



A C H I E V E M E N T
S C H O O L D I S T R I C T

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICANT GUIDANCE

SCHOOLS OPENING FALL 2016 AND BEYOND

Request for Proposals Launches February 17, 2015



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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

The Achievement School District (ASD) seeks to lead the transformation of public education in Tennessee, serving as a national role model for needs-based and turnaround charter school authorizing. The New Schools team's mission is to provide quality school options for all students in Tennessee through:

- A tailored authorization process based on data and aligned to the needs of communities and students;
- An open and transparent feedback loop for charter applicants and evaluators;
- A rigorous, objective, and comprehensive new schools application evaluation process;
- Meaningful school opening support;
- Active engagement of its stakeholders; and
- Attention to ongoing and continuous improvement of all processes.

Priority schools need a top-notch intervention that meets the needs of its students and broader community and accelerates learning for every student. The ASD aims to create a diverse portfolio of schools by keeping a pulse on school and city-wide needs, mining for capacity, and creating multiple pathways through which schools can meet the needs identified, most notably through the authorization of new schools. We serve as the gatekeepers of quality and facilitate fast learning to support schools in understanding the context of our work and the needs of those we will serve.

The information and guidance contained in this document are to ensure potential partners understand the ASD's charge, structure, and context as well as to provide information about the applicant process and customized tracks. The next charter authorization process will formally launch on February 17 with a Request for Proposals for schools opening in fall 2016 and beyond. All applicant materials and resources will be posted at achievementschooldistrict.org.

Please direct questions about the authorization process to Anna Kucaj, Charter Authorization Manager, at RFPSupport@tn-asd.org.

SECTION II. ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT AT A GLANCE

ABOUT US

The Achievement School District represents a bold effort to improve Tennessee's lowest performing schools and change the life trajectories of the students they serve. Created as part of Tennessee's winning *Race to the Top* application, the ASD's mission is to move the bottom 5% of schools to the top 25% in five years.



OUR ROLE: REDEFINING "DISTRICT"

The ASD acts as both an **authorizer** of charter schools—recruiting high quality operators locally and nationally and matching them with priority schools—and an **operator** of schools, directly running five "Achievement" schools in the Frayser community in Memphis.

OUR ROLE AS AN OPERATOR

- Directly run five schools in Memphis
- Oversee all teacher, school leader hiring/support
- Develop PD, curriculum, program, and schedule
- Engage Frayser families, community

OUR ROLE AS AN AUTHORIZER & LEA

- Recruit and match high quality charters with neighborhood schools
- Ensure families, communities have access to options
- Set performance expectations and hold schools accountable
- Ensure all student needs are met

WE SERVE 6,500 KIDS ACROSS TENNESSEE. THIS YEAR, OUR KIDS ARE:

