear.

$5 Million in GEER Funding Supports Charter Schools

Thanks to months-long advocacy from the TCSC Policy and External Affairs teams, Governor Lee announced a $5 million grant for Tennessee’s public charter schools to be distributed partly as per-pupil funding and partly as performance-based awards. Following the removal of charter schools’ facilities funding from this year’s State Budget due to COVID-19 cuts, TCSC advocated to help charter schools bridge the gap of this budget shortfall. These funds, provided at Governor Lee’s discretion through the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Funds (GEER), will help charter schools meet critical funding needs after a challenging 2020.
Innovation, Engagement & Collaboration

Through the simultaneous challenges of a global health pandemic, natural disasters and racial injustice, public charter school leaders and operators have remained focused on meeting the needs of students during unprecedented times. As these educators pivoted to meet ever-changing needs in their buildings, TCSC has worked to help schools navigate a brand new landscape to ensure that public charter schools had the support they needed to succeed. TCSC’s partnership with our state’s public charter schools reached new levels of innovation, engagement and collaboration in 2020.

School Leader and Staff Training

TCSC hosted the 2020 TN Charter Reopening Collaborative, a webinar series to support charters across the sector with COVID-19 support and resources. We partnered with the Tennessee Dept. of Education, STAND - Memphis, Memphis Education Fund, Diverse Learners Cooperative and the Hyde Family Foundation to host 13 sessions reaching more than 200 participants.

- Learning Plans
- Re-entry Logistics
- Social and Emotional Support
- Legal Issues
- Technology Support
- Interventions and Testing

Facilities Support

In conjunction with LIIF, TCSC has loaned $7 million of credit enhancement for public charter schools to access low-cost capital to build, purchase, and develop facilities. TCSC also hosted or participated in webinars to answer questions about how lenders are looking to rate credit risks during the COVID-19 pandemic, how to prepare to enter into the financing market, and key things to look for during the development process.

Communication Engagement

This year, TCSC improved engagement through traditional and nontraditional means so that we are reaching more people with accurate information about charter schools than ever. This effort makes it possible to increase the grasstops and grassroots advocate base for public charter schools in Tennessee.

- MEDIA COVERAGE: 38 Media mentions and/or quotes from staff that highlight our positions and priorities for the sector
- Gained more than 300 new followers on social media
- Initiated Communication staffer meetings to support schools and generate and promote content with charter schools statewide

TCSC A.C.T. Council

An acronym for Advise, Collaborate and Take Action, this council of Memphis operators discuss important policy issues, brainstorm solutions to problems charters face and advocate together as a charter sector.

TCSC State Advocacy

- The TCSC Policy Team engaged multiple times with all 59 members of the House and Senate Education and Finance committees, as well as senior members of the Lee Administration and the Tennessee Department of Education
- TCSC advocacy helped lead to equitable distribution of millions of dollars in CARES Act funds to public charter schools and a $5 million allocation in federal funding at Governor Lee’s discretion to public charter schools in Tennessee
Charters Come To the Rescue After Tennessee Tornadoes

In early March 2020, days before COVID-19 would interrupt the typical school year, Middle Tennessee was severely impacted by several deadly tornadoes. Many families lost everything. After the storm, schools like Purpose Preparatory Academy and STRIVE Collegiate Academy stepped up to help those in need in Donelson, Hermitage, Old Hickory, Napier and Antioch. As public charter schools, they were able to pivot and direct focus on areas of most need, not only meeting student academic needs, but their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter as well.

The school leaders at these schools saw the barriers online education would introduce and worked with local funders to provide devices and internet access for students. They supported students with phone calls, social media shout outs and provided “community” by connecting students online with fun and games.

“Going above & beyond is just the right phrase to describe the STRIVE team and family because within a short amount of time, all of our families had everything they needed to continue excellent teaching and learning. We are so proud of them.”

LAKENDRA BUTLER
STRIVE Collegiate Academy
School Leader, Founder
Charter Champion Awards

Due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, TCSC could not host an in-person conference for public charter schools in November 2020. Instead, the organization chose to honor school leaders, educators and advocates for the tremendous work they’ve done in a virtual awards program.

