

## **Tennessee Volunteer Military Academy**

“Denial of this charter will be harmful to the community, families, and students...”

Title 49-13

### **1. Full-time military academy, as opposed to a simple JROTC program:**

There are twenty plus JROTC programs within the Memphis Shelby County School District. As we note in our application, one of the greatest barriers to students enrolling in JROTC programs is not wanting to wear a uniform in contrast to the rest of the school. It is common for cadets in uniform to be teased as “Rot-Cee Geeks.” At a full-time military academy all students are in uniform, and that factor is entirely removed. In fact, it is estimated that peer pressure alone reduces possible JROTC population by as much as 30%.

### **2. No private military option available:**

Attending a full-time military academy is not a functional option for most students we will serve. The average room, boarding and tuition for a similar military academy is approximately \$36,000 per year, according to AMCSUS, the Association of Military Schools and Colleges of the United States. Further, all private military academy options are located in other states. For the vast majority of students we intend to serve, denying this application is denying the only opportunity they will ever have to attend such an institution.

### **3. Military Awareness for grades 6-8:**

There are currently no opportunities within a school setting for students in grades six through eight to enroll in a school driven military program, since JROTC does not serve those grades. Students can enroll within either the Naval Sea Cadets or the Civil Air Patrol at that age, though those are after school programs that are not easily supported for many families. At TVMA all students in those grades can enroll within a full-time military environment and receive the full benefits. In addition, we will support both the Naval Sea Cadets and Civil Air Patrol as options for all our cadets, grades six through twelve, through both course, leadership, and TEAM Time.

### **4. Coast Guard affiliation:**

There are twenty plus United States Air Force and United States Army JROTC programs throughout Memphis Shelby County Schools, with varying degrees of enrollment. We have been in communication and will promptly apply for the United States Coast Guard as the JROTC sponsor. We will be the only such program within MSCS, the entire state of Tennessee and only the sixth or seventh program nationwide. Unknown to most people, the Coast Guard has a duty station along the Mississippi River, in Memphis. It will afford us real world exposure and training opportunities.

### **5. Exit Point Strategy:**

As identified within our charter application, this strategy creates an individual learning plan for all students, which is common. We take this to the next level, by coordinating with all appropriate personnel to include discussions regarding SPED Transition Planning, and then we engage the military team to coordinate military and post-high school planning for all cadets. We have built Exit Point Strategy into our military team, so that each cadet, grades six through twelve, will be assigned a military unit with corresponding staff. This staff member will be assigned the lead on each cadet, thus a ratio of less than twenty-five to one.

### **6. Enhanced CTE with a First Responders focus:**

All high schools have various CTE programs, as required by State Law. We have focused our CTE programs into areas that have a strong correlation to the military mission. In so doing we have a unique combination of certificate earning programs, with military support and engagement. We are confident that some CTE programs throughout MSCS will have some

modest aspects of this, though none of them have a First Responders focus, with corresponding support from military partnerships. The areas we are focusing on have both a civilian and military relevance.

**7. Leadership training and opportunities:**

As we noted in our charter application, our leadership extends beyond the normal JROTC experience. All classes will have cadet leadership to assist the teacher. All cadets are assigned to squads, platoons, companies, etc., and have the opportunity for unit leadership. The sheer size of TVMA alone is a unique opportunity for cadets. At full enrollment seniors will have the opportunity to lead the Corp of Cadets, which will number upwards of eight-hundred cadets! In the military, an officer who would lead a unit of that size would be around age forty-five and would have served as an officer for twenty years and obtained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Cadets will be mentored and prepared for this scope of leadership through leading smaller units throughout their time at TVMA. No other school in Tennessee, let alone Memphis Shelby County Schools, will provide this opportunity. In fact, there are only around a dozen such programs nationwide that offer such leadership opportunities of this size.

**8. Diverse Corp of Cadets:**

We address this in our charter application, as we are very intentional regarding our desire to be diverse. Currently, enrollment patterns within many schools in Memphis Shelby County Schools show an extremely high minority population, and within the other school districts in Shelby County, they tend to have a very high Caucasian enrollment. We have intentionally targeted an area within Memphis Shelby County Schools that will allow easy transportation access to both communities. We also seek a waiver to allow for enrollment between all school districts within Shelby County proper. We seek to have a very balanced, truly diverse cadet population, which is similar to what cadets will find within the United States Armed Services or in their post-education civilian life. Our children learn through modeling, and we seek to create the environment that will help our cadets thrive in the real world.

**9. Original source documents:**

As referenced within our charter application, we intend to use original source documents. We passionately believe that our cadets need to read the original documents, as well as commentary regarding original source documents. Unfortunately, too many educational experiences involve primarily excerpts from original source documents, then commentary. In fact, some of our educational standards direct the students to the reading of excerpts. It is known that the Standards are set as minimums, not maximums, and those who drafted the Standards hoped schools, teachers and students would in fact read the entire documents. We will make this the norm for our educational experience, which is not commonly experienced by many students.