

Letter of Intent to Apply for a Tennessee Public Charter School - 2015

All applicants must file a Letter of Intent at least 60 days prior to the application deadline of April 1, 2015. This letter must be delivered to the local board of education and the Tennessee Department of Education no later than February 2, 2015.

Submit the letter of intent via email to charter.schools@tn.gov.

Contact the local board of education to determine where to submit the letter of intent.

Chartering Authority (school district) for Charter School: Metro Nashville Schools

Name of Proposed Charter School: The Dream Academy of Nashville

Name of Sponsor/Sponsoring Agency: Genesis Rock

Primary Contact Person: Russ Smith-Director and Raphael Crawford, EdD. Head of School

Telephone: 865-454-5697

Email: russmith222@gmail.com, raphaelcrawford06@yahoo.com

Mailing Address: Genesis Rock c/o Van Elkins and Associates, 800 South Gay Street Suite 2150, Knoxville, Tennessee 37929

Proposed Opening, Grade Levels and Student Enrollment:

Proposed year of school opening	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
Year One	6-7	200
Year Two	6-8	300
Year Three	6-9	380
Year Four	6-10	460
Year Five	6-11	540
Year Six	6-12	620
Year Seven	6-12	620
Year Eight	6-12	620
Year Nine	6-12	620
Year Ten	6-12	620

Current Leadership

List all current and identified board members and their intended roles on the table below (adding rows as needed).

Full Name	Current Job and Employer	Position
Raphael Crawford, EdD	Secondary and post-secondary education administrator, principal	Academic focus, standards, assesment, operations
Louise Lindsay	Educator, previous lead teacher Washington,DC Ward 8. PBL	Academic focus/plan, academic performance, special ed
Phyllis Sells	Metro Nashville Schools, MSW	Special needs, special populations and at risk youth
Deborah Porter	Knox County Government, purchasing	Community Involvement and parental engagement, governance, recruitment
Tony Norman	Knox County Water Treatment, retired high school biology teacher, County Commisioner	Academic focus and plan, academic performance, curriculum, community involvement
Kristin Dean, PhD.	Cherokee Health Systems Director of Children's Health Services; Center of Excellence Project Manager.	Special populations, assesments, counseling services, primary care, trauma treatment
Chris Bradley	Anderson County Schools, High School Math teacher	Academic focus and plan, academic performance standards, assessments
Edward Reinhold	FBI Special Agent in Charge	Civil Rights, youth advocacy, special populations
Bob Freeman	Certified Public Accountant, Private practice	Charter School financing, budget
Gasper Martinez	EdTec	Charter school financing, budget, operations
Marriah Paige	UT Law student, Practicum intern	Community Involvement, advocacy, achievement gap/data
Alan Jones	McGhee Tyson Airport	Personnel and human capital, community involvement, recruitment
Robert Clowney	Retired professional baseball player and retired corporate executive	Community involvement, marketing, recruitment
Russ Smith	Camelot Care/Genesis Rock, resource parent	Special populations and at risk students, marketing, recruitment, enrollment

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Tennessee law limits who may sponsor a charter school and proscribes what type of entity may operate a charter school. T.C.A. § 49-13-104(7),106(c). **Please read the following statements and confirm eligibility to submit an application and verify the status of or plans for the governing body.**

The sponsor of this charter school is not “a for-profit entity, a private elementary or secondary school, a post-secondary institution not accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools [now [AdvancEd](#)], a religious or church school” and does not “promote the agenda of any religious denomination or religiously affiliated entity.”

Charter schools must be operated by entities that have exemption from federal taxation under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Please check one of the following, as applicable:

- The sponsor of this charter school is a not-for-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status.
- The sponsor of this charter school is a not-for-profit organization and has applied for 501(c)(3) status.
- I will provide evidence of non-profit incorporation and 501(c)(3) status at the time of contracting with the chartering authority.

The complete Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act is contained in T. C.A. §§ 49-13-101 through 137, and in § 8-35-242. You can access Tennessee laws [here](#).

Please provide an abstract for your proposed school (two pages maximum). Please address the following elements:

The Proposed academic focus and plan

The Dream Academy of Nashville (DAN) will provide children in grades 6-12 with an innovative and enriched educational program that stimulates and accelerates their achievement in a highly personalized environment utilizing project and problem-based learning(PBL) techniques. The DAN model is based on three core elements: (1) **Curriculum** based on Tennessee Common Core Standards as well as technology infused experiences in science, technology, engineering and math; (2) **Small learning communities** implementing student-centered PBL strategies selected for their rigor and relevance to real world concepts; (3) **Technology** as a tool for communication, collaboration, and learning supported by partnerships with community educational institutions and businesses. An important goal of DAN will be preparation for college success, from the application process through college matriculation and transition. This will be supported each year by a summer residential experience at Maryville College.