TCSC, along with Hyde Family Foundation and Truist as sponsors, facilitated its first Virtual Charter School Awards Nov. 16-20. Having collected more than 50 nominations, a record number, TCSC narrowed each category to 2-3 finalists. TCSC used video interviews and Facebook Premier to announce the results of six annual awards. The Virtual Awards Ceremony drew attention to the great work of Tennessee’s public charter schools in a big way, resulting in 20,293 impressions, and generating 324 new followers who now receive TCSC updates across all platforms.
TCSC’S 2020 Charter Champions were:

**Advocate of the Year**
Brooke Allen
_Diverse Learners Cooperative_ (Nashville/Memphis)

Brooke and the Diverse Learners Cooperative have been critical to supporting Nashville and now Memphis charter schools in providing quality education to students with disabilities and English language learners. Through a combination of workshops, coaching, program development, and collaborative communities, Brooke and the DLC help our charter schools implement high quality, inclusive learning opportunities that make meaningful impacts on students’ success.

**Administrator of the Year**
Sheri Catron-Cooper
_Circles of Success Learning Academy_ (Memphis)

For 14 years, Sheri Catron Cooper has led COSLA through the momentous changes in the charter school movement in Memphis. During her tenure, COSLA has been deemed a Title I School of the Year for Closing the Achievement Gap, Tennessee Reward School and currently has a TVAAS growth score of 5 out of 5 for Academic Achievement in Reading, Mathematics, and Social Studies with a 4 in Science.

**Community Impact Project of the Year**
Memphis STEM Academy (Memphis)

Memphis STEM Academy, a K-5 school, revitalized the Frayser community by transforming dilapidated buildings of Harmony Plaza into an educational, health and financial hub using a $15 million new market tax credit project purchased by Memphis Business Schools. Students were invited to work alongside architects and other professionals to design the school and create an environment they desired.

**Teacher of the Year**
Bryan Mann
_Chattanooga Prep_ (Chattanooga)

If you walk into Mr. Mann’s classroom, you’ll feel like you’re in a Harry Potter movie. Throughout remote and hybrid learning, Mr. Mann has led Chattanooga Prep’s Achievement First curriculum efforts and has championed virtual innovation practices to ensure student engagement remains at a high level.

**Policy Champion**
John Cooper (Nashville)

Nashville Mayor John Cooper was recognized for his work to foster collaboration and shepherd resources. He was sure to include charter schools and his office also worked collaboratively with public charter schools to see that resources designated for public technology needs made their way to all public school students and coordinated with charter schools’ continuous learning plans.

**School of the Year**
Aurora Collegiate Academy (Memphis)

The school’s “Beyond the Classroom” initiative which includes a parent coordinator, assists scholars and families with the needs that exist beyond the traditional school day. Services that address the challenges facing the whole family including finding food banks or accessing affordable counseling services. In one year, this dedication reduced chronic absenteeism among the caseload by 29 percent and increased the number of overall students passing classes by 13 percent.
COVID-19 Above and Beyond

When faced with the coronavirus crisis, public charter schools worked hard and moved quickly to make decisions about closures, establish plans for distance learning, divert resources to facilitate online learning, and create specific solutions for their communities for everything from food distribution to providing social-emotional support for students and families.

The dedication, innovation and adaptability of Tennessee public charter school leaders and staff have meant more of the needs of students and families have been met during this unprecedented time so that every child is able to continue to learn and succeed.

MEMPHIS
Believe Memphis Academy

When schools were forced to switch to online learning during COVID-19, Believe Memphis Academy Charter School made sure its students had what they needed to succeed.

After securing meals, internet access, and virtual mental health counseling, Believe Memphis launched a campaign to collect 190 Chromebooks so students could access their online learning materials.

After all was said and done, Believe Memphis raised over $65,000 and secured 75 more Chromebooks than its original goal, going above and beyond to make sure all of its scholars would have access to the tools they needed.