100% able to succeed in college, career & life



96% Free & Reduced Lunch



96% African American



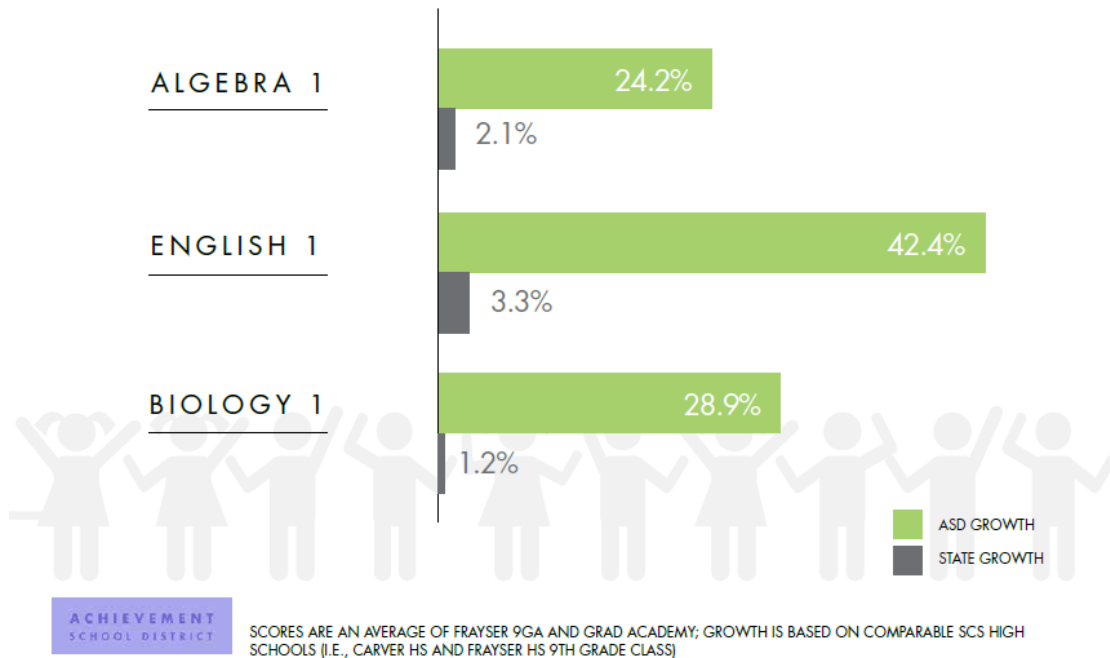
20% Special Education



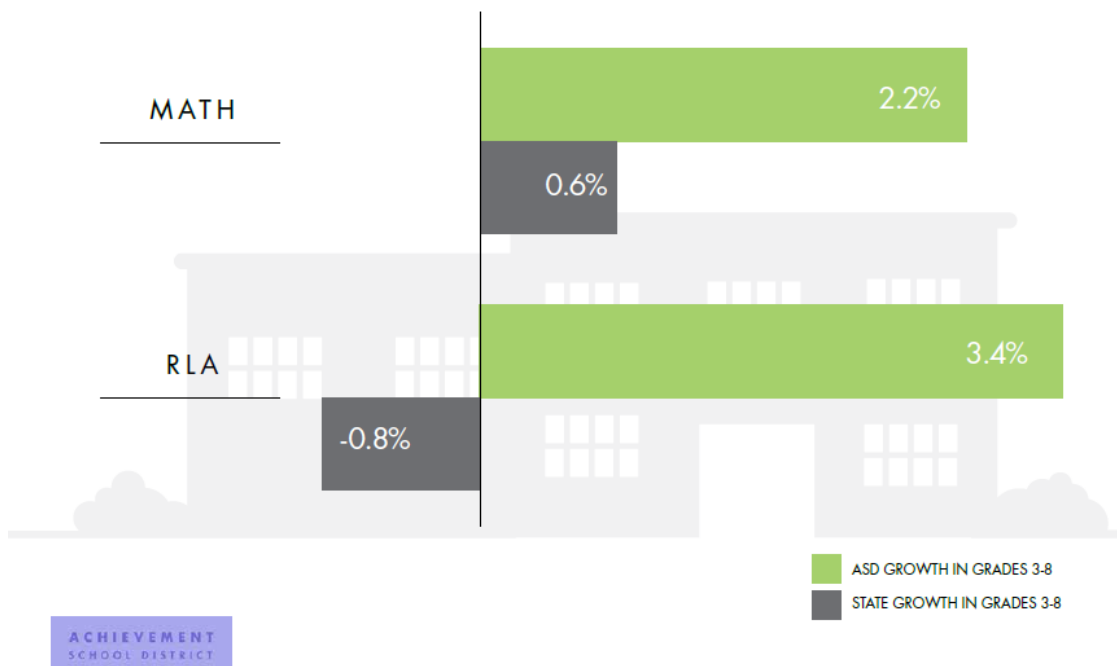
YEAR TWO RESULTS: 2013-14

- ASD students outgained state peers in Reading and Math
- ASD high schools and phase-in schools earned over 10 point gains in Reading and Math
- Nearly half—5 out of 12—ASD schools are out of the bottom 5% in two years
- 9 out of 10 parents graded their school an "A" or "B"
- 4,500 fewer students attending Priority Schools in Memphis (compared to 2011)