DAN will utilize as its model the highly successful NewTech Network design which currently exists in 130 schools in 18 states. This student-centered, interdisciplinary, collaborative strategy has been especially effective with those students not motivated by a more traditional educational approach. As part of the New Tech Network, DAN will fully adhere to the following design principles: (a) rigorous course work aligned to state standards and designed to include a STEM concentration; (b) ongoing professional development and support for staff; (c) sustained community partnerships; (d) extended outreach efforts for students; and (e) adequate facilities and resources. Adherence to these principles will be regularly monitored by the New Tech Network.

Project-based learning (PBL) is at the heart of the instructional approach where learning is contextual, creative, and shared. Students will collaborate on projects that require critical thinking and presentation skills. By making learning relevant in this way, student engagement will reach new levels and produces better educational outcomes, as evidenced throughout the New Tech Network.

The deep use of technology will support the innovative approach to learning. All classrooms will have a one-to-one computing ratio as every student becomes a self-directed learner who no longer needs to rely primarily on teachers or textbooks for knowledge and direction. In addition, the New Tech Network includes a robust learning management system called NTN Echo which connects students, teachers, administration and parents. This system houses extensive project and resource libraries shared among all schools in the network.

The Center of Excellence has been created to serve children who are at-risk for or in state custody which will support DAN. The COE provides consultation for children with complex medical, behavioral, psychological, and psychiatric problems.

Finally, The Dream Academy will maintain a culture that promotes trust, respect, and responsibility. At NTN schools, students and teachers alike have exceptional ownership of the learning experience and their school environment. Working on projects and in teams, students are accountable to their peers and acquire a level of responsibility similar to what they would experience in a professional work environment.

The perceived need for the school and the potential target population

Assessment data in Knox County point to a disturbing inconsistency in academic achievement across schools and communities. Recent studies have shown that the achievement gap in Tennessee has gradually increased over the past twenty years. Although academic progress has been consistent with suburban students, urban students academic progress has been less fortunate. Research by Peabody Vanderbilt professor, Donna Ford, EdD. shows that underachievement of gifted minority males is nearly an epidemic with misdiagnosed, overmedicated and academic compromised students. A 2011-12 study by The University of Tennessee Business Analytics graduate students revealed that 974 fourth graders of approximately 3,800 urban KCS students were at risk of dropping out of school or seriously underachieving by 12th grade. Existing urban middle schools state wide demonstrates a significant achievement gap when compared with their suburban counterparts. The Dream Academy, partnering with the NewTech Network will address low achievement and will provide a model of success which can be replicated throughout Davidson County. In fact, the DAN will be a laboratory of best practices for bridging the achievement gap which will benefit students and teachers throughout Metro schools and elsewhere.

Outreach completed or planned

For the past four years Genesis Rock board members have collected and reviewed school assessment data, educational best practices, and successful school models. They engaged the UT Business Analytics MBA students who reviewed the data revealing an extreme need for an innovative and successful research-based model like NewTech Network to serve those students who are not achieving through no fault of their own.

In addition to the data analytics, Genesis Rock board members developed and nurtured formal and informal relationships with parents, educational consultants, business leaders, students, non-profit agency leaders, school board members, state legislators, educational leaders from the state's executive branch.

Individual or organizational history of success/accomplishments in education

The average New Tech Network high school student graduates with twelve college credits and is formidably prepared for college and career. With 99% of all seniors graduating and attending either two or four year colleges with an 88% college persistence rate, it is clear that New Tech has developed a compelling model with predictable success from both rural and urban schools. Other strategic partners with significant credentials are; Center of Excellence, EdTec (operational support for charter schools), Self-Help (funding for charter schools) and Educational Testing Services.

Finally, members of the Genesis Rock board of directors and The Dream Academy design team boast extensive educational and non-profit leadership experience including public school administrators and classroom teachers, university education professors, attorneys, accountants, counselors, parents and foster parents, architects and facility engineers. Each of these bring unique gifts to the development, implementation, and sustainability of The Dream Academy of Knoxville.

Signature of Primary Contact Person



Russ Smith

Date January 30, 2015