Post-campaign, Believe Memphis watched its Google Classroom engagement grow week by week and worked to provide exciting incentives for students as they complete their work.
**CHATTANOOGA**

**Ivy Academy**

Ivy Academy in Chattanooga is home to a unique environmentally focused model with an emphasis on outdoor classrooms and learning. With the necessary precautions needed to ensure a safe return to school in fall 2020, the fact that Ivy students spend 60-70 percent of their time outdoors helped parents feel comfortable sending their children to school in-person, knowing that social distancing would be easier in such a format. However, despite the precautions and safe environment at Ivy, increased COVID infections in the surrounding community meant that even a school designed for outdoor learning eventually had to shift to an online format to ensure everyone’s safety. A school year that started with in-person classes for the school’s 400 students had to shift to a completely virtual format.

As virtual study began, school administrators realized the challenges students and families were facing with technology, and provided trainings for the school community. Ivy also hired a new, in-house technology expert that educators, students, and families could rely on to keep the learning moving. “We do a lot of training videos and our IT guy is super hands on,” said Holly Slater, school principal. “He’s created all kinds of tutorials.”

Closures and virtual classes also did not stop the school from maintaining a sense of community. Students who would have missed the big school dance in December were treated to a drive-in movie showing of The Grinch. Beta Club members donned masks and gloves to sell popcorn and the principal even dressed up as the Grinch.

“It was really fun,” Slater said. “Just like anywhere else, there’s been a huge adjustment this year. We’ve spent time trying to help where we can help and give the kids and their families a lot of grace.”

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**NASHVILLE**

**Rocketship Public Schools**

While the academic challenges of virtual study are widely recognized, Rocketship Nashville Growth and Community Engagement Manager Sherrill Stratford realized that many children could go hungry without the daily meals schools provide.

Stratford partnered with the non-profit Break-Thru Nashville to host a weekly food distribution program in Antioch for 1,300 families on a first-come, first-served basis. The food boxes of eggs, milk and fresh fruits and vegetables are provided by the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program. TCSC recognized Stratford for her efforts to serve the school and community by naming her a 2020 Charter Awards Advocate of the Year finalist.
Who would imagine that a chance meeting would lead to a million-dollar donation three years later? When Jalen Ramsey, cornerback for the Los Angeles Rams, met Purpose Prep student Jayce Parker and school founder Lagra Newman at a Beyond the Game Charity Gala in 2017, he was so impressed that he wanted to find a way to support the school. In August 2020, Ramsey announced a $1 million donation to support the school’s record-breaking academic achievements. The donation helped cover funding gaps at Purpose Prep, allowing the school to purchase technology and additional resources and expand programming for the school’s students. Purpose Prep, which opened in 2013, serves kindergarten through fourth grade students with an emphasis on academic success, identify affirmation, and positive character development.

As a Nashville native who has become a household name in the NFL, Jalen’s generous support has demonstrated to our students not only the heights they can rise to and their undisputed potential but also the importance of opening doors, reaching back and pulling forward to help others succeed,”

LAGRA NEWMAN, FOUNDER AND HEAD OF SCHOOL AT PURPOSE PREP

I chose to support Purpose Prep because it is important for every child to have the opportunity to receive a great education, and the Purpose Prep programs are designed for underprivileged children in my hometown to have access to those services. I believe in its mission and want to help level the playing field since a solid elementary education is the foundation to a successful future.”

JALEN RAMSEY

Purpose Prep was recognized as a Tennessee Reward School for academic achievement, ranking within the top 5% of schools in the state of Tennessee—making it the first elementary school in North Nashville to ever have earned this distinction.
LEAD Public Schools
$5.1 Million Grant for Innovative Teacher Compensation Program

LEAD Public Schools, Nashville’s largest local charter network, is one of only 13 school districts across the country, and the only district in Tennessee, to be awarded a Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program grant by the U.S. Department of Education. The grant totals $5.1 million dollars over the next three years.