THE STUDENTS IN ASD HIGH SCHOOLS WERE AMONG THE FASTEST-GROWING IN THE STATE



ASD STUDENTS OUTPACED STATE IN READING AND MATH



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ASD

YEAR KEY MILESTONES

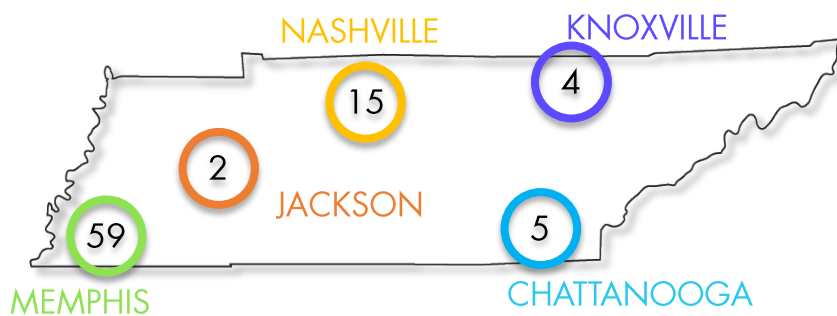
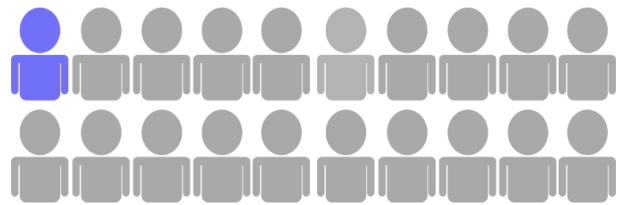
2010-11	<p>January 2010: Tennessee passes <i>First to the Top</i> legislation, which creates the Achievement School District (ASD), a bipartisan effort to turn around the lowest performing schools in the state.</p> <p>March 2010: Tennessee applies for <i>Race to the Top</i>, is awarded \$500 million.</p> <p>May 2011: Chris Barbic named superintendent.</p> <p>June 2011: Tennessee passes legislation to improve the operation of the ASD, including a policy to authorize charter schools.</p>
2011-12	<p>ASD co-manages five schools, Memphis and Nashville Innovation Zones (iZone) established.</p> <p>September 2011: ASD hosts first community forums in Memphis.</p> <p>November 2011: First three ASD-approved charter operators are announced: Gestalt Community Schools, LEAD Public Schools, and Capstone Education Group.</p> <p>February 2012: ASD announces six school matches, including three “Achievement” schools to be directly managed in Frayser. U.S. Department of Education approves ESEA flexibility request establishing two key intervention strategies—charter conversions and direct-run schools.</p> <p>Spring 2012: ASD support team, teachers hired.</p>
2012-13	<p>Six schools open in the ASD’s first year operating schools: three charter, three direct-run. Five are in Memphis and one is in Nashville.</p> <p>August 2012: 83 Priority Schools identified, 69 in Memphis, 6 in Nashville.</p> <p>Fall 2012: ASD launches first extended school matching process with volunteer Achievement Advisory Council.</p> <p>December 2012: ASD announces 10 new schools to join ASD in 2013-14, all in Memphis.</p> <p>July 2013: ASD earns Level 5 growth, sees decrease in reading proficiency.</p>
2013-14	<p>17 schools in the ASD—11 charter, 6 direct-run. 16 in Memphis, one in Nashville.</p> <p>November 2013: Operator Advisory Council is launched to inform student-centered district policies and practices.</p> <p>December 2013: School matching identifies six new schools to join in 2014-15, all in Memphis, all charter.</p> <p>January 2014: Pathways in Education opens ASD’s first alternative school.</p> <p>August 2014: New Priority list announced with 4,500 fewer kids in Memphis Priority schools, 3,700 more in Nashville.</p>
2014-15	<p>23 schools in the ASD—18 charter, five direct-run. 22 in Memphis, one in Nashville.</p>

OUR CHARGE

The ASD's mission is to move the bottom 5% schools to the top 25% in the state in five years. The graphics below share context about the work ahead, the distribution of Priority Schools statewide, and our district's growth to meet the need.

