



2026 SCORE ADVOCACY AGENDA

*Advancing what works.
Accelerating what's next.*

**Excerpts from the 2026 State of
Education in Tennessee: Moving Every
Student Forward report**

The bedrock of Tennessee's economy is an education system that connects every student to opportunity. SCORE's report, 2026 State of Education in Tennessee: Moving Every Student Forward, calls for bold actions that will move every student forward on a clear pathway to a choice-filled life and economic independence. This Advocacy Agenda outlines the four priorities in the report, offering a blueprint for sustained progress: a Tennessee where students graduate with credentials that lead to economic independence, teachers are empowered to excel, families have access to excellent public school options, and accountability and transparency systems ensure we keep getting better.



View SCORE's
full 2026 State
of Education in
Tennessee report.



PRIORITY: TRANSFORM EDUCATION INTO AN ENGINE FOR ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

From Credits to Careers: Reimagining Dual Enrollment for Impact

- **The Tennessee Office of Evidence and Impact (OEI) should audit and analyze dual enrollment course offerings**, modalities, and patterns across K-12 and postsecondary systems in consultation with the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), and the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE).
- **The state should develop and adopt statewide goals for dual enrollment** that prioritize career-connected pathways that lead to impact credentials.
- **TDOE should develop dual enrollment resources** that provide clarity to students on which dual enrollment courses count for credit at Tennessee institutions and will advance students toward an impact credential.

Connect Learning to Career Through High-Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences

- **TDOE should develop a statewide quality work-based learning framework** focused on skill development, credit-bearing participation, pathway alignment, and opportunities for compensation.
- **TDOE should collect and report more precise data** on work-based learning experiences, skill development, and outcomes.
- **The state should incentivize high-quality work-based learning experiences for employers, districts, and higher education institutions** by exploring strategies to increase employer participation and aligning accountability and funding systems to reward rigorous career-aligned placements.

Empower Students With Information to Shape Their Futures

- **The General Assembly should expand access to college and career advising** through investments in completion grants and coaching so that more students can map pathways to impact credentials, assess career outcomes and courses, evaluate work-based learning opportunities, and make informed postsecondary and career decisions.
- **TBR, TDOE, THEC, the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD), the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TDECD), and OEI should integrate and share education and workforce data** transparently so that workforce outcomes for specific courses, noncredit options, and credentials are clearly understood by students, families, educators, and advisors.

Reward Institutions for Impact Credentials

- **THEC should revise the outcomes-based funding (OBF) formula** to replace the high-need premium with an impact credential bonus that rewards completions tied to high-wage, high-demand jobs.
- **THEC should streamline and modernize OBF metrics** to reduce redundancy, emphasize workforce outcomes, and promote on-time completion.

Set a Higher Standard for Nondegree Credentials

- **The General Assembly should refine Tennessee's definition of a quality nondegree credential** and direct THEC and TDLWD to build a public-facing statewide data infrastructure that incorporates earnings potential, job outlook, and stackability.
- **The State Workforce Development Board should align Workforce Pell eligibility criteria** to programs that meet both high-demand and high-wage thresholds, directing federal and state resources toward credentials that enable economic independence.

PRIORITY: ELEVATE EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AS TENNESSEE'S MOST POWERFUL INVESTMENT

Strengthen Evaluation Systems

- **TDOE should establish a grant to pilot innovative observation models** that offer flexibility in cadence and focus on content-specific feedback for teachers, such as formally utilizing the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG).
- **The State Board of Education should revise the achievement measure selection menu to better identify individual teacher effectiveness.** This will help ensure that classroom-level student achievement contributes to evaluation scores for teachers.
- **TDOE should publish an annual report on the Tennessee educator labor market** that includes a statewide analysis of teacher evaluation and teacher effectiveness. The state-level profile on the state report card should include the distribution of composite teacher Level of Overall Effectiveness (LOE) scores, and individual-level LOE scores should be returned promptly to teachers and school leaders.

Create Instructional Coherence

- **TDOE should update policies and guidance** to ensure interventions are grounded in evidence-based approaches for supporting students. These include aligning assessment practices, anchoring support in high-quality instructional materials, and providing frequency and dosage aligned to research-backed best practices for high-dosage tutoring.
- **TDOE should study the effect of instructionally aligned intervention** and highlight best practices for building coherent instructional systems at the school and district level.
- **TDOE should collect and publicly report information** on the state's tiered literacy interventions and TDOE should use this information to provide targeted supports to districts to improve implementation of intervention strategies.

Reimagine Great Teaching for Students

- **The General Assembly should establish an advanced teacher role taskforce** that works to define roles, responsibilities, compensation paths, and accountability structures for advanced teacher roles.
- **The General Assembly should then establish a statewide grant for districts to pilot** advanced teacher roles and strategic staffing structures and produce a study of the impact of these roles on student achievement, teacher retention, and teacher satisfaction.
- **The General Assembly should amend the state salary schedule** to incentivize compensation models that reward teacher effectiveness and align differentiated pay plans to teachers' contributions and impact.

PRIORITY: EXPAND ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL OPTIONS FOR EVERY FAMILY, IN EVERY COMMUNITY

Level the Funding and Facilities Playing Field

- **The General Assembly should increase the direct allocation for charter schools in the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) funding formula** to \$1,500 per charter student and codify the allocation methodology. This will help close the facilities funding gap to ensure funding grows alongside enrollment.
- **Tennessee should solve facilities challenges for newly authorized charter schools**, including access to bridge funding and incubation facilities, to ensure approved charter schools can open without delay.

Modernize Authorization for Charter Schools

- **The General Assembly should allow operators with multiple authorizers** to consolidate oversight under a single authorizer to reduce administrative burden and improve consistency.
- **The General Assembly should create a direct authorization pathway** through the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission for new-start charter schools that are designed to meet critical regional workforce needs.

Break Down Barriers to Open Enrollment

- **The General Assembly should standardize enrollment timelines** and require all LEAs to offer transparent, uniform open enrollment periods with publicly posted dates and clear application procedures.
- **The state should enable cross-district mobility** and encourage districts to participate in regional pilot programs that allow students to attend schools across district lines where space is available.
- **Tennessee should increase transparency** by requiring districts to publicly report available seats, open-enrollment participation, and transfer outcomes annually.

PRIORITY: STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS TO TURN DATA INTO ACTION AND INSIGHT INTO IMPACT

Monitor for Accountability

- **TDOE should unify state and federal accountability systems** under a single framework that aligns measures, reduces confusion, and focuses on continuous school improvement. The updated accountability system should adopt college and career readiness (CCR) as the state's postsecondary readiness measure and increase its weight in high school accountability; preserve focus population metrics by incorporating both federal subgroup performance and state bottom 25% growth indicators; and rebalance achievement and growth weights to ensure schools are recognized for improving student learning.

Accelerate Data Access

- **Tennessee should maintain the state's robust state assessment system** — the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) — to ensure alignment with state standards and transparency for families.
- **The General Assembly should codify a statutory deadline** for the release of TCAP results to educators and families and accelerate reporting timelines by adopting technical innovations.
- **To identify opportunities to reduce testing time, TDOE should** conduct a statewide inventory of local assessments to evaluate alignment, testing time, and redundancy; limit local summative assessments in courses already covered by state end-of-course exams; and launch a district pilot program focused on improving test scheduling, communication, and preparation to minimize instructional disruptions.