LEAD Public Schools is being recognized for its self-funded, innovative teacher compensation plan and commitment to treating teachers like professionals and compensating them based on performance. Traditionally, teachers are compensated on experience only. Each year teachers at LEAD Public Schools can earn up to a 10% increase to their base salary driven by their performance, starting at year one.

“Teachers are our greatest asset at LEAD Public Schools and deserve to make enough to be able to live in an increasingly expensive Nashville,” said Dwayne Tucker, CEO of LEAD Public Schools. “We can’t thank the U.S. Department of Education enough for recognizing that our work is innovative and valuable and could form a model to be replicated.”

MAHS High School Partners with Blaze Fire Games to Launch a New eSports Club

Looking for ways to help students have fun and gain a sense of community amid online-learning, Memphis Academy of Health Sciences Charter School signed a conference partnership agreement with Blaze Fire Games to launch a new eSports Club at the High School. As part of the program, the club’s 65 students will have access to industry micro-credentialing certificates in subjects such as Intro to eSports, Coaching, Broadcasting, eSports Digital Marketing, eSports Project Management, AI Gaming Analytics, and Health and Wellness.

The class, which launches Spring 2021, is an officially approved collegiate dual-enrollment approved program class offered throughout the entire State of Tennessee by the Department of Education. The academic program will also serve as a future student enrollment pipeline program for two of The State of Tennessee’s Historically Black College and Universities HBCU’s Fisk University and Tennessee State University.

“I’m excited,” said Cedric Granger, MAHS visual arts director. “This is an opportunity for them to do what they do all the time. In this program, not only will they get to create the games, but they can make money doing it.”
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**

- Economically Disadvantaged (ED): 59.06% (9,854 students)
- Students with Disabilities (SWD): 8.11% (1,353 students)
- English Language Learners (ELL): 7.19% (1,200 students)

**RACE & ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN**

- African American: 13,543 (81.17%)
- Hispanic: 2,748 (16.47%)
- White: 320 (1.91%)
- Asian: 49 (0.29%)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 18 (0.11%)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 6 (0.04%)

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education 2019 - 2020)

**ACADEMIC GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENT (TVAAS COMPOSITE)**

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth year over year and rates each school on their ability to help students learn and grow. A Level 5 rating represents the highest level of growth, Level 3-4 ratings are meeting or exceeding expectations, and Level 1-2 ratings are signs of needed improvements.

*Data reflects district managed charters only. See Achievement School District (ASD) profile for ASD charter school data.

85% AVERAGE GRADUATION RATE

17.5 AVERAGE ACT RATE

(District Overall Average = 79.2%)  
(District Overall Average = 17.8)
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**

- Economically Disadvantaged (ED): 43.63% (5,556 students)
- Students with Disabilities (SWD): 12.09% (1,539 students)
- English Language Learners (ELL): 15.64% (1,991 students)

**RACE & ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN**

- African American: 5,719 (44.91%)
- Hispanic: 4,410 (34.63%)
- White: 2,328 (18.28%)
- Asian: 246 (1.93%)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 24 (0.19%)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 7 (0.05%)

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education 2019 - 2020)

**ACADEMIC GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENT (TVAAS COMPOSITE)**

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth year over year and rates each school on their ability to help students learn and grow. A Level 5 rating represents the highest level of growth, Level 3-4 ratings are meeting or exceeding expectations, and Level 1-2 ratings are signs of needed improvements.

*Data reflects district managed charters only. See Achievement School District (ASD) profile for ASD charter school data.

**90% AVERAGE GRADUATION RATE**

(District Overall Average = 80.2%)

**19.6 AVERAGE ACT RATE**

(District Overall Average = 18.9)

This data reflects scores from the 2018-19 academic year. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on testing and schools, the information is not available for 2019-2020.
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**

- Economically Disadvantaged (ED): 11.80% (172 students)
- Students with Disabilities (SWD): 9.26% (135 students)
- English Language Learners (ELL): 13.51% (197 students)

**RACE & ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN**

- African American: 632 (43.35%)
- Hispanic: 451 (30.93%)
- White: 368 (25.24%)
- Asian: 4 (0.27%)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 2 (0.14%)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 1 (0.06%)

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education 2019 - 2020)

**ACADEMIC GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENT (TVAAS COMPOSITE)**

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth year over year and rates each school on their ability to help students learn and grow. A Level 5 rating represents the highest level of growth, Level 3-4 ratings are meeting or exceeding expectations, and Level 1-2 ratings are signs of needed improvements.