In Tennessee's bottom 5% of schools:

- Only 4% are college-ready as determined by the ACT.
- Fewer than 1 in 4 students read and write on grade level.

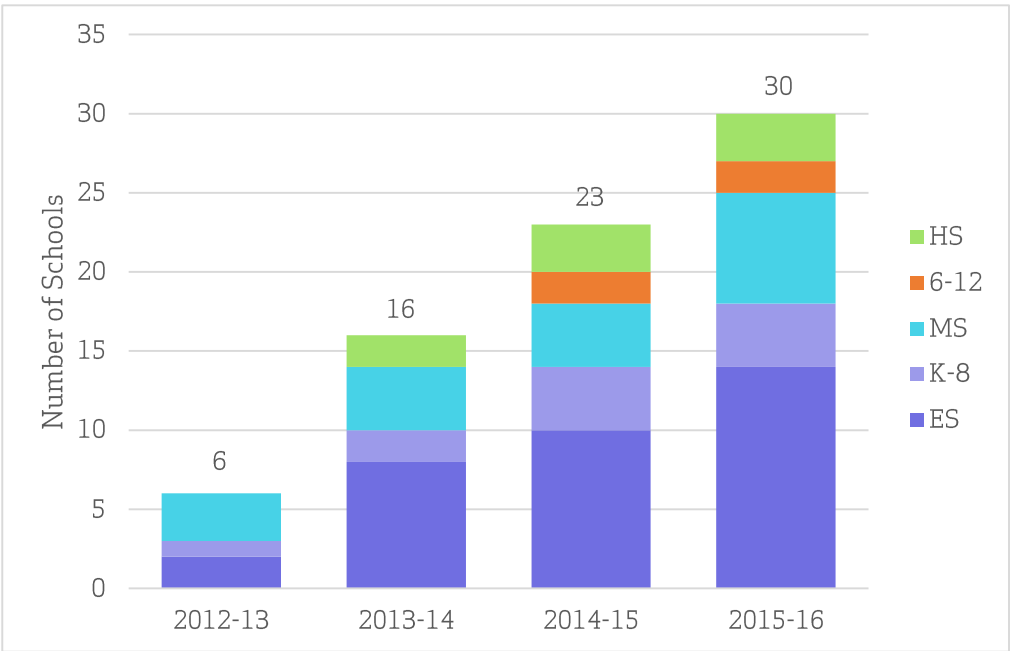


Today, there are ~35K students in the 85 schools that comprise the bottom 5% in Tennessee.

The majority of these schools are concentrated in Memphis (~70%). The majority of these schools are concentrated in neighborhoods such that students may attend multiple bottom 5% schools during their K-12 years.

Sixteen of these Priority schools are currently served by the ASD, with another six slated to open in the 2015-16 school year. An additional 18 schools are supported by a local Office of Innovation (Davidson, Hamilton, or Shelby counties).

Enrollment in ASD Schools



SECTION III. ASD NEEDS

Applicants may propose one of two models for the ASD's 2015 authorization round:

- Alternative Models (Memphis Only)
- Neighborhood Schools:
 - Memphis:
 - Middle Schools (Full Transformation Only)
 - High Schools
 - Nashville
 - Elementary Schools
 - Middle Schools
 - High Schools

Please note that these needs are based on the Tennessee [Priority schools](#) list and subject to change, even after authorization. Several factors affect these needs, such as:

- The law limiting ASD schools to serving only students currently attending or zoned to attend Priority Schools,
- The academic performance of existing ASD schools: operators planning to grow and operators that may be subject to replacement, and
- Need determined by future Priority Lists.

It is also possible that turnaround sites will not be available for matching in the 2016-17 school year. Specific schools and feeder patterns will not be decided until after 2014-15 school year performance data is released this summer/fall.

More information on each of the needs is provided below:

1. Alternative Model: Alternative education providers are needed for all grades and may be for alternative settings, expelled or suspended students, for reenrollment to engage student dropouts, and/or to serve as a regional center of excellence for special education exceptionalities. Alternative proposals will be accepted for Memphis only.
2. Neighborhood Schools: Based on the Priority list, the ASD realizes there is still a need for more middle and high school turnaround partners in Memphis and additional elementary, middle, and high school partners in Nashville. Neighborhood charter schools must agree to turn around a current failing school or create a new choice option for students zoned to attend a bottom 5% school.
 - A. **New Start** is for applicants intending to provide a new school option for students zoned to attend a Priority list school. New Start operators must find or develop a facility separate from that in which a persistently low performing school—as identified by the state—is located, OR intend to operate in a persistently low performing school side-by-side with the existing school and without any students assigned to the proposed school. No students will be assigned to a New Start school. Enrollment is by affirmative choice of eligible families.



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- B. **Phase-In** is for applicants intending to turn around an existing Priority list school in a phased approach. For example, a high school Phase-In might start with a 9th grade while the rest of the existing school (grades 10-12) continues to operate under its existing district (Note: it is that district's decision whether or not to co-locate on the same campus or to re-assign the grades that are not served). In the second year, the Phase-In school would serve grades 9-10 while the existing school serves grades 11-12. This proposed phasing continues until the Phase-In school serves all grades previously served by the identified school. Students in the Phase-In grades will be assigned to your school as their default neighborhood option. They will need to affirmatively opt out of your school if they wish to attend a different school. Students not assigned to your school but otherwise eligible to attend an ASD school may enroll contingent on availability of seats. Phase-In school models must serve all students zoned to attend the neighborhood school, regardless of disability, and must provide the same transportation currently afforded to its students.
- C. **Full Transformation** is for applicants proposing to assume immediate responsibility for all students in all grades of a persistently low performing school. Students in all grades will be assigned to the turnaround school as their default neighborhood option. They will need to affirmatively opt out of your turnaround school if they want a different option. Students not assigned to the turnaround school but otherwise eligible to attend an ASD school may enroll contingent on availability of seats. Full Transformation school models must serve all students zoned to attend the neighborhood school, regardless of disability, and must provide the same transportation currently afforded to its students.

SECTION IV. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What kinds of schools are you looking for?

There are two Requests for Proposals this year, one for alternative programs in Memphis and one for neighborhood schools in Memphis (Full Transformation middle schools as well as Full Transformation, Phase-In or New Start high schools) and Nashville (elementary, middle, and high schools of all models). More information on the RFPs can be found in Section III of this document.

The ASD remains agnostic to the model of school and the programs or pedagogy utilized, but seeks operators who are data-driven, have an internally-aligned plan related to academics, operations, and finance, and demonstrate the capacity to implement the plan with fidelity to drive student achievement and rapid turnaround. Additional information on the ASD's strategic priorities can be found [HERE](#).

Additionally, operators who currently operate schools, in Tennessee or in other states, should demonstrate a track record of success with a student population similar to that served by the ASD.

2. What is the timeline for applying?

The mandatory Intent to Apply (and data submission for experienced operators) is due by March 16. Due diligence will be conducted on all applicants, including analysis of submitted data for experienced operators.

All start-up applicants, as well as experienced operators who demonstrate a track record of success, will advance to Phase 2, which consists of a proposal. All proposals will be due to the application portal by 5 p.m. CT on Monday, April 24, 2015. Late or incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

Applicants that approach or meet the standard in the majority of the RFP categories (Meeting the Need, Academics, Operations, and Finance) will advance to the Capacity Interviews, which will be held the week of June 15.

Authorization announcements will be made by Wednesday, July 15, 2015. More information on the timeline for this process can be found in Section V.