*Data reflects district managed charters only. See Achievement School District (ASD) profile for ASD charter school data.*

**# OF SCHOOLS**

- Level 5-3: 4
- Level 2: 5
- Level 1: 0

**AVERAGE GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)**

- 94.12% (District Overall Average = 86.6%)
- 18.8% (District Overall Average = 19.9%)

This data reflects scores from the 2018-19 academic year. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on testing and schools, the information is not available for 2019-2020.
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

- **Economically Disadvantaged (ED)**: 62.39% (297 students)
- **Students with Disabilities (SWD)**: 12.61% (60 students)
- **English Language Learners (ELL)**: 2.31% (11 students)

RACE & ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN

- African American: 368 (77.31%)
- Hispanic: 43 (9.03%)
- White: 65 (13.66%)
- Asian: 0
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 0
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0

ACADEMIC GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENT (TVAAS COMPOSITE)

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth year over year and rates each school on their ability to help students learn and grow. A **Level 5** rating represents the highest level of growth, **Level 3-4** ratings are meeting or exceeding expectations, and **Level 1-2** ratings are signs of needed improvements.

This data reflects scores from the 2018-19 academic year. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on testing and schools, the information is not available for 2019-2020.
Now in its second year of operation, Bluff City High School, operated by Green Dot Public Schools in southeast Memphis, was the first charter school authorized by the State Board of Education. In Fall of 2018, KIPP Antioch College Prep Elementary became the first TN State Board of Education authorized school to open in the city of Nashville. Once fully operating, the Public Charter School Commission will become the authorizer for these schools.

### ACADEMIC GROWTH & ACHIEVEMENT

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth year over year and rates each school on their ability to help students learn and grow. A Level 5 rating represents the highest level of growth, Level 3-4 ratings are meeting or exceeding expectations, and Level 1-2 ratings are signs of needed improvements.

**BLUFF CITY HIGH SCHOOL EARNED A LEVEL 5 GROWTH SCORE**

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education 2019 - 2020)
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 it’s beginning, the district has seen both bright spots and noted challenges in its efforts to improve the quality of these local schools, but the ASD’s most recent approach focuses on collaboration and partnership with local school districts to turn around schools together.

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) measures student growth year over year and rates each school on their ability to help students learn and grow. A Level 5 rating represents the highest level of growth, Level 3-4 ratings are meeting or exceeding expectations, and Level 1-2 ratings are signs of needed improvements. This data reflects scores from the 2018-19 academic year. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on testing and schools, the information is not available for 2019-2020.

SPECIAL POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

- Economically Disadvantaged (ED): 62.46% (5,362 students)
- Students with Disabilities (SWD): 13.14% (1,128 students)
- English Language Learners (ELL): 4.19% (360 students)

RACE & ETHNICITY BREAKDOWN

- African American: 7,742 (90.18%)
- Hispanic: 618 (7.20%)
- White: 198 (2.3%)
- Asian: 15 (0.17%)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 9 (0.10%)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 3 (0.03%)

(Source: Tennessee Department of Education 2019 - 2020)

This data reflects Achievement School District (ASD) charter school data exclusive of ASD direct-run schools.
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 2021, the Tennessee Charter School Center’s policy team will be focused on:

1. Restoring and expanding facilities funding for public charter schools
2. Investing in expansion and replication for public charter schools
3. Laying the foundation to recruit more high-quality public charter school operators to Tennessee
4. Ensuring a clear path for the future of ASD public charter schools and their students
5. Increasing equity for students through whole-child supports, learning loss recovery, strong literacy instruction, and increasing access to high-quality charter schools for students who need public school options most