3. How do I know if I am eligible to apply?

For-profit entities may neither sponsor nor operate a Tennessee charter school. Charter schools must be operated by entities that have exemption from federal taxation under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Individuals or groups who have never operated a charter school, or who have operated a school for one school year or less, are considered start-up applicants.

Groups that currently operate schools and have done so for two years or more, are considered experienced operators. These groups will submit student achievement data as part of the Intent to Apply and are required to complete additional components of the proposal (all of which are clearly labeled).

More information about the applicant tracks can be found [HERE](#).

4. What resources are available to help me prepare my proposal?

A variety of resources to provide context and assistance to potential applicants is available [HERE](#). This site contains links to applicable state laws, other authorizers and support agencies, past trainings, and ASD policies.

5. How do I submit my proposal?

To be eligible to submit a full proposal for the 2016-17 school year cycle, **applicants must first submit the Intent to Apply packet by 5 p.m. CT on March 16, 2015.** Note: Experienced operators will be notified by the ASD (as indicated in the Intent to Apply document) if they meet the academic track record standards to apply.

Applications should be prepared using the templates and online submission process established by the ASD.

Applications should be prepared using the templates and online submission process established by the ASD. **The mandatory Intent to Apply documents must be submitted via email to CharterRFP@tn-asd.org. Documents should be submitted as attachments; any content in the body of the email will not be considered.** Subsequent Instructions for submitting proposals will be provided in the Notification of Eligibility following approval of the Intent to Apply.

Each element of the application (e.g., Intent to Apply, Cover Sheet, narrative, Financial Workbook, attachments, etc.) will be uploaded separately using the online portal.

Applicants may upload proposals up to 5 p.m. CT on April 24, 2015. Once the proposal is submitted, applicants will be unable to access, edit, or revise proposals. **The submission portal will automatically shut down access to all applications at 5 p.m. CT on April 24, 2015.** Be sure to allow adequate time to upload all documents before the deadline. Applications not SUBMITTED, including applications that are partially uploaded, will not be accepted. Emailed and/or printed copies of sections will not be accepted—please ensure that you leave ample time to upload all of the documents.

6. How will my proposal be evaluated?

Charter proposals are read and scored by an external team of evaluators from Tennessee and across the nation, each of whom has expertise in academics, operations, and/or finance, as well as the communities being served.

The Superintendent will make qualification decisions based on Evaluation Team recommendations. Please note that, by law, all Achievement School District authorization decisions are final and may not be appealed.

More information about the evaluation process can be found [HERE](#).

7. When would a school approved in this cycle be opened?

Schools authorized in this cycle will participate in the ASD's school matching process in the fall of 2015 and will begin operation in the 2016-17 school year. Applicants may also choose to apply now and defer the school opening to 2017-18.

8. What is different about operating a school in the ASD?

There are two things that make the ASD unlike most districts in Tennessee and across the country: 1) the ASD is a portfolio school district made up of autonomous schools, and 2) the ASD was created to turn around neighborhood schools identified for intervention on the [state's Priority list](#).

The ASD is a [portfolio school district](#), meaning the district manages a diverse set of schools with different charter operators, and it supports and monitors the performance of those operators using a School Performance Framework. All ASD schools have the same autonomies:

- Decisions about people, program, budgeting, and time are decided at the school level-and the same accountability.
- Per pupil funding follows the students to the school, and the nonprofit charter operator is responsible for using this funding to meet the needs of its students, including:
 - Providing extensive student supports for migrant, homeless, ELL, gifted, and special needs students,
 - Run an organizationally, financially and operationally sound school,
 - AND meet the ambitious academic expectations of the district.

The majority of the ASD's portfolio of schools are turning around Priority list schools. This means that ASD charter schools are neighborhood schools, and therefore they have a zoned student population, are required to provide transportation and a variety of student programming, and are expected to work in partnership with the broader school community to support the learning of all students.

SECTION V. CHARTER RFP EVALUATION PROCESS

Milestone	Date (2015)
PHASE 1: LETTER OF INTENT AND ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION	
RFP Release	February 17
The ASD releases two separate Requests for Proposals, each including instructions for groups applying to operate an ASD school beginning in the 2016-17 school year and a description of the need.	
Web-Based Orientation Session for Prospective Applicants	February 25 3:30 p.m. CT
<p>The ASD will conduct webinar orientation sessions for prospective applicants. This session will provide an overview of the Achievement School District as well as discuss the application timeline and eligibility requirements.</p> <p>www.uberconference.com/charterauthorization2015</p> <p>Or, call in using your telephone at 901-244-3700.</p> <p><i>NOTE: Webinars are best viewed using Google Chrome. If you use a browser other than Chrome, simply click "Just Viewing?" when connecting and call in using the phone number above to access the audio portion of the presentation.</i></p>	
Intent to Apply Packet Due	March 16, 5 p.m. CT
The MANDATORY Intent to Apply packet and the data submission (for experienced operators) must be submitted by 5 p.m. CT. The complete submission process, including all templates and detailed instructions is outlined in the document titled "Charter RFP Submission Instructions". Late Submissions will not be accepted. Applicants who fail to submit a complete Intent to Apply packet will be discontinued from the application process.	
Notification of Eligibility (based on Due Diligence)	By March 23
The ASD will invite qualified experienced operators to proceed to Phase 2 of the application process within one week of receiving the required data (included in the Intent to Apply packet). All Start-Up applicants will proceed to Phase 2.	
Online Submission Portal Launched	March 23
Requests for Proposals, as well as required appendices and template documents for the applicants' use in preparing applications, will be posted to the Authorization Portal. Proposal submission instructions for the application will be sent as part of the Notification of Eligibility.	
PHASE 2: APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION	
Web-Based Orientation Session for Prospective Applicants	April 1, 3:30 p.m. CT
<p>This webinar session will provide eligible applicants with information about the RFP content and evaluation process, including a brief discussion of the Phase 2 feedback and interview process.</p> <p>www.uberconference.com/charterauthorization2015</p>	

Or, call in using your telephone at 901-244-3700.

NOTE: Webinars are best viewed using Google Chrome. If you use a browser other than Chrome, simply click "Just Viewing?" when connecting and call in using the phone number above to access the audio portion of the presentation.

Proposals Due

April 24, 5 p.m. CT

All application documents must be submitted in complete and final form by 5 p.m. CT via upload to the SharePoint online application submission platform. Instructions for submitting proposals will be provided in the Notification of Eligibility following approval of the Intent to Apply. Applicants may upload proposals up to 5 p.m. CT on April 24, 2015. Once the proposal is submitted, applicants will be unable to access, edit, or revise proposals. The submission portal will automatically shut down access to all applications at 5 p.m. CT on April 24, 2015. Late submissions, including applications that are partially uploaded, will not be accepted. Emailed and/or printed copies of sections will not be accepted. Late or incomplete documents will not be accepted.

Application Evaluation

May 4-21

Evaluation Teams will evaluate proposals using the published evaluation rubric with set criteria. Only applicants that approach or meet the standard for the majority of the sections outlined in the RFP (Academics, Operations, Finance, Meeting the Need) will be invited to proceed to the final phase.

PHASE 3: CAPACITY DEMONSTRATION AND DECISION MAKING

Applicant Capacity Interviews

Week of June 15 (specific dates/times/locations TBA)

Evaluation Teams will interview applicant teams to explore questions and concerns raised during proposal evaluation and to assess group capacity to implement the proposed program effectively.

Superintendent's Decisions

July 15

The superintendent will make qualification decisions based on Evaluation Team recommendations. Please note that, by law, all Achievement School District authorization decisions are final and may not be appealed.

SECTION VI: PRIORITY LIST SCHOOL PROFILES

Aggregated data for Priority list schools is available to applicants on [Tableau](#). Data is sorted by city, geographic region, feeder pattern, and tier level and is intended to provide applicants the opportunity to create a targeted plan to meet the needs of the community to be served. A sample profile is provided below.

